From the moment he got a small role in Timberlake Wertenbaker's play, *The Love of the Nightingale*, Kyle Brenton was hooked. “I had a part that was one step above a spear carrier,” he laughs, “but I knew from that moment.”

That small part raised the curtain on a whole new world for the then A&S freshman. The following fall, he declared a double major in theatre and English.

Brenton came to Vanderbilt from Evansville, Indiana, without any preconceived ideas about his future. He had chosen the school for the overall strength of its liberal arts program. But it was watching a production of *The Music Cure* by George Bernard Shaw his first week on campus that stirred him to audition for a part in the Vanderbilt University Theatre's (VUT) first major production of the year.

Terryl Hallquist, associate professor of theatre, codirects the theatre program with her husband, Associate Professor Jon Hallquist. Brenton is one of about 30 students majoring in theatre; fourteen others have chosen it as a minor.

In addition to course work, the department offers four major productions and other one-act plays each year, which can involve up to 100 students from all areas of Vanderbilt, not only theatre majors.

“The directors and designers in the department choose the plays for the season,” Terryl Hallquist says. “They usually select two classic plays and two contemporary works. During the past season, a musical was produced instead of a second classical piece.”

Brenton says the smallness of Vanderbilt’s program is also its chief strength. “The advantage is that you get to do everything...from building sets to acting and directing. At a bigger program like Northwestern, you have to declare your special interest right away and stay with it. Here at Vanderbilt, you can try a wide range of theatrical experiences.”

**Artists-in-residence**

A highlight of the program is the Fred Coe Artist-in-Residence program, which brings outstanding actors and technicians to the campus. Started in the 1980s by Academy Award-winning director and Vanderbilt trustee Delbert Mann, BA’41, the program honors his close friend and mentor, Coe, a Peabody alumnus. A pioneer in the golden age of television, Coe directed and produced outstanding live theatre for the small screen during the 1950s.

Actor Karl Malden served as the first artist-in-residence at Vanderbilt, followed by such distinguished actors as Fiona Shaw and Olympia Dukakis.

For Brenton, Dukakis was a favorite. “We were saturated with three days of outstanding instruction,” he recalls. “She taught about the Greek acting style, and we were able to pick her brain. She was fantastic.”

A May 2000 graduate, Brenton will study at Harvard next year. His focus will be dramaturgy, a relatively new specialty in U.S. theatre. A bit like an artistic coordinator, the dramaturg must be well versed in all aspects of theatre from playwriting and acting to lighting and set design. Brenton is particularly excited that the two-year program includes three months study at the National Theatre of Moscow.

**Ninety years of theatre**

According to Cecil Jones, professor of theatre emeritus, there has been a theatre group at Vanderbilt perhaps as far back as 1910. The first director was hired in 1946, and from 1948 until the early ‘70s, the department operated from a prefabricated theatre on Garland Avenue.

The VUT has been housed in Neely Auditorium since the building was renovated in 1975. Called an ultra-black-box flexible space, the design, by the distinguished German architect Peter Blake, is based on an idea for an ideal off-Broadway theatre.

“It is an exciting space,” says Terryl Hallquist, “because it can be adapted to any configuration, depending on the best relationship between actors and audience for a particular play.”

“For students who are trying to learn how to do theatre,” says Jones, “it offers a range of educational opportunities that you don’t ordinarily find on campuses with only a single theatre space.”

**Curtain going up**

For Kyle Brenton, Vanderbilt’s theatre program has been more than a course of study—it’s like a family. “The best way to know someone is to be in a play with them,” he says, adding, “The people I’ve met here will be my friends for life.”

Once he’s earned his Master of Fine Arts degree, Brenton hopes to get a job behind the footlights somewhere, perhaps as a dramaturg with a repertory company. His dream is to end up working with a professional regional theatre.

For Kyle Brenton, the curtain is about to go up on the next act. And he is eager to get started.

*Judith DeMoss Campbell*
Mentoring enriches English faculty teaching

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two Shakespearean scholars—Leah Marcus, Edwin Mims Professor of English, and Dennis Kezar, assistant professor of creative writing—have combined forces in a mentoring relationship they say benefits both.

“We both do historical work in the same field, Shakespeare and the 17th century," Marcus says. “I’m more research oriented; I like to do archival work. Dennis is interested in the ethics of literature, in how literature has the capacity to harm. “A good mentoring relationship is like this. We’re equal. We respect each other’s work and we want to read and think about each other’s writing.”

As the senior member of the team (she’s been teaching for decades), Marcus has the advantage of years of experience, while the junior colleague, Kezar says, “My first few semesters included the usual anxieties about the classroom, and she proved a very helpful mentor. She read and reread quite a lot of writing that I have inflicted on her, commenting very helpfully on how to improve it.”

