

BLAIR

Quarter Note

Vanderbilt University



Sing Out!

Undergraduate choral music at Blair flourishes under the direction of David Childs

WINTER 2006

From the *Dean*

Cover photo of David Childs 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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This issue of the *Blair Quarter Note* gives further evidence of the dramatic progress the Blair School is making as it approaches the 20th anniversary of the collegiate program. As many of you know, the Blair School was founded in 1964 as an academy for precollegiate and adult instruction. Following its affiliation with Vanderbilt University in 1981, the School developed a Bachelor of Music degree which accepted its first students in 1986.

From that first class of just 13 students, the undergraduate student body has grown to its current level of 180 music majors—an ideal size for optimal student/faculty interaction and musical growth. Meanwhile, the precollegiate and adult program has continued to flourish with over 600 students enrolled this fall.

It is highly unusual for any school of music to develop the sophistication and depth that the Blair School has established in its collegiate program in less than 20 years. Several benchmarks have been achieved, including the remarkable development and maturation of the voice, choral, and opera programs in recent years, and the commissioning of six musical works for the Blair School's leading chamber ensembles and soloists. Both of these important milestones are described in detail in this issue of the *Quarter Note*.

I hope you will enjoy reading of these and other developments at Blair. Meanwhile, please know of my best personal wishes for the new year.



DANIEL DUBOIS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Davis".

Sing *Out!*

Choral and vocal music at the Blair School flourishes thanks to director and choral composer David Childs and others

BY REED RICHARDS



DANIEL DUBOIS

"The thought of disturbing this holy space took me aback, but he insisted, and I thought, 'We will sing "Weep No More," as it is beautiful and healing.' Our performance was one of the most moving experiences I have had as a musician. The girls sang beautifully, choking back tears, and everyone in the sanctuary stopped, sat quietly, and listened. David's music spoke to all that day in a profound way."

David Childs, assistant professor of choral studies, admits that "Weep No More," his setting of a poem by Keats, frequently draws an emotional response from audiences and performers alike. It was reported that for one month in the summer of 2004 "Weep No More" was the second best-selling piece in music publisher J.W. Pepper's catalogue. Coming in just behind a piece by world-famous composer/director John Rutter is something of which any choral composer could be proud, but Childs is modest and self-effacing about it. He is so busy at Blair, directing the Symphonic Choir, Chamber Choir, and Collegium Vocale, in addition to being musical director of Vanderbilt Opera Theatre (VOT), his colleagues and students probably don't realize how widely known his compositions are in the choral world. He is one of the most performed composers in high schools and mid-

dle schools in the U.S. He has fulfilled commissions internationally and is aware of having his works performed in Asia, Europe, Australia, and his home country, New Zealand. His focus has been sacred music, because he believes its doctrine and message, and he believes he has something to say musically with sacred words. "When I receive commissions," he says, "I like to select my own texts. I will not set a text I don't believe in." Audiences are delighted and entranced by his beautiful melodies and intriguing harmonies.

Music was an inheritance for Childs. His father was organist and master of choristers at Christchurch Cathedral in

"We were approached by a church staff member who asked 'Is this a choir?' and 'Will you sing?'" says Ms. Schneller.

Music was an inheritance for Childs. His father was organist and master of choristers at Christchurch Cathedral in



DANIEL DUBOIS

“When I receive commissions, I like to select my own texts. I will not set a text I don’t believe in.”

— DAVID CHILDS

Christchurch, New Zealand. Childs has sung in choirs and participated in church music as long as he can remember, but he became a composer almost accidentally. Before he decided to come to the U.S. for graduate school, he taught high school in New Zealand. “I had a choir with more girls than boys, and I wanted music that would fit their needs exactly and make them sound balanced, but I couldn’t find anything. So I decided to write three pieces for them. On a whim I sent them off to America to see if anyone was interested.”

The first publisher he sent them to, Santa Barbara, wrote back immediately, accepting them and asking for more. He now has dozens of songs in the choral catalogue, but, he says, “I’m outgrowing writing in short blocks. I would like to expand into the masterwork series, push my own boundaries, and write longer works.” He is currently working on a mass that should be about forty minutes when completed and would also like to write orchestral music.

Childs and his colleague Pam Schneller direct three choirs each, and additionally there is the large children’s chorus

program comprised of six groups, headed by Hazel Somerville. Childs’s choirs consist mostly of music majors, along with some gifted auditioners from other Vanderbilt schools. Schneller’s Concert Choir and Chamber Singers are made up of undergraduates from all parts of Vanderbilt. The Community Chorus was created as a vehicle for the rest of the Vanderbilt community. “These are adults who may be very accomplished in their own worlds, and many of them have incredibly fine voices and a strong desire to be involved in music,” says Schneller. Last May, the Community Chorus celebrated its fifth anniversary by presenting Haydn’s moving *Lord Nelson Mass*. This year they sang Vivaldi’s *Magnificat* in December and are preparing Fauré’s beautiful *Requiem* for May.

