From the Department Chair

This fall marked a milestone in the department: the president of the university invited the entire department to dinner. Dinner was preceded by a performance hour showcasing some of the best performances from our undergraduate and graduate students. The evening’s performance paid homage to the performance traditions of our department—from oral interpretation of literature from the lectern to postmodern performance art. The faculty—and the president—were pleased. We should think about making this an annual event—including dinner at the president’s house!

In addition to dining with the president, the faculty and students have been busy directing and performing in shows, publishing books and essays, delivering papers, and winning awards (especially yours truly). This fall, however, we’ve been particularly fortunate to have had remarkable speakers and performers come to us. Writer Justin Spring gave a fascinating presentation on Samuel Steward, a man who led many lives outside his life as an academic, including seducing Rudolph Valentino! Bryant Keith Alexander gave a brilliantly moving talk for the Bacon Lecture on the uses of auto/ethnography. And, Nancy Cheryll Davis brought her adaptation of Nella Larsen’s novella, *Passing*, to life in her one-woman show.

We have more invited lecturers and performers lined up for winter quarter, in addition to our performance hours and graduate student recruitment. Indeed, there’s never a dull moment in the hallowed halls in the basement—I mean garden level!—of Annie May Swift.

As we prepare for the holiday season and for the impending winter (if it ever comes!) to set in, we’ll relish in the good company that we keep in the department and on the road. I look forward to what the new year has in store for us all.

—E. Patrick Johnson

P.S. Breaking news to come about our “place” at Northwestern.

Bryant Keith Alexander presents Wallace Bacon Lecture

Bryant Keith Alexander presented the Wallace A. Bacon Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, October 27th at noon in the Alvina Krause Studio. His talk was titled “Standing In the Wake: A Critical Auto/Ethnographic Exercise on Reflexivity in Three Movements.”

Bryant Keith Alexander is Professor of Performance, Pedagogy and Culture in the Department of Communication Studies, and Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, at California State University-Los Angeles. Professor Alexander’s scholarship contributes to the fields of performance studies, communication and cultural studies, pedagogy and instruction, gender and queer studies, and African American studies. He has particular interests in using performance/studies to explore issues of race/culture/gender diversity, critical pedagogy, leadership in/as collaboration and consensus building; as well as an acknowledgement of teaching, scholarship and administration as informing practices of academic professionalism.

His publications include: *Performance Theories in Education: Power, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Identity* (Lawrence Erlbaum Press, 2005) co-edited with Gary Anderson and Bernardo Gallegos; *Performing Black Masculinity: Race, Culture, and Queer Identity* (Alta Mira Press, 2006), which won the 2007 Best Book Award from the National Communication Association Ethnography Division; and The Performative Sustainability of Race in the Black Studies and Critical Thinking Book Series (Peter Lang Press, forthcoming).

Alexander’s scholarship also appears in the five-volume *Men and Masculinities: Critical Concepts in Sociology* (Routledge) and *Black Queer Studies* (Duke); in the books *Culture and Manhood; From Bourgeois to Boojie: Middle-Class Performances*; and *Remembering the AIDS Quilt*; and in the journals *Text and Performance Quarterly, Theatre Topics, Theatre Annual, Qualitative Inquiry, Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies, Journal of Homosexuality, Communication Quarterly,* and *Callaloo*.

P.S.: The Newsletter of the Department of Performance Studies is also available online at www.communication.northwestern.edu/performancestudies/news
Department performs for and dines with President Schapiro

On October 5th, Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro and Mimi Schapiro hosted a dinner for Performance Studies students and faculty at their home in Evanston. The dinner was preceded by a Performance Showcase presented by the department in the Alvina Krause Studio and featured solo performances by undergraduate majors Darren Barrere, Jeremy Fassler, and Jeremy Shpizner, and graduate students Andrew Brown, Kareem Khubchandani, Mbongeni Mtshali, and Nikki Yeboah.
Justin Spring talks

Author Justin Spring spoke on October 13th in the Hagstrum Room, in a program co-sponsored with the Gender Studies Program. Justin Spring is the author of Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2010), which was named as a National Book Award finalist. Spring is a New York based writer specializing in twentieth-century American art and culture, and he is the author of numerous monographs, catalogs, museum publications, and books, including the biography Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art (Yale University Press, 2000) and Paul Cadmus: The Male Nude (Universe, 2002).

