

# MUSIC AT MUHLENBERG

## Dan McGee '09

*Dan with his apartment-mates in Ghana, where he spent his semester abroad.*



Many Muhlenberg students spend a semester studying abroad. Here, in his own words, is Dan McGee's story:

"Akwaaba! (that's "welcome" in the twi dialect). My name is Dan McGee and I'm a senior music and English double major. I study voice and guitar, perform with the College Choir and Collegium Musicum, and I'm co-founder of the Muhlenberg Hip-Hop Collective. Last spring, I had the incredible opportunity to study at Ashesi University in Ghana for four months. I've always loved West African music, and I finally had the chance to experience and learn it for myself in Ghana.

"My sophomore year I learned about Ghanaian Ewe drumming

in Dr. Conner's World Music course; in Ghana, I privately studied with a master drummer/dancer named Edward Drogba. I even had the chance to sit in and sing with his troupe as they played at the funeral of his great-grandmother (funerals are long, heavily attended celebrations in Ghana, with over five different drum and dance troupes performing at this one alone).

"At Ashesi University I took an African Music & Dance class taught by Professor Nii-Yartey, an established musician, dancer, and founder of the Noyam Dance Institute. In his course, I learned a number of Ghanaian songs, played kpanlogo drums, the axatse (a gourd rattle), and the gankogui (a bell), and

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### Of special interest:

With this issue, we continue our 5<sup>th</sup> year of publication! You have complimented us on our new look, and we hope you will continue to enjoy reading about us.



Would you kindly send your email address to us ([dfollet@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:dfollet@muhlenberg.edu)) so we can keep you updated?

*Without music life would be a mistake.  
~Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche*

learned the Gahu and Kpanlogo dances.

"Thanks to lucky flying, I returned with my own kpanlogo drum undamaged; I also returned with fantastic memories of the Ghanaian people and the rich and diverse Ghanaian culture. My post-graduation future is uncertain, but I plan to continue writing and performing my own music and see where that path leads me."

## BOOM Activities – Fall, 2008

*Thomas Bertorelli '10, BOOM secretary, tells us:* Just as in semesters past, BOOM (Berg Organization of Music) made its presence known on campus in a variety of ways. By selling baked goods in Seegers Union, serving refreshments after this semester's Piano Series recitals, and most recently holding the collection basket for the Jacy Good Foundation at the entrance of the Flute Ensemble performance, BOOM has been visible to both students and members of the Allentown community.

On Friday, November 14th, BOOM chartered school shuttles to bring students to the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia to see Rafael Fruhbeck de Burgos conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra. Leaving campus at 4PM, we arrived in Philadelphia with time to spare, allowing us to have dinner

together at a local restaurant before the 8PM concert. On the program was Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F Major and excerpts from Wagner's "Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg." A good time was had by all students who came on the trip.

Currently planned for next semester are performances made available through the Chamber Music Society of Bethlehem (a special thanks to Dean Wilson, who so graciously provides BOOM with tickets) as well as the club's annual opera trip to Manhattan. BOOM looks forward to taking advantage of this season's repertoire at the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera.



*BOOM is an acronym for the Berg Organization of Music. It also represents a musical sound!*

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## Spotlight on Ensembles: Muhlenberg Percussion Ensemble



*Jim Thoma and members of the Percussion Ensemble in rehearsal.*

The Muhlenberg College Percussion Ensemble enters its fourth year under the direction of James Thoma. The Ensemble has been a staple of Muhlenberg College for decades, and Mr. Thoma conducted the group in the mid-1980s. After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, while Mr. Thoma performed and toured with the New York City Opera National Company, he returned to Muhlenberg in 2005.

The Percussion Ensemble rehearses weekly and performs several times during the year. The group is open to all who desire to perform on percussion instruments. Currently, it is comprised of Muhlenberg students, adult enthusiasts, and advanced high school students, and the ensemble commissions works and performs music written for or arranged for percussion instruments.

In addition to his work with Muhlenberg students, Mr. Thoma teaches and continues an active performing career in New York.



## Focus on Faculty/Staff: Elaine Martin

Elaine Martin teaches flute at Muhlenberg College and directs the Muhlenberg Flute Ensemble. A graduate of Temple University, Elaine was principal flutist with the Allentown Symphony Orchestra for nearly 30 years. She also teaches at Cedar Crest College, and she and harpist Andrea Wittchen perform as the duo 'Elan. Elaine and her husband, Ed, just celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They have three children and two grandchildren.

