

STAGES

THE BOSTON CONSERVATORY

Raising Hell

When a production describes itself as

“a modern morality musical that tears open the skin of contemporary society to expose the seething entrails of our own vices,” what else can you do but reserve your tickets now?

The work being described in such dramatic fashion is The Boston Conservatory’s production of *Heaven & Hell: The Fantastical Temptation of The 7 Deadly Sins*. Director Jason Slavick has adapted Joe Jackson’s 1997 musical recording, “Heaven & Hell,” for the stage. While Jackson is best known for radio hits such as “Is She Really Going Out with Him?,” he’s led quite an eclectic career. His “Heaven & Hell” explores the Seven Deadly Sins through a range of musical genres and featured such varied vocalists as Suzanne Vega and Dawn Upshaw.

Slavick, who previously directed *The Cherry Orchard* and *Good Woman of Setzuan*



Joe Jackson

for The Boston Conservatory, first heard “Heaven & Hell” in 2000. “It was one of the only albums I had listened to that I could see as I heard it,” Slavick recounts. “It came to life as characters in scenes and a world going on around them. The more I listened, the more I thought it would make a great stage production.” Slavick brought the idea to Neil Donohoe, Theater Division Director at the Conservatory, and proceeded to obtain the

permissions he needed to adapt the music.

Donohoe says that while each Conservatory production presents its own challenges, the fact that *Heaven & Hell* “has no previous incarnation, the work is coming from a grassroots type of intense creativity that includes the students themselves. The students are the clay of the piece.”

That “clay” has been carefully shaped in a series of workshops conducted by Slavick, along with collaborators Peter Mansfield, Music Director/Arranger and Orchestrator, and Michelle Chassé, Choreographer.

Though he had written a script—the story of an Everyman character who

All the World’s on Stage

Performing with the China Philharmonic, winning awards in Mexico, and teaching dance in Ireland are just a few of the ways Boston Conservatory students and alumni have taken the world stage.

For many students these opportunities arise from their years at the Conservatory.

According to Rebekah de Wit, Director of International Student Affairs, “there is literally a *world* of



Sebastian Plano '99; Rasa Vitkauskaitė '10; Mimi Hewlett, Chair of the Board of Trustees; and Eran Houja '09

opportunity available to students through interactions and friendships with the many international students on campus.”

De Wit believes the cross-cultural knowledge and skills gained through personal relationships with students from all over the globe will benefit them throughout their lives.

“Twenty percent of the Conservatory’s student body is international, which

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music dance theater

On Board

President Richard Ortner announces the election of a new alumnus trustee and two new overseers.

Donald F. Jemella '70 '73 holds both a bachelor's and master's of Music Education from The Boston Conservatory. He recently retired from his position as Vice President at JP Morgan Chase Treasury Services to establish his own Senior Business Advisory firm. For the past 20 years, Mr. Jemella has served as an adjudicator, clinician, and advisor to high school performing groups. He holds an MBA from Pace University, where he is an annual speaker at their MBA classes and at Boston University.

Ron Brenner '73, of Randolph, graduated from The Boston Conservatory with a B.M. in Music Education. After college, he continued to play the trumpet and worked for Hull Public Schools and the Jewish Community Religious School as Principal. Since 1985, Mr. Brenner has been President and CEO of Melmar, Inc. His son, Scott, is currently a candidate for a master's in Music Education from The Boston Conservatory.

Mark H. Cooley, M.D., of Jamaica Plain, currently serves on the Board of Overseers of the Bank of America Celebrity Series. A graduate of Boston University's School of Medicine, he was a physician of Internal Medicine and Primary Care Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Beth Israel Hospital from 1966–1999. Mr. Cooley funds the Mark H. Cooley Piano Scholarship at The Boston Conservatory.



As a dynamic training ground for more than 600 young performers and a venue for more than 250 music, dance, and theater productions a year, The Boston Conservatory has served as a unique forum for expression since it opened its doors 140 years ago.

