

## or How Music Robots and Custom Circuits Will Change Music in the 21st Century

By Sam Pluta

(WS summer staff '01–02; faculty '03–08)

Anyone who grew up after 1950 will most likely approach the following article with an understandable level of doubt. From the maid on *The Jetsons* to C3PO in *Star Wars*; from Vicki in *Small Wonder* to Data in *Star Trek*, Hollywood has continually barraged us with convincing humanoid robot characters, who take on human roles, have human thoughts, and perform human tasks. Yet, in our daily lives, not only have these idealistic visions of a robot future failed to become reality, but also, even the simplest of robots has been left out of our increasingly digital culture. However, as electronic musicians are becoming more and more interested in robotic instruments and hand-built electronic control devices, all signs point to a more promising future of robot music.

This future is not without its particular idiosyncratic hurdles, however. Simply put, one problem of live electronic music is an issue of information flow. Traditional methods of getting data from a performer to a computer do not include enough information exchange between the carbon-based life form and the silicon-based microchip. The easiest method of getting data from a performer to a computer is with a MIDI keyboard. The problem with this method is very clear when we think about a cellist, say Jane O'Hara, playing the cello. Through her simple interaction with the cello — left hand holding the note, right hand moving the bow across the string — Jane is able to send a ton of data into the instrument. The MIDI keyboard, on the other hand, does not achieve this. By pressing a key, the performer basically has a switch; he can turn the instrument on and off by striking and releasing the key, and by hitting the key at different velocities, tell the machine how loud to play. The information is binary and instantaneous, not changing over time like the cello bow on the string. So, unlike a real cellist's playing, the results are a dull sound and a boring performance.

The second problem in live electronic performance is sound. Say you want to make an interesting drum track to play

along with your composition or improvisation. The traditional approach would be to use a drum machine or some kind of sampler. When a real drummer hits a snare, no matter how hard he tries to be consistent, the sound of each snare strike will be minutely different. With the sampled drum, the same sample is used each time and the listener will become bored with it.

The last issue is an issue of visuals. Much live electronic laptop performance leaves the viewer wondering if the guy on stage is creating music or simply checking his email.

The three problems that are outlined above can be solved, at least partly, by recent innovations in computer music.

Composers and engineers are finding new ways to interact with computers so that more information can pass between the hands of the performer and the electronic circuitry, and finding new ways of using robots to make sounds so that more information is included in the sonic signal.

A perfect example of such an advancement in interaction is the Wii controller, designed for use in Nintendo's most recent gaming system. At some point, Nintendo decided that they could not compete graphically with the other gaming systems on the market, so instead, they decided to make the controller the focus of their new gaming system. The Wii controller uses an accelerometer to measure the movements of a gamer, thus passing more information from the player to the game than a traditional controller, making a player's interaction with the game more rewarding. Because of this, many people have begun to use the Wii as a musical controller.

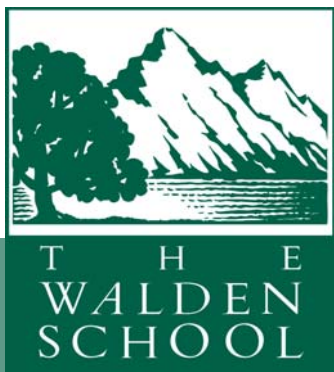
Another example is Jeff Snyder's MEAPBook, which presents the performer with forty-two buttons. Each button is a continuous controller, meaning if more of your finger is pressing the button, a higher number is passed to the computer; if less of your finger is touching the button, a lower number is passed to the computer. The beauty of the

*continued on page 11*



# Recitative

Fall 2008



Stories from New York:  
 Things You Don't Admit ..... page 2  
 Walden... in Iowa? ..... page 3  
 JCC Corner..... page 3  
 Walden Partners  
 with PRISM and ICE .....page 4  
 Learning Community ..... page 5  
 Contributors to  
 The Walden School..... pages 6 – 7  
 News and Goods..... pages 8 – 10  
 The Play Is the Thing ..... page 11  
 Alumni Spotlight:  
 James Athey..... page 12



# Stories from New York: Things You Don't Admit

By Caroline Mallonée (WS '87-92; TTI '07; summer staff '96; faculty '98-00; '02-08)

Walden is a fun place. It is a place where people have fun, where people are funny, where the fun is palpable. Are announcements fun? They are at Walden! Is the Sunday reminder that crews change fun? It is at Walden! Is meeting a deadline fun? Always, at Walden!

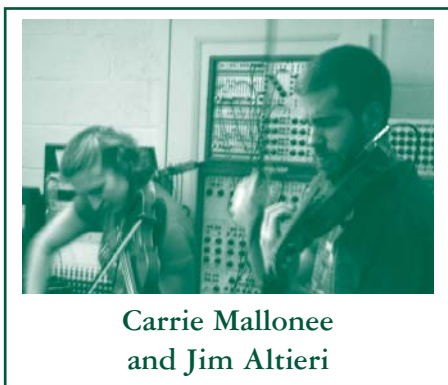
I've recently moved to New York City. As with all transitions, there is much uncertainty (navigating a new city, settling into a new apartment), but I have good friends here, including a host of Walden friends, and for that I am thankful. I'm in two ensembles with Walden faculty members, visiting artists, TTI alumni and former Walden students.

A choir of Waldenites has met occasionally since 2006 on Monday evenings in the

“Can the choir sightread Monteverdi for fun? Yes, indeed. Do we? Of course!”

basement of Hunter College High School on the Upper East Side, where Walden alumnus and faculty member Shawn Crouch teaches. Once we met at Walden alumna and guest artist Meighan Stoops's apartment in midtown and had chili. It's informal and flexible — if someone has a cold or there's a concert to go to, we forgo rehearsal that week.

When the group formed, each member selected a piece: a favorite from Walden (*To My Old Brown Earth*) or elsewhere (Walden alumna and faculty member Renée Favand picked Poulenc's *O Magnum Mysterium*); a gem we had always wanted to sing (I picked Josquin's *Ave Maria*); an original composition (Walden alumnus and faculty member Jim Altieri brought his piece, *Of All Things Most Yielding*). We also sang through a student Festival piece at the



Carrie Mallonée  
and Jim Altieri

end of rehearsal once, someone having found it in a choir folder. After rehearsals, we make merry. We'd walk to the subway together, a lucky member hails a cab, and we bid adieu until the next rehearsal.

Our group is called Choir in the Hole. That's right — you'd yell it: *CHOIR IN THE HOLE!* It's a warning. It's not on my résumé.

I am also in an experimental microtonal improvising band. We're making some of the most exciting and interesting music I've heard. Two violins (Jim Altieri and I), two computers (Walden faculty members Sam Pluta and Alexander Ness) and bass clarinet (Meighan Stoops) make for an exciting and original sound. We've had a few shows in New York; we've got a MySpace page. I once met a colleague of Sam's and when I revealed I was in the band, her eyes widened with admiration. We make really fascinating music.

We all met at Walden, and we are indebted to the place for what it fosters: a high level of musicianship, a comfort with improvisation, a sense of whimsy. We're called Glissando bin Laden and His Musichideen.