A few years ago, Elaine thought she would have to give up the flute. Here is her story, in her own words. " 'You will be a student of the Alexander Technique who just happens to play the flute,' he said. That statement angered me. I was a flutist. I loved my job and felt blessed to be able to work in a profession I thoroughly enjoyed. I had been diagnosed with focal

dystonia, a condition that caused movements in my fingers over which I had no control, forcing me to stop playing. Thanks to Stanley Tucker, my Alexander teacher and acupuncturist, who "rewired me," I am playing the flute again. I believed that Stan and I could fix my problem in three months to a year. It soon became apparent, however, that I had no clue what Stan was up to, or what the Alexander Technique truly had to offer. Seven years later I can finally say, 'I get it,' although I am still learning and remain on the road to recovery. I've learned a lot about myself. I am a better teacher. Young people respond quickly to the Alexander Technique. I sometimes play better than I ever have and I am more of a risk taker than I ever imagined myself to be. Stan was right. I am a student of the Alexander Technique who happens to play the flute."

## Alumni News

Lyric Mezzo-Soprano **Lauren Curnow '96** will travel to Trappe, PA, to give an April recital in the Community Music School's concert series, "A Little Night Music." A native of Easton, PA, Curnow holds graduate degrees from the Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music. She sings with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

**Katrina Holden '05** has returned to Boston after 5 weeks in Italy singing her first Musetta in La Musica Lirica's production of Puccini's opera *La Boheme*. She also sang in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the Boston Opera Collaborative.

**Gregg Rossetti '05** is co-owner of Erypsus Studios in Whitehouse Station, NJ. The studio does recording, mixing, mastering, MIDI programming, art/liner notes, and short-run duplication. Gregg also composes, performs, and teaches guitar and saxophone.

**Kate Foretek '06** is the interim audio coordinator at the Zoellner Arts Center at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA.


**Colleen Meade '06** is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Music Therapy at Molloy College in Rockville Centre, NY.

**Erica Green '07** is a Development Associate at WHYY, a PBS member station in Philadelphia.

**Tom Kelleher '08** plays steelworker Jerry Lukowski in "The Full Monty" at Waterville (ME) Opera. The show explores the loss of identity that accompanies the loss of a job and seems especially appropriate at this time of economic turmoil.

**Music at  
Muhlenberg**

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**Our Mission**

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The goal of the Music Department is to develop skilled and knowledgeable musicians who think creatively. Our curriculum is designed to provide students with a broad and comprehensive background in music and the opportunity to pursue their own musical interests in greater depth. The development of technical and interpretive skills is informed by a liberal arts approach. We teach creative musicians to analyze evidence, integrate knowledge from diverse fields, make judgments, and create new knowledge. We are also committed to teaching students to communicate effectively, reflect thoughtfully on their own work, and show respect for others. These abilities prepare our students for lives as musicians, creative thinkers, and responsible members of society.



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## Spring 2009 Calendar of Events

### February

- 7, Saturday, 2 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Tynan Hooker-Haring, Bass
- 7, Saturday, 4:30 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Colleen McDonald, Soprano
- 8, Sunday, 4 pm, Recital Hall – Petar Jankovic, Classical Guitar
- 13, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Piano Series: Idil Biret (admission charge)
- 14, Saturday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: J. Eric Stephenson, Tenor
- 15, Sunday, 4 pm, Empie Theatre – Contemporary Piano Music sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Women's Cancer Center: Idil Biret (admission charge, free for Piano Series subscribers)
- 19, Thursday, 8 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Donna Ward, Soprano
- 21, Saturday, 3 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Sarah Primmer, Soprano
- 21, Saturday, 8 pm, Recital Hall – Faculty Recital: Vincent Trovato, Piano
- 23, Monday, 6:15 pm, Recital Hall - Master Class: German Vocal Literature, Christa Warda

