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FALL 2011

Acoustics: Music's Empty Reason

By Alex Ness (YMP Faculty '05-07; YMP Staff '03)

"You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist."

— FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Please note: This article is drawn from Alex's doctoral dissertation.

The simplest, most common musical assumptions have profound consequences. Consider, for example, the layout and tuning of the keys on a keyboard. Most of us take for granted a repeating pattern of seven white and five black keys: . We also generally presume that each key should be tuned one-twelfth of an octave higher than the key below it. Patterns like these are, in a sense, the glue holding together the Western musical tradition—a point of agreement between composers as diverse as Bach, Beethoven, and Messiaen, to choose three famous names among thousands. If we choose, we too can spend a lifetime exploring the depths of these conventions. There is no shortage of musical discoveries to make, or material to exhaust.

Of course, we can also spend a lifetime working *against* the assumptions of Western art music and exploring alternatives. Like Harry Partch, we may want to compose music for uniquely-tuned instruments that we design ourselves. Perhaps we don't even care about tuning at all, and are happy to let the musicians decide for themselves, as Louis Andriessen did in *Workers Union*. Or, we may simply be more interested in the conventions of the TR-808 drum machine than those of the piano.

During a period of deep depression, the philosopher John Stuart Mill was "seriously tormented by the thought of the

exhaustibility of musical combinations." Those of us who see the bigger musical picture, however, might be tormented by the opposite thought: that music is utterly inexhaustible; that each musical style, practice, convention, or decision has countless alternatives. This is hard enough to deal with as composers and performers, but it makes things especially difficult for music teachers. Put simply: out of all these possibilities, which music should we teach, and why?

Certainly, one can answer that *no* music is well-suited to an education, at least an education that concerns itself with truth and correct reasoning. Musical preferences are, at root, a matter of personal taste (or bias) rather than of universal truth. Any musical decision is as valid as any other; fundamentally, it doesn't matter whether you make music with a conventional piano, a randomly-tuned homemade marimba, or an 808. From this perspective, "musical logic" is an oxymoron, because music has *no logos*, no essential principle that guarantees its validity. This, however, has not been the opinion of philosophers, music theorists, and pedagogues from the dawn of music theory to the present day. They have argued, to the contrary, that some music can be justified by reason—more specifically, by the mathematical rationality of *acoustics*, the science of sound. For two-and-a-half millennia, music instructors in the West have relied on "the nature of sound" to distinguish the good musical assumptions and decisions from the bad, and the teachable music from the unteachable.

We can trace the link between music education, acoustics, and "good music" to the mythical foundations of Western music theory itself. According to legend, once upon a time in ancient Greece the philosopher Pythagoras was daydreaming about a way to measure sounds. In his reverie, he heard, by chance, a concord of blacksmith's hammers as they beat a piece of iron on an anvil. Seduced by the beauty of

the harmony, he tried to reproduce it on the strings of a lyre. His experiments led him to discover the integer ratios of the perfect consonances: 2:1 for the octave, 3:2 for the fifth, and 4:3 for the fourth. With this discovery, Pythagoras invented a technique of acoustic music notation that remains in use to this day. But this notation interested him less as a tool to transcribe new and unusual sounds, than as an intellectual weapon to justify the consonances that *he* preferred, and to impose them on his students as divine law. Pythagoras devised an entire religion, educational system, and way of life around the integers 1 through 4; the students of his cult learned to worship the consonances as sacred sounds. No student dared challenge Pythagoras' conception of good music, since to do so would mean challenging nature itself.

Acoustics, however, is a double-edged sword for musical education: insofar as it can justify a musical preference and make it educationally viable, it can also justify its alternative. It doesn't take much imagination to invent an anti-Pythagorean religion in which the small numbers are the most *profane*, and the consonances therefore the *least* desirable intervals. In such a religion, we might worship the tritone instead of the octave. This too has its precedent. A different legend relates the fate of Pythagoras' student Hippasus, who showed that the consonances were nothing special because there was nothing special about the integers themselves. Hippasus used his master's famous theorem to construct the irrational ratio $\sqrt{2}:1$ from the hypotenuse of a right isosceles triangle and its edge. Hippasus argued that this ratio is as mathematically, metaphysically, and acoustically valid as any small-integer ratio: it too makes sound, even if that sound is the diabolical discord of an octave split into two equal halves. For the insolence of his reasoning, the gods drowned Hippasus at sea, but not before his argument had spread through the Pythagorean (*cont'd on page 8*)

FALL 2011

FOR THE STUDENTS, ALUMNI, PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF
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What a summer! What a year!