Sam Pluta

That's right. We were a little worried for a while that the FBI would read our emails about band practice, but they've left us alone so far. Glissando bin Laden is Alexander Ness. We all have band names: Jim Altieri is P. Rust, I'm Leffe Blonde and Sam is Mr. Glitch. Meighan Stoops just joined the band, and Walden faculty member Aurora Nealand played a show with Glissando last fall, but neither of them has a band name yet (as far as I know). Glissando bin Laden and His Musichideen is not on my résumé either.

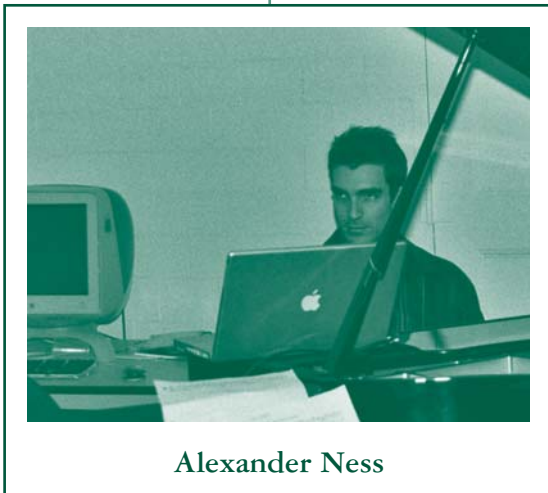
Having relocated to this great city, I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of such groups. Can the choir sightread Monteverdi for fun? Yes, indeed. Do we? Of course! Can the band play Scandinavian fiddle tunes in just intonation, our sound echoed and reverberated, captured and manipulated in real time on Macintosh computers? Yes, we can, and of course we do.

There are details I don't want to admit about my life in New York, like the fact that the nearest landmark to my first apartment in Brooklyn was a White Castle.

There are things about my New York lifestyle I don't admit to everyone.

But... Am I proud to be a part of a group of Waldenites living in New York City? Yes, I am! I am in a band called Glissando bin Laden and his Musichideen! I am a member of Choir in

the Hole! Come hear us! It's so much fun!



Alexander Ness

## Recitative

Fall 2008

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

Esther Landau  
Editor

Anne Deane Berman  
Founding Editor

Stillwell Design  
Design and Layout

Marshall Bessières

Brad Evans

Esther Landau

Sam Pluta

Jeff Snyder

Meighan Stoops

Photography

Administration

Seth Brenzel

Executive Director

Brad Evans

Office Manager

Marguerite Ladd

& Molly Pindell

Directors of Operations

Esther Landau

Director of Development

Tom Lopez

Director,

Computer Music Program

Caroline Mallonée,

Assistant Academic Dean

and Director,

Composers Forums

Patricia Plude

Director,

Teacher Training Institute

Pamela Layman Quist

Assistant Director,

Teacher Training Institute

Leo Wanenchak

Academic Dean & Director,

Choral Program

Board of Directors

Ellen Bernard, Chair

John O'Meara, Vice Chair

Andrew Jacobs, Secretary

Leslie Stephens, Treasurer

David Callan

Todd Cleary

Michael Cornog

Robin Kenney

Laura Mehiel

Rita Mitra

Molly Pindell

Susan Rosen

Leo Wanenchak

Emeriti Directors

Lynn Taylor Hebden

Charlton MacVeagh, Jr.

Pamela Layman Quist

Advisory Council

Samuel Adler

Martin Bresnick

Nansi Carroll

Joel Chadabe

Chen Yi

Jeffrey Cohen

George Crumb

Leon Fleisher

Mona Golabek

Lynn Taylor Hebden

Jennifer Higdon

Paul Lansky

Eugene O'Brien

Elmar Oliveira

Pauline Oliveros

Curtis Roads

Christopher Rouse

Allan Schindler

Joseph Schwantner

John Weaver

The Walden School

31A 29th Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

415.648.4710 info@waldenschool.org

www.waldenschool.org

# Walden... in Iowa?

By Brooke Joyce (YMP faculty '00–04;  
TTI faculty '06–08)

Luther College is a small liberal arts school with a big music department in northeast Iowa. When I began teaching here in 2005, I immediately recognized a wonderful opportunity to share my Walden musicianship training with my students and colleagues. We began doing hand over hand drills, improvisation activities and even an occasional “frolic,” much to the delight (mostly) of these staid, polite Midwesterners. As I began transitioning into my new role as a Teacher Training Institute faculty member, I began to talk more specifically to my colleagues about the possibility of attending TTI. In the summer of 2007, three fellow Luther faculty members and one former student attended TTI. A year later, they're still talking about it!



When you first meet Kathy Reed-Maxfield, you can immediately imagine her as a life-long Waldenite; she is one of those musicians who does it all — performing, teaching, improvising — and she does it all with creativity and humor. For her, Walden helped confirm some of her own ideas about music: at Walden, she appreciated “the constant reminder and demonstration of the spirit of fun and adventure and challenge in the best

“I feel like I have broken out of a pedagogical rut with the help of TTI.”

— Amy Engelsdorfer (TTI '07)

way that is the essence of music making.” She also picked up on the “fun ways to drill stuff, often while improvising at the same time; my classes have especially had fun playing ‘telephone.’”

Marie Palmquist is another of those people who, had they known about Walden as a child, would have come to Walden every summer. For Marie, TTI was about the community: “I learned that tight-knit artistic communities can flourish in many settings, and the most exciting thing was to be in such a supportive and collaborative place with other educators and musicians and composers.” As a senior about to begin her student teaching semester, she has “already incorporated much of what I learned at TTI into my hands-on education classes and practicums. I was introduced to a method of discovery learning that values student-teacher dialogue, letting students become motivated by what they can discover. Introducing third graders to some essentials of sound and music with Bach, John Cage, and Paul Koonce was really exciting.” (*Note to you computer music folks out there — yes, she did play Paul Koonce’s music to a class of third graders!*)

Luther faculty member Amy Engelsdorfer, who teaches theory and ear-training and has a background in music education and flute

performance as well as theory, “was reminded of the virtually unlimited number of creative ways in which to teach theory and musicianship to students. We theorists in particular get entrenched in teaching patterns very easily, and the overall TTI experience helped remind me of that variety.” When asked what she learned at TTI that she’s been able to incorporate into her own teaching, she says, “I feel like I have broken out of a pedagogical rut with the help of TTI. I now feel like I have much more confidence in terms of asking students to create and improvise, and I have tried this year to make composition/improvisation more a part of my daily teaching routine.”

But TTI is more than a laboratory for theory teachers. To remind us that not every TTI participant is a theory teacher in “real life,” and that Walden’s musicianship curriculum extends to all kinds of creative endeavors,

consider what Heather Armstrong, Luther’s oboe professor (who happens to teach theory and play piano on the side), says about TTI: “What I appreciated the most about Walden was the freedom to learn, express, experience and create in a supportive community of other creative individuals. It was something I needed for myself — to remind myself that it’s okay to make mistakes, and that sometimes the world opens up when you try new things. Because of my personal experience, it’s also something that has become important to me in my teaching, both in the classroom and in the studio — trying to create an atmosphere and a space for students to explore and learn freely and openly. And I try to show them that I’m still learning and growing (and making mistakes) too!”

