

# The Arts Culture

“To see my notes leap off the page into her feet, hands, body and face—it has been unbelievable.” —MICHAEL ALEC ROSE

## UPCOMING



**VISUAL ARTS**  
**Marking Time**, an exhibit of mixed-media pieces by Linda Laino and handmade paper quilts by Zelda Tanenbaum, explores the layering of memory, dream and experience at Sarratt Art Gallery, June 16–Aug. 2.

**Summer Reading: Artists' Books from Nashville Collections** presents a number of artist-made books, some illustrating important works of literature, others that are distinct, independent works of art at Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery, June 17–Aug. 16.



### MUSIC

The **Blair School of Music** will host its second annual **International Fiddle School** July 27–Aug. 2. Acclaimed artists such as Vassar Clements and Buddy Spicher will teach classes in Celtic, bluegrass, Texas swing, jazz, country, old-time and rock styles of playing.

### THEATER

**Actors Bridge Ensemble**, housed at St. Augustine's Episcopal Chapel on campus, presents Rebecca Gilman's **"Boy Gets Girl,"** a dark thriller about how a blind date sparks a man's obsession, beginning July 18 and running weekends through Aug. 2 at Nashville's Darkhorse Theatre.



### VISUAL ARTS:

**Sarratt Art Gallery** showed work by mixed-media artist **Crimson Rain McCaslin** during February and March. The exhibit, **Full Circle**, showcased what McCaslin refers to as "two-and-a-half"-dimensional work resembling miniature dioramas in which she utilizes natural materials such as wax, seeds and rust. McCaslin draws on museum displays of cultural artifacts, beetles, bones and medical oddities in jars to reflect her preoccupation with recording events in her life.



From **"Full Circle"** recently added four works by **Laura McNellis** to its permanent art collection. McNellis, a Nashville native with developmental disabilities and autism, was introduced to artists of the Riddle Institute in North Carolina five years ago when their show traveled to the Kennedy Center. That connection led her to move to North Carolina where she now works full time as a painter and sculptor. Since 1992 McNellis has been represented

### The John F. Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development

by the Ricco/Maresca Gallery in New York City.

Running from late March through June at the Fine Arts Gallery are works by New York artist **Lesley Dill. A Word Made Flesh** features large-scale, photo-based tapestries,



A Word Made Flesh

merging images of the human body with poetry by the 19th-century American poet Emily Dickinson literally drawn on the figures themselves.

### Paranirvana (Self-Portrait)

by San Francisco State University professor **Lewis DeSoto** reclined at the **Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery** during February and March. The 26-foot-long, air-filled, fan-inflated sculpture was inspired by a well-known statue of Buddha at Gal Vihara in Sri Lanka, but in this sculpture the artist replaced the face of Buddha with his own, thereby portraying both himself and the reclining Buddha at the moment of death and supreme consciousness.



Paranirvana (Self-Portrait)

### ACCOLADES

**Michael Aurbach**, professor of art, reprised his exhibit **"The Administrator"** in February at Belmont University's Leu Gallery of Art. First seen in spring 2001 as the inaugural exhibit at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville,



Aurbach's consummately crafted piece uses hidden symbols to poke fun at small-minded people in positions of power. Professor of Art and Art History, Emeritus, **Don Evans** celebrated his 64th birthday with an exhibit titled **"Be One of These"** at Ruby Green Contemporary Arts Center in Nashville through March and April. Evans, who is famous for his doodles, enlarged a number of these drawings—some done during "boring faculty meetings"—transferred them to plywood, cut them out, added color, and hung them from the Ruby Green ceiling suspended by fishing line. For the opening, he invited participants to come as their favorite doodle.





Eos Orchestra

**MUSIC:**

**Eos Orchestra** performed at the Blair School's Ingram Hall as part of the Great Performances Series in February. The program included the complete ballet score of Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and two works by the late Paul Bowles, a former student of Copland best known as author of the novel *Sheltering Sky*.



