Opus Zero Band and Williams Symphonic Winds
Steven Dennis Bodner, director

AFTERSHOCKS
8 May 2010

When planning the 2009-2010 concert season for Opus Zero Band/Symphonic Winds, I knew that I wanted our final concert (which would mark both the final concert for a group of especially dedicated seniors and the end of my 10th year directing the group) to feature music with a strong Williams connection. I spoke with David Kechley about performing both *BANG!*, a work he had written for SymphWinds in 2005, and possibly something new: perhaps a piece that responded to *BANG!*—an aftershock, of sorts? In the end, Opus Zero Band needed a work for our recent CBDNA conference performance, and so David and I settled on the idea of creating an arrangement of his saxophone quartet *Rush*.

The rest of the program was intended to be pieces by current students, and maybe others with a Williams connection: Jacob Walls ‘11 was asked to write a work for SymphWinds that would feature two of our outstanding horn players; Brian Simalchik ‘10 volunteered to write a work for Opus Zero Band, a proposition that I enthusiastically endorsed. I knew we would be performing Judd Greenstein ‘01’s *Get Up/Get Down* on our CBDNA performance in March, too, so if the work was reprised (along with *Rush*), it seemed that we had the beginnings of an interesting all-Williams program.

However, when David announced this fall that he would be stepping down as chair of the music department, the spark of an idea for this concert finally ignited: why not create a concert that featured works that were, in themselves, “aftershocks” of David’s *BANG!*? And so, I asked five alumni-composers – Douglas Boyce ‘92, Brian Coughlin ‘95, Andrea Mazzariello ‘00, Andres Carrizo ‘04, and Benjamin Wood ‘08 – to each write a “postcard” to David. They were each sent a score and recording of *BANG!* and asked to write a short piece for chamber ensemble that somehow incorporated an idea or aspect of David’s piece in their work.

The series of “Aftershock Postcards” we received from these five composers are a true testament to David’s caring mentorship of students and his inspired stewardship of our music department. The works are as diverse as they are interesting, ranging from Andrea Mazzariello’s intimate trio to Brian Coughlin’s exuberant, over-sided (!) postcard and more. Each alumus answered the call uniquely, and we are excited to share these wonderful works with you all – and we are honored to present to David this concert as a token of our appreciation and admiration. Thank you, David, for all that you have done for Symphonic Winds/Opus Zero, all of our students both past and present, and for the entire Music Department!

—SDB
**PROGRAM NOTES**


Since the 1968 premiere of Second Composition for Large Orchestra by the Seattle Symphony, David Kechley (b. 1947) has produced works in all genres. His music draws from a variety of sources including the “usual suspects” of twentieth-century concert music, composers from the more distant past and present, and many forms of vernacular, popular, and ethnic musics. Although these influences are generally integrated into a consistent style, the resulting musical narratives often create sharp contrasts between lyricism, virtuosity, and dramatic gesture.

Kechley’s work has been recognized by a Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (1979), grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1979), and commissions from the Barlow Foundation (1998) and the New England Orchestra Consortium (2004). He also won the 1994 Lee Ettelson Prize, as well as first prizes in the Shreveport Symphony Composers’ Competition (1980-81) and the Opus I Chamber Orchestra Contest for Ohio Composers (1979). His works have been commissioned and performed throughout the USA and abroad by ensembles such as the Boston Pops, Cleveland Orchestra, United States Military Academy Band, Kronos String Quartet, Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, and Vienna Saxophone Quartet, among others. Some of his most recent premieres are **BOUNCE: Inventions, Interludes, and Interjections**, premiered at the World Saxophone Congress in July 2006 in Ljubljana, Slovenia by the Ryoanji Duo; **WAKEFUL VISIONS/MOONLESS DREAMS: A Symphony in Four Movement**, premiered by the Berkshire Symphony in February 2008; **MIXED MESSAGES: Variations on a Fragment** by the Fireworks Ensemble in September 2008; and **DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTIONS: Trialogues for Trumpet, Saxophone and Percussion**, premiered by I/O New Music last week. He was awarded residencies at The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in 2002, Yaddo in 2006, and the MacDowell Colony in 2009.

