

# Montage

Art, books, diverse creations



- 18 Off the Shelf
- 19 Sophomores, Sex, Soap
- 20 Venerable, Valuable Volumes
- 24 Chairman of the Bored
- 25 Open Book
- 26 Chapter and Verse

## Stirred, Shaken, and Sung

*Pink Martini—musicians who don’t “know enough to be scared”*

by HOWARD AXELROD

**A**T THE END of Pink Martini’s Carnegie Hall debut this past June, a conga line broke out in the audience and bounced its way up and down one of the aisles. Even in the venerable hall’s tiered balconies, people were on their feet, clapping and dancing. “Our music is permission to escape into a romantic world,” says lead singer China Forbes ’92.

That music—much of it written either by Forbes or by bandleader Thomas Lauderdale ’92—represents a kind of re-

verse globalization. Rather than impose one style everywhere, it draws from nearly everywhere, ranging from Edith Piaf-style torch songs to Brazilian sambas to Gershwin standards; the lyrics are in Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, Arabic, and Portuguese, as well as English. With strings, percussion, two horn players, and Forbes’s clear, luminous voice, the 12-piece pop orchestra has a lush, energetic sound, with the sweep of a Hollywood musical from the 1940s or ’50s ([www.pinkmartini.com](http://www.pinkmartini.com)). It’s a mix different

**Pink Martini onstage, with Thomas Lauderdale on piano at far left, and vocalist China Forbes.**

from almost anything else out there, and audiences are responding: Pink Martini’s first two albums sold more than a million copies combined, and its recently released third album, *Hey Eugene!*, entered Amazon’s bestseller list at number one.

The *New York Times* headlined its review of the Carnegie Hall concert “Grab a Cocktail and Listen to the Vintage-Chic Band.” Replace “Cocktail” with “Coffee,” and that headline—with its offbeat allure—could have been a handwritten sign from 1992 advertising a musical night at Café

Mardi in the Adams House lower common room. The founder of Café Mardi, and of Pink Martini, has never had trouble attracting an audience. With his platinum-blond hair, bow tie (something he gave up after college), and cross-dressing, Thomas Lauderdale has always cut a flamboyant figure. (He threw the last, and perhaps most famous, party in the now-remodeled-out-of-existence Adams House pool: “In walks the senior tutor—lots of naked people in the pool, at 3 A.M., with the lights off,” he confesses with an impish grin.) When not in the pool, Lauderdale, a classically

# Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

**The Complete Fables of Jean de La Fontaine**, translated by Norman R. Shapiro '51, Ph.D. '58 (University of Illinois, \$80 cloth, \$25 paper). The Wesleyan professor—who commutes from Cambridge and writes in Adams House—gives in to his La Fontaine addiction. Hence, “No doubt the first to see a camel/Fled from the unfamiliar mammal,” and other delights.

**From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession**, by Rakesh Khurana, Ph.D. '98, associate professor of business administration (Princeton, \$35). Management is an institution—but is it a profession like law or medicine? Is the M.B.A. a professional degree, or simply a license to make lots of money? Khurana explores the “delegitimation of managerial authority” and the “abandonment of the professionalization project in business schools,” and asks whether such schools can “take their future success for granted” or are, perhaps, on the verge of “reinvention.”

**Tell Borges If You See Him: Tales of Contemporary Somnambulism**, by Peter LaSalle '69 (University of Georgia, \$24.95). This third collection of short stories, winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, begins familiarly enough: “I was supposed to meet Emily later that night in the old Hayes-Bickford Cafeteria right there on Massachusetts Avenue in Harvard Square...”

**Babies by Design: The Ethics of Genetic Choice**, by Ronald M. Green, Ph.D. '73 (Yale, \$26). The author, who professes ethics at Dartmouth and advises Advanced Cell Technology on the ethics of stem-cell research, charts a path toward “the responsible introduction

of reproductive innovations” emerging from labs.

**Planets, Stars, and Galaxies: A Visual Encyclopedia of Our Universe**, written and illustra-

ted by David A. Aguilar (National Geographic, \$24.95). An almost psychedelic tour of the cosmos, in text, photographs, and illustrations by Aguilar, director of science information at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

**The First Campaign: Globalization, the Web, and the Race for the White House**, by Garrett M. Graff '03 (Farrar Straus and Giroux, \$24). The author, formerly a Ledecky Undergraduate Fellow at this magazine, posits a 2008 election about, and shaped by, globalization and information technology.

**The Short Book**, written and illustrated by Zachary Kanin '05 (Black Dog & Leventhal, \$9.95 paper). The height-challenged author, a former *Lampoon* president, reaches out to others who, like him, deal with their stature every day “and sometimes at night.”