A Message from the Director

By **Seth Brenzel**

If the measure of a program were the number of people it deeply affected, Walden would surely impress for 2011. Between Walden's new Creative Musicians Retreat, our 39th Young Musicians Program, the 7th weeklong Teacher Training Institute intensive and our second collaboration with Oberlin's Masters in Music Teaching program, a record number of participants—more than 110—participated in a Walden program during 2011.

If the value of Walden could be determined by the number of engaging events we presented, the School would merit high marks for its 2011 season. Over the course of the summer, we presented more than 25 public performances, outreach concerts, composers forums and open rehearsals, with music ranging from early English motets to cutting edge new work and live electronic processing.

If the strength of Walden could be measured by the number of partnerships it builds and sustains, 2011 would certainly be one of our strongest. This year we continued forging links with other outstanding arts and education organizations, including Apple Hill, The MacDowell Colony, Monadnock Music, The Juilliard School's MAP program, the PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Duke University, and many others. This was also the 2nd year that Walden had a faculty member in residence in the music department at the Dublin School; Marshall Bessières taught courses in musicianship, composition and computer music.

If we were to calculate Walden's value by the number of friends it has, we would find Walden to be rich, indeed. In order to accomplish everything above, Walden needed the help of many friends. In 2011, 370 of you, along with 25 foundations and corporations, combined to provide more than \$385,000 in support for our annual fund. Did you know that in 2011 more than 50% of our program participants received financial aid? Walden distributed approximately \$100,000 in aid to deserving participants, something we could not have done without our supporters. We also

needed the help of many friends who volunteered hundreds of hours in making Walden happen. From our dedicated board of directors to our volunteer alumni who help guide Walden's alumni association, we simply could not operate without such assistance.

If public recognition were the indicator of Walden's success, our 2011 grades would be off the charts. Walden was awarded the 2011 New Music Educator Award from the American Music Center and earned a spot as one of 50 finalists nationally for the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, a program sponsored by the White House. We also received notice of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts that will support our Young Musicians Program in 2012.

But numbers—of participants, events, partnerships, donors, awards – don't tell the real story of Walden's value. None of these numbers can represent the incredible musicianship training that Walden participants receive. No award can adequately honor Walden's mission to "nurture a life-long commitment to creative expression, all resulting in the development of individuals who are capable of effecting positive change in the world around them." Only Walden's unique programs, led by its outstanding faculty, staff and artists, do this.

So what is the true measure of Walden's impact? Here are just a few examples:

- A student's excitement after the premiere and ensuing discussion of her composition on a Composers Forum.
- A music teacher's refreshed enthusiasm for helping his students, using new solfege games and fun rhythm drills.
- Comments like this one from Olivier Kisielius, a Young Musicians Program participant from 2011—"I didn't believe in heaven before I went to Walden."

I hope you enjoy the wonderful reading in this issue of Recitative, from Alex Ness's questions about the primacy of the over-tone system to the spotlight on departing board member Ellen Bernard; Ellen's humanity and care for everyone at Walden has had a lasting impact, for which I am deeply grateful. Happy reading!



Marguerite Ladd working with members of the Firebird Ensemble



Wesley Levers

Composing: Not a Solo Sport

By Brendon Randall-Myers

How do you compose for musicians you've never met?

At age 17, Ariel Kent has spent five summers at Walden writing for The Walden School Players, professional musicians who workshop and premiere student works during the Young Musicians Program (YMP) Festival Week. But she knew the commission she received this March would be something different. The project—part of a collaboration between Walden, the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, and the Firebird Ensemble, and funded in part by Chamber Music America and the Putnam Foundation—tasked Ariel and fellow YMP students Evan Johnson and Wesley Levers with writing pieces for a chamber ensemble of Apple Hill student performers. Each composer was assigned a performance difficulty level of moderate, difficult or advanced.

For Ariel, not knowing exactly who her performers were going to be lent a unique sense of “fun and added mystery” to the compositional process, and the knowledge that she was writing for less experienced players helped guide the piece’s shape, instrumentation and content. She decided to write for string quartet, and, looking to write a piece that would be more accessible, began with a French folk song her father

used to sing, gradually elaborating on it by reversing the melody, changing and restructuring its rhythmic content. She opted to steer clear of extended performance techniques, and alternated more challenging sections with easy ones.

