Orpheus Descends Again

Orpheus Descending, composer Bruce Saylor’s (Music) critically acclaimed re-imagining of the Tennessee Williams play, has not been performed since it was first staged by the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1994. This month, the two-act work is receiving its New York premiere on campus in a co-presentation of the Department of Drama, Theatre & Dance and the Aaron Copland School of Music.

Conducted by Maurice Peress (Music), who saw and admired the Chicago production, Orpheus Descending features recent Queens alumni, current students, and one adjunct faculty member. Soprano Juliana Rambaldi and her husband, baritone Victor Benedetti, are reprising their roles as the ill-fated lovers Lady and Val. With the exception of the two principals, none of the cast members has sung the score before, so all participants have logged lots of rehearsal time. “It’s a huge commitment,” says Saylor, who has taught composition on campus for many years.

To realize his vision of Orpheus, Saylor faced his own set of challenges. He conceived the project in 1991 after attending a Broadway revival of Williams’s drama with his wife, mezzo-soprano Constance Beavon, who thought the saga of love, sex, and violence set in a small Southern town in the 1950s was operatic material. Saylor then entered into negotiations with Williams’s literary estate, but before winning the rights to adapt the play, the composer and his librettist, award-winning poet J.D. McClatchy, had to agree to preserve every word of the playwright’s script.

“We unstitched the play and stitched it back to make it move more quickly and forcefully toward its tragic conclusion,” says McClatchy, a professor of English at Yale University. “The play is gothic but has mythic underpinnings, so it works on many levels.”

Since Saylor couldn’t alter the words, he had to refine his musical vocabulary. “I had to think about finding a vocal language that would allow Williams’s text, which has its own American cadences, to come through so that the person in the theatre is sitting on his seat, waiting for what would come next,” he explains.

Revisiting the score for the Queens production, Saylor has made a few changes. “I’m filling in some orchestration that I neglected to do as the rush of the premiere fell upon me,” he reports. “But I don’t have time to write much.” That’s because he’s busy with other projects, including his rendition of The Image Maker, a verse play by James Merrill.

Orpheus Descending is being presented at the Goldstein Theatre on Thursday, March 23 at 7 pm (preview); Friday, March 24, and Saturday, March 25, 8 pm; Sunday, March 26, 3 pm; and Tuesday, March 28, 10 am. For tickets, call 718-793-8080.

Godwin-Ternbach: You Are What You Wear

Academically speaking, there is much more to apparel than meets the eye. “It’s an important lens through which we can understand culture and history,” says Eugenia Paulicelli (European Languages), whose new course on fashion, identity, and globalization has attracted PhD candidates in a wide range of fields. “There is complexity in fashion and dress. It’s not an ephemeral topic.”

Fortunately, you don’t have to be a grad student to gain insights into style. The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, Globalization, an exhibition originated by Paulicelli, is on campus at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum through June 1.

“Clothes and textiles have always been a global commodity,” says Amy Winter, director of the Godwin-Ternbach and co-curator of the show, which draws heavily on (continued on page 2)
“I have family and friends who attended NYU, Columbia, and Yale, all looking for the opportunities associated with those big-name colleges,” says honors student Abdallah Zihni ’07. “I chose Queens College because it offered me the same advantages without the financial burden. That helps me stay independent.”

Actually, studying at Queens has enabled Zihni, who was recommended for the honors program during the second semester of his freshman year, to consider a career close to his heart. “I was always interested in politics,” he says. “And I enjoy writing.” His original plan was to major in political science, with the goal of attending law school.

Then he won a Watson Fellowship. “The Honors Center staff has a way of streamlining the scholarship process,” he observes.

As a Watson Fellow, Zihni held summer internships with the Bronx Public Defenders and the Institute of International Education. Those experiences have caused him to stick with his major, but rethink his long-term plans. “Law isn’t as appealing as it once was,” he admits. “Now, my main ambition is to be a political analyst working in the Middle East.” At press time, he was completing an application for an internship with the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC.