For the Opus Zero Band’s performance at the 2010 CBDNA Eastern Division conference at West Chester University this past March, Kechley adapted his most recent saxophone quartet, **Rush** (2002), for a mixed ensemble of woodwind septet, string trio, percussion, and piano. Writing about the original saxophone quartet version, Kechley offers the following about **Rush**:

*The fast and furious work was inspired by a radio broadcast of West Point Saxophone Quartet, which the composer heard in his car. The new virtuosity of this group and its convincing performances of chromatic, rhythmic, and edgy sorts of pieces made a strong impression. The result is a cutting-edge addition to the saxophone quartet repertoire. Rush was written during the composer’s Bellagio residency in the summer of 2002 and the West Point Quartet recorded it soon after. It was then given its official premiere at World Saxophone Congress XIII. The piece opens with a seamless line of 16th notes beginning softly and growing. The tempo is relentless even during the more lyrical “chorale with protesting soloist” middle section and the piece begins and ends with the same unison passage consisting of 700+ notes!*  

With its intricately hocketed and syncopated rhythms, spiky unison lines, and schizophrenically-changing moods, this expanded chamber version, **Rush** is a miniature study in ensemble virtuosity, offering a model for music’s meaning not being found solely “in the music,” but more importantly in the collective performance.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Kechley was educated at the University of Washington, Cleveland Institute of Music, and Case Western Reserve University. His teachers include Paul Tufts, Robert Suderburg, William Bergsma, James Beale, and Donald Erb. His music is available and released on the Liscio Recordings, Albany Records, Reference Recording, and others.

After performing with various punk rock bands, Douglas Boyce attended Williams College, receiving BA degrees in Physics and Music, with honors, in 1992. He holds an MM from the University of Oregon and a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. He is Associate Professor of Music at the George Washington University in Washington, DC, and is a founding member of the New York new music collective counter)induction; his works have been awarded the Salvatore Martirano Prize (2006), the Avalon Prize (2010), and the Leage of Composers ISCM Composers competition (2005), and have been commissioned by Concert Artists' Guild, the Catholic University of America, and violinist Miranda Cuckson. Current projects include The Instances, a work for guitar and string quartet commissioned by Marco Cappelli, and The Girl who Watered the Basil, a pocket-opera based on the eponymous play by Federico Garcia Lorca, A Brief History of Acceleration for jazz ensemble, and a new work for the ensemble Beta Collide.

About his Aftershock Postcard, Douglas writes:

A work like this—a recollection of a great teacher—must in homage focus, in part or in whole, on the lessons taught and wisdom imparted. Perhaps the greatest lesson Dave taught me was as I prepared my senior recital – I shared with him a rehearsal recording of a string trio, and he paused from erasing a black board, turned his head over his shoulder and said, "It's good; it's lyrical, but it's a HARD lyrical." This foregrounding of aesthetic complementation has stayed strongly present for me, especially in Dave's typically succinct crystallization; opposites need to be coupled precisely because they are not opposites.

If the first half of this Postcard is the ghostly return of 1992's “hard lyricism,” then the second half presents Dave's second and deeper truth, the ineluctable need for funk.

The piece is a soggetto cavato, in fine renaissance style. The melodic material of the first half, the chords at the end, and the slowly emerging bass line of the second part are all transliterations of David Kechley's name. This term, originally “soggetto cavato dalle parole” (a subject carved out of the words) was coined by Zarlino in 1558 to denote the special class of thematic subjects for polyphonic compositions that were derived from a phrase associated with them by matching the vowels of the words to the corresponding vowels of the traditional Guidonian solmization syllables (ut re mi fa sol la). My system of transliteration derives from Ravel's refinement of the system described by Zarlino; each letter of the alphabet “maps” on to one of the 12 pitches, producing a more chromatic fundamental set than either Ravel's or Zarlino's system. In this piece, the intervals of the resulting pitch sets generate the musical material, and also, in a fit of Boulezian multiplication, also determine the places to which this material travels. It is technical, but as Dave might say, it is a funky technical.

Many thanks to Steven Bodner for putting this project together so quickly and so secretly, and hearty congratulations to Dave as he moves into this next period of his composing.

David Lang: Street (1994)

People seem to like a lot of things happening in a piece of music: fireworks, excitement, fancy technology. These things can be great, but sometimes, as a composer, it's tiring to know that everyone wants so many things all of the time.