Leisner

The **Blair Guitar Fest** took place Feb. 6–7 in the Steve and Judy Turner Recital Hall at the Blair School of Music. David Leisner, currently teaching at Manhattan School of Music after more

than two decades at the New England Conservatory of Music, was featured along with Michael Cedric Smith, on faculty at the Conservatory of Music of Brooklyn College. They performed works by Rodrigo, Schubert, Bach and Villa-Lobos, among others.

**Robert Beaser**, artistic director of the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and chair of the composition department at Juilliard, was featured as this spring's **BMI Composer-in-Residence** at the Blair School during February. Blair faculty members Amy Jarman, Melissa Rose and Carolyn Huebl, along with staff accompanist Leah Bowes, performed works by Beaser in a Feb. 17 concert at Blair's Steve and Judy Turner Recital Hall.

**ACCOLADES**

President Bush intends to nominate **John E. Buchanan Jr.**, MA'79, of Portland, Ore., to be a member of the National Museum Services Board for the remainder of a five-year term expiring Dec. 6, 2006. Buchanan currently serves as executive director of the Portland Art Museum. Previously, he served as director of the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, and as executive director of the Lakeview Museum of Arts and Sciences.

The Blair String Quartet joined the concert to perform Charles Ives's First Quartet.

Early this semester, numerous **master classes** brought some of the nation's best musicians to teach students and community members at the Blair School. In January, **Paul Kantor**, chair of the string department at the University of Michigan and a member of the artist-faculty at Aspen, conducted a violin master class, and **Roberto Diaz**, principal violist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted a viola master class. In February, Blair was visited by the trumpet/guitar duo Spanish Blue whose members, trumpeter **Richard Carson Steuart** and guitarist **Christian Reichert**, taught for the Del Sawyer Endowment Guest Artist Concert and Master

Class. Just a few days later, the **Baltimore Consort**, a six-member ensemble specializing in popular music of the 16th to 18th centuries, shared their expertise, while internationally acclaimed pianist **Emanuel Ax**, in town to perform with the Nashville Symphony, closed out the month.

**Emergence!**, a collaboration between the Blair School of Music and the Nashville Ballet, featured new music by Blair faculty **Michael Alec Rose** and **Stan Link**, and traditional Celtic music newly arranged by **Crystal Plohman**, director of Blair's fiddle program. The mid-March performances marked the most extensive collaboration yet between the Blair School and a local arts group. Rose's music for *Night of the Iguana*, based on the

Tennessee Williams short story and choreographed by Nashville Ballet artistic director Paul Vasterling, was rhythmically complex, composed only after



DANIEL DUBOIS

Rose had seen the dancers rehearsing it in silence. Link's music, entitled *LAPseDANCE*, for Robert Philander-Valentine's abstract piece *Premeditated*, was described by the composer as "Stravinsky played on African drums." The **Vanderbilt New Music Ensemble**, com-

posed entirely of students, performed Rose's and Link's works for the performance, while Plohman performed her own arrangements of Irish music onstage.

Nashville Symphony principal oboist and Blair School of Music faculty member **Bobby Taylor** gathered his musical friends and neighbors April 5 for an **Appalachian Celebration** at the Blair School's Ingram Hall as the final concert for the Concert Series season. Taylor, whose Kentucky grandfather was a mountain musician, enlisted the musical aid of fellow Blair faculty members—master fiddler **Crystal Plohman**, Nashville Mandolin Ensemble leader **Butch Baldassari**, and dulcimer master **David Schnauffer**—to help kick up the audience's heels in a joyous celebration of some of America's deepest-rooted musical traditions.

**Great Performances at Vanderbilt** ended the year with the **Afro-Cuban All Stars**, whose Latin rhythms had the Langford Auditorium audience dancing in the aisles. Brought together by musical director Juan de Marcos González (leader of the groups Sierra Maestra and Buena Vista Social Club) as a multi-generational big band to explore a broader scope than the Buena Vista projects, the All Stars paid tribute to the diversity of Cuban music, marrying the past with the present.