The biggest vocal event of the year was the Vanderbilt Opera Theatre (VOT) production of *A Little Night Music* in November, a magical comedy about love and relationships that contains some of Stephen Sondheim’s best-loved music. It’s a tribute to the talents of VOT director Gayle Shay, musical director David Childs, Rudi and Rowena Aldridge and

the technical staff of the Ingram Center for the Performing Arts, the Vanderbilt Orchestra, and the entire voice department. The production of *A Little Night Music* marks a new milestone for the Blair School, highlighting the combined talents of students and faculty alike.

Besides being wonderful entertainment, VOT productions have a primary educational function for students. Shay loves working with undergraduate singers and watching them discover the joys of acting. “It’s nice to be at the beginning of that adventure before it becomes a profession,” she says.

One of the goals of the voice department is to prepare undergraduates in the very broad range of skills required of singers in a competitive market. “When Blair students go to graduate school, they take those skills—including stage experience—and are ready to move to the next level, building on what they have received here,” says Jonathan Retzlaff, chair of the voice department. In addition to VOT productions, students have many other opportunities to perform,

including degree and elective recitals, opera scenes programs, and yearly competitions. Retzlaff says, “No student should get to the end of their program saying, ‘I wish I’d had more performing opportunities.’”

One of the biggest boosts the voice department has received in the last few years has been the receipt of a generous bequest, the Ragland endowment, which has been used to create the Mary Cortner Ragland Master Series. Sponsor of “Blair Presents,” it brings world class singers to campus each year for recitals and master classes. The Ragland series has featured great American soprano Dawn Upshaw twice, British tenor Ian Bostridge, and baritones Nicholas Isherwood and John Marcus Bindel as well as renowned vocal coaches Martin Katz and Margo Garrett.

As recently as six or seven years ago vocal music lovers would have found at Blair considerably less to satisfy their taste than they do now. With the addition of David Childs to the choral program, along with ensembles led by colleague Pam Schneller and voice department faculty Jonathan Retzlaff, Amy Jarman, Cheri Montgomery, Tracy Prentice, and Gayle Shay, undergraduate voice and choral offerings at Blair offer many learning and performing opportunities for students.



DANIEL DUBOIS

Sophomore vocal performance major Madeleine O’Donnell as Mrs. Segstrom in Stephen Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music*, produced by Vanderbilt Opera Theatre in November.

All the choirs at the Blair School present concerts each semester, usually free of charge. “Blair Presents,” sponsored by the Mary Cortner Ragland Master Series, VOT productions, and individual recitals are presented during both semesters. Community arts organizations also add to the feast. In November, the Nashville Opera premiered *Surrender Road* by local singer/songwriter Marcus Hummon in Ingram Hall. Many events not listed in the promotional and concert schedule brochures can be found on the University Calendar at the Vanderbilt Web site. Information about any of the events, including the student recitals, may be obtained at www.vanderbilt.edu/blair or by calling (615) 322-7651.

Production expertise runs in the Aldridge family

Rudi Aldridge says he met Rowena Aldridge when he was working tech and she was assistant stage manager on a production of *Il Trovatore*. Rowena says they met at Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC) when she was dancing *Swan Lake* with a touring company. Either way they were doing something they love.

Now they both work at Blair where, among their many duties, Rudi is lighting and set designer and technical director for Vanderbilt Opera Theatre (VOT), and Rowena is costumer, choreographer, and sometimes stage manager for VOT. Each job has its problems to solve, such as balancing the conflicting demands of being designer and technical director in Rudi's case, which means, among other things, watching the budget. Rowena has to find and/or make costumes with almost no money. Obviously, many of their issues coincide, and that's why it comes in handy that they are married. They talk work at work, at home, or driving to the mall. Sometimes they wake up in the middle of the night and talk work. "A lot of production problems get solved that way," says Rowena.

Rudi says he's lost count of the number of productions they've worked on together—30 or 40, perhaps, including those at TPAC and elsewhere before coming to Blair. "We dovetail well together because we respect each other and know how to take things gently down a path," he says. "Rudi is such a creative problem solver," says Rowena, "I worry sometimes I lag behind."

Rudi thinks nothing of the sort. "If I had my way," says he, "I'd never leave her side."

—Reed Richards



Rudi and Rowena Aldridge

High AIMS



Jonathan Retzlaff with junior Regan Lackey

"The music was intense and gorgeous, the sights breathtaking, and the desserts delicious," said junior Regan Lackey about her summer experience in Graz, Austria. "This different environment gave me a new appreciation for music and culture I had never before experienced."

A vocal performance major and violin minor at Blair, Regan spent six weeks at the AIMS (American Institute of Musical Studies) summer music festival singing, learning,

and catching a glimpse of music at a higher level. "I was surprised to realize I was one of the younger students, but I think I held my own."