-David Lang

According to composer/critic Kyle Gann, David Lang (b. 1957) straddles the uptown and downtown worlds of the New York new music scene more effectively than any other composer. As Alex Ross wrote in The New Yorker: “Lang, once a postminimalist enfant terrible, has solidified his standing as an
American master.” Lang won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for The Little Match Girl Passion (which also won a 2009 Grammy), a work that elicited The Washington Post’s Tim Page to write: “I don't think I've ever been so moved by a new […] composition as I was by David Lang's Little Match Girl Passion which is unlike any music I know.” Besides the Pulitzer, Lang is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including a Bessie Award (1999) for his music in choreographer Susan Marshall's The Most Dangerous Room in the House, the 2000 Village Voice OBIE Award for Best New American Work for The Carbon Copy Building, the Rome Prize, the BMW Music-Theater Prize (Munich), and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is one of America’s most performed composers, with recent performances at the Paris Opera and Lincoln Center; by groups such as the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Kronos Quartet; and during the Sidney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival and the Almeida, Holland, Berlin, and Strasbourg Festivals.

Lang’s music often synthesizes a minimalist aesthetic with a rock sensibility; however, his music tends to be less systematic and rhythmically complex than that of his totalist/postclassical contemporaries, as he tends to opt instead for theatrical gestures in his music. Los Angeles Times music critic Mark Swed capitulates to Lang's un-categorizable style, writing: "There is no name yet for this kind of music." Although he studied “formally” at Yale, Lang was just as much influenced by rock and jazz musics—and so his music doesn’t seem to fit into any traditional box. During a PBS interview, Lang quipped (describing not only himself, but several generations of composers now): “The thing about a record store is they have all the different sections of the store to make it easy for you to find the music you know you like. But you may not be the kind of composer who wants to fit in one of those categories. Those composers don't have a venue, a kind of place that supports them, a kind of funder that supports them. They don't have musical institutions that support them or radio stations which just play that kind of music. You know, they don't have a good place to go. They're homeless.”

Along with composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe, Lang founded Bang on a Can to give these “homeless composers” a home. Described by the San Francisco Chronicle as “the country's most important vehicle for contemporary music,” Bang on a Can was once “only” a one-day new music festival; now BoaC is a multi-faceted organization dedicated to commissioning, performing, creating, presenting, and recording contemporary music, and whose mission is “to expose exciting and innovative music as broadly and accessibly as possible to new audiences worldwide.” BoaC has thrived on the fringes of the classical music world for about 20 years, happily blending everything from Gregorian chant to the rock band Radiohead. However, with the growing popularity of their day-long Marathon concerts, the successful touring of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the annual three-week Summer Music Festival mounted at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams (ten minutes from Williams College), and now with one of the co-founders being a Pulitzer laureate, the group seems suddenly in danger of becoming mainstream. As Lang responds, though: “I actually think what happened is not that anything has changed to make us more institutional or more mainstream, and certainly nothing's changed in my music. I'm sure I am the weirdest composer ever to win a Pulitzer Prize.”

Many of Lang’s pieces resemble each other only in the fierce intelligence and clarity of vision that inform their structures. His catalogue is extensive, and his opera, orchestral, chamber and solo works are by turns ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling and very emotionally direct. Much of his work seeks to expand the definition of virtuosity in music—even the deceptively simple pieces can be fiendishly difficult to play and require incredible concentration by musicians and audiences alike. As Molly Sheridan writes, Lang’s style is “stripped down to the bare essentials [which] makes the (often religious) underpinnings of the works more universal yet renders their message exponentially more
potent. In all cases...the music pulls [the listeners]—deeply, completely, without gratuitous fanfare—through these collected moments of incredible pain and amazing beauty.”

*Street* (1994) was written for the Dutch wind band *Orkest de Volharding* (“Orchestra of Perseverance”) that Louis Andriessen formed in 1971. Creating a work of “amazing beauty”—one which calls for subtlety in balance and a dynamic never above *piano*—for Volharding was an ironic, but inspired choice for Lang, especially given that Andriessen once described the ensemble as “loud, out of tune, and asynchronous.” (Andriessen once retold this story, too: “Classical musicians are really a medium. They say, ‘You write a B-flat, I give you a B-flat.’ But a colleague, a classically-trained composer, wrote for De Volharding, and after a rehearsal came to me: ‘It’s completely different to all my former experiences, because when I write a B-flat, I don’t get back my B-flat, I get De Volharding back.’ You see the difference?”) Lang’s explanation of his choice reveals his sophisticated thoughtfulness: “What kind of music do you give to your friends? Sometimes you give them what they want; sometimes you give them what they didn't know they wanted until you gave it.”