## JCC Corner:

### A Fateful Encounter with Mrs. C

Junior Conservatory Camp visitor Patricia Melcher Bissell’s article “Improvising Attitudes” was recently published in *American Music Teacher*, a publication of the Music Teachers National Association. Even though Bissell was not a camper — she attended camp just briefly one summer — she found herself transformed by working with Grace Newsom Cushman. As you will clearly see, she has framed her teaching around the principles she learned that summer, and continues developing the ideas in her own work. Her substantive article can be read in its entirety in the magazine, or at [www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-172292052.html](http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-172292052.html). Here are some highlights:



#### The opening

I always enjoyed improvising on the piano as I was growing up in a small town near a farming community in western New York State. However, when I took piano lessons, this creativity was discouraged. According to my teachers, there was only one right way to play the piano: from the written notes. “Good” music meant only notated music... Throughout my musical studies and professional career, I have constantly heard music teachers express negative attitudes towards improvisation and improvised music, such as jazz.

#### Why improvise?

The word improvise is defined as “to invent, compose or recite without preparation... to make or do something using whatever you have or without arranging it or planning it in advance.” One could say to improvise means to “make it up as you go along.” We improvise when we speak. For several years

after we’re born, we speak before being able to read. Why not teach students to “speak” music through musical improvisation, including playing songs “by ear,” before learning to read notes? Authors William Anderson and Joy E. Lawrence state:

*Children should be able to physically feel and respond to musical stimuli before being asked to identify such stimuli on a cognitive level. Such an approach to musical study clearly parallels the pedagogical principle of sound before sight.*

#### The summary

The importance of improvisational keyboard skills of 17th- and 18th-century Europe gave way to technique and interpretation in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, it was central to some groups of American colonists in their religious hymns, as well as African-Americans in their folk and spiritual songs and development of jazz and gospel music. In addition to being one of the National Music Education Standards, the importance of music improvisation today can be seen by thousands of online entries on the subject. And, jazz improvisation is recognized with the many college courses and workshops offered in this subject, as well as in the popularity of jazz performers throughout the world.

Enjoy making music without notation. Let your students experience the joy of improvising on the musical keyboard from the very first lesson.

*Reprinted from American Music Teacher, Volume 57, No. 3, December/January 2007/2008, with permission of Music Teachers National Association.*

# Walden Partners with PRISM and ICE

by Esther Landau

Every year at Walden, one graduating senior is selected to compose a work for PRISM Saxophone Quartet; and starting in 2006, we launched a similar project with the International Contemporary Ensemble. The PRISM Quartet commission includes a premiere performance and the ICE commission results in a professionally recorded reading of the new work.

These commissions mean different things to everyone who participates in the process.

## Inspiration

For 2007 PRISM commission awardee, Torrey Cheah, being selected was a surprise.

“There were so many incredible composers studying at Walden, and I felt like my graduating class had more than its fair share.” She continues, “I was very happy with the way it turned out — and especially with how beautifully Prism interpreted the piece. It was an incredible opportunity, and I’m very grateful to Prism and Walden for it.”

Her work, *and yes I said yes*, grew out of Torrey’s interest in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. “It’s very complex writing, but even though it can be really technical and esoteric, it can also be extremely moving and personal. I took the phrase “his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes” from the last chapter — the Penelope chapter and Molly Bloom’s monologue — and used the pitch contour of the words as a starting point for my piece. *and yes I said yes* is about the journey from thought to thought, and loyalty to first one gesture, then another. Eventually, the two gestures learn that they can coexist, building upon each other to create complexities, conversations and arguments, only to ultimately return to the beginning.”

## Openness and Communication

Andrew Barnes Jamieson, the 2007 ICE commission awardee, was equally pleased with the quality of playing in the ensemble, even from the first reading of the piece. “It was already where I would have expected a professional ensemble to be after a two-hour rehearsal.” Although his work didn’t require any compositional changes, Andrew came away from the experience with a deeper understanding of some technical issues in ensemble writing. His advice to other composers working in a similar situation is to have a good idea of what you want from the beginning. “Anybody who’s playing your music will be asking you questions. There will always be things you hadn’t thought about, and it’s good to be open to that.”

## Marathon Rehearsals

For PRISM saxophonist Matt Levy, the commissioning process creates excitement for the new work, and a returning admiration for what happens at Walden. The commission also means three consecutive days of 10-hour rehearsals on a series of intense weekends. “Our first rehearsal weekend is for just understanding

the work, and for figuring out how to prepare it for the next group of rehearsals. Then, over the course of three weekends, we try and make the piece our own.”

Levy says it’s different working with student composers versus professionals — and students, too, can be at very different stages in their

studies. Younger students tend to write in a more conventional way — they don’t call for extended techniques that doctoral candidates or students at conservatories might explore. But he feels it’s appropriate that younger students should start with the basics.

Considering what makes a “good” saxophone quartet, Levy says: “We’re not biased in any way; we play some quartets that are very tonal, others that are dissonant and abstract. I think that like any other chamber work, when a piece truly develops an idea in an organic but unpredictable way, it is very satisfying. Coming up with the building blocks and motivic material is one thing, but to develop it over time is another. It really speaks to a student’s ingenuity and creativity, how they can make their composition something that has meaning and depth. That’s where a great teacher comes in, in helping a student achieve their vision, by always asking the student ‘Is this all? Have you truly fulfilled your idea?’”

## Supporting Young Composers

Levy goes on: “The Walden pieces we’ve premiered have really been a hit with our audiences. And some of the students we’ve worked with have gone on to gain real prominence; we’re happy to help them forge their careers. At Torrey Cheah’s premiere, we were also playing a quartet by Martin Bresnick, who was present for the

performance. He got up and reminisced about being in Torrey’s position many years ago, and talked about his current role as a mentor. He spoke of how gratified he was to hear her having this opportunity also. He grew sentimental in considering her work.”

Our other student-commissioning ensemble, ICE, is “a group of young musicians who are passionate about the music of our time, who are interested in creating new ways — distinctly 21st century ways — of presenting this music, reaching new audiences, and fostering mutual understanding between our

“We view Walden as a really magical place unlike anything we’ve ever encountered where at a very young age you have an opportunity to explore, develop your artistry and your compositional voice — it’s spectacular.”

— Matt Levy, PRISM Quartet

generation of players and our generation of composers.” More than half of ICE’s concerts are free and open to the public, and 80% of the 400-plus world premieres the group has given in the past six years have been by composers under the age of 30. ICE’s Executive Director Claire Chase (WS Visiting Artist ’05–08) says: “We’re deeply committed to nurturing the next generation (Walden’s generation!) of young talents. We’re living in a very exciting time right now, a time in which the lines are blurring between composers, performers, improvisers and organizers, and a time in which we all have an extraordinary opportunity to create our own creative paths and career paths.”

Describing the ensemble’s work with 2007 commission awardee Andrew Barnes Jamieson, Chase says: “Andrew was terrific to work with — totally prepared, profession-

al, and a delight in all stages of the process. It’s always a joy for us to see a young composer rise to the occasion of a professional environment, and Andrew did just this. He was incredibly insightful and helpful in the rehearsal process and in



Torrey Cheah

the studio. We love it when a composer knows what he or she wants, and can articulate it! One of the many great things about Walden is that the summer experience really prepares young composers to use their time well in rehearsals, and to talk to performers in a helpful, respectful, inspiring way. I have some graduate students that could learn a thing or two from Walden students about this area of expertise!”

