

Rich Fine and Performing Arts tradition continues at Birmingham-Southern

BY LESTER SEIGEL '79

I am pleased to write the introduction to this issue of 'Southern, which focuses on the fine and performing arts. The arts are truly alive and well at Birmingham-Southern, continuing a long legacy that includes such memorable professors as Hugh Thomas, Arnold Powell, "Doc" Slone, Andrew Gainey, Raymond Anderson, Ray McMahan, Bill Baxter, Karoly Barta, and continues today in the teaching and mentoring of Mira Popovich, Michael Flowers, Bob Shelton, Tom Gibbs, Bill DeVan, and the other dedicated members of our faculty. All of them continue the tradition of dedication to our students that has been the hallmark of the arts on the Hilltop.

Our faculty members continue to grow as scholars and artists. We are proud of Charles Norman Mason, professor of music, who will spend 2005-06 composing in Italy as a winner of the Samuel Barber Rome Prize—an honor he shares with such illustrious names as Berlioz, Bizet, and Debussy! William DeVan, who is the only solo artist in Alabama on the distinguished roster of Steinway Presenters, continues to give concerts worldwide and has attracted international attention for his scholarly work on performance-related injury prevention, together with music alum Robert Poczatek, M.D. '92. Art History Professor Kathleen Spies is completing a landmark book on the artist Reginald Marsh, and Art Professor Bob Shelton recently published a two-volume work on the cultural study of the art film. Professors Alan Litsey in theatre and Jim Neel in visual art have won significant grants for their work in playwriting and sculpture, respectively. And this is just a representative sampling of the fine work our faculty continues to engage in.

On the pages of this issue you will read about a few of our representative alumni in the arts. I hope you appreciate the variety of their interests and achievements. We are proud of all of them, and of our many other graduates who teach students every day, make music in houses of worship, research, perform, and create on stage and off. They are truly making art every day. Others have taken their arts training and used it as a springboard for careers in law, medicine, government, education, and business. They all reflect our passionate belief that the arts teach one the importance of discipline, of dedication, and of the joy of fulfillment in studying that which you love.

Our division continues to grow and explore new ideas for teach-



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ing, learning, and service. The art history program has quintupled the number of majors in the last five years. The new master of music degree program in piano, voice, organ, and composition continues to grow. Our first MM degree since the days of the Birmingham Conservatory of Music (our parent institution) was conferred last May. The dance faculty and students have added a winter holiday performance to their already busy calendar, and a new first-year Foundations program in dance was begun by Professor Ruth Henry. The Hugh and Barbara Thomas Masterclass Series, generously funded by David and Beverly '73 Hosokawa, continues to bring outstanding artists to work with our students, and our partnership program with St. Aloysius School in Harlem is ongoing, with a service-learning team visiting regularly during Interim, and through the work of music education alumnae Andrea Parker, and currently Kirstin Anderson, teaching there. The BSC Concert Choir has added the performance of major works with orchestra as a regular part of its repertoire, in addition to its regional and national tours.

Teaching is only one aspect of the continuum. Our students make up another. Each year, they continue to discover and develop their artistic and intellectual growth through the many exhibitions, productions, concerts, and recitals that fill the calendar. If you haven't been on campus for one of our season events, I cordially invite you to experience this for yourself!

Finally, there is the support from the many alumni, parents, and friends who are part of the BSC family. As we embark on the college's Sesquicentennial next year, we will be honoring our past. More important, however, we will embrace the future, continuing the commitment to excellence that has always characterized academic and artistic life, and seeking new challenges to our growth as artists and teachers. Come along for the journey!

Editor's Note: Dr. Lester Seigel is Joseph Hugh Thomas Professor of Music and chair of the Division of Fine and Performing Arts at Birmingham-Southern. The Grammy-nominated 1979 BSC graduate serves as director of BSC's Concert Choir and the Hilltop Singers. He also is pianist for the local Chagall Trio and is choir-master and organist at Canterbury United Methodist Church.