Megan Curtis Joins BOLLI Staff

by Alorie Parkhill

“I am a people person,” reflects Megan Curtis cheerfully, flashing her winning smile. Her warmth, intelligence, and organizational skills will serve her well in taking over a demanding role as BOLLI Program Administrator. With Ilana’s helpful guidance initially, Megan looks forward to beginning at Turner Street on March 5th. We are delighted to welcome her.

The job description for this position includes seeking, organizing, and supervising volunteers, empowering people to create their environment and quality of life. She will also take charge of organizing and improving the physical space at Turner and the volunteer office at the Rabb School on Old South St. Megan will be maintaining and upgrading BOLLI A/V and Web capacity. Part of that role will be to support members’ ability to use our equipment. Megan will be promoting events, including classes, speakers, and groups. She will, of course, be coordinating regularly with both Avi and Ilana. The majority of her time will be spent “moving about the learning environment, meeting with members, collaborating with leadership, maintaining the space, and troubleshooting issues as they arise for membership or with equipment.” As primary staff for our class and social space, Megan will be based at 60 Turner St. Ilana’s office will remain in Old South St.

Megan’s experience as Volunteer Coordinator at Beacon Hospice and Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly has given her rich opportunities both to recruit and to train volunteers. Both of these tasks require a subtle touch. With characteristic energy, she facilitated the addition of 41 volunteers from the original four at Beacon Hospice. At Little Brothers, Megan planned and implemented many events to engage clients. She has gained perspective from these jobs on what it means to involve people in contributing to the common welfare. Megan communicates a deep respect for others. Working in hospice can be “intense and emotional,” requiring a balanced perspective. When the interviewing team asked how she managed potentially contentious situations, her response was that she “depersonalized the situation and remained calm,” important behaviors in any group.

Megan relishes reading, volunteering, and being part of the lives of seniors. She believes that “enrichment and social opportunities are very important for older adults.” She most values work that “includes a convivial environment, a clear set of goals, and opportunities to learn about people.” You will no doubt see Megan regularly around the Gathering Space, making connections and being helpful wherever she can be. By all means, introduce yourself, and join us in welcoming Megan Curtis into our community.
COUNCIL REPORT
by Bonnie Alpert

Parking Brandeis has informed us that we may not park in the Turner St. lot on class days, unless we have a handicap parking sticker, available from Ilana Levine. On class days, please park in J–lot (Angleside St.) and board the convenient BOLLI shuttle.

Rapaporte Seminars The Othello, Anthropology, Music, and Other Desert Cities seminars together attracted nearly 100 participants! Reviews were overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and BOLLI not only met its costs but made a profit.

Open Door Hours Avi Bernstein and Mike Segal will hold “Open Door” sessions during the Spring class term on Thursdays during fourth period, to meet individually with members and discuss our concerns and ideas.

Class Schedules The Council decided to retain the present class schedule as best meeting current needs of members and SGLs.

Task Force A group is working with staff to plan improvements in classroom arrangements and A/V equipment setup.

BOLLI Survey Sixty-nine percent of BOLLI members responded to the recent survey, indicating very positive feelings about classes, Lunch & Learn, and Enhancement activities.

MEMBERS OPEN FORUM
by Andy Thurnauer

At December’s Open Forum, BOLLI members heard presentations from our Council Chair, Membership Committee Chair, and Director. Surprisingly, Council Chair Mike Segal’s celebration of BOLLI’s growth generated the most controversy. Now that we control our own space, we can schedule events all week and all year long. Our Fall offering of a record 48 courses and our burgeoning array of Enhancement activities and special events provided members with a much greater variety of opportunities than in the past. An increase in membership has accompanied that expansion.

But growth may have its down side. This point was raised repeatedly during the Question & Answer (and Comment) session following Mike’s talk. Some veteran members feel that, in the process of growing, we’ve lost some of our former sense of community. With courses and activities spread out over an entire week, old friends are losing track of each other. As one member put it, “The glory of choice does not replace the glory of intimacy.” Ideally, our members will find a way of maintaining intimacy while continuing to enjoy their greater range of opportunities.

The BOLLI Banner is published by the Banner Committee:

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Telephone number for the BOLLI office is 781-736-2992

Banner archive: www.brandeis.edu/bolli/publications/banner/index.html

Volume 13 Issue 4 - 2 - March 2013
The curtain went up on an innovative BOLLI intersession seminar, as a class full of avid theatergoers undertook the reading and analysis of an acclaimed play, *Other Desert Cities*, and then saw it performed live on stage in downtown Boston.