Regan was involved in the German Lieder Concert Studio at AIMS. The Concert Studio—comprised of daily German classes, German poetry study, musical repertoire classes, audition training seminars, biweekly voice and coaching sessions, and final performances—was rigorous, yet rewarding.

Jonathan Retzlaff, chair of the Blair voice department, taught on the AIMS voice faculty, and Regan was able to continue her study with him there. "Something about being in Europe gave a completely new dynamic to our work," she said. "We communicated well, and my singing really improved."

Regan was chosen to sing in a master class with tenor Ian Bostridge in September at Blair. She also landed the role of Anne Eggerman in Vanderbilt Opera Theatre's production of *A Little Night Music* in November.

In the House

Nashville Jazz Orchestra begins residency with the Blair School



KATSBERRY

The Nashville Jazz Orchestra celebrated their newly established residency at the Blair School with a performance at Dyer Observatory in September as part of the *Music on the Mountain* series.

In a union of talented musicians and students striving to master the craft, the 16-piece Nashville Jazz Orchestra is establishing a residency at the Blair School of Music to help bring this unique American sound directly to the next generation of artists. The Jazz Orchestra is a nonprofit association dedicated to the performance of quality jazz by some of Nashville's best recording studio musicians. Its repertoire includes standard big band tunes and original arrangements by local artists.

Director Jim Williamson said the residency allows his organization to fulfill its mission "to preserve, advance, and promote big band jazz appreciation to our children and to our communities through live performance, workshops, and quality recordings."

"In my opinion, this is probably the best non-touring jazz band in the country," said Billy Adair, adjunct associate professor of jazz studies. "It is stunningly strong. Access to these musicians will be invaluable to our students."

The group now rehearses at the Blair School once a month and will perform three or four concerts a year. It gives master classes and workshops for students in Billy Adair's Big Band, now in its fourth year at Vanderbilt. This one-credit course involves students from a variety of disciplines.

"The Nashville Jazz Orchestra's residency at the Blair School brings together performance, creativity, education, and community outreach in the best ways," said Mark Wait, dean of the Blair School. "We are proud of this partnership, which will benefit our students and all the citizens of our community."

A benefit for the Nashville Jazz Orchestra with the Blair Big Band took place in December with vocalist Annie Selleck and Associate Professor of Composition Michael Kurek on drums as special surprise guests. Their spring concert—again with the Blair Big Band—will take place April 21 and is being planned as a "jazz writers night," sponsored by Susan and Frank Genovese.

New Music for the 21st Century

Grant from Turner Family Foundation to commission works for Blair ensembles

BY CINDY STEINE

The Blair School of Music announces a unique and important long-range initiative, funded by a significant grant from the James Stephen Turner Charitable Foundation. The grant allows the School to commission three major musical works from the world's most celebrated composers, each to be written for one of Blair's signature ensembles—the Blair String Quartet, the Blair Woodwind Quintet, and the Blakemore Trio.



"The Blair Commissions: Music for the 21st Century" as the project is called, will serve two intertwined missions: to promote the composition of outstanding works by the world's leading composers, and to invite attention to the excellent ensembles and faculty members of Vanderbilt University.

"We are delighted and energized by this generous gift from the Turner Family Foundation," says Dean Mark Wait. "This is a singular project. I know of no other school of music that regularly commissions works for its faculty, certainly not on this scale. This project is an opportunity for the Blair School and the selected composers to create new music for the new century, and it offers our ensembles an opportunity to perform exciting new works for national audiences—as official ambassadors of Vanderbilt. This will no doubt attract national and international attention, and, we hope, produce important compositions that will be known for generations to come. The Turner Family Foundation gift will engender some rather daring artistic exploration.

"We have a number of faculty who have an affinity and talent for contemporary music, and I want to put Blair into the business of soliciting music by world-class composers, performed by faculty who deserve exposure to a larger audience in other cities and cultural centers around the country, as well as in Nashville.

"Steve and Judy Turner and the members of their foundation board appreciated the aesthetic of the endeavor and are enthusiastically supportive of this project."

For each commission funded by this grant, the Blair School will solicit a work from a select slate of composers. "This is a long-term project," notes Wait. "The process of selecting a composer and then completion of the work may take two to three years or more, since the finest composers are often committed to projects several years in advance." Each of the three works will be premiered at a concert hall in a major American city (for example, New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago). Then, each composer will come to Blair for a performance of the work, with attendant seminars, master classes and/or symposia on the compositional process featuring both composer and performers. Each ensemble will keep the work in its repertoire for at least two years.

Above left: the Blakemore Trio; right: the Blair String Quartet



Steve and Judy Turner

"We intend for the commissioned works to be performed numerous times in different cities, avoiding a typical circumstance in which a new work is seldom—or never—heard after the first performance," says Wait. "More



importantly for the mission of Blair and Vanderbilt University, this commissioning project will tie together the processes of creation, performance, and education in ways meaningful for students and general audiences."