Walden also commissioned eight faculty members at the Young Musicians Program to write new works for performers they didn’t know: the members of the Firebird Ensemble, seven of whom were in residence at Walden. Part of the Firebird Ensemble’s mission is “to build enthusiasm for new compositions, and to create a unique concert atmosphere,” which made them a great fit for this commissioning project, in which each faculty member was asked to write for a specific subset of instruments.

Marguerite Ladd’s piece, *Number 8, Birmingham Gauge*, is for violin, clarinet, piano, electronics and video playback. Last spring when she started writing the work, she says she had become “obsessed” with the story of the Brooklyn Bridge and so wrote this piece in homage to Washington Roebling, Chief Engineer of the project. The tape portion and video portion of this piece consists of material recorded and captured at the bridge. She says, “It was exciting to walk across the quad one morning delivering packages to student lockers and hear my music drifting out of the windows of the dining hall.” Open rehearsals were held for all of the faculty pieces, giving students an opportunity to watch and

be a part of the critical but often undervalued process of a composer working directly with an ensemble. Marguerite explains, “During my open rehearsal the ensemble and I spent a lot of time getting tempos and timing just right so that everything lined up with the video and tape portions of the piece. I was incredibly grateful for the rehearsal time with the ensemble, as it allowed for a clearer and more refined realization of my piece.”

During rehearsals for Ariel’s piece, she and the ensemble had support and direction from Apple Hill director, Lenny Matczynski, the ensemble’s coach, and from Kate Vincent of Firebird. She very much enjoyed working “peer to peer” with other musicians her age, and stated that “it was good to work with the performers. The whole fact that they interpreted my piece slightly differently than I interpreted it made it good to be able to work with them.” Ladd agrees, saying “This is a valuable lesson and reminder for all composers that collaboration is an important part of the journey of taking a basic idea all the way to a finished product.”



Ariel Kent



Pam Quist, Erika Hight, Pat Plude

Reflections on Certification

By Erika Hight (Teacher Training Institute '09–11)

It was only in my sophomore year of college that I realized singing was what gave me joy and that music was my passion. Unfortunately, I had to wait until my senior year before I finally got to the good stuff—reading notes, singing solfege, speaking rhythms, dissecting the vibrations of a single string, singing the circle of fifths, and reveling in the foundations of sound. When I was told about The Walden School's Teacher Training Institute (TTI) at the end of my sophomore year, I was certain I didn't have the skills to keep up with a one week intensive course, yet I couldn't pass up the opportunity to immerse myself in music for an entire week in a way that I had never found possible at school. TTI opened my eyes to a world where I could actually be an accomplished musician, confident in my knowledge and ability.

I also count myself exceptionally lucky to have been a part of the music department of Santa Clara University. With guidance from Pat Plude and Pam Quist, both on the faculty there, I gained fluency in the individual building blocks of music, fundamental parts that I could use to create my own music with an understanding of form and function. When I first attended TTI, I was shocked to find out that this kind of education was unusual, since I had never known any musical training that did *not* involve a step-by-step discovery-based process with constant opportunity for improvisation. If music teachers could give students the knowledge they need along with the inspiration and sense of wonder exuded by my professors at Santa Clara and TTI, the world would soon be flooded with passionate musicians.

My second session at TTI motivated me to think of music not just as my passion, but a passion born to be shared. That week I asked Pam about the Certification process, and went on to wrestle with my Practicum for the next ten months. Having graduated from Santa Clara, I spent the next year as a quasi-student, auditing a class every quarter, attending choir rehearsals, and meeting with my mentor every two weeks to talk about my Practicum progress.

The first three chapters of the Musician-ship Manual for Teachers was my inspiration; I decided to translate the discovery concepts and drills I found there to ones that were vocally based. By creating a step-by-step discovery process aimed at teaching a group of beginning singers the foundations of music theory and vocal technique, I tried to respectfully replace our old friend the piano with voice. I delved into the physics of sound and the physicality of singing, and I have not looked back.

The rewards I have earned through the research, writing, practice, and experimentation involved in this Practicum are priceless to me. Although during the process I occasionally felt lost in anguished wandering, Pam never failed to make me feel that my work was meaningful, and that everything would get done in its time. Thank you, Pam—you were right.

