

ket.” At first, she studied Chinese, taught English, and, like Kavulla, “enjoyed having the time to read all those books I’d always meant to read.” From Taiwan, she set off for Beijing University, where she supplemented her Mandarin studies with courses on immigration and Chinese history in an academic setting unlike anything she had seen at Harvard or Penn.

After further travels throughout China, Wang worked for Senator Barack Obama in his Chicago office, a job perhaps most valuable for allowing her to concentrate on her growing interest in immigration issues. “In a way,” she says, “a year away from doing ‘productive’ work was really what threw me into focus, so to speak. At the end of it, I was ready to begin again, not only with energy, but also with the knowledge that this wasn’t the only thing out there—that, contrary to popular belief, a world does exist on the other side of the Charles and past Porter, not just in a theoretical future way.”

AFTER TWO YEARS of living in Boston, I’m not entirely sure that I’ve actually been past Porter Square; I’m even less sure that any of the lessons I’ve learned while away will throw anything into focus for me back at Harvard. I am, after all, still in the midst of things, having written this on a dirty street corner in Dar es Salaam, to be sent overseas—the chaos of overland travel in Africa permitting—from my home in Gaborone.

I do know, however, that my newfound commitment to the worlds of public health and international aid is only one part of my time abroad. In some probably selfish sense, what I’ve done in my time off has mattered less than the simple fact that I did it away from Harvard. My work, although supported by a generous Harvard-specific fellowship, was not arranged by an established work- or study-abroad program or through any of Harvard’s international channels. It arose instead from a few simple e-mails to outside organizations I admired. This probably resulted in a more chaotic project than a formal Harvard program might have provided, but I’m not convinced that is all bad. In fact, it has allowed me to step away not just from the routines of Cambridge, but from the academic co-

150 Years of Glee

During its first international tour, in 1921, the Harvard Glee Club inspired French composers Francis Poulenc and Darius Milhaud to write new pieces for the group. Milhaud set Psalm 121. Poulenc penned a drinking song. So began a tradition that continues this April 11, when the club premieres opera and choral composer Dominic Argento’s *Apollo in Cambridge* at a gala 150th-anniversary concert in Sanders Theatre (see www.harvardgleeclub.org).

The debut caps an eight-year project. In 2000, Bernard E. Kreger ’59, secretary of the Harvard Glee Club Foundation, donated \$25,000 (which was matched by the foundation) to commission a new piece of men’s choral music annually, culminating in a major work for the sesquicentennial. He formed a five-man committee and began considering likely sources. He even remembers a vacation spent driving all over Maui, “listening to a stack of CDs to see if I could whittle it down to a couple that I thought were really worthy.”

The committee ran its selections by director of choral activities Jameson N. Marvin, the group’s conductor, and began commissioning composers, including Charles Fussell, a professor at Boston University, and Sir John Tavener, who composed music for Princess Diana’s funeral. “We probably do more twentieth-century music than any genre,” explains Marvin. The commissions help because “in general there’s not a lot of great male chorus music out there.” Kreger and current Glee Clubbers agree that their goal is not only to support the group, but also to push the boundaries of men’s choral music with every piece.

Of the new works, club president Quentin Sedlacek ’08 says, “Some are now performed by choirs throughout the country.” The professional men’s group Cantus recorded Sedlacek’s favorite, “Ave Dulcissima Maria” by Morton Lauridsen, a winner of the National Medal of the Arts. Peter Lifland ’10, who “came to Harvard for the Glee Club,” enjoys “Credo,” by Paul Moravec, but says some audiences—put off by its dissonant cluster chords—don’t. He admits that the new pieces can be difficult, sometimes requiring months of rehearsal.

Nothing has been more difficult than *Apollo in Cambridge*, a setting of works by Harvard-affiliated poets James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that Marvin introduced in rehearsal more than a year ago. Argento’s 15-minute piece contains three sections, each with its own shifting time signatures, syncopated rhythms, and flurries of sharps, naturals, and flats. But the challenges and intricacies, say the singers, don’t mean the piece isn’t fun to listen to. “It sounds really luscious,” agrees Kreger, who serves as an accompanist for the group. “[Argento’s] not an ‘out-there’ modern composer making odd noises.” Sedlacek sees the new music connecting the group’s present with its storied past. “This anniversary,” he says, “will really highlight that continuity.”



coon in which I’ve been ensconced for two years. I have been able to define my public-health experience for myself, in part by ignoring time altogether, in part by responding in my own way to the

difficulties of the developing world. I still don’t know what I’ll do when I return to campus, but for the first time in years, I’m comfortable with that.

My African adventures do occasionally