## Building Community

As all Walden and Junior Conservatory Camp alumni can testify, there is tremendous benefit to writing a new work for musicians you know, at every stage in one’s career. The conversation and support flows in both directions. Claire Chase recognizes the value of cultivating these symbiotic relationships, encouraging young composers to bring their Walden learning into the rest of their musical lives: “Foster mutually beneficial relationships with like-minded musicians, ensembles, and organizers. Composers need performers; performers need composers. Write pieces for your performer friends; learn from them and soak up every second of the process. Take risks and have fun!”

These “mutually beneficial relationships” are what Walden is built on. After 36 years of honoring, inspiring, challenging, and supporting young musicians, we are pleased to partner with PRISM and ICE in offering these two commissioning programs. They are a natural extension of something Walden students experience every summer, and we look forward to many future collaborations and world premieres.



Andrew Barnes Jamieson

# Learning Community (Or, what I did on my summer vacation.)

By Seth Brenzel

This past summer, during our board's annual meeting, all of us learned to sing *Be Grateful* and *Don't Be Wasteful*, a blessing composed by Walden alumnus Leland Kusmer. (I have participated in other boards, but none of them have had singing as part of their agenda!) The act of singing and learning something new together represented what I have come to realize is inherent in the Walden experience: we are a community of passionate learners.



In August, I found myself back in a music classroom again for the first time in many years. There I was, studying with some of the same teachers (including Pat Plude and Pam Quist) who had laid the musical foundations for me when I myself attended Walden back in the 1980s. Had I not learned what I was supposed to those many years ago? Had I been sent back to repeat musicianship classes and learn my hand-over-hand drills over again?



No, in fact I had chosen to be there. And what an amazing experience it was for me to be able to sit in the classrooms of these master teachers, now in the context of Walden's Teacher Training Institute (TTI). My fellow students (aka music teachers) formed a wonderful community of creative musicians, spanning an age range of 18–63. We went to class, did our drills, sang, composed music, hiked Mt. Monadnock, and explored the ways we would teach the materials presented in class in myriad teaching situations. I, for one, left the week awed by the material, the manner in which it was taught, and by the collective sense of joy and discovery that swept over the program's participants.

What struck me about the week perhaps more than anything, however, was the way that the community formed not only around teaching, but also around learning. Here were



nearly a dozen members of our Young Musicians Program 2008 faculty, committing themselves to learning and re-learning material they had just taught. (Weren't they worn out from the past five weeks of teaching?!) Here were several very experienced private instrumental teachers discovering the overtone series — again. Here were college students, having spent their whole year immersed in courses in aural skills, theory and composition, now learning about the pentatonic modes and moving away by 3rds. And there I was, listening to Leo Wanenchak demonstrate the difference between the piano's "perfect" 5th and the human voice's perfect 5th; while I had learned this before, it nonetheless came alive for me yet again in that classroom this summer. There we were — *teachers* — drawn to *learn* new approaches for teaching familiar material, eager to *learn* new material, and passionate to *learn* new ways of inspiring students.

While TTI launched five years ago as a separate program, the training of teachers has been part of Walden's flagship Young Musicians Program from the very beginning; YMP teachers commit themselves to an intensive teaching workload *and* a program of apprenticeship where our senior faculty (Tom Lopez, Pat Plude, Leo Wanenchak and Pam Quist) provides guidance and consultation throughout the summer. Indeed, it is this modeling of teachers as learners that keeps our programs vital.



As I've come to expect, the 52 young people who participated in Walden's 2008 Young Musicians Program came together once again to form a learning community. I was continually impressed by how returning students would mentor and encourage new students to learn our many traditions, how all of our students committed themselves to learning in their classes and in chorus, and by the joy in learning new things that was present throughout the summer. Even one of our youngest, two-year-old



Dahlia Bolaños (the daughter of Walden's nurse), got into the act, and was learning to sing along with the chorus by the end of the program.

What makes such a learning community sustainable is that, in fact, one is never "done" with the musicianship course. One is never done with the overtone series, or cycles, or modes, 9th chords, intervals, or the principles of *musique concrète*. Through the constant cycle of discovery, drilling and practicing, and then creation, a musician's understanding of musical materials can always be deepened — in fun and infinitely engaging ways.



In both programs, musicians come to Walden to explore their creativity, through improvisation and composition. That is why I often refer to Walden as a community of creatives. But I now see that another essential element of Walden is that all involved — teachers, students, and even administrators — participate as *learners*, and we do this together, in community.



In other news...

I wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge Ruth Franklin for her six years of service as a Walden board member. Ruth and I went to Walden together many years ago, and it was a joy to work with her these past years in her capacity as secretary, chair of the Planning and Program Development Committee and as a member of the board's executive committee. She was instrumental in our recent adoption of a five-year strategic plan that is guiding the work of the board and the School, and her contributions are many. Thank you, Ruth.

And I also wanted to welcome Laura Mehiel back to the board of directors. After a one-year hiatus, she has rejoined the board and serves this time on the Development and Nominating & Governance Committees. Since 1994, Laura has served almost continuously on the board of directors of the School. We are lucky to have her back, to be sure, and I am looking forward to her continued contributions to Walden.



*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](mailto: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 more news and event listings, go to [www.bandoverhand.org](http://www.bandoverhand.org).*

After working for several years at a top tier consulting firm (and designing jewelry on the side) **Karen (Wu) Audi** (WS '79, '81) and a friend created *Aba! Chinese*, a program to teach children how to understand and speak Mandarin. There are games and educational activities at the site:

[www.abachinese.com](http://www.abachinese.com). Karen has an MBA from The Wharton School of Business and a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Duke University. She says, "My two summers at Walden were some of the most magical ones of my childhood."

**Lydia Brindamour** (WS '07) and family visited Oberlin in the spring, where Lydia met **Michael Rosen** (WS '04–05) and **Kate Ettinger** (WS '03–05), and heard a choir piece by **Meade Bernard** (WS '02–06). Meade's program notes attributed "all this compositional grace to Walden School, a small piece of paradise in Dublin, NH."

In the spring, **Ann Callaway** (JCC '65–67; WS faculty '74–76, '78–84, '99) finished a commission for the 25th anniversary of the San Francisco-based Composers Inc. It's a trio for horn, violin and piano and is entitled *Ballade*.

**Amy Catlin-Jairazhboy's** (JCC '61–65; faculty '63–65) recent projects include new titles available on her website on subjects ranging from the Goddess and Pakistan to Rajasthani puppetry. The website is: [www.apsara-media.com](http://www.apsara-media.com).

Chanticleer, an award-winning men's vocal ensemble based in San Francisco, has made two Walden connections of late. **David Conte** (Visiting Artist) writes: "In September,

Chanticleer premiered my new composition *The Homecoming: In Memoriam Martin Luther King, Jr.*, commissioned for the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King's death." **Shawn Crouch** (WS '93–94, '96; staff '97; faculty '99–07; TTI '08) also received a commission from the vocal ensemble and looks forward to its world premiere in March.