### March

- 8, Sunday, 2-9 pm, Egner Chapel – Bach Marathon
- 13, Friday, 4:30 pm, Recital Hall – Class of 1969 Recital Competition
- 14, Saturday, 2 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Shannon Fitzsimons, Mezzo Soprano, and Sarah Monticue, Soprano
- 15, Sunday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Maria N.D. Ruppert, Soprano
- 19, Thursday, 7:30 pm, Recital Hall – Faculty Recital: Raya Gonen, Voice
- 20, Friday, 8 pm, Recital Hall – Paul Windt, Violin
- 21, Saturday, 4-8 pm, Empie Theatre - A Cappella Fest
- 22, Sunday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel – Muhlenberg College Choir
- 28, Saturday, 1 pm, Recital Hall – Senior Recital: Allison Wente, Piano
- 28, Saturday, 3 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Dana Kowalsick, Soprano
- 28, Saturday, 5 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: Dan McGee, Baritone
- 29, Sunday, 3 pm, Recital Hall – Senior Recital: Rebecca Goldstein, Soprano, and Michael D. Miller, Tenor
- 31, Tuesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall - Percussion Improv Recital: Tatsuya Nakatani & Toshi Makihara

*Cont'd. on p. 6...*

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## Spring 2009 Calendar of Events, cont'd.

### April

- 2, Thursday, 7 pm, Recital Hall – Lehigh Saengerbund Voice Competition
- 3, Friday, 4:30 pm, Recital Hall – Student Recital
- 3, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Piano Series: Peter Frankl (admission charge)
- 4, Saturday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel – Muhlenberg Collegium Musicum
- 5, Sunday, 1 pm, Recital Hall – Senior Recital: Emily Herring, Soprano
- 5, Sunday, 3 pm, Empie Theatre – The Allentown Band
- 5, Sunday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel – Senior Recital: James Ludlum, Bass
- 6, Monday, 4:30 pm, Egner Chapel – Student Recital
- 7, Tuesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall – Jazz Improvisation Ensemble, Ted Conner, Director
- 8, Wednesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall – Jazz Improvisation Ensemble, Charles Fambrough, Director
- 15, Wednesday, 4:30 pm, Recital Hall – Student Recital
- 15, Wednesday, and 17, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Percussion Festival
- 18, Saturday, 1 pm, Egner Chapter – Senior Recital: Michael Cali, Tuba
- 18, Saturday, 4 pm, Recital Hall – Senior Recital: Kristen Kaelber, Soprano
- 18, Saturday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Muhlenberg Jazz Ensemble
- 24, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Muhlenberg Chamber Orchestra
- 25, Saturday, 4 pm, Recital Hall – Senior Recital: Dorie Casper, Soprano, Insley Fowler, Soprano, Christina Hourihan, Soprano
- 25, Saturday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre – Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble
- 26, Sunday, 4 pm, Empie Theatre – Piano Series: Alessio Bax (admission charge)
- 27, Monday, and 28, Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Recital Hall – Muhlenberg Opera Group

### May

- 2, Saturday, 6 pm, Egner Chapel – Lehigh Saengerbund Chorus

## In the Classroom Counterpoint

“You mean we won’t be doing a lot of Roman Numeral Analysis?” This is the first surprise for most people who take Counterpoint. As Dr. Ted Conner explains, “we spend most of the semester studying the modal counterpoint techniques of the Renaissance. During that period, composers and musicians were more focused on the horizontal—melodic lines—and, in polyphonic music, their relation to other lines.”

Counterpoint blends music theory and music history with composition. Treatises on composition from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries serve as the course’s “textbooks.” According to Dr. Conner, “the treatises offer insights into the ways that Renaissance and

Baroque musicians conceived of music in ways that go beyond the technical. Perhaps the most important goal of the course is learning to hear music in ways that are similar to the composers and performers of the time. This involves re-thinking many of the assumptions that we take for granted as 21<sup>st</sup> Century musicians.” Members of the class spend the first part of the semester developing basic technical skills. Once these have been mastered, compositions ranging from English consort music to the Bach cello suites are analyzed. These pieces serve as models for student works that are discussed by the class during the compositional process and performed when they are completed.



*Composing  
contrapuntal music*

*Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.  
~Maya Angelou, Gather Together in My Name*

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### *Music at Muhlenberg,*

Diane Follet, Editor,

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We hope you have enjoyed reading about us. If you have ideas for articles, alumni news, or comments about this newsletter, please contact the Editor at [dfollet@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:dfollet@muhlenberg.edu).