In one article, *All the World's on Stage*, you'll see just how far our voices have reached. With Davis Scholars from Lithuania, Israel, and Argentina, and alumni and students performing in Mexico, China, Germany, and London, the name of The Boston Conservatory can be heard in more than 30 languages.

Back here in the U.S., director Jason Slavick transforms recording artist Joe Jackson's message on good and evil. Based on his album of the same title, *Heaven and Hell* sends the character (and the audience) on a journey through the Seven Deadly Sins.

We also take a look at one young man who expresses himself in myriad ways: from dance concerts to theater productions to choruses. A true triple threat.

On March 31, we'll celebrate an important milestone in our history, plus honor the Music Division, at our 2007 *Reaching for the Stars!* Gala, with honorary co-chairs Victoria Livengood, Yo-Yo Ma, and John Williams.

As this issue of *Stages* shows, The Boston Conservatory is a place to see something, hear something, and say something.

Richard Ortner
President of the Conservatory

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THE BOSTON CONSERVATORY
MUSIC DANCE THEATER

Good Hunt Dancing

When Jordan Hunt was 8 years old, his mother enrolled him in gymnastics class. Limber and energetic, he enjoyed the acrobatics. But it wasn't until they did a section on dance that young Jordan got hooked. "It didn't take us long to figure out *that* was what I wanted to do," he says.

Hunt started taking jazz and tap for the next few years; then took a hiatus in junior high. "At that age, if you're a boy who dances, they make fun of you. So I stopped." He then attended a performing arts high school in Houston, where he was able to study ballet.

With training and performing both in and outside of school—private classes and a stint as an apprentice dancer at the Houston Metropolitan Dance Company—Hunt

was dancing up to 30 hours a week by junior year.

Soon it was time to look at colleges. "There was no training ground for singing, acting, and dancing back home in Houston." He found that The Boston Conservatory was the only school that had musical theater and a strong dance program. "[It] was my first choice."

Hunt entered the Musical Theater program in Fall, 2004. With his background in dance and his new training in musical theater, he started landing roles in both musical theater and dance productions.

In Fall, 2005, Hunt played the principal dancer in the musical *Kismet*.

"That was a lot of fun," he says. "I was kind of a narrator, interconnecting things through dancing."

That same year, Hunt was asked by the Dance Division to perform in the



Hunt (left) in *Spring Works* Dance Concert 2006.

Spring 2006 Dance Concert, as part of the ensemble in Luis Fuente's premiere, *Con Temperamento*.

"Jordan, from his freshman year, has been very serious about his dancing and has been taking men's class with the dancers," says Yasuko Tokunaga, Director of the Dance Division. "When we called on him to replace an injured dancer in the ballet last year, he not only stepped up to the plate, but did a terrific job."

Hunt performed a few months later in *Spring Works*, a spring dance concert featuring original student choreography. In addition to dance and theater, that spring Hunt was also singing with the Boston

Gay Men's Chorus. "I went from show to show to show," he recounts.

This season, Hunt has put his focus back on theater. In October, 2006, he performed in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. He played Fleta—a bratty, sassy fairy—a comic role with a lot of dance features. "This role was a challenge," Hunt says. Unlike the classic version, director Neil Donohoe reversed gender roles, having men play the fairies and women play the Peers.

Hunt is no stranger to gender-reversal roles. Since he arrived at the Conservatory, he's performed in the school's annual drag show. This February, he also produced and directed the show, *Queens of Heart*.

For Hunt's upcoming role, however, there will be no fairy dust or 4-inch stilettos. In March, he plays "J," the central character in *Heaven and Hell*. In this show, based on Joe Jackson's album, Hunt must make the dark journey through the Seven Deadly Sins. "We're mapping out that journey as we speak," says Hunt.

When Hunt first came to The Boston Conservatory for a visit in Spring 2004, "it just felt right," he says.

With graduation around the corner in 2008, it seems that, no matter where he ends up, he'll know again what feels right.