From the very first class, Edmiston provided a behind-the-scenes perspective on his work as a play’s director, beginning with his informal “table talk” discussions with the actors; his step-by-step “blocking,” or staging, of the performers on the set; and his all-important “work-throughs,” in which he guides the cast as it delves into the characters and emotions inherent in the play.

The lead actor in *Other Desert Cities*, Anne Gottlieb, Edmiston’s guest during the second class, shared her insights about her character, who has written a memoir revealing a dark secret about her family and who is determined to see it published despite her parents’ objections.

Edmiston’s skillful direction and Gottlieb’s impassioned acting were on full display in the performances attended by the BOLLI class the weekend of January 26-27. Transferred from the printed page to the live stage, the play spoke rivetingly of human conflict and reconciliation. *Other Desert Cities* earned glowing reviews, and so did Edmiston’s first theater seminar for BOLLI members, leading one to hope there will be many encores.

What a memorable experience it was to meet Jared Redmond in a seminar setting! Jared is a pianist and Presidential Fellow in Music, writing his Ph.D. dissertation on Scriabin. Over five consecutive afternoons, he explored the music of Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, Debussy, Schoenberg, Scriabin, and Cage, while blending different aspects of musicology, philosophy, and history to demonstrate major changes in musical style, theory, and performance over the past two centuries.

Prior to each class, Jared sent members YouTube links to two or three brief examples of themes and composers to be presented, and selected extracts of articles on changing forms of musical expression. These excerpts were very helpful in enabling members to prepare for the next day’s class. Jared led an organized discussion at each meeting with enthusiastic participation by the members, and played brief examples of what we were discussing.

Thanks to Jared’s depth of understanding and his capacity to convey his excitement about music, we were all left with a deeper appreciation of the path taken from Beethoven and the classical period through Debussy and impressionism to Scriabin and modernism. We hope Jared will come back and offer another seminar. If he does, don’t miss it!
We don’t normally need to know what BOLLI stands for in order to enjoy its blessings. But BOLLI happens to be a very rich acronym:

B is for Brandeis, the university in which our organization is embedded
O is for Osher, the last name of key benefactor Bernard Osher
L is for Lifelong, signifying our aspiration for a life of learning without end
L is for Learning, the prime directive of our founders, and our most prominent shared value
I is for Institute, a physical place on campus, but also a charter within Brandeis, entitling us to a range of university goods and services, including additional learning opportunities.

The last point is worth explaining in some detail.

Brandeis comprises five schools, the most conspicuous of which is the College of Arts and Sciences with 3500 full-time undergraduates and bragging rights as an elite liberal arts college. In addition, Brandeis sports a Graduate School of Arts and Sciences with world-class research faculty and graduate programs that are the envy of many of its rivals. As many of you are aware, many Brandeis departments boast world-renowned faculty, like MacArthur Fellow Bernadette Brooten (Religious Studies), Pulitzer Prize-winner David Hackett Fischer (American History), and American Academy of Sciences Fellow Gregory Petsko (Biochemistry).


As a Rabb unit, BOLLI participates in the day-to-day life of the Rabb School and of the University more broadly. Here are just some of the benefits we have recently enjoyed as a consequence:

**On-line Registration** Brandeis Vice-Registrar, Shohreh Harris, devoted scores of hours in December and January to get our system up and running. BOLLI member and Web Task Force Chair Peter Schmidt notes that the new system substantially reduced errors in the course assignment process.

**Multigenerational Opportunities** Many of our members have enjoyed participating in multigenerational programs with the Heller School and with the International School of Business. We recently began collaboration with the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life to bring together Brandeis undergraduates and BOLLI members to explore ethical issues, including the meaning of the university’s traditional social justice mission. BOLLI members adore exploring with undergraduates the meaning of moral values in the well-lived life; Brandeis undergraduates are their natural partners.

**Speakers of International Renown** Our Lunch and Learn speaker series features distinguished Brandeis faculty, like Stuart Altman, gracing us with his latest thinking on health care policy; Chris Bedford, our new Rose Art Museum director, regaling us with his insights into the contemporary art scene; and President Fred Lawrence, a noted authority on freedom of speech, joining us to reflect on the enduring pursuit of liberal education.

