

# The Evolution

## Mills College Pushes

In 1946, a young pianist from Concord, Calif., fresh from his army service in World War II, enrolled as a graduate student in music at Mills College in Oakland. He had chosen Mills, best known as a liberal arts school for women, because his older brother was teaching music there under Darius Milhaud, the prolific jazz-influenced French composer who had emigrated to Oakland from war-torn Paris in 1940. Although David Warren Brubeck did not finish his master's degree, he did launch an illustrious jazz career while studying polytonality and polyrhythms with Milhaud: By 1951 he had formed the immensely popular Dave Brubeck Quartet, which, among other accomplishments, recorded the best-selling jazz single of all time, 1959's "Take Five."

Brubeck may be Mills College's most famous former music student, but he is hardly the lone star on a roster that includes Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh, minimalist composer Steve Reich, pop performance artist Laurie Anderson and current freak-folk star Joanna Newsom. Nonetheless, the music program at Mills remains one of Oakland's best-kept secrets, better known to avant-garde music connoisseurs worldwide than to general music audiences in the Bay Area.

"Because we are progressive and try to push the limits, what we do here is marginalized on the boundaries of the music world," says David Bernstein, who has taught music theory, analysis and historical musicology at Mills since 1989. "The Bay Area is a free-thinking place, but new

Percussion instructor William Winant (this page) strikes out toward the future in his Mills College studio. Theresa Wong (opposite page) takes her Mills MFA and her cello into the community, performing with her Bolivar Zoar trio at the Stork Club in Oakland.



# Starts Now

## the Limits of Contemporary Sound

By Derk Richardson  
Photography by Stuart Brinin



music is actually not well known here. People don't really know what we're doing. They don't come to our concerts, and it's a shame. The Bay Area community often knows less about Mills than the rest of the world does."

As department head and music historian (and author of *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art* and *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture Meets the Avant-Garde*), the New York-bred Bernstein is especially concerned with the Mills music legacy. "But it's not an immobile legacy," he notes. "It's an ongoing development, and I'm interested in preserving an ongoing evolution."

Mills College was founded in 1852 as the Young Ladies' Seminary of Benicia, resituated in Oakland in 1871 and chartered as a degree-granting college for women in 1885. It boasts a long record of distinctions: the first women's college west of the Rockies; home to the first laboratory school for teacher training west of the Mississippi (1926); one of the first liberal arts colleges to offer a modern dance degree (1941); and the first women's college to offer a computer science major (1974) and a 4+1 MBA (2001).

But the music department, open to both men and women at the graduate level (as are other master's programs), is the hidden treasure of this elite educational enclave tucked away in a sylvan setting southwest of the Warren and MacArthur freeway interchange. Of the 480 or so graduate students at Mills (in a student body numbering only 1,410 total), about 45 are in music. But the department's influence is exponentially greater than its numbers. For more than 70 years, Mills musicians—professors, visiting faculty and students—have been at the forefront of contemporary music, dramatically and consistently expanding the frontiers of sound and theory. ►►





The Dave Brubeck Quartet, 2007.

## Dave Brubeck at Mills

In the 1950s, the Dave Brubeck Quartet was one of the best-known jazz groups in the world, especially popular on college campuses. But unbeknownst to audiences who flocked to its concerts and snapped up such LPs as *Brubeck Time*, *Jazz Goes to College* and *Time Out* (featuring the best-selling single “Take Five”), the band was rooted in Brubeck’s experience at Mills College and his relationship with Darius Milhaud. “I was very interested in studying with him because he was the first European composer to use jazz,” Brubeck, now 86, said in a telephone interview from his home in Connecticut. And it was through Milhaud’s instigation that Brubeck and other students formed the experimental Jazz Workshop Ensemble that evolved, off campus, into the Dave Brubeck Octet.