From the book *Planets, Stars, and Galaxies: A Visual Encyclopedia of Our Universe*

**The Modern Element: Essays on Contemporary Poetry**, by Adam Kirsch '97 (Norton, \$24.95). Collected critical essays, on subjects ranging from Jorie Graham to Billy Collins, by one of this magazine's contributing editors; in these pages, he has written most recently about Seamus Heaney and W. H. Auden.

trained pianist, could often be found late at night accompanying Forbes on Puccini and Verdi arias. But he never envisioned that a band would grow out of their collaboration. “I was more concerned with throwing parties,” he says. “With being the cruise-ship director of Adams House.”

His cruise-ship-director talents—energy, organization, and a penchant for

“I just fired the singer; we have these really big shows coming up this weekend, and I want to fly you to Portland.”

fun—have served him and Pink Martini well. Indeed, the band's appeal is not unlike that of the cruise ship: just subtract the surfeit of dining options and the shuffleboard, and enable the ship to travel at high speed through time as well

as space. Of writing lyrics in several languages and drawing on the musical styles of different eras, Lauderdale says, “It frees us from the fear of sentimentality. It's like a kid playing the piano—he doesn't know enough to be scared.”

Pink Martini's success has surprised many, and that includes Lauderdale himself. “When the band first started, I was wearing cocktail dresses and we were playing ‘I Dream of Jeannie,’” he recalls. After graduation, Forbes moved to New York City to launch a career as a singer-songwriter, while Lauderdale returned to his hometown of Portland, Oregon, hoping to get involved in politics—he aspired to become mayor someday. While working on a campaign to keep homosexuality legal in the state, he booked bands for political fundraisers; one weekend, in desperate



need of an opening band for a show, he called up his old friend Forbes. "I just fired the singer; we have these really big shows coming up this weekend, and I want to fly you to Portland," Forbes remembers him saying. With the Pink Martini sheet music in hand—Lauderdale had FedEx-ed all the songs to her—she boarded the plane.

Forbes soon signed on full-time, but the band did not find its niche easily. For one thing, traveling with so many musicians is expensive. Without the backing of a major label (the band's albums are on its own label, Heinz Records, named after Lauderdale's dog), Forbes and Lauderdale had to think unconventionally. Unable to cut expenses, they increased revenue instead by performing where they were most popular: in Europe.

The band got its first big break in 1997, when the release of its version of Edith Piaf's "*Je ne veux pas travailler*" ("I don't want to work") serendipitously coincided with French legislation that shortened the number of hours in that country's workweek. The selection was nominated for "Song of the Year," and the band for "Best New Artist" in France's version of the Grammys, the *Victoires de la Musique* awards. (The song is still popular there, having run in a Citroën commercial.) With its multilingual lyrics and diverse influences, Pink Martini soon attracted a following across the continent.

The band's success in Europe prompted American symphony orchestras to extend invitations. Since its debut with the Oregon Symphony in 1998 (Lauderdale has been friends with then-music director Norman Leyden since high school), Pink Martini has performed with the Boston Pops, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and other companies across the country. Al-



The Pink Martini band lifting off, above, and China Forbes on the cover of their latest CD, *Hey Eugene!*

though "It's not really in young people's repertoire to go see symphony orchestras," Lauderdale says, the sophisticated fun of Pink Martini's sets has drawn a mixed crowd of old and young, turning such collaborations into an appealing way for the orchestras to reach a new demographic.

After their Carnegie Hall performance and an appearance on *The Late Show* with David Letterman, Pink Martini continued its North American tour to promote *Hey Eugene!* with stops in Montreal, Chicago, Los Angeles, and many places in between. "There's nothing better than a public library, a used-record store, and meeting strangers in dark alleys," says Lauderdale of his life as bandleader. Although the stage doors of leading concert halls don't always open onto dark alleys, Lauderdale has certainly become cruise-ship director once again.

Howard Axelrod '95, a contributor to the New York Times Magazine, is writing a memoir.

## Sophomores, Sex, Soap

*Students steam up the small screen with Harvard melodramas.*

by ANDREA MCCARREN

LISA NESTLES into the folds of Adam's grey fleece jacket, her hand entwined in his. The two lovers share a park bench and an uncertain future—their budding romance, forbidden. Adam is a wide-eyed freshman from South Dakota; Lisa, a sophisticated and shapely junior from New York. But she is also his peer advising fel-

low, an upperclass student chosen to offer academic and social guidance to freshmen. By the rules of academia, their relationship is taboo.

Nevertheless, hormones rule on days like this. They've slipped away from roommates to this quiet spot overlooking the Charles River. Adam leans in toward Lisa and places a soft kiss on her forehead.