I hope that this Practicum will eventually turn into a Walden School-inspired guide for teachers of singing classes or singers in general, and I would like nothing more than to teach a class myself using the experiments and drills I have created. Soon I will be a music teacher and the lessons I create will be infused with the Walden principles already ensconced in my Practicum.

I have come to understand how incredible and unique The Walden School really is; how it brings together people from all over the country (the world, even!) who are genuinely excited about music. These people have such a strong desire to share their love of music that they will travel far from their homes with the goal of learning new and exciting ways of engaging their peers and students.

The gathering of musical hearts and minds at Walden will continue to be a source of hope and inspiration to me and my work. It takes a certain combination of curiosity and humility to be a great teacher, and the best are those who know there is always more to learn. Of course, we all know that these are exactly the kinds of folks that end up talking chord progressions and singing sea shanties all hours of the day at The Walden School. If I could accomplish in an entire lifetime of teaching what The Walden School does in one week, I'll have done my job, and done it well.



Teacher Training Institute



Acoustics: (cont'd from page 1) cult, splitting it in two as well: on one side, the *acusmatici*, who would continue adhering to the values of Pythagoras himself; on the other, the *mathematici*, who, following Hippasus' lead, would spurn their master's religion, devise their own mathematics and discover their own sounds.

Pythagoras was not wrong to love the sound of the octave. He was not even wrong to teach the octave; what better way to teach music than by sharing the sounds that you love? His error was, rather, to call on acoustics to *explain how music should work*, and to force this explanation on his students. Acoustics explains nothing about music; although it can describe sound relationships, it cannot prove which of these relationships are musical and which are not. No logic can bridge the gap between acoustic information and musical decision-making. It is the responsibility of every musician, young or old, to make their own sense of that gap. They must each decide which acoustic tools to use for their music—if any at all—and how to use them. No music teacher can do this work for them.

Nor can any logic bridge the gap between the music of the world and the music of the classroom. It is the music teacher's responsibility to decide what to teach; but this, again, must be their own decision. Whether they choose to teach the conventional musical patterns or the exceptional ones is less important than understanding that their choice is ultimately their own, and not the necessary consequence of an inviolable musical nature. As for the right curriculum, the correct curriculum, and the only curriculum, it does not exist.

Alex Ness is a doctoral student in the music department of New York University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. As a historian of music theory, he focuses on 18th-century harmonic treatises, the institutionalization of music pedagogy, and heterodox musical logic. He is also an active composer, having written extensively for new music groups in New York. His website is <http://nesssoftware.com/home/asn>.

ALUMNI:

What do you think about Alex's conclusions? Share your reactions to this article on the Community Blog at www.handoverhand.org, the alumni community site. If you're not a member, go ahead and register. Some responses may be selected for publication in future newsletter issues.

Community News and Goods

The Walden School welcomes news and information from members of the Junior Conservatory Camp and Walden School communities to include in our print and online newsletters. News may be sent via mail or email. We will publish your contact information only if you specifically request that we do so. Please send info to alumni@waldenschool.org or The Walden School, 31A 29th St., San Francisco, CA 94110. We reserve the right to edit submissions and regret we cannot publish all information provided. For upcoming event listings, go to www.handoverhand.org.

Violinist **Nigel Armstrong** (YMP '00) was a finalist in the Tchaikovsky Competition last year.

Whit Bernard (YMP '00-02, TTI '06, Faculty '09) has begun his first year as an MBA candidate in social enterprise and international business at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University.

After 15 years in Hungary, **Tamar Bloch** (JCC '69-71, YMP '72, TTI '08, Faculty '75, '77, '87-92, '94-99, '01) is living in New Jersey, and taking care of her mother. She just got a job as accompanist for the dance and choral programs at the Newark Arts High School in New Jersey. She's also doing translations (German and Hungarian) and just recorded her first voice-over demo CD. She'd love to hear from you at solfatamar@yahoo.com.

The September 2011 edition of JazzInside Magazine featured an interview with **George Brandon** (CMR '11), in which he discusses his early musical environment, the process of recording his recently released debut CD, *Toward the Hill of Joy*, and advice for musicians and bandleaders for coping with hassles and pressures! Learn more at www.reverbnation.com/georgebrandon.

Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy (JCC '61-65) was present for a screening of her documentary film "FROM AFRICA TO INDIA: Sidi Music in the Indian Ocean Diaspora" at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco in early September. Walden administration members **Esther Landau** (TTI '09, Administration '05-11) and **Jefferson Packer** (TTI '10-11, Administration '10-11) attended both this fascinating film and the ensuing discussion. Amy hopes to attend the reunion in 2012.



Alan Chan

Alan Chan (TTI '04, '06, Faculty '10-'11) is the winner of this year's ArtEZ Jazz Composition Contest (International Jazz Festival Enschede, Netherlands) with his composition *To Be Continued* for jazz big band. He is also the winner of the joint Los Angeles County Arts/St. Matthew's Music Guild Commission Award in October 2010 and his commissioned work, a concerto for erhu entitled *Rock-Paper-Scissors* was premiered in June, 2011 by Wang Hong and St. Matthew's Chamber Orchestra in Pacific Palisades, California. In the same month, *Bitter Melon* for erhu and pipa received its Asia Premiere by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. Alan is currently the Artistic Director of Gateway Performance Series in LA. Read more at www.alanchanmusic.com.

Pianist **Jeff Cohen** (JCC '69-71; YMP '72; YMP faculty '74-75; '78-79; '88; Advisory Council '02 to present) joined legendary bel canto soprano June Anderson in LIE-DER ALIVE!, a groundbreaking program in the teaching of German Lieder held at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in mid-October. The program included a Gala Benefit Concert and a public masterclass.

Shawn Crouch (YMP '93-94, '96; TTI '08; YMP faculty '99-00, '02, '05-07) was present in Phoenix for the premiere of *A Marshland Elegy* for double choir by the Grammy Award-winning choral ensemble, The Phoenix Chorale. On December 2-4, his *Garden of Paradise* will be performed by Volti in San Francisco. More information at www.voltisf.org.

In July, **Renée Favand-See** (YMP '85, '87-90, TTI '08, Faculty '93-97, '99, '06-07, '09) premiered a new work by Bonnie Miksch, *Like water, like sound, like breath*, in addition to performing two songs of her own, *Driving a highway in Eastern Washington* and *Morning Mist*. The concert took place at Old Church in Portland. She also received a commission from the Five Boroughs Music Festival in New York and attended the premiere in early October in Brooklyn. Read more at www.reneefavand.com.

Walden board member **Corty Fengler** (TTI '11, Board '09-11) met up with **Sarah**

Ye (YMP '01-05) and her family in July, 2010, while in Beijing.

Stephen Flynn (YMP '01-04) started in July 2011 as the Emerging Technologies Librarian at the College of Wooster, and had his innovative cover letter website featured in *Library Journal*.

The music of **Stacy Garrop** (YMP '87-88, Faculty '96) has seen lots of action lately, with performances of *Sonnets of Desire*, *Longing*, and *Whimsy* by The Grant Park Chorus and *SEVEN* by the Lincoln Trio. Stacy also made an appearance at the Skaneateles Festival. *SEVEN* was featured on a CD by the Lincoln Trio called *Notable Women*, which includes the music of former festival week moderators **Jennifer Higdon** (Visiting Artist '99, Advisory Council '02-06, '10-11) and **Joan Tower** (Visiting Artist '09). Read more at: www.garrop.com.

Tonya Ingersol (YMP '78-80, 83, Board of Directors '98-01) had an exhibit of her paintings at the June Kelly Gallery in New York in September.

In June, NPR's *All Things Considered* ran a report on the week that music contributor Lara Pellegrinelli shadowed **International Contemporary Ensemble** (Guest Artists '11) flutist and executive director **Claire Chase** ('05-09). The ensemble performed with toy pianist Phyllis Chen at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in November. Read more at www.iceorg.org.

Alex Kazenoff (YMP'05) graduated this summer from Berklee College of Music with a degree in Electronic Production & Design, and was offered a job as Assistant Engineer at Creative Group, an industry company in the Times Square area of Manhattan.

Ned McGowan (Visiting Artist '01-04, '10) reports that his ensemble **Hexnut** (Visiting Artists '10) has a new project, *WRENCH*, incorporating the photographs of Edward Burtynsky. The performance consists of new compositions performed in a tightly versed integration of sound and projected image, and its premiere last May had a big turnout and was a big success. Hexnut's website has a trailer from the performance, along with photos, reviews, articles, videos, and info about upcoming concerts. Read more at www.nedmcgowan.com and www.hexnut.nl.

