Dance
Darshan Singh Bhuller has formed a company of 10 seasoned dancers who mirror the wider multicultural society and present thought-provoking pieces encompassing pop culture, classicism and abstract concepts.

The Vanderbilt Dance Program held its second annual Summer Dance Festival June 8–17, providing classes in ballet, jazz, modern, hip-hop, dance improvisation, West African dance, capoeira (Brazilian martial arts), Bartonieff fundamentals (dance conditioning) and yoga. In addition to daily classes, performance-based repertory classes were offered. This year’s faculty featured visiting artists Eliz Neal Neidinger and Taryn Packhiser (modern dance and hip-hop), Kelli Reeves (jazz) and Randall Duval (capoeira).

Music
This spring’s production by the Vanderbilt Opera Theatre, Mozart to Modern, juxtaposed scenes from Mozart’s operas Così fan Tutte and Marriage of Figaro in the first act with works by Mark Adamo, Kurt Weill and Carolee Floyd in the second.

The Annual Appalachian Celebration was performed by the Blair folk music faculty, including Butch Ballassaari, mandolin; David Schnader, dulcimer; and Bobby Taylor, oboe, who were joined in this fourth annual concert by Alison Brown, jazz banjo player, and the Peabear Sisters of O Brother, Where Art Thou fame.

Theatre and Dance
In late March, Vanderbilt Juggling and Physical Arts presented Juggleville at Ingram Hall. This one-of-a-kind production featured juggling, break dancing, physical comedy and more. A portion of the proceeds was donated to the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt.

Vanderbilt University Theatre’s last production of the season was Dramablog: an exploration of the political and personal, a student-created piece exploring current events from personal perspectives, presented at Neely Auditorium in mid-April. Combining political theatre with media trends, Dramablog allowed students a new mode of expression without pretending to be fair and balanced—immediate news became immediate theatre.

Vanderbilt Opera Theatre, one of England’s leading contemporary dance companies, finished the Vanderbilt Great Performances Series with a master class and performance in mid-April. By fusing genres and forms, Artistic Director Donald Woodman, Judy Chicago

California-based painter Albert Contreras, who in the last five years has re-established himself as an artist of international renown, recently bequeathed to Vanderbilt 24 works of art that are now hanging in a single exhibit. The renovation for renovation following the end of 2006 brought a new level of security and insecurity. The renovation included installation of museum-quality lighting and ceiling tiles in the gallery, upgrades to office and storage areas, and the installation of a new sign above the front entrance of the Fine Arts Building. The gallery will reopen Aug. 17.

At Sarratt Gallery, sculptor Aaron Hussy installed a mixed-media work that remained on view through the end of May. Hussy draws on figurative and architectural forms to explore the human condition focusing on issues of security and insecurity. Hussy works in a wide variety of media, including cast and fabricated metal, clay, wood, plaster, concrete and, most recently, digital video.

Acadia must address these issues to be relevant.

We owe it to the kids we’re teaching.

—Professor Cecelia Tichi
“Maggie Sullivan,” a portrait painting by Rick Weaver, BS’80, has been selected for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006 Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., where it will be on view through Feb. 18, 2007. The portrait was one of 51 paintings chosen, from more than 4,000 entries, to form the Outwin Boochever Portrait Exhibition of the 2006 competition. It is one of 12 alumni chapters around the country and led art tours both here and abroad.

Robert L. Mode, associate professor of history of art, has been named the recipient of the Alumni Education Award. The award, which consists of an engraved jade cup and $2,500, is given annually by the Vanderbilt Alumni Association to a faculty member who has distinguished himself through long service to alumni. Mode has visited 12 alumni chapters around the country and led art tours both here and abroad.

“In 1869 he displayed his work in group and solo exhibitions. His work from that time period is well-represented in the major Swedish museum, according to a January 2002 Art in America article. However, in 1972 he stopped painting altogether, a dark period that would last 25 years. After resuming painting in 1997, Contreras is once again an artistic dynamo. He’s exhibited his work six times since 2001, twice each at the Daniel Weinberg Gallery in Los Angeles and the Bill Maynes Gallery in New York.