Violinist **Miranda Cuckson** (Visiting Artist '08) recently performed a program of new music at Mannes College; her colleagues included pianist **Blair McMillen** (Visiting Artist '01–02). Centaur Records just released a CD of Miranda performing works by Donald Martino. She's also performing all the Beethoven sonatas at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in recitals in January and March. Check the events calendar at [www.bandoverhand.org](http://www.bandoverhand.org) for details.

**Nick DeMaison** (WS faculty '04–07) has moved, saying: "It seems that the time is almost right to abandon the south left coast and move back to the center of the universe. Having completed my doctoral exams here in San Diego, I've decided to jump ship while the jumping is good, and head for New York."

**Carol Thomas Downing** (WS faculty '82–86, '88–94; visiting artist '05) ran Fiddle Camp again this summer in Norfolk for a week in July. She also sends a YouTube link of her student fiddler and tin whistle group performing at a festival: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=11NmaWqCspg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11NmaWqCspg)

Arno Drucker, Walden supporter and father of **David Ducker** (WS '77–78, '82; faculty '84–86, '88; board '98–05), recently received the Johns Hopkins Heritage Award, an award honoring alumni and friends of Johns Hopkins University who have contributed outstanding service over an extended period to the progress of the University or the activities of the Alumni Association.

**Thomas Hecht** (WS '78; faculty '82–84; visiting artist '00) directed a Summer Piano Institute in Singapore this year. The week-long program of master classes and recitals was for young pianists of all nationalities between the ages of 14–17.

**Ellen "Pogo" Hoffman** (JCC '60–67) recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Berkeley Broadway Singers, a 75-member community chorus she founded. They performed music from *The Follies* and *Kismet*, as well as jazz and other popular favorites at two concerts in mid-April. The Singers then performed with the Oakland East Bay Symphony and guest star Rita Moreno.

The **International Contemporary Ensemble** (with Claire Chase, WS Visiting Artist '07–08) welcomes new member **Nathan Davis** (WS Visiting Artist '01–08). ICE presented an entire program of Davis' work in April in New York. The pieces on this program were the fruits of Nathan's close collaboration with several ICE musicians, featuring the world premieres of a piece for solo marimba and a mixed quintet.

**Andrew Jacobs** (WS '85–90; Board '05–08) is currently Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel of Hutchin Hill Capital, LP, based in New York City, where he lives with his wife Kathy Park.

**Alex Kazenoff** (WS '05) just began his freshman year at the Berklee College of Music.

This fall, **Ha-Yang Kim** (Visiting Artist '01–07) will be touring with Meredith Monk and Co., performing Monk's Songs of Ascension in New York, Stanford, and Los Angeles.

**Tom Lopez** (Walden faculty '99–01; administration '01–08; TTI faculty '05–08), recently received a 2007–08 Oberlin Teaching Excellence Award. This award recognizes commitment to excellence and innovation in teaching. Tom is Associate Professor of Computer Music and Digital Arts at the Oberlin Conservatory and director of the school's Contemporary Music Division.

**Monica Lynn** (TTI '04–06) had her doctoral composition recital in mid-May at UC Santa Cruz. The concert included Monica's new works for Western instruments, the Chinese *gu-zheng* (table harp) and the Japanese *koto*.

**Caroline Mallonée** (WS '87–92; TTI '07; staff '96; faculty '98–08; administration '06–08) is looking forward to counter)induction's performance of her work *Throwing Mountains* at Tenri Cultural Center in New York City on October 12th.

In April, **Ned McGowan** (Visiting Artist '01–04) performed the premiere of *Bantammer Swing*, his new concerto for contrabass flute, with the American Composers Orchestra at both Carnegie Hall and at the Annenberg Center for the Arts in Philadelphia. His band, Hexnut, will perform at Paradox in Tilburg (Netherlands) in December.

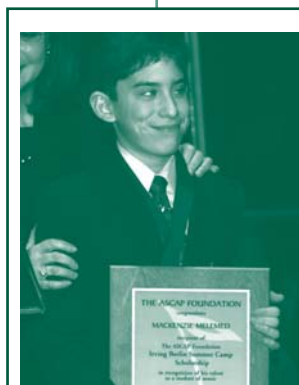
The 2007 recipient of the ASCAP Foundation's Irving Berlin Family Fund Award at Walden, **Mackenzie Melemed** (WS '06–07) performed at the ASCAP awards ceremony in

## Malcolm Gaines' Key Lime Pie

1 store-bought graham cracker crust  
1 can sweetened condensed milk  
3/4 cup key lime juice (Regular limes work as well. I use a bit more for extra tanginess.)  
3 large egg yolks (4 if you want a more custardy texture)  
fresh whipped cream



Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Using a hand mixer on medium, combine egg yolks and condensed milk in a large bowl until well mixed. Add lime juice a little at a time and continue to mix for three more minutes. Pour mixture into crust and bake for 22 minutes, until the middle is firm. Remove from oven and cool completely. When ready to serve, spread whipped cream on top. *Yum!*



Mackenzie Melemed

# News and Goods (continued)

December in New York. He also recently placed second in the Concord (Massachusetts) Concerto Competition. One of the judges turned out to be **Richard Pittman** (JCC faculty '60).

**Brendan Milburn** (WS '88) recently collaborated with his graduate school classmate, David Javerbaum on *WATT?!?*, a show about the life and times of James Watt (Secretary of the Interior during Reagan's presidency). Javerbaum is the head writer/executive producer of the Daily Show.

**Jonathan Miller** (WS faculty '01–02) has been musically quite busy. "I've been happy to compose everything from horror film music to trip-hop to industrial — and everything in between." His work can be heard on the sound tracks for *Verminators* on the Discovery Channel, *Greenovate* on TLC, *Flip That House!* on TLC and Discovery Home.

**Loretta Notareschi** (WS staff and faculty '97–05, '08; TTI '08) had works performed

several times in the Bay Area in May. Santa Clara University presented her *Love Songs* on texts by e.e. cummings, and the Sacred and Profane Chamber Chorus premiered her *Italia Mia* (with text by Petrarch) in Berkeley and San Francisco.

**Tierney O'Brien** (WS '03–05; staff '08) is at the University of Delaware, where she was on the dean's list last spring. She plays with the orchestra, the wind ensemble, a wind quintet, and the marching band. Her mother reports: "The band had its annual banquet, and Tierney was named one of the outstanding rookies. She is having another great semester, which includes her continued studies in music composition." Tierney served on staff at Walden this summer.

**Nat Osborn** (WS '00–03) just graduated from Skidmore College, where his senior composition recital included jazz, a string quartet and a performance by his rock band, The Free Radicals. They have released an EP available through CD Baby: <http://cdbaby.com/cd/nofreeradicals>.

**Joo Won Park** (TTI '05 with certification) writes: "I have accepted a job offer from Community College of Philadelphia. As an Assistant Professor, I will be teaching music technology and music theory classes starting this fall.

In May, **Pamela Layman Quist** (WS & TTI faculty and administration '68–06) was featured on a concert series at Santa Clara University focusing on women composers.

As a part of their class, *Women in Music*, with instructor Marie-Louise Catsalis, students had to create a brief video presentation on a composer whose music would then be heard in concert. In Pam's case, the video was of an interview conducted by Leslie LaBarre, a freshman composition student of Pam's this year. Pam's featured works were her *Romanze* for horn and piano, and "Pie Jesu" from *Requiem for the People*.

