

The Arts Culture

“Art should inspire people to feel, think and act... Good art is both roots and reach” —ART CRITIC LUCY LIPPARD



Carreno

VISUAL ARTS:

Paintings by acclaimed South American artist **Dudley Charles** were on display at the **Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center** through February. A native of Guyana, Charles' technique includes cutting up and rearranging the canvas using wood, dust, paper pulp and acrylic gel to create a textured effect. He frequently draws on his heritage for inspiration.

Earlier in the academic year, contemporary abstract painter **Antonio Carreno** discussed his art at the **Black Cultural Center**. An exhibit of his work was on display through early December. Carreno, born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, has exhibited his work in collections throughout the world including the Latin

American Museum of Modern Art in Washington, D.C., and the National Museum of Art in Santo Domingo. The exhibit was co-sponsored by the Center for the Americas and the *Afro-Hispanic Review*.

At the **Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery**, works by **Hanh Ho**, the 2004 Margaret Stonewall Woolldridge Hamblet Award winner, were on view from Jan. 12 through Feb. 2. The award, a \$19,000 grant to be used for travel and study during the year following graduation, culminates in this exhibition. In



Hanh Ho

her artist's statement, Ho articulated the plan for her Hamblet year: "Last year I elected to study in Italy to hunt down the ancestors of my artistic lineage, and now I want to visit Asia to discover a more literal heritage. In the same vein that I believe artists have to know art history before they proceed with their creative processes, I have

to know my personal history before I can continue my life's future."

In "Three Paths to Abstraction: Herbert, Leland and Mode," on view from Feb. 9 through March 16, three Tennessee artists—**Pinkney Herbert** (Memphis), **Whitney Leland** (Knoxville) and **Carol Mode** (Nashville)—

who have demonstrated a lifelong commitment to non-representational art, showed abstraction as a viable mode of visual communication.

In February, **Sarratt Gallery** showed photos by **Beth Lilly**, whose work is poignant

and ethereal. In March, **Colin McLain** showed paintings that derive motifs from *Gray's Anatomy* and, according to the *New York Times*, "give the human form neon vibrancy with his slightly skitterish drip technique and his brush palette of pinks, greens and yellows inspired by skateboard graphics."

Longtime art critic and theorist **Lucy Lippard** spoke about "Common Ground: Arts and Communities" during the **Chancellor's Lecture Series** on Feb. 22 at the Student Life Center. Describing art as "an agent of change," she showed slides of works in a variety of environments, virtually none in museums. In each of the works, place provided vital context. Art and place are intertwined, said Lippard, because "the strongest activism starts from a center."



Laurie Anderson

MUSIC:

The **Soweto Gospel Choir** visited Vanderbilt's Langford Auditorium as part of the **Great Performances Series** in February, conveying the traditions of South African music. Choirmaster David Mulovhedzi and South African executive producer Beverly Bryer built the Soweto Gospel Choir from talent in the many churches in and around Soweto.

Also in February, the **Ingram Center for the Performing Arts** was one of the world's select locations for an exhibition of photos of contemporary composers

by philanthropist/photographer **Betty Freeman**,

with a concert honoring three composers Freeman has sponsored.

And for the last two Fridays in March, the **Blair String Quartet**

presented a special double bill—performing the complete six quartets of Béla Bartók.

The Blair School of Music's Concert Series



Betty Freeman

for the spring featured pianist **Craig Nies** performing the grand finale concert in his eight-recital **Mozart-Schubert Piano Sonata Series**—on Mozart's 250th birthday, January 27.



Blair String Quartet

In February baritone **John Marcus Bindel**, a Nashville native who has been hailed by critics on both sides of the Atlantic, performed a solo recital in Ingram Hall.

The **Rova Saxophone Quartet** performed in late March at Langford. The ensemble is rooted in post-bop free jazz, avant rock and 20th-century new music.

THEATRE & FILM:

Laurie Anderson presented *The End of the Moon* in November as part of Great Performances at Vanderbilt. This expression of contemporary life incorporated dreams, theories and research from her recent stint as NASA artist-in-residence through stories, spoken word and her violin. Anderson appeared courtesy of the Chancellor's Lecture Series. >>

Vanderbilt University Theatre presented *Hamlet* in February at Neely Auditorium. **Terry Hallquist**, associate professor of theatre and co-director of VUT, talked about the challenges of mounting a production of one of the best-known plays in the Western world.

Q & A



Jason Dechert and Mackenzie Shivers

Q: *Hamlet* is daunting on many levels. Why did you decide to stage it this year?

A: I am attracted to plays that have a strong link to the political (as Shakespeare's plays usually do). I appreciated a hero who did not readily fight or murder but, rather, considered and even agonized about the problem. I then looked to our casting pool, and it seemed like a good year to do the play based on the experience level of several of the young men I knew would audition, considering, too, the parts that might be played by beginners.

Q: What do college-age actors bring to the play, and what is their greatest challenge in staging *Hamlet*?

A: Undergraduates bring to any play their own understanding of the problems that pester and influence their life here on campus and in the world, and this certainly proved true with *Hamlet*. Language, always, is a huge impediment—the speaking of lines so they are heard and understood by an audience. I petitioned to have our depart-

ment invite a guest speech coach, and Alex Harrington was extremely helpful in this respect.

Q: What did students discover about Shakespeare as a playwright and a master of theatre craft in doing a play as complex as *Hamlet*?