Hunt (left) as "Fleta" in *Iolanthe*, Fall 2006.

travels through a series of vignettes based on the seven deadly sins—Slavick has used the workshops not as rehearsals, but rather as a way for the creative team and their actors to flesh out the script in terms of character development, movement and dance, and music. This is especially valuable since the piece contains no dialogue: the story is communicated through music and lyrics, movement and dance. “We take each scene and make a really quick sketch of it,” Slavick says. “Sometimes I say, ‘Be children in a playroom,’ and the students will make up the scene. We find out what works and what doesn’t, sort of like taking each scene for a test drive. A great deal of what we do in the workshops will end up being the play people see.”

The workshops’ value isn’t lost on cast member Leah Joseph, a senior Musical Theater major from Solon, Ohio. “It’s a really fantastic learning experience,” she says. “While you’re pushing yourself past comfortable boundaries, you have faith in yourself and the people you’re working with to make the environment completely safe.” As a result, Joseph says, cast members are taking huge artistic risks—something that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise.

“Creating a fully-staged theatrical production from a 50-minute concept album really pushes you to find new ways of creating and defining narrative.” —Michelle Chassé, Choreographer

Dan O’Connor, a sophomore Musical Theater major from Huntington, New York, says that while he’s still a student, he’s fully aware of the unique opportunity *Heaven & Hell* offers. “I haven’t done anything like this before,” he says. “It’s so amazing to me that I’m doing something I may never do again. I’m taking as much advantage of it as I can.”

Peter Mansfield, Professor of Music Theater Piano, Repertoire, and Ensemble at the Conservatory, who describes Jackson’s musical piece as varying from “classical to folk to Latin to hard punk rock,” says his background in improvisation has suited him well for his role during the workshops. “I’ve been able to begin to arrange what Jason is molding,” he says. “I won’t be changing the orchestration colors from the CD, but much of the music is being adapted, lengthened, modified, etc., for our production.”

Michelle Chassé, Musical Theater Dance Coordinator and Resident Choreographer at the Conservatory, describes her job of choreographing the movement and dance in *Heaven & Hell* as a work in progress. “The music and the script are ever-evolving,” she says. “Nothing is set in stone [at this point], which forces you to be flexible about the material you



“I’m aiming for not just an extravaganza but in fact a really challenging exploration of the society in which we live.”

—Jason Slavick, Director

come up with in any given rehearsal, since it may be gone the next day. Also, creating a fully-staged theatrical production from a...50-minute concept album really pushes you to find new ways of creating and defining narrative.”

What can audience members expect to see on stage? “You should expect a fantastical spectacle that will aurally and visually blow you away,” Slavick says.

Although certain aspects of *Heaven & Hell* continue to evolve, Slavick provides a glimpse into the journey the main character, “J,” takes as he attempts to transcend the mundane world around him. “We begin in ‘gluttony,’” Slavick says, “in a meat processing plant that feeds into a fast food frenzy with a horde of gluttonous, frenetic eaters stuffing themselves into oblivion.” From there, J encounters the lustful in a demonic bordello, filled with survivors in a war zone, a “Jabba the Hutt”-type character lazing in front of a giant TV, and other equally afflicted sinners. To explore “wrath,” Slavick says the scene traces the sin’s evolution from children’s temper tantrums all the way to the torture of a terror suspect.

“It’s really important to me that theater have something to say about the world we share,” Slavick says. “I’m aiming for not just an extravaganza but in fact a really challenging exploration of the society in which we live.”

Donohoe says that producing such an experimental piece is in keeping with the Conservatory’s educational mission. “During the four years students are here, they have the opportunity to be in or observe the classics, operettas, contemporary Broadway productions, and more,” he says. “It’s an incredibly diverse experience.”

And one that would be a sin to miss.

**For the record, the seven deadly sins are gluttony, lust, avarice, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.*

Heaven & Hell:

The Fantastical Temptation of The 7 Deadly Sins will be presented at The Boston Conservatory March 7–11, 2007. For tickets, call The Boston Conservatory Box Office at (617) 912-9222.

A Place to Say Something: The Off-Off Broadway Phenomenon of the 60s

Plays, panels, and workshops with playwrights and pioneers from Off-Off Broadway's golden years.