**Alicia Rabins'** (WS '88–93) band, Golem, recently toured with the Walkmen. They played in Washington, DC, New York, Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Michigan, Columbus, and finally at the WEMA Fest in Springfield, MA.

**Leah Reid** (WS '99–00) is attending Stanford University's graduate program for composition.

**Maria Shao** (TTI '06–07) has accepted a position as music teacher for grades K–6 at St. Nicholas School in Los Altos Hills, CA. Maria also graduated with an MA in Pastoral Ministries, with an emphasis in Liturgical Music from Santa Clara University in June 2008.

**Gregory Shiff** (WS '96) updates us: "My wife Deborah and I spent the summer of '06 in Spain and had this great, really creative time. When we landed back in New York that fall, I was really charged up with and had composed a lot of great music. And

after working with a variety of small independent labels over the years, I yearned for more control and wanted to do a larger scale project. Thus, *The Vacationist* was born. The first four releases on the label comprise a concept series. These four EP's each feature fragments of Deborah's text online ([www.TheVacationist.net](http://www.TheVacationist.net)), on the 12-inch jacket, and in the

other promotional material. Individually, the texts are quite abstract, but taken together, the narrative begins to emerge. The first record came out at the end of '07, and at the end of May we released one remix of the first EP each week at Beatport.com's online store, followed in the first week of June by the next part in the series "The Ventriloquist & The Mime" by myself and the Scandinavian composer Robin Crafoord.

**Josh Taylor** (WS '89–92) writes of his work on a recent production of *Godspell* in Gaithersburg, Maryland: "I directed the music and also recorded and tracked all of the arrangements, playing an

assortment of pianos, organs, synthesizers, guitars, basses, harp, sitar and singing bowls, as well as programming drums, percussion, tabla, banjo, fiddle, and Tibetan temple blocks."

**Bob Weaver** (JCC '56–63) writes: "I caught up with **Ruth (Young) McGuire** (JCC '50's–60's) in Vienna, Austria, by phone recently. In 1962 she moved to Austria and has been making music in

Vienna ever since. She has 8 children, 6 of whom have doctorates and the other two of whom have earned masters degrees. Ruth was organist at two churches in Vienna, one for 17 years, and the other one for 19 years. She retired in 2000 from that and has concentrated on composing

since then."

**Asa Williams** (JCC '70–72) had one very Walden/JCC-rich weekend this spring. After attending an Atlanta Symphony concert with guest conductor **Hugh Wolff** (JCC '72) Asa writes: "I met Hugh last night for the first time in 34 years. He still looks like Hugh of old. And yes, his hair is still red. He talked about his three boys, his wife (a harpist by the way), a bit about JCC, and his forthcoming move to Boston." He continues: "I heard from **Tamar Bloch** this morning via email. While responding to her, **Arturo Salinas** called me from Mexico. Now you wrote. Thank you all for making this a very pleasurable weekend."

**William Wisnom** (WS '97–98) currently serves as organist and choirmaster at Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore. Bill was a piano student of **Carol Prochazka** (JCC '72; Walden faculty '76, '78, '81, '83–84, '92, '95–97) and an organ student of **Leo Wanenchak** (WS faculty '77–81, '83–84, '89–93, '95–08; administration '99–08; board '04–08; TTI faculty '05–08).

**Hugh Wolff** (JCC '72) has been made Director of the Orchestral Program at New England Conservatory. Wolff's upcoming performance with the NEC Symphony

Orchestra on October 22 will feature works by Messiaen, Schumann, Prokofiev and Berlioz.

**Sarah Ye's** (WS '01–05) mother reports that Sarah just finished her first year at Brandeis. "She returned to Beijing for the summer to intern for two months as a research analyst for a think tank examining non-traditional security issues that may impact

US-China relations, before completely switching gears and becoming an intern for

*continued on next page*



Golem



Loretta Notareschi



Gregory Shiff



Hugh Wolff

continued from page 9

the US Olympic Committee for the month of August and the Beijing Olympics. Somewhere in all this, she also found time to continue her Arabic language studies and to keep up with her baking.”



## Transitions Major Life Events in the Walden/JCC Family

Fall 2008 weddings of Waldenites include: **Shawn Crouch** (WS '93–94, '96; staff '97; faculty '99–00, '02, 05–07); **Renée Favand** (WS '85, '87–90; faculty '93–97, '99, '05–07); and **Russell Nadel** (WS '00–01; TTI '05–06).



Eleanor Love  
Chesney

New children in the Walden family include: **Cyrus Alexander Brenzel**, born to Jason and **Neathery Brenzel** (WS '84–89) in August; **Eleanor Love Chesney**, born to Chris

Chesney and **Sarah Cornog** (WS '83–89) in August; **Amelie Akiko Wright**, born to **Cody Wright** (faculty '00–04, visiting artist '07) and **Maho Nabeshima** (TTI '06; visiting artist '07) in June.

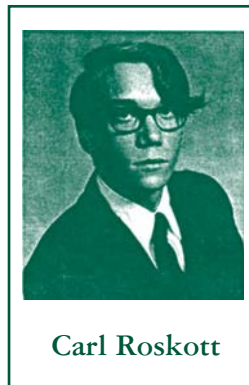


Isaac O'Meara Traub with  
mother and grandmother

**Caroline O'Meara** (WS '88–95, staff '98) delivered **Isaac O'Meara Traub** on May 2nd.

All are doing well. In August, the family moved to Austin, TX where **Caroline** joined the music faculty at the University of Texas. Grandparents **Mary Anne O'Meara** (JC '62–65; board '99–01) and **John O'Meara** (board '04–08) are also doing well.

**Carl Roskott** (JCC) passed away in June. Carl was for many years Music Director and Conductor of the Charlottesville and University of Virginia Symphony. Pam Quist writes: “One of my fondest memories of



Carl Roskott

Carl was taking a Peabody graduate class alongside him and **Hugh Wolff**. It was a class on 20th-century music with **Robert Hall Lewis** in which the three of us came to the conclusion that ALL early 20th-century music could be reduced to motivic cells of minor thirds and half-steps.” Please send your memories of Carl to [alumni@walden-school.org](mailto:alumni@walden-school.org) for inclusion in a commemorative article on the alumni website.

Major **Jonathan Weaver**, son of **John** and **Marianne Weaver** (John: JCC faculty '51–68; Visiting Composer '97; Advisory Council '02–08; Marianne: JCC '66–68), was killed in a traffic accident in Missouri in July. Jonathan, 36, was travelling to visit friends and family before deployment to the Persian Gulf. An excellent musician, Jonathan sang all his life. A memorial service was held at the church that Jonathan and his wife, **Meredith**, attended in **Leavenworth, Kansas**. John played the service, Marianne played two flute pieces, **Bob Weaver** sang John's Psalm 23, Bob and Anne's daughters **Cindy** and **Debbie** read scriptures, and Jonathan's sister, **Kirianne** (Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of **Northville, NY**) preached the sermon.