“The octet was born right in Milhaud’s class,” Brubeck recalled, “when he said, ‘How many of you play jazz?’ We all started thinking, ‘Uh oh, is this going to be like all the other teachers in conservatories?’ But we raised our hands anyway, and he said, ‘All right, I’d like you to write for the jazz instrumentation,’ and that’s the way the octet was born. He got the first concert for us right there at Mills, for the girls. The guys all, well, I think quite a few romances and some marriages came out of that.”



Darius Milhaud at Mills College.

The original pool of collaborators included fellow Milhaud students—clarinetist Bill Smith, trumpeter Dick Collins, trombonist Bob Collins, tenor saxophonist David van Kriedt, tenor saxophonist and bassist/trombonist Jack Weeks—plus trombonist Pete Rugolo, drummer Cal Tjader and alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, who came over to Oakland from San Francisco State. “I was just listening to [the octet recording],” Brubeck continued, “and I was thinking how advanced and how good the guys were. It predates the things Miles [Davis] did with Gerry Mulligan [the historic *Birth of the Cool* sessions].”

As do today’s music instructors at Mills, Milhaud spent time out of the classroom with his students. Brubeck remembers going to Thursday night open houses at the Milhaud’s campus residence on faculty row. “He’d had them for a few years before, and they weren’t well attended,” Brubeck said, “so he asked us one day in class if we’d be interested in coming. There were about five of us in that class, and we all wanted to come, so we’d often meet there. We’d listen to some of his recordings, or maybe Stravinsky—it was really nothing planned, just whatever happened.”

Brubeck benefited from once-a-week private lessons with the French master. “I wrote those piano pieces called ‘Reminiscences of the Cattle Country’ as part of those weekly lessons,” he recalled. “I also did my first ballet right at Mills—with the Mills Dance Department, my brother conducting and Milhaud sitting with my wife and me. It was early in my time at Mills, and he said, ‘You know, it’s too late for Dave to ever get a true classical European background, but he’s going to do it on his own, and he should be a composer. Dave has to be a composer.’ He taught me through encouragement. It was like osmosis, because I couldn’t even read music. He knew that and laughed about it and said, ‘But you’ll do it somehow, your own way.’”

Sooner rather than later, as it turned out. “I’m not a good student,” Brubeck explained. “I was doing OK, but I was forced to leave because I didn’t hand in a bluebook in one class. I had all As up to then, but I didn’t hand in the final and the teacher gave me an F, and you couldn’t have an F in the master’s degree program. When Milhaud heard about it, he said, ‘Well, if you have to leave, just come to me once a week; I won’t charge you, and you can study with me. So that’s the way that went, off and on up until 1949,’ at which point the Dave Brubeck Trio, with Tjader on drums and Norman Bates (later replaced by Ron Crotty) on bass, inaugurated the next phase of Brubeck’s musical career.

## Experimental Music Takes Root and Flourishes

A music conservatory was established at Mills in 1894, and an ornate, mural-adorned concert hall, currently under renovation, was built in 1928. In the 1930s, an innovative program called Summer Sessions in the Creative Arts brought pioneering 20th-century composers Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison and John Cage (as a dance department accompanist) to the campus. The Pro Arte and Budapest string quartets also took up residencies at Mills. The 1940 arrival of Milhaud, who taught until 1971, dramatically boosted the momentum of experimentalism, an aesthetic encouraged by Margaret Lyon, music department chair from 1955 to 1979, and consistent with the college mission of encouraging “openness to experimentation in the context of established academic disciplines.”

Among many pivotal developments in a constantly evolving legacy was the 1966 relocation of the San Francisco Tape Music Center to the Mills campus. Founded in 1961 by groundbreaking electronic-music composers Ramon Sender and Morton Subotnick, it was renamed the Center for Contemporary Music in 1967. Under the leadership of initial director (and “deep listening” innovator) Pauline Oliveros and such successors as Robert Ashley, David Rosenboom and current co-directors Chris Brown and Maggi Payne, the CCM (home to the first analog synthesizer, invented by Don Buchla, as well as an antique Moog) advanced to and remains at the vanguard of electronic and computer music.