Lang has often described his music as “about the struggle to create beauty,” which seems not only to concisely describe the essence of performing and listening to *Street*, but also serve as metaphor for David Kechley’s accomplishments as chair: despite whatever struggles we have faced, there can be no doubt that *beauty* has been created and maintained.

About *Street*, Lang offers:

> What occurred to me while writing my piece was that the actual street was there long before Louis imagined what sort of ensemble should be standing upon it. What sort of music would a hip, dynamic, no-nonsense street band have played if it had been standing on that street 400 years earlier, founded not by Andriessen but by, maybe, Sweelinck, for example? Just as Louis created for *Orkest de Volharding* a complete musical world out of a few fundamental musical concepts, my piece concentrates on a few 16th-century ideas — most notably ideas about vocal lines, suspensions, and scales — focusing in on them relentlessly until they take over the entire piece.

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**Andrea Carrizo ‘04: Aftershock Postcard: *For David* (2010)**

Andrés Carrizo was born in Panama City, Panama, in 1982. The son of a professional Jazz arranger and musician, Carrizo was exposed to music and performance at an early age. While a student at Williams College, Carrizo began studying composition in 2001, under the tutelage of Ileana Perez-Velazquez and David Kechley. After graduating with a B.A. in History and Music (with Honors in Music Composition), he moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he studied composition privately with Argentine pianist and composer Gerardo Gandini. In August 2007, Carrizo completed a Master’s degree in Music Composition at Bowling Green State University, where he studied with Burton Beerman, Marilyn Shrude, and Mikel Kuehn. He is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Music Composition at the University of Chicago, where he is studying with Marta Ptaszynska.

His music has been performed by the Fireworks Ensemble (New York), the Orquesta Nacional de Sopros dos Templários (Portugal), the Salzedo Harp Duo (Toledo, OH), cellist Ronald Feldman, the Interlochen Symphony Orchestra, the Cosmos Saxophone Quartet, Primary Colors Trio, the Pacifica String Quartet, and eighth blackbird.

Andrés’s *For David* explores the interesting, fragile, introspective sounds of a quartet of violin, guitar, saxophone, and piano. Andrés writes the following about his work:
By the summer of 2003, I had already studied under David in some capacity (first as a theory student, then as his composition student) for almost two years. That summer, I stayed in Williamstown working for David, and got to know several pieces of his quite well: in particular his piece FLOW for Cello and Orchestra, and his Soft Refrains and Gentle Whispers for 20 (yeah... 20!) harps. As I heard more of his music, I noticed a particularly striking rising line that appeared in a few of them, almost as if it were his musical signature, and one which I associated aurally with him immediately. When Steve Bodner contacted us (some of his former students) to propose these “postcards,” and sent us a recording of BANG!, I noticed a similar rising line in the first few seconds, and thought it natural to base an homage to him around what I thought was one of his music’s most salient characteristics. Of course, this is all a way of expressing my deepest love and admiration for a wonderful, caring teacher, and an even better person. Thank you for everything!

**Brian Simalchik ‘10: Rain Towards Morning (2010)**

Brian Simalchik’s *Rain Towards Morning* is a setting of the first stanza of Elizabeth Bishop’s poem of the same name as text:

> The great light cage has broken up in the air
> Freeing, I think, about a million birds,
> Whose wild ascending shadows will not be back.
> And all the wires come falling down.

As Brian remarks:

> I love Bishop’s poetry because of its lyrical, understated language and the strange power of its imagery. The images in these four lines are both fantastical and enigmatic: a cage of light disintegrating in the air, its wires falling down to earth and releasing the shadows of millions of birds. But the title of the poem grounds these images in the physical world, employing them to elucidate on something as simple as a rainstorm. That’s why the poem never comes across as purely fantastic: its imagery is used to openly examine the quality of a moment in time, not just deployed as empty descriptive language.

> My music is similarly concerned with constructing a kind of moment in time, eschewing quick shifts or hurried development in favor of a careful examination and breakdown of a simple melodic phrase. Within the three main instrumental choirs (saxophones, violas and sopranos), much of the music is imitative and canonic, which blurs the horizontal movement of the piece and, I think, is a clearly audible analog to the motion of birds flying in groups.