In addition to commissions for ensembles, the Blair School has invited three faculty soloists—Craig Nies, piano; Carolyn Huebl, violin; and Leslie Norton, horn—to commission individual works for themselves. "These individual commissions will promote three outstanding artists in a highly visible way, fostering not only their own careers but also the stature of Blair's musical excellence, which is becoming increasingly known around the country," says Wait.

"Our family foundation is delighted to partner with the Blair School in this unique endeavor," says Steve Turner, chairman of the James Stephen Turner Charitable Foundation. "Under Mark Wait's leadership, the Blair School of Music has earned a distinguished reputation as a center for creative and innovative work, making this initiative a perfect fit for the school."

On *Broadway*

Alumna Georgia Stitt, BMus'94, is making her mark on the Great White Way and beyond

BY ANGELA FOX

Georgia Stitt is an emerging talent in American musical theater. Recent credits include assistant conductor of the Broadway musical *Little Shop of Horrors* and associate conductor of *Can-Can* starring Patti LuPone. Other Broadway work includes *The Music Man*, *Titanic*, and the national tour of *Parade*. As an arranger and pianist, Stitt can be heard on the Broadway Cares *Home for the Holidays* CD and on the cast albums of *After the Fair*, *Do Re Mi*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Stitt also has written several original musicals, as well as songs that have been performed by New York's top cabaret singers.

Yet for all that, Stitt didn't listen to show tunes as a child. "No, I was definitely not a Broadway baby," says Stitt, who grew up in Covington, Tenn. "My dad loved classical music so that is what I heard around the house." Georgia began studying the piano at age seven and continued through high school. Like most young piano students Georgia learned to play pop standards like "Some Enchanted Evening" and became fascinated by the way in which words and music can combine to tell a story within the framework of a play. "I remember discovering musical theater in high school—falling in love with cast albums and buying sheet music to *Les Miz* and *Phantom* to play on the piano. I don't think it occurred to me that I could actually write musical theatre until college, but sometime around my sophomore year the idea formed that my love of musical theater and my love of setting poetry might actually be compatible."

Over a decade after graduating, Stitt finds the skills gained at Blair are essential to her success. "The classical training I received at Blair has been invaluable to me, both in my ability to play anything that's put in front of me and to think musically in a number of different styles," says Stitt, who studied piano with Craig Nies. "I use my Blair-taught technique on a daily basis, too, as I deal with issues of orchestration and arranging.



I also know a lot more about the human voice—thanks to Amy Jarman [senior lecturer in voice and assistant dean]—than some other music directors do, because of the accompanying I did in the voice department."

Stitt's success comes as no surprise to Blair faculty. "The first memory I have of Georgia is her interview for admission as a high-school senior," says Michael Kurek, associate professor of composition. "She expressed a desire to pursue Broadway-style songwriting and classical composition, and we made an informal agreement to allow her to do both things, provided she kept up the classical composition at the highest level." Michael Alec Rose, associate professor of composition, also recalls Stitt. "She is one of the most brilliant students I've ever had, both as a composer and as a scholar," Rose says. "A

substantial number of Blair graduates in composition/theory have gone on to the tremendous challenge of seeking a musical career in New York City. Georgia has been one of the most successful of these, I think, because of her extraordinary musical talent, her strong dramatic instincts, and her natural ability to work creatively with others."

After graduating from Vanderbilt, Stitt moved to Manhattan and earned her M.F.A. in musical theatre writing from New York University. Stitt and her husband, composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown, relocated to Los Angeles earlier this year where Brown is a guest artist composer at the University of Southern California. Stitt is currently at work on a new musical with

New York-based writing partner John Jiler and is opening a Los Angeles branch of The Gym, a musical theater training program she helped found in New York. In October, she became a mother with the addition of Molly Cate Brown.

In her work as a teacher, Stitt draws on her Blair background. "I think my job as a teacher is to provide a safe and nurturing environment, along with a solid technique and a challenge to inspire the students to do their best," she says. "If someone at Blair had told me that I didn't have what it took to be a competitive musician, I'm not sure I would have been confident enough to disregard that opinion. Fortunately, no one ever did."



Resonance: the intensification and enriching of a musical tone by transmission of vibration from one instrument to another. Your generosity will resonate for generations when you support scholarships at Blair.

Will Fisher is the recipient of the Del Sawyer Trumpet Scholarship, a gift that's allowed him to pursue a degree in trumpet performance at Blair—and share his time and talent with others by teaching music to Nashville children at the W.O. Smith Music School.

Resonate in the lives of young musicians. Support scholarships at Blair.

For more information, call the Blair Development Office at 322-7650.

PRECOLLEGE

The **Blair Suzuki Violin and Cello Program** performed a winter concert at the Nashville Public Library last February. Suzuki faculty **Carol Smith, Anne Hall Williams, Katherine Mansouri, and Sara Johnson** directed the concert with **Celeste Halbrook Tuten** as accompanist.