Other milestones in Mills music history include the 1975 endowment of the Darius Milhaud Chair in Composition, which has been filled by such international luminaries as Lou Harrison, Iannis Xenakis, Anthony Braxton and Alvin Curran and will be occupied for the next three years by Roscoe Mitchell, a founding member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and guiding light in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, or AACM. In 1978, the Kronos Quartet began a two-year residency at Mills and put together the membership—David Harrington, John Sherba, Hank Dutt and Joan Jeanrenaud—that carried it to international acclaim over the next 20 years. (See sidebar, “The Rebirth of Kronos Quartet,” on page 55.) And in 1995, a four-day

Brubeck: courtesy of Dave Brubeck; Milhaud and Concert Hall: courtesy of Mills College



The historic Mills College Concert Hall.





David Bernstein, Maggi Payne and Chris Brown in the Concert Hall during restoration.



Roscoe Mitchell

festival, *Here Comes Everybody: The Music, Poetry and Art of John Cage*, brought overflow audiences to Mills as scores of musicians and academics paid tribute to the myriad talents of the polymathic master who had died three years earlier.

Over the decades, Mills music instructors and artists-in-residence have included Italian composer Luciano Berio, Indian vocal master Pandit Pran Nath, minimalist godfather Terry Riley, trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and radical composer Frederic Rzewski, among many others—hardly household names to audiences for whom Norah Jones and the Buena Vista Social Club are left-field listening, but a veritable *Who's Who* in new music, modern composition and improvisation.

Today, more than ever, the music department, into which the CCM has been almost completely integrated, is a crucial hub of experimental and electronic music, ranking second to none in the world and fostering cross-pollination and collaboration in the local creative music scene.

### Music Students Make the Scene

As glorious as bygone days might be, it's the potential of the present moment that preoccupies current faculty members, such as guitarist Fred Frith. Known for his work in the seminal English art-rock band Henry Cow (as well as the Art Bears, Massacre, Skeleton Crew and countless collaborations with the likes of Brian Eno, Bill Laswell, Henry Kaiser, John Zorn and others), Frith has been teaching at Mills since 1999 and will take over as head of the department in fall 2008. "I think keeping the focus of attention resolutely on the current students rather than the achievements of the past is one of the things I'm proudest of," he wrote in an e-mail from Europe while on sab-

batical. "Obviously I'm happy to be part of that amazing historical continuum, and I consider it an honor to occupy the same professorial chair as Terry Riley and to be part of the astonishing roll of names, many of whom, like Terry and Alvin [Curran] and Pauline [Oliveros], have become friends as a result of our association here. But I'm proudest of what the students are doing, and continue to do every year."

The inventory of recent Mills students and alumni is indeed impressive. It includes Latin jazz keyboardist Rebeca Mauleón, koto player Miya Masaoka, cellists Danielle DeGruttola and Theresa Wong, clarinetist/computer musician Matt Ingalls, vocalist Aurora Josephson, clarinetist Ben Goldberg, keyboardist Graham Connah, drummer/percussionist Ches Smith, sound artist Ed Osborn, composer Guillermo Galindo, electroacoustic vocalist/composer Anne Hege, video/sound artist Betsey Biggs, neo-folk guitarist and producer Noah Georgeson and flutist MaryClare Brzytwa. In addition to their academic achievements, recording credits and, in some cases, international accomplishments, many of these musicians are active in the Bay Area's eclectic music scene.

In that respect, they parallel the activities of their instructors, including percussionist William Winant, who studied at Mills with Lou Harrison, was in residence for 10 years with the acclaimed Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio and has been teaching there part time since 1983, all the while maintaining a performing career with Harrison, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the John Zorn Chamber Ensemble, the Mark Morris and Merce Cunningham dance companies and the avant-rock band Mr. Bungle. "A lot of my students, one minute they might be playing at 21 Grand in Oakland or the Luggage Store



Fred Frith

"The department changes every year, depending on the students who enter and alter the chemistry of the community. When we're successful it's because the students become inspired and spark one another's creativity."