> But even more than imitating natural behavior or trying to slow the passing of time, the procedures, timbral choices and structure of this piece were designed to create a coherent and resonant mood. There is a kind of beautiful, wide-eyed quality to Bishop’s poetic voice, as she turns the ordinary into the lyrical, a passing moment into a wide and richly evocative landscape. My goal with this piece was to do the same with music, hopefully creating an acoustic space that invites listeners to consider the power of something that, at first glance, seems simple.

Brian Simalchik ‘10 is a composer of concert music, with roots in rock n’ roll, classical music and minimalism. He’s currently a senior at Williams College, majoring in music and active as a performer, conductor and composer. He was recently in residency at Mass MOCA with Roomful of Teeth, an eight-member vocal ensemble focusing on extended vocal techniques, and wrote two pieces especially for them that were premiered at a concluding concert. In April 2010 his honors thesis composition *Wey-Gat Cycles* was premiered by the Berkshire Symphony. The Williams Symphonic Winds recently premiered two of his pieces: *when I lived in permanence* for three amplified cellos and wind ensemble, and
Untitled, which was presented in collaborations with the Williams Dance Company. His score for the documentary Child of Hope: Darfur Dreams of Peace won best soundtrack at the 2008 Kent Film Festival, and he has had premieres by the both the Williams Percussion Ensemble and the Williams Student Symphony. In January 2010 his piece Modular Homes was premiered during the I/O New Music Festival. In addition to being co-conductor of Student Symphony for the 2009-2010 year, Brian has conducted performances of music of John Luther Adams, Arvo Pärt, Missy Mazzoli, and Sarah Kirkland Snider with the Williams Symphonic Winds and Iota Ensembles.

A full recital of Brian’s works is scheduled for Friday, May 14 at 4:15 p.m in the Chapin Courtyard. The recipient of the 2010 Hutchinson Fellowship in Music, Brian will be attending The Hartt School in West Hartford, CT, this fall, pursuing a Masters degree in composition.


Writer, artist, and musician Andrea Mazzariello is a doctoral fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University. His diverse creative output includes concert music, rock songs, sound design, prose, and collage. His work has been performed or exhibited in diverse venues, including the Fringe Festival in New York, the 555 Gallery/Studio in Detroit, and the South by Southwest music festival in Austin, by such ensembles as the Berkshire Symphony, NOW Ensemble, Newspeak, and So Percussion. For more information please visit andreamazzariello.com, or say hello after the show.

Andrea writes the following:

Brave Art New God steals a prominent pitch collection from BANG! and writes “into” it, stretching out the line, creating new metric emphases and harmonic contexts. It also highlights an orchestration technique that David Kechley threatened to steal from one of my early pieces, after I stumbled onto the combination of flute and bassoon in unison or close proximity, in their respective lowest and highest registers. I very much appreciate the chance to do work in tribute to a great teacher, mentor, and friend, so would like to thank Steven Bodner for the opportunity.

Judd Greenstein ’01: Get Up/Get Down (2006)

A generation was bound to come along for which the reduced status of modern classical music was no tragedy, simply a fact of life; pop music no corporate hegemon, but a fellow traveler; aesthetics no life-or-death agon, but a shopping mall of viable brands. That generation has arrived. And Greenstein is emerging as one of its chief spokespersons.

-Kyle Gann, Chamber Music: January/February 2010

In a 2007 article in the New Yorker, Alex Ross (author of The Rest is Noise) mapped “New York’s vibrant contemporary-classical scene”; the first two composers that Ross listed as being at the heart of the scene: Nico Muhly (recently commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera) and Judd Greenstein.

Judd Greenstein (b. 1979) was born and raised in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City, where he began his compositional life by writing hip-hop beats as a teenager. Judd has received degrees from Williams College—where he studied composition with David Kechley—and the Yale School of Music, and he has been a Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and the Bang on a Can Summer Institute of Music (where he studied with David Lang, too). Much of Judd’s work is written for the virtuosic ensembles and solo performers who make up the indie-classical community in New York. Central to his output is his work for NOW Ensemble, the composer/performer collective for whom Judd has written over an hour of music, including two pieces that can be heard on the group’s eponymous 2008 album. In addition he also written several works for Roomful of Teeth, the new music vocal ensemble directed by Brad Wells. Judd’s works have been heard at festivals such as the Tanglewood
Festival of Contemporary Music, the Bang on a Can Marathon MATA, the Carlsbad Music Festival, Wordless Music, Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh), Icebreaker (Seattle), the Look & Listen Festival, and the Kyiv Music Festival in the Ukraine. After winning ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Awards in 2004 and 2008, he received the 2009 ASCAP Leonard Bernstein Composer Fellowship. Returning full-circle to his first compositional exploits, Judd is currently at Princeton University completing his PhD dissertation on hip-hop music.