The students submit “one-minute papers” after each class. These half-page slips of paper query the students about what they learned and what questions they may have following the lesson. Wikswo builds much of the next class around helping them answer those questions for themselves.

For their part, most students echo senior Chris Protos, an economics and political science major, when he says, “This is the coolest course I’ve ever taken.”

Reinventing the wheel

T
eleven students, a teaching assistant, and Professor John P. Wikswo squeeze into a small Stevenson Center classroom. Wikswo, the A.B. Learned Professor of State Physics, begins class as a student makes her way to the hopelessly crowded table and claims enough space to place her plastic box containing Lego blocks.

A functional battery-operated car made from the colorful plastic building blocks, a willingness to engage in classroom discussions, and the ability to tear down and reassemble a combustion engine are all freshman Lindsay Salter and her peers need to make it through Wikswo’s “Practical Physics” class.

“Who would have thought that students would actually want to tear a car apart? No, it’s not a physics textbook disguised as a coffee-table book,” Wikswo says. The students submit “one-minute papers” after each class. These half-page slips of paper query the students about what they learned and what questions they may have following the lesson. Wikswo builds much of the next class around helping them answer those questions for themselves.

In addition to oral presentations, written exams, and building working models—the first Lego project was the workforce construction of a three-speed transmission with a reverse gear—the students are graded on a series of one-page papers. Wikswo, who has taught the course in this fashion nine times before, says the students gain a better understanding of physics from this approach than from a more traditional physics class.

“They can learn more about rotational motion, torque, and inertia by building a Lego car than from any lecture I could possibly give,” he says. For their part, most students echo senior Chris Protos, an economics and political science major, when he says, “This is the coolest course I’ve ever taken.”
On June 30, Ettore F. “Jim” Infante will resign as dean of the College of Arts and Science for health reasons. While he has been in office only three years, he has overseen several initiatives to strengthen and advance the college. In his honor, an anonymous donor has endowed a scholarship to be awarded annually beginning in fall 2001. Recently, the editor of the A&S Cornerstone interviewed him about his accomplishments and hopes for the future of the college.

A&S Cornerstone: What do you think your legacy will be? What are some major contributions of which you are most proud?

Dean Infante: One of the things of which I’m most proud is having been associated with such a good place, with such good faculty, and such good students. And hopefully I’ve served them and the central purpose of the college, which is to learn and to teach, to the best of my ability. I deeply regret that this has been a much shorter period than I certainly ever thought it would be.

I think we have made some progress, and I’m hoping that the last part of the period that I’m here will bring to fruition the planned changes in the undergraduate curriculum. I’m pleased about appointments that we have made to the faculty. I’m pleased with the plans for the new biology building that is under construction now [please see related article on page 7].

I’m especially pleased to have had the opportunity to continue and sustaining the wonderful enterprise and a unique one. Vanderbilt is one of the few scholarly universities with a very high commitment to undergraduate education. I wouldn’t do this without the support of the faculty, from the deans to the students. That’s what has contributed to sustaining that spirit, the very particular nature of this place with its sense of civility, which is leveraged on a commitment to excellence and civility very seldom go hand in hand. Few places exhibit this level of civility, but at the same time have the commitment to be the best they can be. Places that really go after excellence—especially in excellence in research—can be rather cutthroat, rather ugly. This place is not.

A&S Cornerstone: What is the college different today than when you took office?

Dean Infante: I would like to think that the college is very much the same in some ways. Some of the things that I found most appealing in coming here were the values and the nature of the community. That’s as far as we have planned. We’ve always been in a hurry all these years. My guess is that some of the things that I found most appealing in coming here were the values and the nature of the community. That’s as far as we have planned.

A&S Cornerstone: What do you mean by civility?

Dean Infante: People like Leah Marcus—what a wonderful person she is—what a wonderful professor, and a fantastic teacher in and providing the means and environment that nurture scholarly and research advances. I would like to think that we prepare our young men and women to handle themselves very well. One of the things we’ve very good here—because of the tradition, because of the environment—we keep on raising the bar higher and higher, and we thoughtfully coach our students and tell them, “You can jump over it. Yes, you can jump it.” And they do it.

We are here to urge them, to mentor them, to teach them how to do it. And friends has a very good reason. That’s why I like to think of the College of Arts and Science as a university college.

A&S Cornerstone: What three words would you use to describe the College of Arts and Science?

Dean Infante: Civility, challenge, expectations. We have an expectation of ourselves as a faculty, of our students, and of our staff, that we can and will do things better. We have the expectation that we’re going to be the kind of place in which you feel an enormous amount of pride and love—the kind of place where all of us, faculty and students, learn, grow intellectually, challenge our limits, and advance ourselves and our goals.

A&S Cornerstone: Could you give me an example of what you mean by civility?

