Majestic hosts arts awards

David '68 and Jennifer LeVan among winners named

The Majestic Theater served as the venue for the annual Governor’s Awards for the Arts, which recognize Pennsylvanians who contribute their creative talents to their communities.

Among the winners were David '68 and Jennifer LeVan, for whom the Majestic Performing Arts Center is named. They received the Patron Award for significant contributions to the vitality and availability of the arts in Pennsylvania. The LeVans’ involvement includes helping with the renovation of the Majestic and starting “First Friday” events in Gettysburg to get residents to visit local art exhibits.

Other award recipients included hip-hop dancer Rennie Harris, who was named Artist of the Year; Kathleen Marshall, a Tony Award-winning choreographer; and her brother Rob Marshall, an Academy Award nominated director.

The event also included the painting of a “People’s Lincoln,” sponsored by the Pennsylvania Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. Everyone at the event was invited to add a brushstroke to the portrait, designed by artist Wendy Allen. The result was unveiled Nov. 19.

For more information about the Lincoln commission, which is based at the College’s Civil War Institute, please visit www.palincoln.org.

Around the Campus

Gabor Boritt (Civil War studies) and Scott Hancock (history), who published a collection of essays, Slavery, Resistance, Freedom. The book explores how the struggle to realize the ideal of freedom shaped the lives of black and white Americans.

Emelio Betances (sociology and Latin American studies), who published The Catholic Church and Power Politics in Latin America: The Dominican Case in Comparative Perspective. The book examines the Catholic Church’s mediation in the Dominican Republic, drawing parallels and contrasts to Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.


Caroline Hartzell (political science and globalization studies), who is co-author of Crafting Peace: Power-Sharing Institutions and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars. The book examines how a diversity of power-sharing and power-dividing arrangements is needed for civil war settlements to be stable.

TISSA HAMI, one of the world’s few female Muslim stand-up comics, performed on campus this past semester. Tissa’s “unique act and fresh perspective on life as an Iranian-American woman leave audiences in shock and awe,” says her website, www.tissahami.com. “From Islamic fundamentalists to white liberals to good old-fashioned racists, no one is safe from her sharp wit.” Hami took the stage in traditional Islamic attire for her presentation, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Mosque.”

The Orange Bike Project

Looking for an easy way to get around campus? The Orange Bike Project has a perfect solution. Next time you visit Gettysburg College, look for a parked orange bicycle and take a ride. This past autumn College Life distributed a number of bikes throughout campus for community members to use as needed — to get to class, to take a ride on the battlefield, to take a ride around town.

Just look for a bike with an orange frame and the word “Gettysburg” painted in blue. When you finish your ride, park the bike at any of the many outdoor bike racks.

For more stories about Gettysburg College, visit www.gettysburg.edu and click on News.

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A funny thing happened

Tissa Hami, one of the world’s few female Muslim stand-up comics, performed on campus this past semester. Hami’s “unique act and fresh perspective on life as an Iranian-American woman leave audiences in shock and awe,” says her website, www.tissahami.com. “From Islamic fundamentalists to white liberals to good old-fashioned racists, no one is safe from her sharp wit.” Hami took the stage in traditional Islamic attire for her presentation, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Mosque.”

She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in international affairs at Columbia University.
AROUND THE CAMPUS

Improv 101

“Wait’s the most book you ever read?”


A quick and clever one-liner delivered by a member of “Shots in the Dark,” Gettysburg College’s own home-grown improvisational comedy troupe. Barely out of their teens, these students routinely deliver hair-trigger humor off the top of the head based on scenes and characters called out by the audience. They have no time to prepare and no place to hide.

The Gettysburg improvisational program began just five years ago when Karen Land in the theater arts department, introduced a course for first-year students, The Zen of Improv. The course took off like a fast-paced routine, and soon the students decided to form their own improv club. The club eventually produced the performers who dazzle audiences. That’s what I hope they take away from this.”

—Jim Murphy

Students in Gettysburg College’s home-grown improvisational comedy troupe deliver hair-trigger humor off the top of the head based on scenes and characters called out by the audience. They have no time to prepare and no place to hide.

and trying to make something funny, touching, or at least interesting happen. Their efforts are peppered with Land’s comments: “Listen to each other. Create an environment. ” Accept the offer.”

The results are predictably spotty. Some of the students have figured out how to tap their clever impulses, while others are still struggling to think freely in challenging situations.