Let me conclude by mentioning a Brandeis event I’m personally excited about. In April *New Yorker* literary critic James Wood will deliver three “letters to a young author” before the Brandeis community. Wood’s appearance on campus is yet another example of the richness that comes with participating in Brandeis life. Clearly the B in BOLLI undergirds what we do at Turner Street; as BOLLI grows, I expect that, increasingly, BOLLI members will discover that the B offers them much more as well.
Activist Doctor Meets Holy Germs

by Richard Glantz

Who could guess that BOLLI’s mild-mannered ob/gyn Elliott Rivo was once a fierce advocate for women’s health and deeply involved in the formative stages of the right-to-choose movement?

Fierce? As a resident rotating through a Catholic hospital, Elliott was dressed down by the Mother Superior, who falsely accused him of failing to change his scrub suit when visiting the maternity ward. Elliott pointed out that the local priest wore his overcoat during daily visits. The Mother Superior retorted, “Father’s germs are holy germs.”

Elliott was part of the team formed by Dr. John Rock, the developer of the birth control pill during the time when contraception was illegal in Massachusetts. He also worked with Jack Lippes, who invented the popular Lippes Loop IUD.

Not all of Elliott’s work was devoted to preventing pregnancy. He worked to help men hampered by a low-sperm count. To trick the body to form more sperm, Elliott needed to find a low-cost and effective way for men to heat their scrotums. His solution: a baby bottle warmer he found in Zayre’s.

Elliott began to appear on radio and TV shows. His success with the media, coupled with his Harvard and Tufts credentials, led to his selection as president of the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, where he battled “the conservative crazies.”

Alas, there he also learned about the “liberal crazies.” When the PPLM Board learned that he and his wife Sharon had had their third child—a violation of the Zero Population Growth principles—he was asked to resign.

Elliott is pleased that, although political hurdles remain, today medical science and society allow and encourage women to plan their families in a safe manner.

Prestigious Shaw Prize Awarded to Verne Vance

BOLLI SGL Verne Vance has won the second annual T.F. Evans prize awarded by Great Britain’s Shaw Society for the best drama-related writing that reflects the wit, wisdom, and writing style of George Bernard Shaw. The 2012 prize—£500—was awarded in January after an international competition in which entrants were required to submit a new preface to a Shaw play of their choosing. Verne’s 3,000 word entry, written ostensibly from beyond the grave by Shaw (who died in 1950 at the age of 93), was a preface to Shaw’s 1929 play, The Apple Cart. The new preface reiterates Shaw’s long-time skepticism of democracy as subject to manipulation by plutocrats interested only in their own advancement. Vance, a retired lawyer and former president of the Newton Board of Aldermen, leads popular courses on Shaw’s plays both at BOLLI and at Regis College.

WANTED—YOUR WRITING and PHOTOGRAPHY

Submissions for the next edition of the BOLLI Journal are now being accepted.

Send your stories, poems, essays, memoirs, or photographs to Joan Kleinman at joankleinman@rcn.com
What do Beavis and Butthead, Petraeus and Broadwell, Much Ado About Nothing, and Hitchcock’s Suspicion have to do with Othello? If you were lucky enough to participate in Billy Flesch’s tenth successive Rapaporte Seminar, you would know. Billy led 30 enthusiastic participants on a wild intellectual ride, making Shakespeare accessible, exciting, and, yes, fun! Each session not only focused on one act of the play, but also dealt in depth with the play’s main themes of power, envy, and jealousy. Billy explored the nooks and crannies of the drama and helped us to deconstruct the myriad motivations of the evil, manipulative Iago, Shakespeare’s consummate villain, and to witness the disintegration of the credulous and tragic Othello.

Billy Flesch’s prodigious memory and encyclopedic knowledge of Shakespeare, poetry, and film allowed him to weave a fabric of allusions so rich that it left our heads spinning. It was a joy to hear him quote from memory long speeches from Othello and other Shakespearean plays. He then moved seamlessly to Browning’s My Last Duchess and to a riff on modern films that elucidated his remarkable contention that Othello and Hamlet are mirror images of each other, something most of us had never thought about, but will now never forget.

Through the examination of the text and excerpts of several stage and screen versions of the play, our study of Othello helped us to look at ourselves through the lens of this great play and brought us to a deeper understanding of the human condition.

Prof. Sarah Lamb, a cultural anthropologist, introduced us to different societies around the world, exposing us to beliefs and practices regarding gender, family, rites of passage, aging, and death that we found strange. Some practices we were inclined to reject immediately as cruel; but then, upon examination of the underlying beliefs of other societies, we could see the value of these practices as empowering rather than denigrating, even if we could not accept them.