His concert works reflect not only his hip-hop origins, but also his traditional piano background, combining an urban, beat-oriented sensibility with a late Romantic classical harmonic language. Composer and former Village Voice music critic Kyle Gann recently wrote that: “Judd Greenstein writes happy music. By that I don’t mean simply that it’s upbeat, energetic, in major keys, though it is often those things. I mean it’s characterized by almost a prelapsarian innocence: it doesn’t seem to bear scars from the fractures and antagonisms of 20th-century music. It doesn’t have any “tough” structural elements to prove its intellectual bona fides, and neither does it indulge in audience-baiting comfortable grooves.” Gann continues, describing Judd’s music as “bright, clever, inventive, and playful,” which it certainly is. Even when a piece has a foot-tapping and diatonic pop surface, the background is rooted in layers of rhythmic/polymetric complexity and melodic density.

Get Up/Get Down was commissioned by the Milwaukee-based new music ensemble Present Music. Judd has this to say about the work:

“I grew up in New York City, and I grew up listening mostly to hip-hop music. In the late 1980s and into the mid-1990s, hip hop beats were full of outstanding samples from funk, soul, and jazz, and the sounds of those musics were lodged in my memory through the filter of rap. Later in life, I was introduced to the original material, and fell for it, hard – from Philadelphia Soul to Afro-Beat to late Motown and everything in between.

One of my personal beliefs about writing music is that whatever we love will be present in the work we make, like it or not. That presence won’t always be overt, but it will somehow work its way in there. The "elephant in the room" for my own music is the question of where my hip-hop background makes itself known in my "classical" compositions. I think there are ways in which this happens that are subtle and interesting (probably only to me), but it does seem strange that so few of my works have explored anything connected to the music that brought me in to the world of music-writing.

A couple of years ago, I decided that I wanted to go straight at this issue, and write something funky, leaving hip-hop aside, and going towards the source material that I now love. Get Up/Get Down is the result of that ambition, not as a self-conscious "exploration of funk" or something ridiculous like that, but as a piece where I let myself be pulled towards material that has always attracted me – funky bass lines, big horn hits, snare drum and hi-hat-driven drum patterns (largely left to the imagination of the drummer), wah-wah guitar licks. I wasn’t trying to write a "funk song," but I opened a door that I often enter as a listener, this time with my composer hat on. The result is a piece that’s not quite like anything I’ve ever written—in a good way.

In addition to his work as a composer, Judd is active as a promoter of new music in New York and around the country. He is co-director of New Amsterdam Records, the record label and artists' organization that Newsweek writer Seth Colter Walls (brother of composer Jacob Walls ’11) calls "an upstart label that’s been releasing one quality disc after another since its founding," and which New York magazine critic Justin Davidson places "at the center" of New York's burgeoning indie classical scene.
Currently pursuing a PhD in computer science at the University of Washington in Seattle, Benjamin Wood majored in computer science and music at Williams, graduating in 2008. In the Williams music department, Ben studied composition with David Kechley, Ileana Perez-Velazquez, and Stephen Dankner, and was a member (playing both trumpet and percussion) of various ensembles, including the Symphonic Winds, Percussion Ensemble, and Brass Ensemble. Sky Islands is Ben’s first new piece since Forgotten Skies was premiered by the Symphonic Winds in the spring of 2007.

Ben writes the following about Sky Islands:

On a climb of Mount Saint Helens last summer, I stood on the crater rim, at the apex of the massive mountain and the gaping void carved from it. On the horizon, towering far above waves of clouds on an endless sea of lesser mountains, stood the great volcanic massifs of Mount Rainier, Mount Adams, Mount Hood, and, in the distance, Mount Jefferson. Silent musics floated across the void from each of these lonely islands in the sky, perpetually interweaving.