Dean Infante: Last year, a search committee wanted me to appoint a certain faculty member, which I declined to do. Components of the student body and of the faculty made it quite clear to me how they felt. But look at the manner in which they did it. Nobody came and took over my office. No one shouted. But they clearly expressed in a thoughtful manner that they felt that they had not been heard by me. In an equal civil way, I tried to explain to them the reasons behind my decision. At many other universities, there would have been shouting matches, yelling. Here we had a civil dialogue.

A&S Cornerstone: What are your plans for the future?

Dean Infante: People want to talk about balance, between teaching and research. I don’t believe in balance; I believe in leverage. That means that one builds on the other. I think of research and undergraduate education at Vanderbilt as propelling each other to higher levels. We have the kind of environment for our undergraduate students that puts them in contact with people who are at the forefront of their fields and at the forefront of intellectual pursuits. That is an enormous benefit to undergraduate students, a benefit they wouldn’t have an undergraduate four-year liberal arts college. At the same time, we’re providing the faculty with contact with undergraduate students so that their research is connected to undergraduate teaching. Which again is something that wouldn’t happen either at a four-year college or at a research university where there’s not that commitment to undergraduate students. That’s why I like to call the College of Arts and Science a university college.

A&S Cornerstone: Is there one thought that you would like to leave with our readers?

Dean Infante: This is a wonderfully unique place. It’s the kind of place that has a very special nature and character; it deserves to be maintained and improved upon. The extended college community of alumni, faculty, former faculty, students, and staff of which I’m a part have a great deal of pride in this place, for what it is and for what it does. It is a pride and love that I fully share.

Ettore F. “Jim” Infante is retiring as dean of the College of Arts and Science on June 30. His office contains the items on this page 3 and a statue of Don Quixote on page 4, which he uses to defuse ostracism with humor. “Whenever the council comes asking for money,” he says, “I use the magic wind and give them play money.”

“What I would like to think, and I hope, and I pray is that I’ve made a contribution to sustaining the unusual quality of this place, the unusual commitment to real values such as teaching, learning, and civility in preparing young men and women for fruitful and demanding lives…”

“…and in providing the means and environment that nurture scholarly and research advances. I would like to think that we prepare our young men and women to handle themselves very well. One of the things we’ve very good here—because of the tradition, because of the environment—we keep on raising the bar higher and higher, and we thoughtfully coach our students and tell them, “You can jump over it. Yes, you can jump it.” And they do it. We are here to urge them, to mentor them, to teach them how to do it. And friends has a very good reason.”
From college friends to e-commerce partners

L eading an Internet company from start-up to corporate merger takes more than intelligence and good ideas, says Thomas Conner, a 1988 graduate of the College of Arts and Science. Most of all, it takes relationships built on trust.

For Conner and the management team at Telalink Internet Service Provider (ISP), those trusting business relationships were forged during their undergraduate years at Vanderbilt.

When Telalink merged successfully with PSINet, a global Internet "super carrier," last November, Telalink’s five principals were all Van- derbilt alumni from the ’90s and ’00s. In addition, Frank Wood, BS’96, LILB’66, brokered the deal.

Lewis Bramson first

Bramson Visiting Professor

This past year, Lewis Bramson—a Vanderbilt trustee and the son of former Chancellor Harvie Bramson—shared his knowledge and insights on science and public policy with members of the Vanderbilt community as the first holder of a visiting professorship named for his late father, Lucius Turner Outlaw.

Professor Outlaw to lead

American African studies program

Lucius Turner Outlaw Jr., the T. Wistar Brown Professor of Philosophy, was recently named director of the African American studies program at Vanderbilt, effective at the beginning of the fall 2000 semester. He has also been named a professor of philosophy.

Appointments

Dennis G. Hall, a highly regarded scholar in the field of optics, has been named associate provost for academic and effec-

tive July 1. The position was created in 1999 to coordinate and enhance scholarly research throughout the University. He will also hold a faculty position as professor of physics. As director of the Institute of Optics at the University of Rochester, Hall headed the premier U.S. program of high-
education in optics and was responsible for a number of its discoveries, including a method and system to enhance fluorescence.

Kudos

Joseph H. Hamilton, left, Landon C. Garland Distinguished Professor of Physics, has been selected as Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s first Visiting Dis-
tinguished Laboratory Fellow. The pro-
gram recognizes scientists from the universities, industry, and other insti-
tutions for extraordinary contributions to Oak Ridge National Laboratory through sustained leadership in scientific and programmatic activities.


come July 1, Robert Birkby will add the word emeritus to his title, professor of political science. The word connotes “honor,” which fits Professor Birkby well according to his admirers among former students and faculty.

During his 37 years at Vanderbilt, Birkby has become famous for remembering the names of his students, where they sat in his classes, and even the fact that they were on probation when he first met them.

“I made a real effort to learn their names,” he says, adding that he’d consult the Commonwealth yearbook or, in the case of freshmen, the Newscom.