As for who took this class, that’s the point. As one student said, “This is probably the most valuable class I’m taking. I’ll probably never see the history of Islam in my day-to-day career, but I’ll always have to think on my feet. You improve every day.”

The class is sprinkled with potential political science, English, even physics majors, only about half the students plan to major in theater. And watching them work (they prefer the word “play”), one can project the skills they are learning to sales people, attorneys, politicians, managers of every stripe. They are getting hands-on experience in that ultimate liberal arts goal — the ability to think.

Most of them enjoy it so much that they show up on a Tuesday night for one of the club’s regular meetings. About 30 members participate in a series of unplanned — certainly unscripted — routines. Club President Cory Heselton ’08, a political science major, conducts the meeting with help from a couple of his colleagues in the performing troupe. The members run through such exercises as “be a vegetable,” the park bench scenario, and a take-off on “The Dating Game” TV show. The members make each other laugh, then Cory and his sidekicks offer critiques. In the class, some moments are brighter than others, some members seem to be more comfortable than others. That variable fuels one of Land’s lessons: the idea is not for you to make yourself look good. The idea is to make everyone look good. The goal is teamwork. Learning to listen, to react, to advance the story.

Back in the Kline Theatre, Land wraps up another class session with her first-year students: “Do not fear mistakes. There are none.” Minutes later in her office she elaborates: “Improv is acting. I stress to the students that there needs to be a standard. What they do must be stage-worthy. They have to take it seriously, have focus. But the real lesson is self-confidence. That’s what I hope they take away from this.”
A Place to Grow

Gettysburg’s new early-learning center serves area children

The College’s new early-learning center, Gettysburg’s Growing Place, is open and serving 177 children from six weeks to 12 years old. House in an 8,800 square-foot building located on Constitution Ave., the center has nine rooms for five different age groups and a staff of 20.

“This is an exceptional, one-of-a-kind place,” said Sherry Yingling, director of the Growing Place since 1999. “I’m so excited for the kids to be here.”

Among distinctive features of the facility are a bicycle path and outdoor instructional areas, including flower and vegetable gardens that children will tend. “They’ll learn that tomatoes don’t come from a can,” said Sarah Kotlinski, co-chair of the Gettysburg Child Care Corporation (GCCC), the non-profit organization that oversees Gettysburg’s Growing Place. Outdoor climbing structures were donated by Dale ’68 and Joan (Edwards) ’69 Miller, owners of Playworld Systems Inc. in Lewistown, Pa. (see story on page 40.)

African Heritage Week

The Republic of Malawi’s finance minister, Godail Mpendulo Membe, remembered his brother in the second annual Derrick K. Gondwe Memorial Lecture on Social and Economic Justice, which was among highlights of this past October’s inaugural African Heritage Week on campus. The two brothers grew up in poverty, but both became economists. Derrick taught at Gettysburg College for 27 years prior to his death in 2004. Though they disagreed about how use government resources to alleviate poverty, Gondall said he eventually

“The Finance Minister of the Republic of Malawi remembers his brother employed Derrick’s arguments to convince donor nations to allow fertilizer subsidies for small farmers.

“My brother died just as I was becoming minister, and one of the sad things is he will never know that I did use his ideas. It has worked. We have tripled production of maize, and now our population is eating as you do, three times a day.”

Nonetheless, poverty persists in Malawi. “When you are drinking good water,” Gondwe told an audience of more than 100 in the Pennsylvania Hall Lyceum, “know that elsewhere, people who belong to the same world community you do share their water with worms, and snakes, and dogs.”

“When you are drinking good water, know that elsewhere, people who belong to the same world community you do share their water with worms, and snakes, and dogs.”

New athletic and fitness center to be built

The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve the building of a new center for Athletics, Recreation, and Fitness while fundraising for the project continues.

The vote came during the Board’s fall meeting. A subcommittee led by John Jaeger ’65, president of DANAC real estate development firm, performed a detailed preconstruction review, including project scope and architectural design. Cannon Design, an international architectural, engineering and planning firm, will serve as the architect for the project.

“While approval for the new center for Athletics, Recreation, and Fitness is an important milestone in the history of the project, fundraising must continue to support it,” said Victoria Dowling, vice president for development and alumni relations. “The need for individuals to step up and commit to supporting this building is great. They will follow others who have gone before them to support this project, including John Jaeger ’65 and Robert Ortenzio ’79.”