Sky Islands is a “postcard” written to David Kechley in celebration of his mentorship of Williams’ young composers, and to Steve Bodner and the Williams Symphonic Winds and Opus Zero Band for their committed performances of these composers’ works. The Symphonic Winds premiered BANG! five years ago, during my first year in the ensemble. Recurring motives in the piece built on ascending and descending sequences of major and minor thirds captured my imagination then as they do now. For me, they evoke a very physical sense of big vertical open spaces. Sky Islands reinterprets the sets of pitches outlined by these sequences and experiments more directly with the feeling of open space through three antiphonal brass trios.

Jacob Walls ’11: Three Bands (2010)
Three Bands is the third in a series of works commissioned by SymphWinds, written by junior music majors and meant to provide solo vehicles for senior performers. [The first two were Benjamin Wood’s Forgotten Skies (2007) which featured Ian Jessen as oboe/English horn soloist, and Brian Simulchik’s when I lived in permanence (2009) which featured Mimi Lou, Betsy Ribble, and Katie Palmer as cello soloists.] For Three Bands, Jacob Walls ’11 was asked to write a piece for two horn soloists, senior Elizabeth Irvin and junior Peter Gottlieb. About this new work, Jacob writes:

Three Bands takes its horn soloists and treats them as protagonists. After trips through three musical areas (at first stately and mercurial, turning aggressive but quizzical, and following with a chorale), the horns preside over their synthesis, having traded their opening teasing minor-thirds for stately minor-sevenths. So why call these three ideas bands? One of Ronald Reagan’s earliest political speeches takes the opportunity to deride a “morality gap” at UC-Berkeley by detailing the vices of a particular dance party. Two of the complaints were simple enough: the smell of drugs in the hall and the screening of videos with nudity. But the complaint that seemed out of place to me was that “Three rock and roll bands played simultaneously.” He cites only three sins, and one of them is purely musical? Maybe I shouldn’t have been so surprised: Mozart’s miscreant Don Giovanni dances to three superimposed tunes, and Stockhausen is a bit of a miscreant himself for scoring Gruppen for four orchestras. Even in pop music, The Flaming Lips’ release Zaireeka for four-disc simultaneous playback comes with a studio-imposed warning about the alleged dangerous effects of the high frequencies on the discs. Three Bands is not rock and roll music, and it’s not antiphonal. It is, however, about taking the horn soloists to a synthesis of three musics and teasing the boundary between gentle and mean sounds along the way. It edges right up to a morality gap, if there is one.
Jacob Walls is a junior from Forest Grove, Oregon, majoring in music and philosophy, and studying composition with David Kechley and Ileana Perez Velazquez. Jacob plays trumpet in several Williams ensembles, and was featured as soloist on Ives's *The Unanswered Question* with the Student Symphony in 2009. He conducted the Symphonic Winds in a concert last spring and he will co-conduct next year's Student Symphony season. The Berkshire Symphony will perform his senior thesis in April 2011. *Three Bands* is his third campus premiere, following works for brass ensemble and for the 2010 I/O New Music Festival.

**Brian Coughlin ’95: Aftershock Postcard: Cor (2010)**

Brian Coughlin has won acclaim throughout the United States as an ensemble director, a versatile double- and electric bassist, and as a genre-defying composer. In 2002 he founded the Fireworks Ensemble, a group hailed as “the hottest classical band in New York” and “the bridge between the contemporary classical new music ensemble and the mainstream, popular audience.” Prior to founding Fireworks, he served as music director of the Hartt Sinfonietta, the Black Sheep Ensemble, and the Noise Factory new music group. Brian has performed hundreds of concerts throughout the United States in venues ranging from venerable classical music institutions such as the Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, to prominent jazz venues such as the Saratoga Jazz Festival, to major rock clubs such as Toad’s Place in New Haven. He has performed as a soloist with the Berkshire Symphony, and has premiered over fifty new works written for him.

Praised by NPR as having a “gift for melody,” Brian has arranged and composed extensively for Fireworks Ensemble, most notably creating a celebrated, rock-inspired arrangement of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. He has also written music for ensembles such as The Eugene Opera, The Berkshire Symphony, Basso Bongo, oboist Humbert Lucarelli, Cygnus, The Pacific Rim Gamelan, Non-Sequitur, The Island Breeze Steel Drum Band, and the rock band Oneida. Brian holds both a Master of Music degree in Composition from the University of Oregon and a Master of Music degree in Double Bass Performance from the Hartt School, as well as a Bachelor’s degree from Williams College. His teachers include Robert Black and Milt Hinton (bass), and David del Tredici, Robert Kyr, and George Tsontakis (composition).