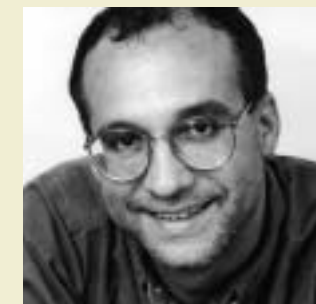


Emergence!

NEIL BRAVE

Q & A

**Michael Alec Rose,** associate professor of composition, Blair School of Music



In mid-March 2003, Michael Rose witnessed his original classical score interpreted in a way few composers ever experience—by a troupe of professional ballet dancers. The Nashville Ballet and the Blair School of Music joined in a first-time collaboration to present a program, "Emergence!," in which Rose and choreographer Paul Vasterling emerged with a new take on Tennessee Williams's short story "Night of the Iguana."

**Q:** You've said that initially you weren't sure you were the right composer for this piece. Why not?

**A:** "Night of the Iguana" is a very neurotic short story. It's very intense—filled with desire and rage and potential love. I wasn't sure I had the temperament to write this piece. It was not literature that I was familiar with or that I naturally gravitate towards. It's "compulsive" literature.

**Q:** Why did you decide to go for it despite these doubts?

**A:** It gave me a sense of artistic excitement. And I felt that if the choreographer believed in this story, it was my job as a composer to embrace it enthusiastically. I knew it would be a great ballet, and I knew there was artistic gold here to be mined—whatever the style of writing. Tennessee Williams got to the very core

of what human beings suffer in their desire for other human beings.

**Q:** Paul Vasterling has said that when he first heard your composition, it wasn't at all what he was expecting.

**A:** That's OK; his choreography wasn't what I was expecting, either. He was expecting something more regional, more southern, in sound. I was trying to capture something universal. This is a story of mythic consequence. The music seemed to me to be stretching beyond the Mason-Dixon Line.

**Q:** What was your reaction when you first saw the dancers perform to your score?

**A:** I was at rehearsal for three days, and I was just crying. These are all great dancers. Jennifer McNamara [the lead ballerina] is a celestial being. I've never seen anything like what she does with my music and Paul's choreography. It's astonishing. To see my notes leap off the page into her feet, hands, body and face—it has been unbelievable.

—Lisa DuBois

**THEATER:**

The promise of spring was celebrated in mid-February when **Vanderbilt University Theatre** presented “**Two Gentlemen of Verona**,” a musical adaptation of the Shakespeare play. The happy coming-of-age story celebrates spring and its promise of love with a satirical undercurrent involving the government’s sometimes less-than-pure motives for war. With music by Galt MacDermot (“Hair”) and lyrics by playwright John Guare (“The House of Blue Leaves”), this adaptation of the Shakespeare comedy won both the Tony Award and the New York Drama Circle Award for best musical of 1972.

In April, VUT presented Lee Blessing’s drama “**Two Rooms**,” in which rising Middle East tensions and self-centered government policies serve as a backdrop. The drama places an American hostage, held captive in a featureless cell, beside his wife, who has stripped a room in their home of furnishings to better understand his deprivation.



Two Rooms



Two Gentlemen of Verona

DAVID CHENSHAW

“**A Letter to Harvey Milk**,” a one-man show about a week in the life of Harry Weinberg, a widower and Holocaust survivor living in San Francisco, was performed at the **Ben Schulman Center for Jewish Life** at Vanderbilt in late March by local actor Yaron Schweizer. The humorous play, told through the voice of a 77-year-old man, examines questions of personal identity for a young woman trying to reconcile being lesbian and Jewish.

**DANCE:**

Two very different dance companies graced the stage in Vanderbilt’s Great Performances Series this spring. **Ronald K. Brown/Evidence**, performing in Langford Auditorium in mid-February, had as its mission to “focus on developing African contemporary dance and [to discuss] issues of race, class, gender and assimilation” through

Brown’s vision of modern dance, theater and kinetic storytelling. In April, **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo**, an all-male comic ballet troupe, dazzled the audience at Ingram Hall with its unusual spin on such traditional masterpieces of classical ballet as “Swan Lake” and “The Dying Swan” by combining technical virtuosity, parody, and the wearing of women’s clothing.



Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo

**HUMANITIES:**

As part of this year’s **Brain Awareness 2003** events on campus, **Robert Zatorre** of the Montreal Neurological Institute at McGill University presented a lecture on how the human brain perceives, understands, remembers and imagines music in “**Music and the Brain**” at the Steve and Judy Turner Recital Hall. The event was co-sponsored by the Vanderbilt Department of Psychology, the Blair School of Music, and the Vanderbilt Brain Institute.

In April, **Kanan Makiya**, professor of near eastern studies at Brandeis University, presented a lecture on the **United States and Post-Saddam Iraq** as part of the “Understanding the Middle East” lecture series sponsored by the Robert Penn

Warren Center for the Humanities. Makiya is an adviser for the Iraqi National Congress, and his work has been featured in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. His book *Republic of Fear* became a bestseller after Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait.

Building bridges to create opportunities for both entertainment and education, Vanderbilt and the **Tennessee Performing Arts Center** has entered into a unique initiative designed to benefit Vanderbilt and the Nashville community. The first programs spotlighted the arts in new ways through a lunchtime learning series at Nashville’s War Memorial Auditorium called “**InsideOut of the (Lunch) Box.**” In February, Dean **Mark Wait** and faculty member **Stan Link** of

the Blair School of Music joined Nashville School of Ballet choreographer Robert Philander-Valentine and *Tennessean* features writer Tasneem Grace Tewogbola for an exploration of African influences in contemporary American choreography and composition. In March, **David Grapes**, artistic producing director of the Tennessee Repertory Theatre, and **Terryl Hallquist**, co-director of Vanderbilt University Theatre, presented “Shakespeare: In and Out of Love.” The season concluded in April with **Bill Ivey**, Branscomb Scholar and former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, talking about arts funding in America. Ivey also now heads the University’s new Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy.

**BOOKS & WRITERS:**

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet **Philip Levine** was honored on his 75th birthday with a two-day poetry colloquium at Vanderbilt April 11–12, featuring 10 poets whose works have been influenced by Levine. Levine was writer-in-residence at Vanderbilt in the spring of 1995 when he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his work *The Simple Truth*. Poets participating in the colloquium included former students, contemporaries and friends of Levine: Vanderbilt faculty members **Kate Daniels** and **Mark Jarman**, along with Christopher Buckley, Peter Everwine, Charles Hanzlicek, Galway Kinnell, Dorianne Laux, Paul Mariani, Sharon Olds and Gerald Stern. The celebration of Levine and his work was this year’s annual colloquium of the Gertrude and Harold S. Vanderbilt Visiting Writers Series.

**Philip Nel’s** (MA’93, PhD’97) latest book, *The Avant-Garde and American Postmodernity: Small Incisive Shocks*, proposes that a series of small but far-reaching changes drew understanding from modernism to postmodernism. He focuses on eight figures—Nathaniel West, Djuna Barnes, Dr. Seuss, Donald Barthelme, Don DeLillo, Chris Van Allsburg, Laurie Anderson and Leonard Cohen—as representative of these changes, in this, the first book to analyze postmodern children’s literature.



*Number: Country Music’s 500 Greatest Singles* by David Cantwell and Bill Friskics-Warren, published jointly by **Vanderbilt University Press** and the Country Music Foundation Press,

Two new books with ties to Nashville’s country music industry also have ties to Vanderbilt. This spring Chronicle Books published *Vinyl Hayride: Country Music Album Covers, 1947-1989* by **Paul Kingsbury**,



BA’80, former deputy director of the Country Music Hall of Fame. The book, illustrated with more than 250 examples of covers, offers a glimpse into the history and evolution of country music. A sweeping kaleidoscope of rhinestones, neon, flashy cars and guitars, it surveys the album art of the entire genre. *Heartaches by the*

is part encyclopedia, part history, and part collection of record reviews. It argues for a way of hearing using critical essays that, when read in sequence, comment upon each other—ultimately challenging what country music is and what it can mean.