## Celebrations of Walden

Several spring events brought together alumni, parents and friends in the New York and San Francisco areas. For **Cody Wright** and **Maho Nabeshima-Wright**, April 20 was the date of their debuts at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall in New York. Friends gathered for Italian food beforehand and then went to hear Maho's collaborative recital with flutist **Margaret Cornils**; the program featured a premiere by **Cody**. Waldenites present were: **Seth Brenzel**, **Amelia Lukas**, **Oliver Kisielius**, **Cara Haxo**, **Anne Haxo**, **Shawn Crouch**, **Renée Favand**, **Danielle Oberdier**, and **Rita Mitra**.

One week later in Menlo Park, CA, **Teresa McCollough** hosted a Walden event, and also provided a live musical program, along with **Tom Colohan** and **David Dueñas**. Guests included **Pat Plude**, **Seth Brenzel**, **Esther Landau**, **Brad Evans**, **Katherine Cooke**, **Emma Eisenberg**, **Marshall Bessières**, **Ruth Rainero**, **Michèle Sharik**, **Steve Astle**, **Pam Quist**, **Cody Wright** and **Maho Nabeshima-Wright**, and many others.

On May 3rd, alumnus and board member **Andrew Jacobs** and his wife **Kathy Park** hosted a fundraiser for Walden at their home in Manhattan. Guests included **Seth Brenzel**, **Alex Ness** and **Shawn Crouch**, and many others. **Gabriel Jodorkovsky** provided jazz piano music for part of the evening. **Jed McGiffin** (WS '89–92; TTI '05) and his girlfriend **Megan Meagher** were responsible



Del Sol String Quartet

for all of the delicious food and drink, and for making the event a wonderful success.

A resident of both San Francisco and Dublin, New Hampshire, Walden friend **Peter Pap** hosted an event at his rug gallery in San Francisco on June 1. Among the many guests were **Seth Brenzel**, **Malcolm Gaines**, **Pat Plude**, **Leo Wanenchak**, **David Ruschke**, **Paul Nauert**, **Leland Kusmer**, **Brad Evans**, **Esther Landau**, **Kat Thompson**, **Krisjana Thorsteinson**, **Marshall Bessières**, **Sarah Summar**, **Susan Rosen**, **Michael Rosen**, **Ilana Rainero-de Haan**, **Ruth Rainero**, **Ellen Hoffman**, **Cliff Reilly**, **Sabrina Wise**, and **Hunter Jones** (WS '07–08), whose work *Books and Tables* was performed at the event by the **Del Sol String Quartet** (Visiting Ensemble '06).

## Creative Music Training in Beautiful New Hampshire

### The Walden School

### Save the Dates for Summer 2009

Young Musicians Program  
June 27 to August 2, 2009



Teacher Training Institute  
Summer Intensive  
August 4 – 11, 2009

Contact us if you're  
interested in applying.



[www.waldenschool.org](http://www.waldenschool.org) (415) 648-4710 [students@waldenschool.org](mailto:students@waldenschool.org)



# The Play Is the Thing: A Profile of Nathan Felde (JCC '63–65)

By Esther Landau

As the Director of Development for Walden I spend a great deal of my time making heartfelt requests to foundations and individuals for their support. It is extremely rare for a gift to come in completely unsolicited. And yet that is exactly what happened on December 19th, via email. Near the end of the work day, a message from Junior Conservatory Camp alumnus Nathan Felde appeared without fanfare in my inbox. It read:

*Esther,  
I am contemplating the donation of a fairly fine viola to the Walden School to obtain a tax benefit for 2007. It was purchased in 1988 and is in perfect condition. It is a copy of a great old Dutch viola made by Steven Reilly of Guarneri House in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Since this was very close to the end of the tax year, we swung into action. Having never received an in-kind gift of this sort, we had some quick learning to do, but learn we did. Nathan was able to quickly secure a professional appraisal of the instrument so that we could process the donation and issue him a receipt.

Then commenced the Great Transcontinental Viola Airlift of 2007. By happy coincidence, Walden's Executive Director Seth Brenzel had plans to pass through Boston over the New Year's holiday, so Nathan, a resident of nearby Newburyport, was able to meet with him at a café for the handoff.

JCCers of a certain era will undoubtedly recall the Feldes — Noel, Sylvelin, Nathan and Marcus — playing in a quartet that regularly performed student works. In what may have been the slowest formation of a string quartet in recorded history, the Felde quartet was built organically, sibling birth by sibling birth. As Nathan explains it, "It followed a natural order of the first child [Noel] playing first violin, the second [Sylvelin] playing cello, myself on the viola and my younger brother [Marcus] playing second violin. Of course, eventually there were three younger siblings [cellist Byron Luke and violinists Jon "Rocky" and Gloria]. The last two were noted for playing a movement of Bach's *Double Violin Concerto* with the rest of the Feldes when they were in grade school.

Nathan began music lessons when he was in the fourth grade, at the same time the family quartet formed. At the time he was too small to play a full-size viola, so his teacher, Joseph Firszt in Berea, Kentucky, had him

playing on a violin strung and tuned a fifth lower. He didn't get a proper viola until the 8th grade.

After attending JCC, Nathan went to Interlochen for a semester and then to the Musikk-konservatoriet in Oslo, Norway, where he studied with Eillef Gunstrom, Principal Violist in the Oslo Philharmonic. After beginning his studies at the School of Music at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, he took an elective course in design and got hooked. He switched his major to design and the rest, as they say, is history.

Currently a designer and professor of design at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University, Nathan lives in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

When Nathan bought his most recent viola, he felt fortunate to have obtained a great instrument, even if it was later in life. "It was a wonderful copy by Steven Reiley and Steven McCann of a great old Dutch viola. It was the instrument I wished I had had when I was a student. But, as it turned out, I did not play it enough in the most recent years to justify owning it, and it seemed that to sell it was not as significant as donating it to The Walden School. Its value



**"I hope this donation to The Walden School is fruitful and serves as a small gesture of my appreciation of the time I spent at the Junior Conservatory Camp and lately at Walden."**

to Walden, which carries on the traditions of the Junior Conservatory Camp, and where I learned so much about music that I would not have otherwise known, just seemed greater."

The decision to donate the viola was both difficult and easy. "There were moments of doubt, and it was clearly an emotional decision — tempered with some good reason. It

was also quite amusing to meet Seth Brenzel on a Saturday morning in the Italian North End of Boston at Mike's Bakery carrying a 'violin case.' It caught a bit of attention and did seem a bit like a scene out of a movie."

When asked if he would recommend this type of donation to other alumni, Nathan replies, "Absolutely. It frees up possibilities for everyone and just creates more music on earth. And for musical instruments, after all, *'the play is the thing.'*"



If you or someone you know might be interested in making a similar donation, please contact Esther Landau, Director of Development, at [elandau@waldenschool.org](mailto:elandau@waldenschool.org).

## Robot Attack!!! (continued)

*continued from page 1*

device is that there is no way to pass a constant number to the computer. No matter how still you hold your finger, the number



**Sam Pluta playing the MEAPBook**

being passed along to the computer is constantly changing, though perhaps hovering in a general region, very similar to a cellist bowing a single note on the cello — almost constant, but not quite. In this way, the amount of information

passing between the performer and the computer is exponentially higher with the MEAPBook than with a MIDI keyboard.