—Fred Frith





Benny Goodman (far right) with the Budapest String Quartet onstage in the Mills Concert Hall (date unknown).



Pauline Oliveros playing the Buchla 100 synthesiser at the Mills Tape Music Center (circa 1966).



Mills students playing instruments built by Harry Partch (date unknown).



Former Mills student Ava Mendoza performs with Theresa Wong in Bolivar Zoar.

Gallery in San Francisco, and then the next minute they might be getting their Ph.D. at Stony Brook or Wesleyan or Princeton University,” Winant says. “I encourage them to do it all.”

Frith concurs. “I always encourage my students at Mills to explore the local community and check out what’s going on,” he wrote, “and it’s one of the things prospective students find exciting (when compared to somewhere like CalArts)—the idea that there is so much going on locally that they can draw on. The local scene, especially the local improvising scene, is still heavily male-dominated, though I’m glad to see that our successful effort to attract more women to our graduate programs is slowly having an effect on the local scene as they leave Mills and stick around.”

## Creative Community Thrives on Campus and Beyond

The sense of community—both on the campus and in the cultural environs of the Bay Area—is one of the biggest draws and grandest rewards for music students at Mills, according to those who teach and have studied there. About 45 graduate students are enrolled annually, and they arrive in Oakland from such far-flung locales as Latvia, India and Bali. “While I’ve been here,” says Frith, “our students have come from Mexico and Canada as well as the U.S., of course, but also Argentina, Colombia, China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Turkey, Germany, France, Denmark, the UK and Iceland—it makes for a great and unpredictable atmosphere.”

“From what I can tell, they’re coming to Mills primarily because of the aesthetic tradition of experimentation,” says assistant professor John Bischoff, whose expertise as an instructor, performer and recording artist lies in electronic and computer-network music. “At the graduate level, a lot of instrumentalists are coming in large part for the improvisation aspects of the program, which Fred Frith has been developing. They’re interested in adding and learning electronics, too. But they really do come for the community—not only for the teachers and visiting artists they get to meet, but also for connecting with the other students. They often make lifelong bonds with other students and go on making music together.”

Avant-garde vocalist Aurora Josephson, who attended Mills as an undergraduate in

Top and center right: courtesy of Mills College; center left: Don W. Jones, courtesy of Mills College

the early 1990s, certainly found that to be true. Born in Michigan and raised in Portland, Ore., Josephson received her degree in music performance after studying extensively with Alvin Curran and participating in the Mills Contemporary Performance Ensemble under Steed Cowart and William Winant. Along the way she commissioned many of her friends to write pieces for her. “The thing that made the biggest impression on me was working with people and actually creating things in the moment,” she says. “I really got into working on people’s concerts—you’re constantly creating and presenting something. Watching that creative process unfold, day by day, rehearsal by rehearsal, is just so interesting.” Josephson performs frequently around the Bay Area, in a variety of contexts at such venues as 21 Grand, the 1510 Performance Space and the Luggage Store Gallery, often with musicians she met while attending Mills. “I’ve continued to have long-lasting relationships that started there when I was still a teenager,” she says. “It’s a community that feeds itself, synergizes from one generation to the next, and all these connections ripple outward.”

“Students do come here for a degree, which will help them professionally in whatever real-world jobs they might need to have on their creative path after Mills,” says professor Chris Brown, co-director of the CCM. “They are also after skills—as players, composers and electronicists. But to my mind, these are rarely more important than the opportunity to explore their ideas in a disciplined, yet unfettered way, in the company of other like-minded musicians. I think that most students come to be part of the creative community.”