In April, the **Nashville Youth Strings Orchestra/Suzuki Reading Orchestra/Beginning Reading Orchestra** performed a warm-up concert at The Factory at Franklin. The YSO/SRO/BRO presented their Spring Concert in Ingram Hall last May. **Celeste Halbrook Tuten** is the director.

Linnaea Brophy, violin student of **Carolyn Huebl**, spent the summer as a scholarship student of Itzhak Perlman at the Perlman Music Program.

Abi Coffey, flute student of **Norma Rogers**, won the Curb Concerto Competition and played with the Nashville Symphony in June. She also received the Nashville Symphony Orchestra League Scholarship.

Heather Engebretson was invited to perform with Christopher O'Reilly in October on the showcase National Public Radio program *From the Top*. She attended the Encore School for Strings last summer and studied with Victor Danchenko of the Curtis Institute. **Sam Moon** studied with Alan Bodman at the Meadowmount School of Music last summer. Both are violin students of **Connie Heard**.

Erika Giuse (2nd grade), **Chunsoo Park** (6th grade), and **Hsiao Tseng** (12th grade) were awarded NAMTA Young Artist Achievement Awards last April. Hsiao Tseng was the runner-up in the state TMTA auditions for 12th grade piano last June. Chunsoo Park received an honorable mention for 6th grade piano. All are piano students of **Kay Rhee**.

Emily Green, harp student of **Marian Shaffer**, participated in the Young Artists Seminar at Rabun Gap, Ga., in July.

George Meyer attended the Greenwood Music Festival this summer, while **Jasmine Miller** attended the Credo Summer Music program at Oberlin College. Both are violin students of **Carolyn Huebl**.

In July, **Sarah Beth Summers** gave her Solo Book 2 Recital. She is a cello student of **Celeste Halbrook Tuten**.

UNDERGRADUATE

The **Vanderbilt Steel Band** performed during the pre-game festivities at a Vanderbilt football game in October.

Sophia Arriaga attended the Aspen Music Festival last summer, studying with **Connie Heard** and coaching chamber music with **Earl Carlyss**, formerly of the Juilliard String Quartet. She played under noted conductors **Peter Oundjian, Michael Stern,** and **George Manahan.** **Joanna Felder**, at Vermont's Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, studied with **Kevin Lawrence** and performed in a master class for **Larry Dutton** of the Emerson String Quartet. **Ellen McSweeney** attended the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music last summer. **Preetha Narayanan** traveled to India last summer, where she performed for the president and also gave a concert/talk to college students studying Indian classical music. All are violin students of **Connie Heard**.

Bonnie Brown, Liz Cornell, Rebecca Oliverio, David Repking, and Juliet Yoshida attended the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory. **Ben Detrick**, attended the Tanglewood Chamber Music program. All are violin students of **Carolyn Huebl**.

Lisa Bryington, flute student of **Jane Kirchner**, had a summer internship as a member of the operations staff at the Marlboro Music Festival in southern Vermont, working closely with artistic directors **Mitsuko Uchida** and **Richard Goode.** **Jon Lijoi**, student of **Billy Adair**, worked as an intern again this summer with CBS on the show *60 Minutes*. One of the segments he worked on last summer was nominated for an Emmy award. **Rosemary Rutledge**, saxophone student of **Frank Kirchner**, spent the summer in New York City as an intern for the Jazz at Lincoln Center development department and studied jazz with **Mike Longo**, former pianist with **Dizzy**

The Blair School would like to congratulate these winners of the Music Teachers National Association auditions held in October in Cookeville, TN.

CHAMBER MUSIC

Alternate

Dragon Park String Quartet
John Kochanowski, teacher
(Preetha Narayanan and Ellen McSweeney, violins, Andy Braddock, viola, and Micah Claffey, cello)

SENIOR STRINGS

Winner

Ju-Young Lee, cello
Felix Wang, teacher

Alternate

Sam Moon, violin
Connie Heard, teacher

Honorable Mention

Sam Quiggins, cello
Felix Wang, teacher

JUNIOR STRINGS

Winner

Linnaea Brophy, violin
Carolyn Huebl, teacher

Honorable Mention

Richard Lee, cello
Brad Mansell, teacher

YOUNG ARTIST STRINGS

Winner

Preetha Narayanan, violin
Connie Heard, teacher

Alternate

Tessa Gotman, violin
Carolyn Huebl, teacher

MTNA Winners

Gillespie. **Jon Lijoi** also studied with **Longo.** **Neala Swaminatha**, flute student of **Jane Kirchner**, served the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C., as operations intern, working in the Kennedy Center in concert production and orchestra administration; she also had an opportunity to perform with the NSO as an "extra."

Tara Burns, a Blair senior, was named Miss Tennessee 2005 in May and represented the state at the Miss America pageant in late January. She is a voice student of **Jonathan Retzlaff**.