Secret Historian is drawn from the secret, never-before-seen diaries, journals, and sexual records of the novelist, poet, and university professor Samuel M. Steward, and offers a sensational reconstruction of one of the more extraordinary hidden lives of the twentieth century. An intimate friend of Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, and Thornton Wilder, Steward maintained a secret sex life from childhood on, and documented these experiences in brilliantly vivid (and often very funny) detail. After leaving the world of academe to become Phil Sparrow, a tattoo artist on Chicago’s notorious South State Street, Steward worked closely with Alfred Kinsey on his landmark sex research. During the early 1960s, Steward changed his name and identity once again, this time to write exceptionally literate, upbeat pro-homosexual pornography under the pseudonym Phil Andros.

Until recently Steward’s many identities have been known to only a few—but an extraordinary archive of his papers, lost since his death in 1993, has provided Justin Spring with the material for an exceptionally compassionate and brilliantly illuminating life-and-times biography. More than merely the story of one remarkable man, Secret Historian is a moving portrait of homosexual life in the years before gay liberation.

Nancy Cheryll Davis performs Passing Solo

On October 29th and 30th in the Alvina Krause Studio, Nancy Cheryll Davis performed Passing Solo, her one-woman show based on the acclaimed Towne Street Theatre Play Passing, which she co-wrote with Sheri Bailey, adapted from the 1927 novel by Nella Larsen. The performance was presented as part of the solo/black/woman performance series, sponsored in part by a grant from the Mellon Foundation.

The play, set in 1920s Harlem, explores the conflicting demands of race and friendship, and the slippery line between trust and deception. In the solo performance, Nancy Cheryll Davis portrays the novel’s central characters, Irene and Clare, whose birth certificates both read “Negro” but who can—and do—pass as white, and whose renewed friendship stirs up questions of roots and the danger of discovery.

Nancy Cheryll Davis is an alumna of the American Conservatory Theatre of San Francisco and the Lincoln Center Directors Lab West. She was the founding Artistic/Producing Director of the Towne Street Theatre, Los Angeles’s premier African American Theatre Company, which has garnered numerous NAACP Theatre Awards and nominations. Davis’s film career began with Robert Townsend’s Hollywood Shuffle and continued in The Five Heartbeats and I’m Gonna Git You Sucka. She co-starred with Andre Braugher & Kasi Lemmons in TNT’s critically acclaimed film, The Court Martial of Jackie Robinson, and she made a special appearance in the Hughes Brothers debut film, Menace to Society.
Allen Center Fete for Alan Shefsky

The department assisted department assistant Alan Shefsky in marking 25 years of assisting the department at a gala event in Alan’s honor at the Allen Center on Sunday, September 26th. (Editor’s note: Alan would be the first person to admit that authoring a piece about himself in the third person, and doing so impersonally, in the editorial voice of Newsletter editor, is awkward to say the least, and raises serious questions about the knowability of authorial intent as revealed in newsletter text. Alas, what is one Alan of an author to do?) Suffice it to say the event was splendid, sunny, and abundant with appreciation, indeed mutually so. Speakers spoke, readings were read, and a clown clowned. Intimations of a gift of a Vespa buzzed in the air, but none appeared. No matter, Alan was elated. Delighted. The day was a delight.
Clockwise from top left: Kemi Adeyemi, Jasmine Mahmoud, Rhaisa Williams, Kantara Souffrant, Kareem Khubchandani; John Haas; Kyla Brundage, Nannette Bell, Georgette Kelly; Lori Baptista; Harvey Young, Sandra Richards, Jeffrey McCune, Christine Dunford, Paul Edwards, Maggie Doyle, Barnaby King. For more photos, see pages 9-11.
Fall Quarter Performance Hours

103 Performance Hour
Solo performances presented by students in the department’s introductory course GEN CMN 103 The Analysis and Performance of Literature
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, September 22
Struble Theater
Admission: Free

We Band of Brothers: The Chronicle of Henry V
Adapted and directed by undergraduate major Anakin Morris
“We Band of Brothers” is the story of the rise of Henry V of England, adapted from Shakespeare’s 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV, and Henry V. It tells the story of a boy who is forced to grow up, to lead a country he still doesn’t understand, and to become the hero he doesn’t know how to be. It is the chronicle of his journey, a coming-of-age story that begins with a young prince, his fat friend, and their drunken band of revelers. It brings to life the universal struggles of adolescence and of having to take responsibility before one think he is ready.
8 p.m. Friday, November 12
2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, November 13
Annie May Swift Hall, Alvina Krause Studio
Admission: Free

Course News

This quarter marks the first use of the newly released text Learning to Perform: An Introduction in the department’s introductory course GEN CMN 103 The Analysis and Performance of Literature. The book, co-authored by Carol Simpson Stern and Bruce Henderson, and published by Northwestern University Press, was written with this audience in mind and includes description of some student performances that have been presented in this class over the years.