Loretta Notareschi (YMP '95, TTI '08, Faculty '98-11) was awarded 2nd place in the IronWorks Percussion Duo competi-

tion for her piece *This Is It*; the work was performed in May 2011 in Long Beach, California. She was also thrilled to write two cadenzas for Mozart's Flute Concerto in D, performed by **Esther Landau** (TTI '09, Administration '05-11) in November 2010. Read more at: www.lorettanotareschi.com.

Anna Orias (TTI '04-05) has opened Musically Minded Academy in Oakland, California, with 11 teachers and more than 100 students. **Nick Benavides** (TTI '09-10, CMR '11) is teaching Creative Musicianship for the first time at the school, a course that is Walden-inspired! Learn more at: www.musicallyminded.com.

Nat Osborn (YMP '00-03) is keeping predictably busy with his bands Hawthorne and The Diamond Allegory, with several gigs early in the summer in the NYC area, and the rest of it spent finishing a record and touring Europe. Read more at www.natosborn.com.

We recently ran across a great 2008 article by **Sam Pluta** (Staff '01-02, Faculty '02-08, '10-11) about how to make successful live electronic music. In case you missed it the first time around, read the article at www.newmusicbox.org/articles/Maximize-Information-Flow-How-to-Make-Successful-Live-Electronic-Music.

The **PRISM Saxophone Quartet** (Guest Artist '05) made its Bang on a Can debut in June, at New York City's World Financial Center in the Winter Garden.

In addition to touring the East Coast this fall, **Alicia Rabins** (YMP '88-93) band Girls in Trouble will be in residence at the Contemporary Jewish Museum of San Francisco on November 17, 18 and 20.

Vivian Adelberg Rudow (JCC '50-51) performed live dance to her piece *John's Song*, at the Baltimore Museum of Art in July 2011. For the entire month of August, her *No Rest Too!* and *The Bare Smooth Stone of Your Love* were featured every two hours on NACUSA Web Radio.

For a great video of **Kelly Smit** (YMP '93-95) doing Irish Sean-nós dance with her husband Dan Isaacson and his band Simple System, go to www.vimeo.com/14769788.

Bob Weaver (JCC '56-63; CMR '11) writes: "I just found out that an anthem that my friend Bill Pasch and I submitted to St. James Music Press was published. Anyone can see the music and listen to the anthem for free by getting a guest membership here: www.sjmp.com."

Births and Weddings

Seth Brenzel (YMP '85-90; TTI '08; staff administration '94-11) and **Malcolm Gaines** (CMR '11; administration '99-11) happily report the August birth of their daughter, Cora Elizabeth Brenzel Gaines.



Cora Elizabeth Brenzel Gaines

Mark A. Lackey (TTI '04-05) and his wife Jennifer welcomed their new daughter Tabitha to the world in February 2011.



Tabitha Lackey

Danielle Schindler (YMP '88-93) married Jason Cheung on August 27, 2011 at IslandWood, an environmental school on Bainbridge Island, Washington. **Seth Brenzel** (YMP '85-90, TTI '08, Staff/Administration '94-11), **Malcolm Gaines** (CMR '11, Administration '99-11), **Loretta Notareschi** (YMP '95, TTI '08, Faculty '98-11), **David Drucker** (YMP '77-82, CMR'11, Faculty '84-88, Board of Directors '98-00), and **Dede Ondishko** (YMP '74-77; Faculty/Staff '79-85, '88; Board '99-02) were in attendance. The couple spent their honeymoon in Hong Kong and India.



Jason Cheung and Danielle Schindler

From Broom Guitar to the Cabrillo Festival

Alumnus Spotlight: D. J. Sparr (Young Musicians Program '91; YMP faculty '09-10)

Guitarist and composer D. J. Sparr only attended The Walden School for one summer, but it made quite an impression. He went on to study composition at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan, and has returned as a faculty member for the Young Musicians Program twice. D. J. is currently the composer-in-residence for the Richmond Symphony's Education and Community Engagement Department. A native of Baltimore, Maryland, he lives in Richmond, Virginia, with his wife Kimberly and their two dogs, Lloyd and Nanette. He graciously answered some questions for us this fall.



D. J. Sparr

Will you tell us about one of your earliest musical memories?

My earliest musical memories involve pretending to play the guitar while using a broom and playing around on my great grandmother's piano at a very young age, receiving a ukulele for my birthday when I was four years old, and beginning guitar lessons when I turned five.