A: The young man playing *Hamlet*, Jason Dechert, helped us all to realize why the character of *Hamlet* continues to fascinate and stands as a benchmark for each generation. In my research I was interested in one scholar's notion that *Hamlet* is a cross between *Rosalind* (in *As You Like It*) and *Falstaff* in the *Henry IV* plays. Since I have directed *Henry IV Part 1* and *As You Like It*, this gave me a window to understanding *Hamlet* that I hadn't considered. I hope I helped Jason with this insight, but the actor, eventually, knows far more about his or her character than the director does, and that's quite as it should be if the director is doing her job. Jason's *Hamlet* was wonderfully his own.

The Actors' Gang

presented *The Exonerated* Jan. 31 as part of the Great Performances Series. *The Exonerated* is about the innocence of people and illuminates the way our justice system works while teaching about human capacities for cruelty and compassion. The company presented a "Playwright Talk-Back" session that afternoon before the performance.

Vanderbilt's **Advanced Production Workshop** in the new Film Studies Program created *The Room of Frequent Assignment* as this semester's student-produced video project. Written by Don Jones and Will Akers, and directed by Akers (who teaches the class), it is a period 1910 piece about the funeral of a romance novelist who drops dead under scandalous circumstances. His wife and children are at the funeral when, one by one, his mistresses arrive.

DANCE:

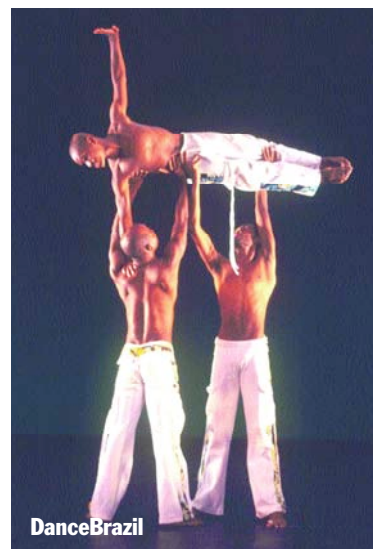
To celebrate Chinese New Year in late January, the **Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville** presented *Touching Clouds—Experiments with Chinese Music & Dance*. The program also featured other Chinese pieces as well as modern dances that interpreted Chinese music.

Great Performances at Vanderbilt once again brought top-notch contemporary dance to Nashville this spring



Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville

with **Richard Alston Dance** in late January and **DanceBrazil** in March. Richard Alston Dance is hailed as the finest modern dance company in the United Kingdom. They visited

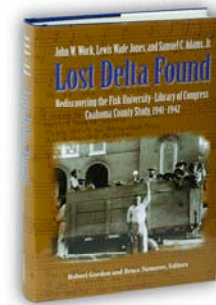


DanceBrazil

Vanderbilt on their first North American tour, also offering a master class the afternoon before the performance. The members of DanceBrazil are masters of capoeira (the Brazilian martial art) and have performed at Spoleto USA, the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center. An Audience Talk-Back Percussion Workshop was held at Nashville's Global Education Center during their visit.

BOOKS & WRITERS:

Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941–1942 was published recently by Vanderbilt University Press. The book, edited by Robert Gordon and



Bruce Nemerov, brings to light the work of musicologist **John Work**, sociologist **Lewis Jones**, and graduate student **Samuel Adams**—all of Fisk—who accompanied famed musicologist **Alan Lomax** on research trips in 1941 and 1942. Lomax condensed the two trips into one in his book *Land Where the Blues Began* after plans for a joint publication between Fisk and the Library of Congress fell through.

The research and writing of Work, Jones and Adams were rediscovered in a mislabeled box in a Nashville storage facility by Gordon while he was researching a biography of Muddy Waters.

The **Gertrude Vanderbilt and Harold S. Vanderbilt Visiting Writers Series** hosted poet **R.S. Gwynn** reading from his work in October. His first col-



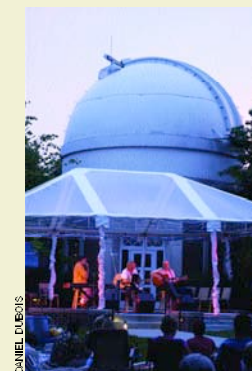
lection, *The Drive-In*, won the Breakthrough Award from the University of Missouri Press in 1986. He was awarded the Michael Braude Award in 2004

for *Light Verse* from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was named University Scholar at Lamar University. His latest volume is *No Word of Farewell: New and Selected Poems, 1970–2000*. He lives in Beaumont, Texas.

Charles Baxter, whose fiction has been described as "a valentine to the Midwest" by *The Atlantic*, read from his

work in late January. Baxter has published eight books of fiction, including *The Feast of Love*, which was a 2000 National Book Award finalist. He is the Edelstein-Keller Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Minnesota and has received the Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

UPCOMING



DANIEL DUBOIS

MUSIC

Vanderbilt's Dyer Observatory continues its **Bluebird on the Mountain** concert series this summer with some of the top songwriters in town playing in the round on perhaps the highest hilltop in Nashville. Bluebird concerts begin May 13 and continue monthly through October.

VISUAL ART

From June 1 through Aug. 4 at Sarratt Gallery, electronic media artist **Brian DeLevie** shows giclée prints that juxtapose images concerning the Holocaust and World War II.

DANCE

The second annual **Vanderbilt Summer Dance Festival** will take place June 7–17. Sponsored by the Vanderbilt Dance Program, it offers intensive dance training to persons 14 years of age and older.



NEIL BRONIE