That was definitely the case for Oakland-based cellist, composer and improviser Theresa Wong. She had been working in graphic and product design in Italy when, after attending an experimental music concert in Venice and reading that Fred Frith was teaching at Mills, she decided to return to music. “I didn’t have any specific musical lessons that I wanted to learn,” she says, “I just really wanted to be around all these people and focus on what I wanted to do, which is a great thing about Mills—they really encourage students to focus on their own work and not to do something like somebody else.”

Taking courses and seminars with Frith, Curran and experimental composer Annie Gosfield, and studying cello with former Kronos Quartet cellist Joan Jeanrenaud (for



Kronos in the Mills Concert Hall (late 1970s).

## The Rebirth of Kronos Quartet

**O**n Sept. 19, 1978, violinists David Harrington and John Sherba learned that they needed to find new players to fill the viola and cello chairs in the Kronos Quartet. The quartet, founded by Harrington in Seattle five years earlier, had moved from New York to San Francisco in the summer of 1977 and was just about to begin a two-year residency at Mills College. Margaret Lyon, head of the Mills College music department had facilitated a grant for the residency from the fledgling Chamber Music America organization.

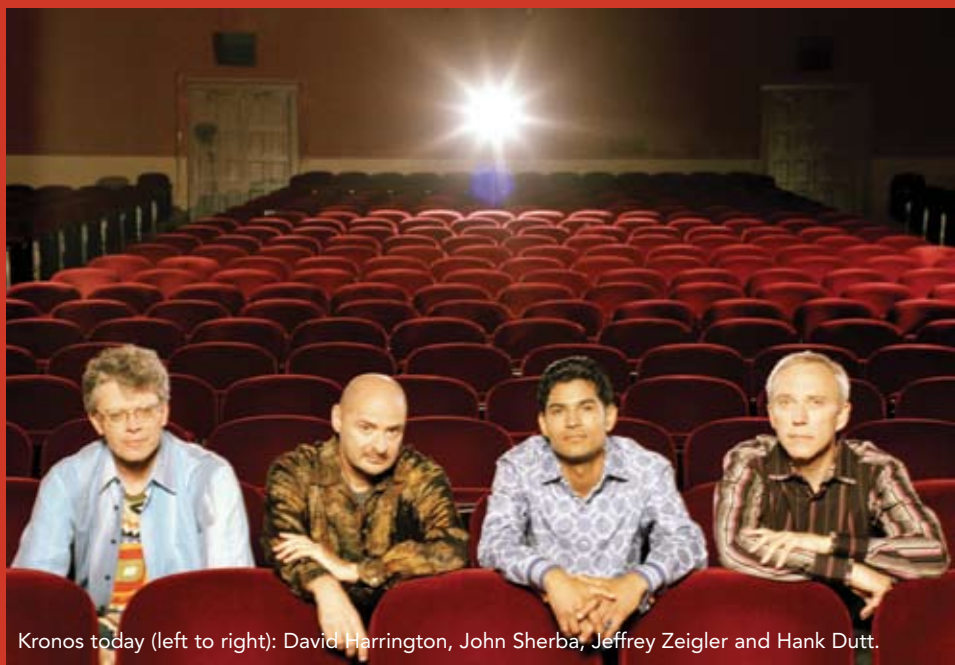
“I wrote a letter to Margaret telling her that John and I were now a duet,” Harrington recalls. “But she did not freak out at all. She wrote back, ‘Oh, David, I know you’ll solve this problem.’ She gave John and me her ultimate confidence and her belief in what could be part of the future.” Within a month or so, Kronos had two new members, violist Hank Dutt and cellist Joan Jeanrenaud, and the quartet plunged into two months of rehearsals, 10 to 12 hours a day, before performing its first concert with the membership that elevated Kronos to the world stage. Over the next 20 years, Kronos refined its innovative staging and renowned sartorial style, and recorded such pathbreaking albums as *Salome Dances for Peace*, *Different Trains*, *Black Angels*, *Pieces of Africa* and *Night Prayers*.