Was guitar your first instrument?

Sort of... but before I took guitar lessons, I took piano lessons with Shoko Gesell at Christy's Music in Westminster, Maryland—which is now Coffee Music where she still teaches! Unfortunately, I did not continue—but if I could talk to my 6 year old self, I would explain to him that having some piano skills would be quite handy!

What prompted your interest in the guitar?

My dad listened to a lot of country music, so that must have been an influence. The thing that sticks in my mind most was watching Roy Clark and Buck Owens on Hee Haw.

Did you study classical and electric guitar simultaneously?

I studied pick-style guitar from first to eighth grade. In eighth grade I took classical guitar lessons as well as pick-style lessons. At the Baltimore School for the Arts,

we did classical guitar in the guitar ensemble, but my private lessons were pick-style and Jazz guitar.

How did you get started composing?

Playing the guitar, it is natural to write songs, and I did that from the very beginning. I remember writing a song about a haunted house when I was in first grade. This all translated into doing instrumental compositions using a four-track recorder when I was in high school. The readers of this interview will be happy to hear that the first time I wrote music for other instruments was when I went to Walden in the summer of 1991!

How did you learn about Walden?

My guitar teacher Steve Yankee, at the Baltimore School for the Arts, told me about a place his brother taught in the summers. I went to meet his brother, John Yankee, who told me what Walden was all about. My parents signed me up...and off I went on a bus to Walden which boarded right outside of the Peabody Conservatory.

You attended the Young Musicians Program in 1991—describe your first impressions and if they changed.

Honestly, I don't remember much about the first few days. The fondest memories I have are from working in the old library...espe-

cially doing score work there. In the stacks I found a poem called Hippopotamothalamium, (about two Hippopotami that fell in love...) which I wrote for children's chorus and became my first performed work outside of Walden. A memory I'll never forget from sitting at the wooden tables there was Gabe Jodorkovsky providing me with a title for my round, "Commercial Ventures of Conformist Upper-class Aristocrats."

Was there a particular teacher or teachers who had a big impact on you at Walden?

Certainly John Yankee for private lessons. In the classroom, Stephen Coxe's contemporary music class was very influential. In my lessons with John Yankee, I would try and mimic some of those ideas and concepts that Steve talked about and ended up writing a lot of music that summer. In looking back, that class with Steve was one of the best classes I ever had anywhere... and the interaction between that class and using the concepts in the private lessons was very "Walden." So, the faculty that summer must have been doing a great job!

You taught at YMP in 2009 and 2010 – did your impression of Walden change being a teacher rather than a student?

For sure! As a teacher, I saw how much effort goes into creating a great experience for the students behind the scenes. I've

never seen anything like it anywhere else I have ever taught. And of course, to try and give back a little to a place that was very influential feels good.

What, in your opinion, is the “secret sauce” of the Walden approach to teaching/learning musicianship?

It has to be the learning musical materials through the process of being creative. I suppose you could read a book about how to ride a bicycle and analyze the art of riding bicycles, but that would be very different than getting up on a bike and learning to ride... At some point, you've gotta just get on it and go. But, a good teacher will have you going before you know you are doing it on your own. Much of the music written at Walden is very advanced, and the students think they are just writing a piece using something simple!

What have been some recent experiences, both as a performer and composer, that have meant a lot to you?

Most recently, being a part of the Cabrillo Festival of New Music (summer 2011) was amazing. I played my piece “Vim-Hocket, Calm” for electric guitar and violin on a chamber recital as well as the Michael Daugherty Electric Guitar Concerto with the orchestra and Marin Alsop conducting. The Cabrillo Festival is like The Walden School for adults! And, it is in Santa Cruz—can't go wrong with that!

How do you think being a composer affects you as a performer and vice versa?

Knowing what it takes to learn a piece and perform it at a high level helps me know not to torture performers with needless mumbo-jumbo and over-complication as a composer. There are ways to achieve what you want so that the performer can bring their own skills to the performance, and that's when superb music making happens.

What is the most important thing young musicians need to know/learn these days?

My mom always says, “Surround yourself with excellence, and you will be excellent.” I might interpret that as, “Surround yourself with people who do everything above-the-bar, make sure you are good company for them, be happy and interested in their success as well as yours. Add to that: Find yourself working at your goals when others are being lazy.” That's the key to life.

Or, just watch that *Yoda-tells-Luke* moment from Star Wars...same thing.