This quarter the department is offering its first freshman seminar as part of a new School of Communication initiative. The course, GEN CMN 115-0 Modes of Performance, was developed and is being taught by E. Patrick Johnson. In conjunction with their exploration of performance modes across history, students attended a performance of The Seagull at the Goodman Theatre.

In winter quarter, Munjulika Rahman will teach a special topics course through the Dance Program, DANCE 335-0-21 Danced Nationalisms: Theories and Practicum, which she is teaching in conjunction with the development of a piece for Danceworks 2011 (February 25-March 6, 2011). The course is designed to give students an understanding of dance as a medium through which national identities are cultivated, expressed, and contested. Based on the instructor’s extensive fieldwork in Bangladesh, the course and the choreography will start with the movement vocabulary and narratives of Bangladeshi “folk” or urban folk dance, and as the class progresses with readings and the choreography, students will engage with the different movement experiences and ethnographic stories of the dancers.

Carol Simpson Stern will teach a newly developed topics course PERF_ST 330-0-20 Performing Jane Austen, William James, and Edith Wharton, in which students will read, adapt, and perform selections from novels and short stories of these three major 19th century writers, focusing on the way they handle narration and voice, create unforgettable characters, offer social commentary, explore ethical and moral dilemmas, and capture the landscape and soundscape of the drawing-rooms, houses, and cities in their fiction. The course will also allow students to use performance to explore the construction of American identity and values, and enrich their understanding of social and literary history.

Ramón Rivera-Servera will teach a newly developed topics course PERF_ST 330-0-21 Sounding America: Popular Music, Performance, and the Nation, which will introduce students to cultural studies approaches to popular music in the United States. The course will engage such musical cultures as jazz, punk, hip-hop, blues, mambo, house, pop, salsa, reggaetón, and emo, with special attention to the ways these cultural scenes create public spheres that engage, challenge, or expand our definitions of national belonging. The course will look at both historical and contemporary examples that showcase the ways in which songs, dances, fashion, and fan practices affiliated with particular musical cultures produce knowledge, memory, and affects about the nation while also gesturing towards histories, material interconnections, and political possibilities beyond it. Students will gain introductory understanding of scholarship and methods in ethnomusicology, performance studies of music, and American cultural studies.
Andrew Brown will present a paper titled “Re-imagining Queer Politics and National Identity in South Africa through Internal Queer Diaspora” at the African Studies Association annual meeting in San Francisco, CA on November 18-21, 2010.

Kareem Khubchandani presented a paper titled, “Queen Harish and Bollywood Camp” at the South Asian Studies conference in Madison, WI, Oct 16-17.

Over the summer Barnaby King presented on his clown research at PSi in Toronto and TaPRA in Cardiff, while at the latter also performing the premiere of “A Trip to America,” a historical practice-as-research project he is currently undertaking with Tracy Davis based on the English comic actor Charles Mathews and his own ethnographic “lecture” performance in 1824. Later this year he will perform “Trip” again as a department “performance hour” and also look out for a forthcoming co-authored essay in the new book Performing Archives/Archives of Performance on the same topic. In November, Barnaby is coordinating his second annual “Clown Encuentro” in Medellin, Colombia, bringing together clown performers from Latin America, Spain, USA, and Canada to share and discuss their work in the field of developmental or “applied” clowning in social contexts. Meanwhile, he is enjoying the experience of being a fellow at NU’s new flagship Center for Leadership.

Gregory Mitchell received a fellowship through the new Sexual Orientation and Health in Social Context program. He recently delivered a keynote address entitled, “Shifting Focus: Lessons from Brazil’s Sex Industry for More Effective Counter-Trafficking Strategies” at an anti-human trafficking conference called “Stopping Traffick,” organized by DePauw University. In November, he will deliver an invited paper entitled, “Garotos From Brazil: The Anti-Immigrant Agenda Behind Spain’s Anti-Trafficking Campaign” at the American Anthropological Association’s conference, and he is currently administering a collaborative project between Northwestern, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and Daspu, a group of female sex workers in Brazil who design and model their own fashion line.