Angela Mace, piano student of **Amy Dorfman**, received a Vanderbilt Quinq Scholarship, funded by alumni of 50 years or more. In July, while in the United Kingdom, she attended the Fifth Biennial International Conference on Music in 19th-Century Britain. Her article, "J. S. Bach's Seventh Toccata: An Anomaly of Genre Indicates a Specific Approach to Performance," was accepted for publication in the peer-reviewed journal, *Clavier*.

Dhrunneanne (Dru) Woodrooffe, student of **Mat Britain**, played steel drums in the 80-member Crossfire Steel Orchestra in Brooklyn, NY, last summer. This 7-week experience culminated in the Panorama Finals, where Crossfire placed 7th.

ALUMNI

PRECOLLEGE

Kate Ransom, former violin student of **Chris Teal**, performed in Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall in May with the Serafin String Quartet. She is executive director of the Wilmington (Delaware) Music School, a 75-year-old community school with 2,000 students of all ages. Previously Kate had created and directed the HARID Music Conservatory in Boca Raton, Fla. **William Ransom**, former piano student of **Enid Katahn**, performed in April at Weill Hall of Carnegie Hall with a chamber music group from Emory University, where he is the Mary Emerson Professor of Piano Studies. He is the founder and director of the Emory Chamber Music Society of Atlanta and artistic director of the High-

In July, I was fortunate to spend two weeks traveling in Asia where I conducted 11 bands and orchestras in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China, before traveling to a conference in Singapore. I was invited to attend a rehearsal of the Hong Kong Wind Philharmonia as they prepared a new setting of Liu Went-Jin's *Great Wall Capriccio* for winds and solo erhu (originally composed for Chinese orchestra). The soloist was Hsin Hsiao-Hung (who uses the western name "Jamie Hsin"), the premiere erhu player in Hong Kong and principal of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. She is considered among the finest players in the world, has a particular interest in music that incorporates both Eastern and Western influences, and has performed with Yo-Yo Ma among others.

The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra toured America this fall, and the timing of the tour coincided with the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony's October concert. Ms. Hsin accepted our invitation to perform the *Great Wall Capriccio*. The students benefited greatly from their time with Ms. Hsin and to exposure to classical music with a blend of East and West.

—Tom Verrier, associate professor and director of wind studies



lands North Carolina Summer Chamber Music Festival. He recently performed in France and Belgium, toured extensively in Japan and Korea, and played with the **Blair String Quartet** last summer. Their parents are **Harry Howe Ransom**, professor emeritus of political science and **Nancy A. Ransom**, retired founding director of the Women's Center at Vanderbilt.

Soprano **Melissa Shippen**, former scholarship student of **Amy Jarman**, is the winner of the Berlin Opera Foundation Scholarship for 2005-2006 and will perform with the Berlin Opera from September until June. She is a graduate of the Juilliard School.

FACULTY

Faculty members who played on Nashville Public Radio's *Live from Studio C* this fall included the **Blair String Quartet**; **John Johns**, guitar; **Craig Nies**, piano; **Christian Teal**, violin; and Blair School of Music Dean **Mark Wait**, piano.

The **Blair String Quartet** recently appeared in Atlanta, at Music Mountain in Conn., and in Bowling Green, Ky. The members are **Chris Teal, Connie Heard, John Kochanowski, and Felix Wang**.

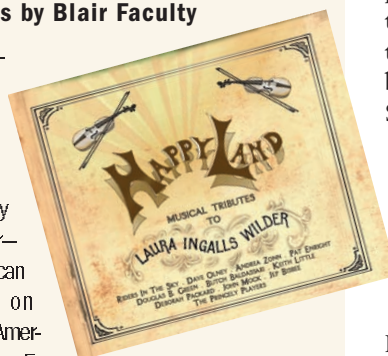
The **Blakemore Trio**, made up of faculty members **Amy Dorfman, Carolyn Huebl, and Felix Wang**, appeared in concert in Huntsville, Ala., and last April gave the world premiere of *Sound and Fury*, a piano trio they commissioned from Middle Tennessee State University composer **Paul Osterfield**. The work was performed in January at the Blair School.

Mat Britain, adjunct instructor in music, recently recorded with country music superstar **Kenny Chesney** on his latest CD titled *The Road and the Radio*.

Allan Cox, professor of trumpet, presented a trumpet and organ Lenten recital last February with his wife **Hildegard Holland Cox** 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 attended the International Trumpet

New Recordings by Blair Faculty

There's a soundtrack interwoven into the stories of pioneer survival in the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder—enduring music that can shed light both on Wilder's stories and America's musical heritage. For the new album *Happy Land:*



Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder, top Nashville musicians were brought together by Dale Cockrell, professor of musicology and professor of American and southern studies, and Butch Baldassari, adjunct associate professor of mandolin, to record fresh versions of songs cited in the *Little House* books. Released in August by Pa's Fiddle Recordings (www.pasfiddle.com), the album, produced by Cockrell and Baldassari, features performances by Riders in the Sky, Dave Olney, Andrea Zonn (BMus'93), and others.