November 2006



Jerry Goralnick leads the Living Theater Workshop

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David Albright & Jessica Norland



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And He Made a Her
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Edward Albee and guest

Living Theater Workshop



Reaching for the Stars

Gala Auction 2007



Our 7th annual Spring Gala will salute our **Music Division** and celebrate the **140th Anniversary** of the founding of The Boston Conservatory, which opened its doors in 1867. This spectacular evening will feature elegant dining, **performances** by our fantastic students, and an entertaining **live auction**. All proceeds from the event will benefit the Conservatory's Scholarship Fund. *Please join us!*

The Gala Committee is proud to acknowledge our Diamond Sponsor:



Saturday, March 31, 2007
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music dance theater

means our students have the opportunity not only to learn from the school's strong faculty and curriculum, but from each other," she says.

Students who have gone on to great accomplishments around the globe include:

Laura Villafranca (Piano '06 '08), who won Second Prize in the *Concurso Nacional de Piano* "Angélica Morales–Yamaha," held in Mexico City, Mexico in October 2006. The Competition, held every three years, is Mexico's national piano competition.



Laura Villafranca

Xiao Yin Zhang (Harp '05), who is now a regular with the China Philharmonic in Beijing, China.

Valerie Cutko, (Associate Alumna) is a regular performer in London's West End musicals and in cabaret performances at Lauderdale House. After her time at the Boston Conservatory, Valerie performed in *Grand Hotel* on Broadway and on US and European tours. In the UK, she performed as Madame Giry in *Phantom of the Opera* for Cameron Macintosh and appeared as a member of the opera ensemble in the 2004 film version of *Phantom*.

Markus Placci (Violin '04, '06) played the Brahms Violin Concerto for the opening Gala of the Baden-Baden Philharmonic

"There is literally a *world* of opportunity available to students through interactions and friendships with the many international students on campus."

—Rebekah de Wit, Director of International Student Affairs

Orchestra in Germany in summer 2006. Placci was also invited by the Brahms Society to live for one month in Brahms's house—the composer's final residence, where he worked on his Horn Trio, Cello Sonata in e minor, and Piano Quartet in f minor, and where he completed his 1st and 2nd Symphonies, String Sextet, and the German Requiem. In general this honor is reserved exclusively for Brahms scholars.

Alicia Christofi Walshe (Dance '01) dances, teaches, and choreographs in Ireland and danced with Cois Ceim Dance Theatre in the Opening Ceremony of the Ryder Cup in September of 2006. Alicia currently teaches ballet and modern for the Association of Professional Dancers at Ireland and Sallynoggin College.

The opportunity for foreign students like these to attend an American conservatory is not always easy. The cost can be high for tuition, room, and board. But some scholarships and grants are available that

allow international students to study in the United States. The Boston Conservatory is the first conservatory to be part of the Davis United

World College (UWC) Scholars Program, which promotes international understanding by providing scholarships to help diversify the undergraduate populations of selected schools. The Conservatory currently has three Davis United World College Scholars attending: Eran Houja '09, composition (Israel); Sebastian Plano '09, cello (Argentina); and Rasa Vitkauskaite '10, piano (Lithuania). The Davis UWC Scholars Program contributes \$10,000 in financial aid for each scholar for every year of a four-year undergraduate degree program. The Conservatory also receives a \$5,000 grant in support of its admissions outreach initiatives.

"The Davis UWC Scholars I have met during my travels and who enroll at our Conservatory are truly some of the most remarkable human beings I have come across in my 17 years in college admissions," said Halley Shefler, Dean of Enrollment Services. "They are intellectually curious, worldly, care deeply about the environment in which

we live, are politically savvy, and follow their dreams, no matter what obstacles are put in front of them."

Rasa Vitkauskaite, a piano major from Lithuania who transferred to the Conservatory this year, has said that her experiences have been very positive. She wanted to attend the Conservatory to work with Piano Chair Michael Lewin, whom she met last year when he made a recruiting trip to a Davis' UWC School in Italy.