The $25-million project will total 55,000 square feet of new construction and includes a new eight-lane competition natatorium with a four-lane warm-up pool and spectator gallery that seats 350; fully equipped weight and fitness room; multipurpose venues for aerobics, yoga, Pilates, dance, spinning and martial arts classes; fully renovated and enlarged athletic training room and HydroWorx therapy pool; and state-of-the-art climbing wall.

The College will break ground for the project in spring 2008 and open in fall 2009.

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To support the new center, contact Victoria Dowling at 717-337-6501 or vdowling@gettysburg.edu, or visit www.gettysburg.edu and click on Make A Gift.

Leadership at the Center for Athletics, Recreation, and Fitness while fundraising for the project continues.

The week’s hosts were the International Club, Africana Studies Minor, and the African Heritage Week Steering Committee, which includes African Studies Minor’s coordinator and Africana Studies Minor’s director. The week’s events included the John Jaeger ’65 and Robert Ortenzio ’79.

The Finance Minister of the Republic of Malawi remembers his brother.

A new 8-lane natatorium will be a part of the new center.

Whispers of Elephants

In his first-year seminar, Whispers of Elephants: Elephant and Human Contact, philosophy Prof. Rajmohan Ramanathapillai traces the elephant’s journey through history and culture and invites students to consider the moral implications of species interaction, especially in connection with war, the ivory trade, and habitat destruction.

Ten years ago, Ramanathapillai visited the Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage in his homeland of Sri Lanka. There, he saw how economic development, including the destruction of 900,000 acres of forest, has harmed the island’s elephants. “When I saw elephants without parents was when I realized there is a deep connection between humans and elephants,” said Ramanathapillai, who coordinates the College’s minor in Peace and Justice Studies. His epiphany led him to travel through Southeast Asia to collect people’s stories of elephants and to study ancient writings about them.

He found that, across many centuries, reverence for and fear of elephants have gone hand in hand. Then, some 1,600 years ago, the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesh arose as the “remover of obstacles,” reflecting the emergence of massed elephant cavalry as a key military asset. The elephant’s new national-security value prompted one emperor to set aside vast swaths of jungle as breeding grounds, forest-shaping today’s habitat preservation efforts.

For Buddhists, the elephant became a symbol of the inward journey. The Buddha’s mother is said to have dreamed of a white elephant entering her womb. Buddhists have also seen wild elephants as a metaphor for uncontrolled desires that prevent spiritual awakening, while the mahout, who tames elephants, represents meditative self-control that leads to enlightenment.

“These are two completely different approaches, but they both use the elephant image to explain the inner and outer aspects of humans’ relationship with nature,” Ramanathapillai said.

Go to www.gettysburg.edu/library/news/index.dox to see more pictures. Click on All Current Exhibits.
study abroad. Each year more than 300 Gettysburg students prepare them-
selves for a global future by choosing one of nearly 200 study-abroad options. Check out some student photos. www.gettysburg.edu/
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Student research opportunities. Measuring the light output of exploding stars. Portfolio investment analysis. Travel writing. Nearly 350 students do independent research or some other independent project each year.

www.gettysburg.edu/academics/undergraduate_research/examples.dot

Gettysburg curriculum. The Gettysburg curriculum is truly exciting, structured around four key elements: multiple inquiries, integrative thinking, communication skills, and local and global citizenship. www.gettysburg.edu/academics/gettysburg_curriculum


Gettysburg Semester. Off campus study has become a regular feature of most undergraduates’ lives. But what if that off-campus program wasn’t on a different continent or in a different country, but instead in a different time? Since 1998 Gettysburg College has offered the most unusual study away semester of them all. www.gettysburg.edu/civilwar/gettysburg_semester

After Gettysburg. In a typical year, about 95 percent of the graduating class is employed or in graduate or professional school within one year of graduating. www.gettysburg.edu/about/after_gettysburg.dot

Professor of the Year
Environmental studies and biology Prof. John Commito was named the 2007 Pennsylvania Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the National Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

John Commito

Former chair of the environmental studies department at the College, Commito’s research on the ecology of the sea floor takes him to a number of study sites throughout the United States. His primary sites are in Maine, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, where he investigates predator-prey interactions, animal dispersal mechanisms, and mathematical models of population distribution patterns. Other interests include land use issues and the impact of the automobile on American culture and environment.