Baldassari and David Schnauer, adjunct associate professor of dulcimer, joined forces for a new CD of duets showcasing traditional music of the Appalachian Mountains. *Appalachian Mandolin and Dulcimer* contains 14 tunes such as "Black Mountain Rag" and "Wild Rose of the Mountain, performed on a variety of mandolins and dulcimers. *Mandolin Hymns* features Baldassari on mandolin, mandola, and octave mandolin in an instrumental program of 15 traditional gospel songs. Nashville session players, including Zonn on fiddle, bring a fresh string band sound to classic melodies such as "Morning Has Broken," "Simple Gifts," and "Down to the River to Pray."

Guild Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, and toured Japan performing with the Fukuoka Technical College Band at the Fukuoka Prefecture Band Festival, presenting master classes and short recitals at Fukuoka Institute, Kyoto Conservatory of Music, Kagoshima Girls School, for the Bridgestone Tire Company Band, and the Japan Army Band in Tokyo. He returned to the Sewanee Summer Music Festival after a four-year absence to teach and perform for two weeks. In October he performed in Taiwan with the Taipei Symphony Winds and also presented a master class and recital. In November, he performed with the Blair Brass Quintet (Jeff Bailey, trum-

pet; Leslie Norton, horn; guest artist Prentice Hobbs, trombone; and Gilbert Long, tuba) on Blair's "Nightcap" series and for a band fundraiser at Wilson County High School. He also performed a trumpet and organ recital and served as adjudicator of the college brass competitions at the Mississippi Music Teachers Association State Convention.

Joy Calico, assistant professor of musicology, is currently the Anna Maria Kellen Fellow in residence at the American Academy in Berlin. Her book, *Brecht at the Opera*, is under contract with the University of California Press. She published an article about the book project in the Berlin newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* in September. Another essay in *Berliner Zeitung*, the largest daily newspaper in Berlin, was about the hurricanes bearing down on the American Southeast and the role a hurricane plays in the Mahagonny opera by Brecht and Weill.

Paul Deakin, lecturer in music, gave the inaugural lecture to a new Nashville arts and culture society, the Learning Club, in late August.



Hailed as 'the preeminent Bach pianist of our time' (*The Guardian*) and 'nothing less than the pianist who will define Bach performance on the piano for years to come' (*Stereophile*), Angela Hewitt conducted a master class at Blair in September. Here, she works with Catherine Nelson.

Elizabeth Eckert, adjunct artist teacher of piano, was privileged to have pianist Adam Tendler give a studio recital as part of his "America 88x50" tour in August. Eckert's students had an up-close-and-personal view of Tendler's American music program and were able to ask questions and engage in dialogue.

Jen Gunderman, adjunct senior lecturer in music history and literature, performed for the Nashville Scene Music Festival in September at the Sin City Social Club, at City Hall Club in Nashville, and with a long list of local and national music notables. She traveled last summer with a band called Last Train Home, playing the Rock & Roots Festival in Illinois; the Bluemont Concert Series in Virginia; the Opry Plaza in Nashville; and club dates in North Carolina and Virginia. She also played at the Americana Music Association Conference showcases in Nashville with Robert Reynolds (of the Mavericks) and Chris Stamey (record producer/musician). She played with various Nashville artists at the Cannery Ballroom, the Exit/In, the Mercy Lounge, BB King's, Douglas Corner, the Five Spot, the Family Wash, and the Basement.

Charlene Harb, senior lecturer in music theory, was coordinator of the piano faculty and a performer this summer for the American Institute for Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria.

Connie Heard, professor of violin, returned to the Aspen Music Festival last summer to teach and perform. She and Kathryn Plummer, associate professor of viola, appeared with the Notre Dame Chamber Players in South Bend, Ind., last February.

Carolyn Huebl, assistant professor of violin, presented two concertos last spring. She and Felix Wang, assistant professor of cello, were soloists with the IRIS Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Michael Stern. In May, she performed with the Dearborn Symphony in Michigan, and she spent the summer teaching and performing at the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory in Steamboat Springs, Colo.

In the spring, John Johns, associate professor of guitar, gave solo recitals at Martin Methodist College, Pulaski, TN; Rust College, Holly Springs, MS; and at Belmont United Methodist Church in Nashville. He also appeared with Amy Jarman, assistant dean and senior lecturer in voice, in a chamber music recital.

Karen Ann Krieger, assistant professor of piano and piano pedagogy, served as dis-

associate professor of viola, and Dean Mark Wait.

Kathryn Plummer, associate professor of viola, along with Connie Heard have a return engagement with the University of Notre Dame Chamber Players in February 2006. She performed concerts in Ernen, Martigny, and Brig, Switzerland, last August. In February, she will judge the Corpus Christi International Competition for Piano and Strings.