“Everything that Kronos has done since Sept. 19, 1978, is in large part due to the generosity and vision of Margaret Lyon,” Harrington says. “I will always be in her

debt. We were given a real large platform on which to experiment. It was a really important time for the gestation of our work and for us learning how to put our concert programs together.” During the concert that marked the end of Kronos’ residency, the quartet performed James Brown’s “Sex Machine”—with vocals by a singing robot named Elvik.

“The residency only lasted two years and wasn’t very lucrative,” adds cellist Jeanrenaud, “but it gave Kronos a base and some credibility.” It also allowed the quartet to forge a bond with minimalist composer Terry Riley, then on the Mills faculty, who has not only continued to write for the quartet over the years but also helped shape the signature Kronos sound by encouraging the players to replace the convention string-vibrato style of chamber quartets with more expressive use of the bow for timbral effects.

“Terry ended up being hugely important for Kronos and for me, too,” says Jeanrenaud, who teaches cello as a member of the Mills performance faculty. “And since I left Kronos [in 1999], the relationship with Mills has been really nice for me. I’m not so interested in traveling, but I have the possibilities of working with all these people, like Annie Gosfield, who wrote a piece for me, and Alvin Curran, who wrote a piece for me and Willie [Winant]. And when they need a cellist for something, like for the Copland sextet and the Lachenmann concerts this fall, they usually call me.”



Kronos today (left to right): David Harrington, John Sherba, Jeffrey Zeigler and Hank Dutt.





William Winant was bequeathed Lou Harrison's hand-built gamelan and percussion instruments and donated them to Mills.



To hear MP3s of music  
by several of the musicians  
in this article, visit  
[www.oaklandmagazine.com](http://www.oaklandmagazine.com).

the New Klezmer Trio, Clarinet Thing and Snorkel—when he began his graduate studies. “I’m not so sure what I was looking for,” he says today, 10 years after finishing his MFA, “maybe just some new input. Maybe I was feeling that I was in a little bit of a dead end.” What he found was a community of people dedicated to thinking about music in a manner that he rarely encountered in his everyday life as a performer. “It gave me permission to be an intellectual in my own way. The world of the working jazz musician wasn’t giving me that hit.”

In recent years, Goldberg has earned a reputation as an authority in the music of such singular jazz composers as soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and pianists Andrew Hill and Thelonious Monk. Among the bands he performs with are guitarist Nels Cline’s New Monastery ensemble (playing the music of Hill) and the Bay Area trio Plays Monk. He finds himself constantly applying the knowledge he gleaned while studying musical analysis with David Bernstein. “We were looking at Brahms chamber music, Beethoven piano sonatas and the music of Schoenberg, and learning how to understand the structures and interrelationships,” Goldberg recalls. “That is something that I use every single day when I play Thelonious Monk’s music, because as a composer he was an equal to those guys. He wasn’t fooling around. Every single song he wrote is as well worked out and as inspired and as deeply insightful as the stuff we were looking at in David’s class. I learned how to understand themes, countermelodies and the way the harmony is used to create a real composition. I see exactly the same mechanisms at work in Monk.”

Goldberg’s approach to writing original music was affected by his work at Mills, as well. “From Alvin Curran I saw that you could slow down a lot,” he says. “I was writing music that moved really fast from beginning to end, with a lot of notes. One day I went into Alvin’s office and he was like, ‘Check this out, this thing I’m working on.’ It was just these beautiful chords that he let ring, and it occurred to me, there’s nothing wrong with just putting a sound out there and giving people time to appreciate it.”

whom she has since composed), Wong waxes enthusiastic about the accommodating atmosphere at Mills. “I could come in with some sort of slide projection and text piece or a video piece and show it to people and they would get it,” she explains, adding that she also plays

in a punk-rockabilly trio, Bolivar Zoar, with two other recent Mills grads, Ava Mendoza and MaryClare Brzytwa, and that she sometimes plays “amplified bicycle.” “It was really welcoming to be able to put all that stuff out there and have people be able to tackle it with you and work with you on it. And I felt very supported by different faculty in terms of performing. Fred and Joan and [bassist] Joelle [Leandre] have all invited me to do various collaborations.”