Composers can now easily and inexpensively build mechanical instruments to replace samples. Kinetic sculptor and robot builder Doug Repetto says, "Robotics and custom electronics have gotten much more accessible to non-specialists. A high school or middle school student can get started in robotics with surplus equipment for less than \$100." For example, the development of the Arduino platform has made microchip control for robots accessible to anyone and books like Nic Collins' *Handmade Electronic Music* have introduced a whole new generation to the art of hardware hacking.

My group exclusiveOr built a mechanical drummer out of old hardware relays (electro-magnetic switches) that we found in the basement of the Computer Music Center at Columbia. The instrument replaces the drum machine and sounds much better because it is mechanical, thus making the sound in the physical world, not the digital domain. The instrument also looks cool (it has all kinds of wires coming off of it), the audience can see it move when a sound is made, and it also functions as a video mixer/controller. This means our video display is synched up to our drum sound, adding an additional level of audio-visual interaction.

In the last few years, there have been amazing advances in human-computer interaction. In addition to this, robotics and hardware hacking have become cheaper and easier than ever before. People often ask me what instrument I play. When I say "the laptop" they usually look at me funny and ask, "No, really, what instrument?" I can only imagine what will happen in the future when they ask my robot and he responds, "I play the drums."

*YouTube is a rich resource for those wanting to know more about electronic music and musical robots. If you want to explore the topics and people mentioned in Sam's article, including exclusiveOr, Nic Collins, Wii (SuperCollider or Max), Arduino, and MEAPBook, do a search on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).*

# Alumni Spotlight: James Athey (WS '97–98)

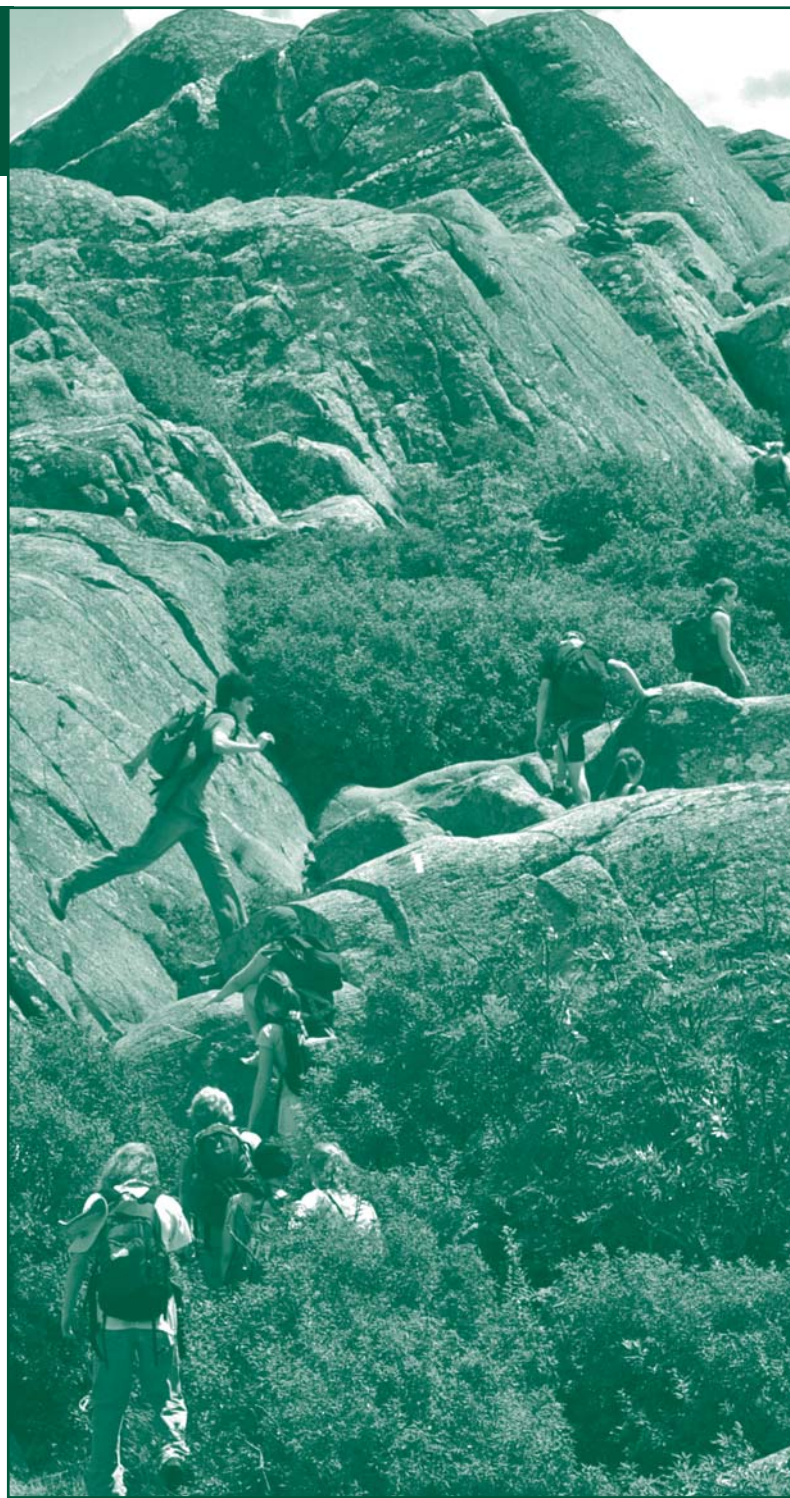
by Esther Landau

James Athey's two summers at Walden couldn't have been less similar. Composing that first summer was a real challenge for him. He hadn't done any significant work in composition before that point. He recalls, "I struggled to get into the right mind set, produce enough material, and maintain a focus on a particular track." He felt that the piece he wrote for Festival Week that year was kind of disjointed, and he was aware of other student's work sounding strong. The following summer was the polar opposite; James had found his focus. He remembers people who had known him the previous summer complimenting his musical development. In some way, Walden provided the crucible for James to mature as a musician. As he puts it, "It's like I needed that really hard experience."

After Walden, James attended Yale, where he spent lots of time singing and taking music classes. He covered nearly enough requirements to major in music, but in the end completed his degree in computer science. He now lives in Washington, DC with his

girlfriend, Jillian; he's a software developer for Tresys Technology in Columbia, Maryland, where he works on computer security products. He keeps his hand in music, though; he's been studying with a voice teacher, and he recently went to a songwriting seminar. And he's well set up at home with what he calls a "modest musical rig;" a synth, a Mac with a big screen, and firewire sound block.

James says, "When I was a teenager going through it, Walden seemed terribly, terribly profound. As an adult I've had to remind myself what was so important about it — I think it was the intellectual independence. I don't think teenagers are given much of a chance to be intellectually independent; you're given an assignment for school and you're given structure and instructions. Then you get to Walden, and no matter whether you're 9 or 18, the teachers give you some tools and then put the ball squarely in your court. And that's tremendously exciting for a young person."



T H E  
WALDEN  
SCHOOL

The Walden School  
31A 29th Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110-4910

*Alumni:* Have you registered yet at Hand Over Hand?

It's a great way to stay connected with the School and fellow alumni.

Post pictures, browse opportunities and keep up with your colleagues.



[www.handoverhand.org](http://www.handoverhand.org)