Appreciating Ellen Bernard

Board Member 2002 – 2011

By Marguerite Ladd

“Really you should ask my mom about why she joined the board...I always assumed it was because she was stalking me,” Whit Bernard affectionately joked when asked about Ellen Bernard's decision to join The Walden School's Board of Directors.

Believe it or not, The Walden School has not always been a “Bernard family addiction.” According to Whit, they heard about it from a friend who was a Young Musicians Program alumnus and also from the choir director at St. Paul's School in Baltimore. They decided to send Whit, “thinking that it would be a good place to learn music theory and get better at piano.” This was the beginning of Ellen Bernard's journey with Walden, becoming, as Leo Wanenchak calls her, the “Walden Music Hero” we know today.



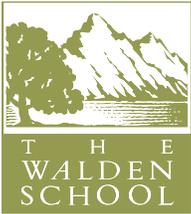
Ellen Bernard

Ellen Bernard joined The Walden School board in 2002, the same year that her younger son, Meade Bernard, had his first summer at Walden. Soon after settling in, Ellen chaired the Development Committee and then served as Board Chair from 2006-2009. Ellen's contributions to The Walden School shaped and continue to shape the organization's future. “Her work on the board stands as one of the pillars of Walden's successful growth over the past decade,” says Molly Pindell, fellow board member. “Walden has blossomed in such positive ways and Ellen's guidance of the board was certainly one of the major forces that shaped the path of this growth.” In 2002, when Ellen joined the Board, Walden ran one program and raised \$118,000. Under Ellen's careful guidance and support, the School has tripled both its number of successful programs and its fundraising, and has begun garnering national recognition and awards. And throughout this period, she has quietly hosted numerous board members and administration in both Baltimore and New Hampshire, and helped establish partnerships to assist in recruitment through several schools in Baltimore.

“She knew how and when to motivate and through this gift of hers, she really inspired people to not only work harder but to enjoy it” said fellow board member Robin Kenney. Walden alumnus and Board Vice Chair Andrew Jacobs adds, “Ellen has been an inspiring board member and she has left big shoes to fill. As a result of Ellen's leadership, the board today has a strong sense of purpose, functions harmoniously and efficiently, and is steeped in the culture of Walden.”

In spite of this undeniable legacy she leaves, Ellen is never one to toot her own horn. As Walden alumna and former Board Chair Laura Mehiel said, “Ellen would probably be the first to downplay the positive impact she has had on Walden, and yet, that would demonstrate even more her mindset of collaboration and community.” Robin Kenney adds, “Ellen's own commitment to Walden was worn so effortlessly, at least that's how it seemed, but it caught everybody's attention. As board member, then as chair, as mother to students Meade and Whit...the list goes on. She is the complete Walden person.” Ellen, you have left your indelible mark on Walden. Thank you for everything!

“She knew how and when to motivate and through this gift of hers, she really inspired people to not only work harder but to enjoy it.”



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Creative Musicians Retreat Makes Its Debut

Celebrating the Inaugural Season of
Walden's Newest Program

By Caroline Mallonée, Director, Creative Musicians Retreat (YMP '87-92; TTI '07; YMP staff '96; YMP faculty '98-00, '02-09; administration '06-11)

From June 11–19, participants from 10 states across the country, Washington D.C., Canada, Japan, Belarus, and Portugal came together on the campus of Smith College for the first ever Creative Musicians Retreat (CMR). For over a week, the 24 musicians immersed themselves in the creative process, and the results were astounding—35 new works were given their world premieres at two Composers Forums, moderated by Composer-In-Residence, Russell Pinkston.

Participants praised the members of the International Contemporary Ensemble, who presented a concert of works by both living and historical composers as a kick-off to the week's events. Classes and workshops in computer music, contemporary music, improvisation, sound painting, chorus and musicianship were offered by the faculty (Marshall Bessières, Caroline Mallonée, Loretta Notareschi, Sam Pluta and Leo Wanenchak). One participant said he had been waiting half his life for the experience CMR provided. It was an inspirational festival, and a wonderful new way for adult musicians to experience Walden!

The Walden School plans to offer the Creative Musicians Retreat again in June 2012. Write to us at retreat@waldenschool.org for more details.

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FOR THE STUDENTS, ALUMNI, PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE WALDEN SCHOOL
AND JUNIOR CONSERVATORY CAMP

FALL 2011