“The aesthetic changes depending on who’s there. Maybe that’s what’s unique about Mills; it doesn’t have one aesthetic.”

—William Winant

Wong also cultivated relationships in the community outside Mills. “One of the first things I did was sign up for a Moe!khestra!” she says, referring to the occasional conducted-improvisation ensembles organized by free-spirited percussionist Moe! Staiano. “For me, meeting and connecting

with people at concerts was really important, too, because it widened my perspective. It’s like tending to a garden behind the walls and then going out and presenting stuff and getting feedback.”

Musicians do come away from Mills with theoretical refinements and concrete skills that deepen their practice and understanding of music. Like many Mills music students, Oakland clarinetist Ben Goldberg was already a performing musician—in such groups as

## Flexibility Feeds the Future

The changes experienced by individual students are microcosmic indicators of the continual flux inherent in a music program dedicated to experimentation and uninhibited creativity. That fluidity makes it impossible to make predictions about the future of the music program. "The department changes every year, depending on the students who enter and alter the chemistry of the community," says Fred Frith. "When we're successful it's because the students become inspired and spark one another's creativity. Apart from that obvious source of continuous revolution, the number of women in the graduate programs has steadily increased, the importance of which cannot be overstated; and I think we've integrated the undergraduate and graduate programs to the point where it really feels like a whole community."

"The most important change as far as I'm concerned," Frith continues, "is our MFA in improvisation, which is one of only a tiny handful of similar programs in North America that are not specifically tied to jazz or world music. The fact that we've had a Palestinian oud player and an Indian percussionist, both with strong roots in their own cultural practices, as well as classically trained violinists, rock guitarists and jazz saxophonists, has helped us to really focus on essentials, and I think the program has opened the door for the kinds of performers who, in order to come here, were previously forced to try and fit into a composition program that wasn't really designed for them."

Chris Brown and John Bischoff agree that the diverse nature of the student population

invigorates the program and shifts its emphases. "Every year there's a different blend of incoming students: Sometimes there are more composers, and other times more performers," Brown says. "Perhaps in the last few years, the mix has favored the latter, corresponding to the growth of interest in improvisation."

"The most fundamental change over the past few years," adds Bischoff, "has been that students come here much more computer savvy. They've been using computers for years—computers have always been there, and they don't know what it would be like without them. When I started at Mills, electronic music was like a fringe thing. So many people do electronic music of different kinds now; there isn't the same dividing line. The electronic music tradition is more like folk music—the way kids used to pick up a guitar, they now use their Mac with Garage Band on it."

Factor in a somewhat more stable but nonetheless transitory faculty roster, and you have a happily unsettled artistic sensibility. "The aesthetic changes depending on who's there," notes William Winant. "It's always changing. If you're going from Darius Mihaud to Terry Riley to Luciano Berio to Anthony Braxton to Fred Frith to Roscoe Mitchell to Helmut Lachenmann [the German composer in residence this fall], it seems the aesthetic is all over the map. Maybe that's what's unique about Mills; it doesn't have one aesthetic."

Another thing Mills doesn't have, according to Winant, is "a really good, modern performance space." Although the lovely Mills Concert Hall is being restored and retrofitted for earthquake safety, Winant notes

that it's not being renovated into the kind of multipurpose, state-of-the-art hall that CalArts, for instance, enjoys with its world-class REDCAT, or the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater.