“I thought the panels demonstrated a great sense of color,” Joseph Mella, director of the Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery, says of the works Contreras donated to Vanderbilt. “It got my attention not only from an artistic standpoint, but also because of Contreras’s own history.” Each 12-by-14-inch panel combines lush, bold colors against a landscape of geometric shapes—an undoubtedly modern effort. There is a palpable texture to each canvas; the paint is layered so thickly that Contreras’s own history suggests that her daughter might want to learn some grownup skills—like cooking—to go with her fifth-floor walk-up. Charlie forms a cooking club with her friends. They convene one month to swap recipes, and to gossip about the drama of their new lives. Spooning is a tale of food, friendship, and what it takes to find the perfect recipe for romance.

What Democracy Looks Like: A New Critical Realism for a Post-Seattle World (Rutgers University Press), edited by Cecilia Tichi, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at Vanderbilt, and Amy Schrager Lang, professor of English and humanities at Syracuse, looks at the 1999 protests in Seattle against world trade policies as a dividing line in our culture and advocates that humanities educators need to adjust their approaches or risk irrelevancy.

“For the first time on U.S. soil, there was a major convergence of different groups from all over the world, everyone from Korean farmers to Central American fishermen to U.S. steelworkers,” says Tichi. Some had little money yet traveled thousands of miles to confront the citizenry at this World Trade Organization meeting. “They said to the world, ‘These policies are destructive to us in our countries and to the whole planet. It was unprecedented, and it changed everything.’

But how should any of this change how a college professor approaches a poem, novel or short story? Tichi explains using William Faulkner’s story Old Man written in 1939, in which a prisoner released during the 1927 Mississippi River flood rescues others from the flood, gets a job and proves himself rehabilitated, only to be returned to prison as an escapee because government officials don’t want it disclosed that they pardoned a live prisoner. “Faulkner fills that novella with indictments against what he calls ‘the criminal injustice system,’” Tichi says. “But modern critics are interested in the language about the flood and say this guy is perfectly well off and he’s happy to get art on campus beyond the gallery,” says Mella, “so I passed the offer on to Judson Newbern, Vanderbilt’s associate vice chancellor for campus planning and construction, who deals with space allocation, and he found a home for it.”

Jeff Havens

BOOKS & WRITERS:

In Spooning, by Megan DeSales, BS’97, and Darri Stephens (Broadway Books, Random House, Charlotte, a.k.a. Charlie—Brown, a recent college grad and newly minted New Yorker, is eager to begin her grownup life. All kinds of “firsts” await her in the big city—her first real job, first loves, first heartaches and, most important, her first time living on her own. When Charlie’s mom subtly suggests that her daughter might want to learn some grownup

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language about the flood and say this guy is perfectly well off and he’s happy to play baseball on Sunday and have a hot dog now and again.”

Tichi thinks the story speaks to today’s criminal justice system. “We have more than 2 million people in prison, most for nonviolent drug offenses. There is a conflict between our citizen selves, in which we want criminal offenders to be reha-

bilitated and return productive to society, and our investor selves who want our Wakenhut or Corrections Corporation of America stock to do well. “We cannot have both,” Tichi says. “We at least have to think through this contradiction in our society. Faulkner’s novella helps us do it.”

What Democracy Looks Like, 27 essays probe how teaching about writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane and Langston Hughes can be rethought to view them in light of the social justice issues raised by the 1999 protests in Seattle. “From where I sit in an Eng-

lish department, I see students who are getting worried about the issues brought up in Seattle, realizing that things like global warming and the World Trade Organization might mean their futures are not as assured as previous generations. Acade-

mists must address these issues to be relevant. We owe it to the kids we’re teaching.” —Jim Patterson