Elias Krell presented a “Trans 101 and Beyond” workshop with Owen Daniel McCarter on Oct 30th, sponsored by qpgsa and the Gender Studies Program. He is also performing once a month through February at locations throughout Chicago (see: www.myspace.com/eliaskrell).

He is also hosting a benefit at the Hideout on November 27th called “A Big Tranny Hootenanny: An evening of music, performance, and dance benefiting Owen DMC,” which will feature performances by Andrew Brown, Kareem Khubchandani, and the Homoticons (Elias Krell’s other band where he plays accordion!).

Priscilla Renta co-created an altar installation that is being shown at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in San Francisco as part of the event “Un Tributo para Dos Heros.” The work, “Día de los Muertos en Boricua: Altar para Lolita Lebrón y Juan Mari Brás” (created with Cynthia Renta and Tania Llambelis), is inspired by sacred altar-making practices that are an integral aspect of Puerto Rico’s Afro-Diasporic experience. The altar expresses profound gratitude for the sacrifices these freedom fighters made in the name of Puerto Rico and humanity.

Munjulika Rahman is presenting a paper titled, “Price of Gold and Light: Power and Politics in Hey Ananta Punya” at the 2010 Joint Conference of The Congress on Research in Dance (CORD) and the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) to be held in Seattle, 18-21 November 2010.
Faculty News

The National Communication Association (NCA) LGBTQ Caucus has selected E. Patrick Johnson as the 2010 recipient of the Randy Majors Memorial Award, which recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender scholarship in communication studies. Each year the Caucus on Gay and Lesbian Concerns presents the award to one individual at the NCA annual convention. Patrick was also awarded the Leslie Irene Coger Award for Outstanding Contributions to Performance by the Performance Studies Division of NCA.

Also, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations’ Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues inducted Patrick into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame.

Patrick was awarded the Bert Williams Best Solo Performance Award from the Black Theater Alliance for his performance in Sweet Tea. Also, he remounted Sweet Tea at the John Warfield Center of African & African American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, as a part of the “Performing Blackness” series, September 9-12. Finally, Patrick gave a paper titled, “Southern (Dis)Comfort: Homosex in the Black South” at the Creating and Consuming the U.S. South Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, August 17-20.

Ramón H. Rivera-Servera presented “Crossing Hispaniola: Cultural Erotics at the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands,” at the Transnational Hispaniola International Conference hosted by the Instituto Filosófico Pedro Francisco Bonó, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on June 4th; “Dancing Reggaetón with Cowboy Boots” at the Society for Dance History Scholars Annual Conference hosted by the University of Surrey, UK on July 9th; and, “Performance Frictions: Teatro Luna, Latina Feminisms and Queer Sexualities” at the Queering the Middle: Race, Sexual Diasporas, and a Queer Midwest conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on October 8th. His review essay of 2boystv’s performance, Phobophilia, appears in the current issue of e-misférica, the journal of the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics.


In addition, Mary’s Arabian Nights returns to Berkeley Repertory Theatre in December and to the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. in January 2011 Also, Mary will appear in three episodes of the new PBS special series Invitation To World Literature: “The Odyssey,” “Journey to the West,” and “1001 Nights.” These are airing nationally and online.

She is also organizing a student trip to the 2011 Prague Quadrennial of Performance and Design Space in June 2011.

Alumnus Chris Corbett discusses new book


Corbett is a full-time faculty member at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County where he is professor of the practice. He was awarded the University System of Maryland Board of Regents’ Faculty Award for Mentoring, 2007-2008.
More photos from Alan’s anniversary celebration

Above: Georgette Kelly, Andrew Brown, Pavithra Prasad, Madsen Minax
Below: Kathleen Galvin, Jane Rankin, Liz Luby, Kyla Brundage, Nannette Bell, Tracy Davis, Jean Deven
Above: Daniel Elam, Mbongeni Mtshali, Lisa Biggs
Below: Jay Shefsky, Alan Shefsky, Cameron Hendershot, Liz Feldman, Elaine Shefsky, Laury Shefsky, Sylvia Unterman, Marilyn Hendershot
E. Patrick Johnson presenting Alan with plaque and congratulatory messages.