Vitkauskaite said she appreciates the opportunities being a Davis Scholar and attending the Conservatory has given her. Studying here, she said, has given her the chance to learn about other cultures and to share ideas with people from the United States and other countries. She also said that the very friendly atmosphere at the Conservatory has added to her great admiration for the school and for Boston.

"I don't feel stressed by competition here. The learning environment is much more relaxed and the feeling of competition among piano majors is very friendly; yet the program is just as competitive as at other schools," Vitkauskaite says. "I'm so happy that I'm here."

Once students pass through the doors of The Boston Conservatory, they go on to work and study across the globe—and it is hoped that the lessons learned while here will help them all to become artist citizens of the highest caliber on the world stage.

Gerard Alessandrini (Theater '77) is the recipient of a 2006 Tony Honors for Excellence in Theatre award. The honors recognize contributions to the field of theater by individuals and organizations that are not eligible in any of the established Tony categories. Alessandrini is the creator of *Forbidden Broadway*, a New York institution that has been poking affectionate fun at theater and its notables for 25 years.

Soprano **Maria-Giulia Bruni (Opera '04)** was presented in a Young Artist Showcase after winning a province-wide contest in Ontario, Canada. She also sings with the Opera in Concert chorus.

Nick Cearley (Theater '06) covers all the young leads in *All Shook Up*. He starred opposite Tony Award Nominee Alice Ripley in the new musical *The Last Smoker in America*, written by Bill Russell and Peter Rodgers Melnick. He has also played in *Cupid and Psyche* with Altered Stages in New York; *The Most Overdone Songs Ever* revue-cabaret; and in *Bored & Bred: The 80s* at The Duplex Cabaret with fellow theater alumni **Emily Mixon '05**, **Trish LaRose '03**, and **Alysha Umphress '04**.

Josie de Guzman (Theater '06) was the winner of the Bobby Capo Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Governor George Pataki of New York. De Guzman previously received Tony nods for *Guys and Dolls* and *West Side Story*.

Craig Gartner (Theater '06)—a talent agent, representing clients such as Brittany Murphy, Michael Vartan, and others—was chosen by *Hollywood Reporter's* Next Generation 2006 as one of the 35 executives who represent the future of the entertainment industry.

Wendy Bryn Harmer (Voice '03) gave a recital with the world's leading dramatic tenor, Ben Heppner, and pianist Craig Rutenberg in October, 2006. The recital opened this season's

George London Foundation series, for which Harmer was a past winner of the competition. She also performed as Vitellia in Opera Boston's *La Clemenza di Tito* in October, 2006.

Svetlana Javakhyan (Violin '04, '06) earned a Tavitian Foundation Award and placed as a Finalist at the Young Virtuosos at Carnegie Hall. She has performed at Germany's Studio Francona, Lincoln Center in New York City, and at Boston's Symphony Hall at the Concert for Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Jason William Jurman (Theater '02) just wrapped production on the feature film *Cougar Club*, starring Faye Dunaway, Carrie Fisher, and Joe Montegna. The movie will open in theaters this spring or summer.

Michael Mosallam (Theater '06) is performing in *Carnival* at The Kennedy Center in February. He just filmed a pilot for a new reality TV show, *Triple Threat*.

In September, 2006, **Alicia Christofi Walshe (Dance '01)**, danced with Cois Ceim Dance Theatre in the Opening Ceremony of the Ryder Cup in Ireland.



Victor Wisehart (Dance '06) is performing with the New York Theater Ballet. He was also recently called back for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* on Broadway.

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One free appetizer or dessert per party up to \$10 with purchase of an entrée. \$5 dollar parking on non-Red Sox game nights at the Deaconess Garage (72 Kilmarnock St. between Peterborough and Queensberry streets).

ON BROADWAY

Boston Conservatory Theater alumni are taking over New York City! Check out some of our alums on Broadway:

Angela Christian (Theater '06) played the title character in *The Woman in White*, on Broadway and in London.

Erin Davie (Theater '06) plays Little Edie Beale in the Broadway Debut of *Grey Gardens* with Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson. She also played April in the Off-Broadway musical *Infertility* at Dillon's Theatre in New York.