He notes that today’s students seem “better-prepared” than their parents’ generation, and that women students “are more willing to speak up in class rather than defer-
ing to the men.”

Birkby has won many awards for teaching and ser-
tice to the University over the years. He has served as chair of the political science department and associate dean of the College of Arts and Science.

But he is most proud of his years of service on the A&S Faculty Council and his work during the mid-eighties on a committee to strengthen the Honor Council.

Even though he’s retiring, Birkby will not be a stranger to campus, as he plans to teach two courses next year.

One thing will change, however: He’ll no longer be a full-time member of the “Standing Committee for the Betterment of the University,” a tongue-in-cheek title for an informal group of faculty and administrators who meet every morning at 7 a.m. over coffee at Rand.

Robert Birkby

Three Vanderbilt alumni recently saw their Internet start-up company, Telalink, merge with PSINet, a global Internet “super carrier.” Left to right are Bill Butler, Scott Sears, BS’92, Thomas Connor, BS’86, Tim Moe, BS’92, involving Tim Duggan, BA’91, and Bob Collie, A’98.

“If we’re college friends who became business partners, says Conner, who is now general manager of Telalink, a PSINet company.

Bill Butler, BE’91, and Tim Moe, BS’92, launched Telalink in 1993. It was the first local ISP in Nashville.

Butler convinced Conner to leave his banking job in 1995 and join the company as chief financial officer. The pair met as students with Vanderbilt Video Productions and had remained friends.

Bob Collie, A’98, was a Vanderbilt freshman when he hatched into the Telalink system and offered to help out as a tester. It was before Collie became chief tech-

ical officer and designed Telalink’s network and server infrastructure.

Scott Sears, BS’92, and Tim Duggan, BA’91, were members of a rock band whose Web site was hosted by Telalink. They developed an expertise in the Internet and joined the company in 1996.

In the original Telalink student participants, we recognized the Telalink’s informal intern program and now hold positions with leading Internet firms nationwide.

Most of the original Telalink team has stayed together—Conner, Duggan, Moes, and Sears have taken leadership positions with the new company. Butler left the group to form a free e-mail company, Nashville Net. Collie is now senior network architect for Education Network of America, which provides Internet connections for K-12 teachers and students.

And Telalink remains an important part of their lives. "We rarely miss a Commodore football or basketball game," says Conner. “Some things never change.”

Face it: Practice makes perfect • The same part of the brain that is crucial in recognizing faces is used by birdswatchers to tell a sparrow from a starling. People who can instantly recognize the latest model cars, researchers from Vanderbilt and Yale have found.

The study by Isabel Gauthier, a recent assistant professor of psychology, and her colleagues could explain why such experts can pick out their citizen subject with just a glance. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, the researchers found that a small area of the brain, the fusiform gyrus, activates when birdswatchers view human faces and birds and auto experts look at human faces and automobiles. "This study suggest that the part of the brain responsible for fusiform face recognition is not genetically determined but rather the result of our vast experience in recognizing faces," says Gauthier.

Sounds of laughter • While conducting research on the sound properties of laughter, Jo-Anne Bonkowski, assistant professor psychology, has found that humans have an unusually rich repertoire of sounds—a sort of laughter actually sounding more like bird clucks or housepets than human laugh sounds. The researcher and her colleagues have found that humans laugh differently with friends than with strangers, and that they respond to laughter with more than just happiness.

"The same part of the brain that is crucial in recognizing faces is used by birdswatchers to tell a sparrow from a starling. People who can instantly recognize the latest model cars, researchers from Vanderbilt and Yale have found."
More than 175 alumni, parents, and other friends returned to campus in February to savor the college first-hand as part of Arts & Science Day. Participants joined students in their regular classes and attended special educational events planned just for them on film, the brain, and the Brazilian rain forest. They also heard about the admissions process from Bill Shain, dean of undergraduate admissions; listened to a panel of undergraduates talk about their A&S experience; and enjoyed a medley of Broadway songs and dances by the Original Cast.

“It was a delightful occasion,” says Paul Manners, BA’42, of Atlanta. “I was very pleased to have a part in it. It’s always inspiring to see the students and hear them talk about some of the same things that we spoke of long ago.”

Manners attended A&S Day with his son, Neal Manners, BA’71, and granddaughter, Meredith Marie Manners, who will be a freshman in the fall.

Members of the Original Cast entertained guests at a dinner celebrating Arts and Science Day. (Lower Left) Jerome Christensen, professor of English, used film clips to illustrate how Hollywood studios influence the content of the movies they produce.

Students receiving scholarships were special guests at the A&S dinner. Eleanor Bloch Small, BA’41, chats with rising junior David Lisenby, recipient of the Eugene H. Vaughan Jr. Scholarship.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
A&S Cornerstone
College of Arts and Science
2201 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37235