Zihni’s affinity for this subject area is not surprising. His heritage is Egyptian, and he speaks Egyptian Arabic fluently. But his sense of intellectual inquiry spans cultures. Last spring he went to Winchester, England, to take a course on American studies at King Alfred College.

“I wanted to see how the English educational system works,” he explains. “I also wanted to see America from another perspective.” In his free time, he observed some natural phenomena that were novel to a Queens resident. “You could see the stars at night,” he reports.

Back home, Zihni explores an artificial form of illumination—he collects lava lamps. “I saw one and I wanted it,” he says. “I have four so far. I also plan to build them.”

**GODWIN-TERNBACH** (continued from page 1)

the college’s costume collection. “We have textiles that are ancient, with stitchery, embroidery, or painting. Most of these things go back to antiquity.” To illustrate that point, the show traces the evolution of various fabrication and embellishment methods. The oldest piece in the museum’s upper gallery is a hand-painted Peruvian swatch that dates to 1000 BC; some of the modern African textiles on display were produced with archaic techniques.

Similarly, contemporary designers recycle ideas from traditional garments. “We wanted to get at the underlying concept of ethnicity and how it was played out in high-fashion clothes,” says Winter’s fellow co-curator Elizabeth Lowe (Family, Nutrition & Exercise Sciences). “So in the downstairs gallery, we have high-fashion pajamas and T-shirt shapes, like caftans and kimonos”—examples of distinctive shapes developed in Asia centuries ago and subsequently adapted for Western consumers. Draping and pleating, lace, and coats also receive scholarly attention.

“I hope visitors to the museum will take away an appreciation for the diversity we have, especially in Queens, the most diverse county in the nation,” notes Lowe. “Plus, they’ll get a warm, fuzzy feeling from all of the gorgeous stuff that we have.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of lectures featuring Queens faculty members and renowned designer Mary McFadden. At an April 26 symposium organized by Paulicelli, students who are exploring fashion and identity issues will present international case studies as well as ethnographic research conducted in the immediate college community. Another highlight will be a May 2 fashion show that will mix traditional costumes and the work of emerging designers. The attire for all events? Dress as who you are.

(For more details on upcoming events, visit [www.qc.cuny.edu/godwin_ternbach](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/godwin_ternbach))
PHOTO EXHIBIT (continued from page 2)

for 12 years.”

The recipient of awards from the Queens Council on the Arts, the International Photography Institute, and other organizations, Melhado draws inspiration from the world around him. “In Queens, we find the most diverse ways in which land is used,” he says. “I want people to know that the landscape is changing day by day. My work is a visual diary. I’m concerned about presenting a complete record. History is happening all around us.”

“The Digital School” Presentation March 21

From cellphones to iPods to laptop computers, 21st-century students live in a digital world and, as a consequence, they learn differently than students did just a few years ago. Rapidly evolving technologies have made new skills essential for success in everyday life. In spite of this, there remains a profound gap between what most students learn at school and the skills they now need in the community and workplace.

Christine Dowd, an education development executive with Apple Computer, will address the challenges new digital technologies pose for education in a presentation entitled “The Digital School: Technology Leadership in 21st-century Schools.” It will take place Tuesday, March 21 at noon in the Campbell Dome. All are invited to attend.

According to Dowd, technology solutions can help to engage students and make education more relevant. Her focus isn’t just on technology; it’s on creating an environment for learning and achievement that meets students’ needs. Dowd’s presentation will discuss how to provide the full range of 21st-century skills and why administrative technology leadership is of vital importance in this process.

Three Intel Semifinalists Had QC Connections

With the help of Queens College professors, three New York area teens placed highly in the most recent Intel Science Talent Search, the prestigious annual competition sponsored by the Intel Corporation that attracted more than 1600 high school seniors from across the country. Belinda Tzen, Hilana Lewkowitz-Shpuntoff, and Anjie Zheng, who worked with members of the college’s psychology and biology departments, were among 300 participants to make it to the semifinal round, earning $1000 apiece, as well as $1000 for their schools.