About Cor, Brian has written:

*Cor, my first work for wind ensemble, utilizes a concept known as the “wedge progression” introduced by music theorist Robert Gauldin to analyze certain types of chromatic harmony in which the outer voices of a harmonic progression move away from one another by half-steps. In traditional harmony, examples of this are typically small isolated events. In Cor, however, the “wedge” concept makes up the entirety of the harmonic material of the work.*

*The piece starts with a unison middle C in the keyboard and mallet instruments and moves away in both directions in progressive half steps, each step forming a new harmony. As the piece expands away from the central C, more instruments of the ensemble are added, creating an orchestral crescendo as the pitch material expands outward. Each new harmony is repeated at the discretion of the conductor. The conductor is also given the freedom to dynamically modify the texture of the piece by changing the volume of the various instrumental choirs.*

*Cor means both “horn” and “heart.” Due to the expanding harmonic motion and orchestral crescendo within the piece, the score resembles a heart when reduced to a single page. This symbol seemed appropriate to express my deep affection and respect for Prof. David Kechley on the occasion of his stepping down as chair of the Williams College music department.*

BANG! was commissioned in 2005 by a consortium of ensembles led by Symphonic Winds and wind ensembles from the following schools: Cal State-Long Beach (John Carnahan, director), The University of Texas-Tyler (Jeffrey Emge, director), Southwestern (TX) University (Lois Ferrari, director), Franklin and Marshall College (Brian Norcross, director), Towson University (Dana Rothlisberger, director), University of Washington (Tim Salzman, director), and Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Jack Stamp, director). It was his third work for large wind ensemble, following Fanfares and Reflections (1984) and Restless Birds Before the Dark Moon (2000), which won the 24th annual National Band Association William D. Revelli Composition Contest. Tonight’s concert marks the second performance of BANG! by the Symphonic Winds; it was one of the first works commissioned by the Symphonic Winds and it was premiered by the ensemble on its May 13, 2005 concert.

David has written the following about the work:

BANG! begins with a musical statement that is clearly enough to explain its title. In fact, the entire first section of the piece is generated by repetitions of this opening cluster of drums as it continues to trigger the woodwinds into creating ever expanding and contracting lines before they finally begin to fragment as new explosions emerge. Beyond this literal reference, the musical ideas and structure of this work are, in fact, inspired by the concept of the "big bang" theory in which the universe is constantly expanding having started from a single point. It seems that, like a rubber band, it may also begin to contract some time in the distant future all the way back to that single point and even beyond! It is impossible to truly wrap one's mind around this, but it is quite fascinating to try.

Above all this is a piece of music with melodies, harmonies, timbres, and rhythms that will hopefully excite, delight, frighten, amuse, and perhaps even give comfort at times. It is not an attempt to represent such cosmic ideas as the "big bang." How futile would that be? However, these ideas do provide interesting musical analogies that can be heard in the outer sections of the piece. There are harmonic progressions, which begin as widely spaced chords and contract into tone clusters or move in the opposite way from the densest possible aggregate of notes expanded structures that are more sonorous due to the open spaces between the notes. Chords and melodies through out the piece are constantly moving toward or away from each other and similar rates. Even the opening lines which provide the thematic basis for much of the work are always presented as at least two lines in mirror images which continue to move both higher and lower simultaneously. Percussive explosions are often the impetus for the bursts of energy created by the winds and brass.

Although the work is continuous, there are clearly three primary sections. The middle section is perhaps more humanly inspired as it features a full flute choir with bass and alto flutes playing a modal chorale interspersed with various solo instruments which play more expressive versions of the same material that opens the work. However, even this tranquility becomes more restless as external forces continue to bombard and undermine it. The pent up emotion of the flute choir’s plaintive song does reach full fruition, however, before the drum cluster once again triggers an explosion, which this time expands even further in displays of musical fireworks and intensity. The final seconds of the work bring new meaning to its title if one considers it in the context of a slightly different theory postulated by T. S Eliot in his poem, “The Hollow Men”:

This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.