David Bernstein acknowledges the inadequacies of the aging, somewhat cramped and run-down physical plant. "At the present moment the facilities are not very good," he grants. "We do have better equipment than we did in the past, but the building is basically a bunch of practice rooms." Improving the home of the music department, and especially the CCM, is high on Bernstein's wish list in his last year as chair. He hopes the college will see fit to provide the budgetary support as the music program enters a "new cycle" marked by Alvin Curran's retirement and Roscoe Mitchell's arrival. "We're at a very interesting moment in our history," he says, "a dissolution of the boundaries between composition and improvisation. Having Fred and Roscoe here at the same time creates a very interesting situation with a lot of potential for synergies and exciting things to happen." ■

## CHECK IT OUT

For information about Mill's College Music Department concerts and the Songlines Series, go to [www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/mus/concerts\\_and\\_songlines.php](http://www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/mus/concerts_and_songlines.php), or call (510) 430-2296.

For information about Signal Flow, the annual festival of new works by Mills music graduate students, go to [www.signal-flow.org](http://www.signal-flow.org).

## Selected Recordings From the Mills Axis

Various Artists, *Music from Mills* (Mills College, 1986). A three-LP anthology: Lou Harrison, Terry Riley, Dave Brubeck, Anthony Braxton, Maggi Payne, Pauline Oliveros, Steve Reich, Morton Subotnick and others.

Various Artists, *Computer Music Series, Volume 17: Music From the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College* (Centaur, 1995). John Bischoff, Chris Brown, Tom Erbe, Maggi Payne and Alvin Curran.

*Oasis: Music from Mills* (Mills College, 2001). Chris Brown, Fred Frith, Pauline Oliveros, Maggi Payne, John Bischoff and Alvin Curran.

Robert Ashley, *Improvement* (Nonesuch, 1992). Adam Klein, Amy X. Neuburg, Joan La Barbara, Robert Ashley and Thomas Buckner. Orchestra conducted by Sam Ashley.

*Dave Brubeck Octet* (OJC/Concord Music Group, 1946/1991).

John Cage, *Sonatas and Interludes* (Music & Arts, 2005). Julie Steinberg, prepared piano.

Deep Listening Band, *Non Stop Flight* (Music & Arts, 1998). Recorded live at Mills College in 1996 by Pauline Oliveros with the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, the Hub and many guest artists.

Fred Frith and Chris Brown, *Cutter Heads* (Intakt Records, 2007). Electric and acoustic guitars, piano and electronics.

Ben Goldberg, *The Door The Hat The Chair The Fact* (Cryptogramophone, 2006).

Lou Harrison, *Rhymes With Silver* (New Albion, 2000). Joan Jeanrenaud, William Winant, Julie Steinberg, Benjamin Simon and David Abel.

The Hub, *Wreckin' Ball* (Artifact, 1994). Live computer network music by Mark Trayle, Phil Stone, Scot Gresham-Lancaster, John Bischoff, Chris Brown and Tim Perkis, plus Alvin Curran and Rova.

Joan Jeanrenaud, *Metamorphosis* (New Albion, 2002). Compositions by Joan Jeanrenaud, Philip Glass, Hamza El Din, Karen Tanaka, Steven Mackey and Mark Grey.

Kronos Quartet, *25 Years: Retrospective* (Nonesuch, 1998).

Joëlle Leandré, Damon Smith, Martin Blume, Aurora Josephson, *Cruxes* (Balance Point Acoustics, 2004).

Maybe Monday, *Digital Wildlife* (Winter & Winter, 2002). Fred Frith, Joan Jeanrenaud, Miya Masaoka and Larry Ochs.

Roscoe Mitchell & The Note Factory, *Song for My Sister* (Pi Recordings, 2002).

Joanna Newsom, *Ys*. (Drag City, 2006).

Terry Riley, *In C: 25th Anniversary Concert* (New Albion, 1995). Featuring Chris Brown, Kronos Quartet, William Winant, Ramon Sender, Henry Kaiser and others.

David Rosenboom and Anthony Braxton, *Two Lines* (Lovely Music, 1995).

John Zorn, *From Silence to Sorcery* (Tzadik, 2007). Featuring a solo piece for 13 tuned drums performed by William Winant.