Belinda Tzen, now in her last semester at Great Neck South High School, worked with Andrea Li (Psychology), who is investigating visual psychophysics: how visual information is processed in the brain. “The general goal of Brenda’s project was to understand the cellular mechanisms involved in the perception of three-dimensional shapes from two-dimensional images,” says Li. “Her study contributes to our understanding of this process by pointing to specific mechanisms sensitive to specific shapes.”

Hilana Lewkowitz-Shpuntoff also put in time in psych department labs. Mentored by Susan Croll (Psychology), the director of the undergraduate neuroscience major, the Great Neck South student analyzed brain sections of mice that had a genetic shortage of receptors for a particular protein—a deficiency previously known to cause behavioral problems. Compared to normal mice, the genetically impaired specimens were shown to have enlarged brains, a finding that may shed light on developmental disorders in children with similarly distorted brains.

Queens’s own Anjie Zheng, soon to graduate from Townsend Harris High School, worked with Mike Barry (Biology). Her paper provides plenty of food for thought: It explores how barbels, the whisker-like organs found around the mouth of Oriental weatherfish, make the bottom-feeder hungry for its next meal.

Anjie Zheng working with Mike Barry

CAMPUS SECURITY UPDATE

During December and January, three purse snatchings and two robberies of purses occurred on campus. These crimes took place in different locations and at different times of the day. Campus Security notes that it is working very closely with the 107th Precinct to address this matter and will continue to do everything possible to maintain the safe environment the Queens College community deserves. In addition, the following measures have been taken:

• A security officer has been added, allowing for more patrols from 10 am to 10 pm.
• Lighting in the area of the Student Union has been improved.
• An emergency blue phone, which connects directly to Security, has been installed near the Student Union.
• The 107th Precinct, as well as the precinct for the Pomonok Houses located directly across from the main college entrance, are focusing extra attention on the college’s perimeter.

Security also notes that there have been several reports recently of people who claim to be students going to classrooms selling various items, including tickets to comedy clubs and cruises. Neither the college nor the Student Life Office condones or allows such sales. Anyone attempting to sell items in classrooms should be immediately reported to Security by calling 74445 or 75912.

For more crime-prevention tips, visit www.qc.cuny.edu/Security

Anjie Zheng working with Mike Barry

Hilana Lewkowitz (right) working with Susan Croll

Belinda Tzen (right) working with Andrea Li

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QC IN THE NEWS

Photographs of Queens County, the exhibition of 40 photos by photographer Paul Anthony Melhado ’86 now appearing at the QC Art Center, garnered attention in the Jan. 26 Queens Chronicle, the Feb. 2 Queens Courier, and the QC Magazine section of the Feb. 9 Queens Chronicle... The Feb. 16 Daily News featured an item about the opening of the Godwin-Ternbach’s new exhibit, The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, Globalization... February, African American History Month, saw the Louis Armstrong House designated a Cultural Organization of the Month by NYC & Co., the city’s official tourism and marketing organization, as was reported in the Jan. 19 editions of the Daily News, Queens Times, and Queens Ledger, the Jan. 20 Queens Tribune, and the Feb. 3 and 17 New York Times. The Daily News noted Michael Heller’s talk about the roots of jazz in New Orleans in its Feb. 16 edition. The February issue of Down Beat magazine featured an article about the Armstrong House’s recent acquisition of the Jack Bradley Collection of Louis Armstrong memorabilia. A photo of an item from the collection appeared in a Jan. 5 Flushing Times article highlighting jazz in Queens... The Queens Courier of Feb. 2 highlighted the college’s Feb. 8 event reuniting participants in Martin Luther King’s summer 1965 effort to register African Americans in southern states to vote... An article about the $100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for QC’s program The Middle East and America: Clash of Civilizations or Meeting of the Minds appeared in the Jan. 5 Amsterdam News and the February edition of Education Update.

MYSTERY PHOTO

Guess Who?

Hint: a faculty member in the Division of Social Sciences, circa 1965.