Commito earned a bachelor’s degree in biology at Cornell University and doctorate in marine science at Duke University. Prior to joining the College in 1993, he taught at Hobart College and was named the Maryland Professor of the Year in 1991 by the same organization.

• Philosophy professor and blogger extraordinaire Steven Gambel can talk and write about almost anything, as evidenced by two different blogs featured in the same month in The Chronicle of Higher Education. On Oct. 15, Gambel wrote in good humor about how easy it is to distinguish two groups of philosophers — analyticians and conflictualists — by their clothing: “Conflicting dress themselves to the nines, whereas it is hard to find analytic philosophers who can dress themselves,” he wrote. In a separate blog on Oct. 30, Gambel wrote about hidden tautologies, sentences that say nothing, but appear to be actual meaningful contributions. “Tautologies, sentences like, ‘It’s raining or it’s not,’ ‘Boys will be boys,’ or ‘First thing first,’ can be used in conversation meaningfully, but recently I’ve become fascinated by a group of expressions that are hidden tautologies, sentences that say nothing, and I am wondering why we use them.” For more from Gambel’s blogs, visit www.philosophersplayground.blogspot.com.

• Biology Prof. Peter Fong’s research on the ecological effects of trace pharmaceuticals in bodies of water was featured in the September issue of The Scientist magazine. Excreted from our bodies, small amounts of medications make their way through wastewater treatment plants and into the effluent pumped into rivers and streams. In 1999 and 2000, the U.S. Geological Survey sampled 139 streams in 30 states for organic wastewater contaminants, including hormones and pharmaceuticals. Eighty percent contained traces of the chemicals. “There are thousands of drugs going into wastewater treatment plants, and thousands of drugs coming out,” Fong wrote. “We know a lot more about what is out there than we know about how it affects aquatic organisms.” Among other things, Fong has found that fluoxetine (Prozac) induces premature spawning in male zebra mussels.

Gettysburg College in the Media

When I retired from Gettysburg College in 1986, I of course assumed the College would enter a period of slow, inevitable decline. But, no, the autumn 2007 issue of Gettysburg depicts an institution in good health. I particularly appreciated the feature on Christopher Weyant ’89, outstanding cartoonist, and Jim Murphy’s splendid piece about Kathrine Taylor and her work, Address Unknown.

I first met Kathrine Taylor in 1957 when I joined the faculty in the psychology department. Shortly thereafter, she asked Prof. Charles Platt and me to help her to capture a rambunctious male cat so that she could take him to a vet. We duly appeared at her home late one afternoon, still dressed in our teaching attire. She greeted us in a big garage, handed us a small blanket and work gloves, and pointed out both the open cat carrier and, in the dim distance, the cat — large, gray, fiercely agitated, insane.

She then excused herself and went into the kitchen next door to prepare drinks. The door to our building was wide open, but the cat showed no interest in leaving. His plan clearly was to dispose of both of us, and then to do as he damn well pleased. For the next five minutes Charles and I, in our work gloves and neckties, shuffled here and there, avoiding serious injury, yet with no clue as to how to corral the cat. Then Kathrine reappeared and said, “Oh.” Anyone who knew her would have understood the greatest intonation of the word. No disappointment, no sharp concern, only clear perception.

The events in the next 15 or 20 seconds, despite earnest efforts, mercifully escape recollection. All I recall, after nearly 50 years, is Kathrine, unruffled, unloved, gently placing the cat into the carrier with her gracious smile and a grateful, “Thank you, now let’s have that drink.”

Lew Frank
Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, Georgetown, Maine

I believe the “Out of the Past” column in the autumn 2007 issue of Gettysburg is incorrect. It said that 30 years ago in the fall of 1977 Gettysburg had defeated Lehigh 31 to 13 in the last football game between the two schools.

I had the pleasure of sitting in the stands that day and my memory is that Lehigh won and won big. The game is seared into my mind because I was sitting in the stands with my father, a 1949 graduate of Lehigh. If I remember correctly, Lehigh’s Steve Kreider, who later played in the NFL for the Cincinnati Bengals, caught seven touchdowns passes. It was not a pleasant afternoon.

After reading the column I called my Dad and he too remembers Lehigh winning, and by a lot. I went to the New York Times and looked up the college football results from Saturday, November 5, 1977. Lehigh won 47 to 0.

Charlie Kishpaugh ’80
Lexington, Mass.

Letter to the Editor