Veronica Kuehn

Ben Gettinger (Theater '06) joins **Veronica Kuehn (Theater '06)** in Broadway's *Mamma Mia*. Gettinger plays Pepper.

Zachary Robert Hanna (Theater '02) is currently portraying Mark in *Altar Boyz* on Broadway.

Eddie Korbich (Theater '06) plays George (the Best Man) in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and in Elaine May's *After the Night and the Music*, both on Broadway.

Drew Sarich (Theater '06) is playing the role of Grantaire, and a cover of Enjolras cover in *Les Misérables* on Broadway, and played Armand earlier in *Lestat*, also on Broadway. He also played the lead in the Off-Broadway production of *Jacque Brel*.

Season Highlights

THEATER

MAR 7–11 (Wednesday–Sunday)

Heaven and Hell (World Premiere)

A modern take on the Seven Deadly Sins, this new performance musical is based on Joe Jackson's concept album of the same title. With permission from Sony Records. Directed and conceived for the stage by guest artist Jason Slavick. Peter Mansfield, Musical Director. Michelle Chassé, Choreographer.

8 p.m. (Wednesday–Saturday), 2 p.m. (Saturday & Sunday)
The Boston Conservatory Theater, \$16/\$14/\$5



APR 20–22 (Friday–Sunday)

Lucky Duck (Concert Musical)

A revised version and New England premiere of a comic twist on the ugly duckling story. It is an adult version that takes an ironic look at the American pop culture celebrity scene and the public's perception of beauty. Written by Bill Russell and Henry Krieger. Directed by Bill Russell. Music by Henry Krieger.

8 p.m. (Friday–Saturday), 2 p.m. (Saturday & Sunday)
The Boston Conservatory Theater, \$16/\$14/\$5



MUSIC (continued)

MAR 27 (Tuesday)

Piano Masters Series— Michael Lewin

Michael Lewin, Piano Department Chair at The Boston Conservatory, is acclaimed as a major pianist of rare communicative power, poetry, and charisma. Since winning the Kapell and Liszt International Competitions, his performances in 30 countries and recordings of a wide-ranging repertoire have earned him an eminent reputation and a thriving concert career.



CLEMENTI: Sonata in f minor
LISZT: Sonata in b minor
GRIFFES: *White Peacock*
RAVEL: *Sad Birds*
GLINKA-BALAKIREV: *The Lark*
GRANADOS: *The Maiden and the Nightingale*
STRAVINSKY: *Firebird Suite*
(Agosti transcription)

8 p.m., Seully Hall, FREE

This concert is free, but tickets are required. To reserve your free tickets, please call the Box Office at (617) 912-9222. Tickets for this performance will be made available as of Wednesday, Feb. 28.

SPECIAL EVENT

MAR 31 (Saturday)



The Boston Conservatory's seventh annual Spring Gala will honor the Music Division and celebrate the 140th anniversary of the Conservatory. All proceeds will benefit the Scholarship Fund.

Seaport Hotel, Boston

For ticket information: (617) 912-9194.

OPERA

OPERA

APR 5–7

(Thursday–Saturday)

L'elisir d'amore (The Elixir of Love)

This comic opera centers on shy Nemorino, who is besotted with the beautiful but elusive Adina. Enter Dr. Dulcamara with his "guaranteed" love potion. By Gaetano Donizetti. Directed by Kirsten Z. Cairns. Bruce Hangen, Conductor.

8 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday), 2 p.m. (Saturday)
The Boston Conservatory Theater, \$16/\$14/\$5

Prices are listed as general/alumni/
students and seniors.



MUSIC

MAR 9 (Friday)

The Boston Conservatory Orchestra

Bruce Hangen, Conductor

Concert will include various opera choruses performed by the Conservatory Chorale and the 2007 Concerto Competition winner.

MESSIAEN: *Les offrandes oubliées*

BERNSTEIN: *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*

8 p.m., Sanders Theatre, \$12/\$10/\$5

Call the Harvard Box Office for tickets: (617) 496-2222.

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SPRING 2007

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