Consider aging, a stage of life which is handled differently in different societies. Hindu belief encourages the elderly to live within a multigenerational family but gradually withdraw from society and reflect. At Indian family meals the elderly sit away from the center of the family circle, increasingly towards the outer edge as they get older. Compare this attitude to America, where the idea of a family meal is waning and where the elderly value their independence—which is why “independent living” arrangements and “learning-in-retirement” programs such as BOLLI’s are so popular.

While Prof. Lamb spent most of her time showing us intriguing video clips of diverse societies, each with its own beliefs and practices, the class raised the question of whether there are universal values, held by all societies. Anthropologists suggest such universals include marriage, family, religion, death rituals, divorce, music, story-telling, and gift-giving.

The take-away from this seminar was that the strange becomes familiar (although perhaps not acceptable) when we open our minds to understand what lies behind the views and traditions of other peoples.

Thank you, BOLLI Community, who supported the end-of-the-tax-year campaign. As a reminder, think of supporting BOLLI at this time of the year to honor life cycle events. Spring is just around the corner. Enjoy your courses. With much appreciation -- The Gift Funds Committee
Who is That?
by Brenda Gleckman

In good fun, the BOLLI Banner is launching a photo recognition contest. How many of your BOLLI friends can you identify from their old photos? The contestant who is able to identify the greatest number of BOLLI members will be invited to join the Banner Staff at lunch at the Brandeis Faculty Club.

Our staff lawyer made us write this: (1) In case of a tie, the winning entry will be selected at random and (2) Banner staff and those whose photos are shown below (and their families) are ineligible.

Members whose photos appear below will be identified, along with the contest winner, in next month’s Banner. Please write your guesses in the box below each photo, print your name here, tear off this page, and stuff it in the box in the Gathering Place by March 15th.
Special prices for BOLLI members with ID. 
Tickets may be purchased by telephone at 781-736-3400 ($2 handling fee) 
or at the Shapiro Campus Center box office, which opens at noon, Mon.–Sat. 
or on-line at brandeis.edu/tickets

SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER

Sat., Mar. 9 (8 P.M.)
Times of Turbulence: Music for Cello & Piano
Joshua Gordon, cello
Randall Hodgkinson, piano

War. Economic upheaval. Psychological stress. Sound familiar? Come hear the powerful and uplifiting response of three composers facing similar conditions at the beginning of the 20th century, as performed by the critically acclaimed cello/piano duo of Gordon and Hodgkinson.

Frank Bridge: Sonata (1913–1917)
Paul Hindemith: Sonata, Op. 11 no. 3 (1919)
Paul Hindemith: Phantasiestück, Op. 8 no. 2 (1917)
Sergei Rachmaninoff: Sonata, Op. 19 (1901)

Fri.–Sun., Mar. 15–17 (see times below)
Fiddle Deis
A cross-genre progression of the violin in performance. From Medieval to Traditional to Electronic. All strings (violin, viola, cello, bass, viola da gamba, guitar, mandolin, etc.) are invited to take part in the workshops, master classes, and jams on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Fri., Mar. 15 (7 P.M.)
Mariel Vandersteel
Reiner Family Band
Laura Cortese Acoustic Project
(fiddles, cello)
Jeremy Kittel Band (fiddle, mandolin, cello)
Simon Chrisman, hammered dulcimer

Sat., Mar. 16 (7 P.M.)
Meena Kothandaraman
David Greely & Chris Stafford
Ben Powell Jazz Quartet (violin, piano, bass, drums)
Casey Driessen

Sun., Mar. 17
1 P.M., Medieval Vielle
3 P.M., Fiddling in the 17th century
4:30 P.M., Luck of the Irish
7 P.M., Daniel Stepner Baroque Project

SPINGOLD THEATER CENTER

Sat.–Sun., Mar. 9–10
Heaven and Hell / Light and Dark
Susan Dibble, choreographer
Performed by graduate and undergraduate students

How does an image inspire movement and theater? This choreographed program will draw on images from paintings, from the parallelism in medieval art to the abstract expressionism of contemporary art. The program will include theater and dance pieces that evoke a wide range of styles and themes, as well as stories told with the intricacy of artists’ symbolism and composition in paintings. This program will emphasize lighting design: how it enhances the movement and also creates shadows and angles to bring visual accent and life to the compositions. Free.

Next issue  Author deadline: 3/15/13 • Newsstand: 4/9/13