Jonathan Retzlaff, associate professor of voice, performed in Oneida, N.Y., in February with Enid Katahn, professor of piano, emerita. At Boise State University in April he presented a week-long pedagogy residency of public master classes and private lessons and a recital with pianist Charlene Harb. In July he traveled to Graz, Austria, to the American Institute of Musi-



Randy Brecker, preeminent jazz trumpeter and flugelhorn player, conducted a rehearsal workshop and master class with the Nashville Jazz Orchestra at the Blair School of Music in September.

cussion leader at the National Keyboard Pedagogy Conference in Chicago in August.

Michael Kurek, associate professor of composition, had 12 performances of *Pas de Deux* (premiered on last year's Emergence!! program at Ingram Hall) performed by the Cincinnati Ballet in November. His Sonata for Viola and Piano was given its European premiere in Stuttgart, Germany, in early 2006. A performance of the work scheduled at Tulane University was postponed due to Hurricane Katrina. An interview with Kurek appeared in the June issue of *Mel Bay's Creative Webzine*. April 2006 will see the world premiere of his Trio for Violin, Violoncello, and Piano, performed by Carolyn Huebl, Felix Wang, and Melissa Rose, assistant professor of piano. The recital will also feature a performance of his Sonata for Viola and Piano by John Kochanowski,

cal Studies where he taught during the Institute's 35th year of intensive training in German Lieder and Opera.

In October, the Nashville Ballet and the Nashville Symphony gave three performances of Associate Professor of Composition Michael Alec Rose's ballet, *The Night of the Iguana*, at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. Also in October, he served as composer-in-residence at the Royal Academy of Music, London, whose internationally acclaimed violinist Peter Sheppard Skaerved performed several of his works at various sites, including the Church of St. Bartholomew the Great. In spring 2006, Rose and Mr. Sheppard Skaerved will launch an exchange program between the Blair School of Music and the Royal Academy. In January, he visited Wilmington, NC, to begin a collaboration with the Carolina Piano Trio on a composition commis-

sioned to respond to the history of that city. Rose will team with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, to serve as the NCO's artistic consultant for its Jewish Music Festival in the spring of 2007 for which he will compose a Double Concerto for Klezmer, Sephardic Band, and Chamber Orchestra. This fall, Rose received his 20th consecutive Annual Award in Composition from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).

Marian Shaffer, adjunct professor of harp, attended the American Harp Society National Conference in Los Angeles and the World Harp Congress in Dublin, Ireland.

Carol Smith, senior artist teacher of violin and director of the Suzuki program, and Carl Smith, senior lecturer in music composition and theory, have created a new-work in three movements, *Bachiana* for Suzuki (or other) string ensemble. It is available in this country and abroad and has enjoyed several performances.

Celeste Halbrook Tuten, artist teacher of Suzuki violin, was accompanist for the Blair Children's Cello Choir performance directed by Anne Williams at Church of the Good Shepherd last April. She also assisted with the Spring Strings Concert at Hull-Jackson Montessori Magnet, and she attended the MTSU/ASTA String Teachers Workshop.

Felix Wang, assistant professor of cello, gave a recital with Melissa Rose at the Blair School featuring all 20th century music, was concerto soloist with violinist Carolyn Huebl and the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, and performed in Steamboat Springs, Colo., at the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory.

NEW STAFF

Sara Beutter, new music librarian for public services, coordinates circulation, reference, reserves, and instruction for the Music Library.

Sarah Scott is the new editorial assistant handling program production in External Relations.

Blair Celebrates Music Honoring Philanthropist and Photographer Betty Freeman

Betty Freeman, a legend in the music world of Los Angeles, is arguably the most influential philanthropist in contemporary music. She has supported some of the most important composers of this century with commissions and grants over the past 50 years. By her own count, she has made over 300 grants, commissions, and gifts of financial assistance to over 70 composers, often early in their careers. Her philanthropy is informed, impassioned, and aesthetically wide-ranging. She is also an accomplished photographer, who has captured each of her grantees in portraits that are evocative and revealing.

Blair is pleased to present an exhibit of more than 40 of her photographs this February in Ingram Hall. The Blair faculty will honor her on opening night of the exhibition, Thursday, February 16, at 8 PM, with music by three of the many composers she has supported: John Adams' *Road Movies* performed by Amy Dorfman, piano, and Connie Heard, violin; his *Hallelujah Junction for Two Pianos* performed by piano duo Enid Katahn and Amy Dorfman; Hungarian composer György Ligeti's *Six Bagatelles* performed by the Blair Woodwind Quartet; and Alfred Schnittke's *Sonata No. 1* performed by Carolyn Huebl, violin, and Mark Wait, piano.

A reception with Ms. Freeman follows the performance. The exhibition, which will be on view through the early spring, and concert are sponsored by BellSouth, Inc.

Join us this season to experience more music at Blair!



*Still Video,
Composite of Betty
Freeman (detail), 1991
by David Hockney*

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