This is the first of a series of faculty and staff photos taken during the individuals’ college years that we hope to publish in FYI. Those who correctly identify their colleague will receive an additional 10% off campus bookstore purchases, for a total of 20% off, and have their names published in the next issue. Please email your answer to Maria Matteo at Maria.Matteo@qc.cuny.edu

We hope that you will share your college-era image with the Queens College community through the “Mystery Photo” column, along with a line or two about your activities during that time, which we will include with the photo. For each new issue of FYI, the first five people who send us their photos will also receive the 20% bookstore discount.

If you have your photo in electronic form (minimum 300 dpi, tif format ideal), please email it to Dyanne.Maue@qc.cuny.edu If not, please send the photo to Dotty Sodano in Design Services (Kiely 908). All original photos will be scanned and promptly returned.

First Science Writing Conference

Just because you understand quantum physics or advanced calculus doesn’t mean you can write about it in such a way that others can also comprehend it.

In an effort to change that, the first Queens College Science Writing Conference will be held on April 7, from 9 am to 5:15 pm, on the fourth floor of the Student Union. The free conference and lunch will feature a variety of interactive workshops, sessions, roundtable discussions, and seminars designed to give faculty the tools to teach high school and college science and math students how to write more effectively. Both faculty and students are invited.

Judith Swain, a world-renowned expert on science writing who directs such a program at Princeton University, will be the conference’s guest facilitator. She will conduct a morning seminar and afternoon workshop, as well as give individual guidance to students and faculty.

The primary organizers of the conference are Robert Cowen (Mathematics) and Jason Tougaw (English/Coordinator of the Office of College Writing Programs). Other participating QC faculty include Kent Boklan (Computer Science), Susan Croll (Psychology), John Kennedy (Math), Wilma Saffran (Biochemistry), Steve Schwartz (Physics), and Tom Strekas (Chemistry and dean, Division of Math and Natural Sciences). Funding for the conference has been provided by the Division of Math and Natural Sciences and the Provost’s Office.

To register and get further information on the conference, click on www.sciencewritingatqueens.org or contact Robert Cowen at 75805.
WOMEN AND THE IRAQ WAR
LeFrak Hall, 12:15 pm.

CINEMA ON SUNDAYS: Sallah Shabbati, Discussant: QC Professor Jane Gerber.
LeFrak Concert Hall, 3 pm.


LECTURE: “The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” Lawrence H. Schiffman (NYU). LeFrak Hall, 7:30 pm.

CONCERT: QC Chamber Orchestra.
LeFrak Hall, 7:30 pm.

GUEST RECITAL: Jesse Levine, viola, LeFrak Hall, 12:15 pm.

GUEST RECITAL: Ensemble Alternance, Paris, performing Debussy, Pesson, Manoury, and Schaeffer. LeFrak Hall, 7:30 pm.

PRESIDENTIAL ROUNDTABLE: “If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents,” Gregory Rabassa (Hispanic Languages). Corner Bistro, first floor Student Union, 12:15 pm. RSVP qcpres@qc.edu or 75556.


PIANO MAJORS RECITAL, Donald Pirone, coordinator, LeFrak Hall, 12:15 pm.

APRIL EVENTS


NEUROPSYCHOLOGY COLLOQUIUM: “Visual Intelligence,” Qasim Zaidi (College of Optometry, SUNY). Science Bldg, Room E308, 4 pm.


GUEST RECITAL: Ensemble Alternance, Paris, performing Debussy, Pesson, Manoury, and Schaeffer. LeFrak Hall, 7:30 pm.


EXHIBITS

How We Use Land: Photographs of Queens County, by Paul Anthony Melhade. Queens College Art Center. Hours: Mon–Thurs, 9 am–8 pm; Fri, 9 am–5 pm. Through March 30.


I Can’t Give You Anything but Love: Treasures from the Jack Bradley Collection. Louis Armstrong House Museum, 34-56 107th Street, Corona, Queens. $8 adults, $6 students and seniors, members free. Tue–Fri 10 am–5 pm, Sat–Sun 12 noon–5 pm. Information: www.louisarmstronghouse.org

Items should be submitted to Maria Matteo, Kiely 1310, x 75590. Items longer than one paragraph must be submitted via email to mmatteo@qc.edu