

OUT OF THE BASEMENT



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Mary Easter in her solo performance, *Arc Light*, which premiered in Arena Theater in 1979. [photo courtesy of Doug Ford, Carletonian Archives]

Professor Mary Easter on Carleton, dance, and knocking over the chair

If you went to opening convocation this year, you witnessed an amazing performance by Mary Easter, professor of dance and the performing arts here at Carleton. Mary Easter owned the stage for the entire performance. Mary had a lot of courage to differ from the traditional form that convocation usually takes: a speech. Mary used dance, movement, and theatrics to present her convocation address. I was shocked to learn that Mary is the only female African American tenured professor at Carleton, and I was interested to interview her about that and also about her performance at opening convocation.

When I went into her office, I had a set of questions laid out that I wanted to ask during the interview. After the very first question, I realized that this wasn't going to be a typical interview. One answer that Mary Easter gave involved a sound; she said something like, "...and then things went...pwuh!" (with a movement of her hands). I thought to myself, now how do I put that into words???? I had neglected to realize the best quality of Mary Easter. She is not like your traditional faculty member at Carleton. She is a professor of movement and dance; her perspectives are different than a professor who works with written material all day. This was the best aspect of my interview with Mary Easter; so much of her responses to my questions were abstract and interpretive, like a piece of art. **I think Mary Easter would want you to keep in mind that the interview below, although made up of her answers, is also a product of my own personal perspectives.**

What does it mean to you that you are the only female African American tenured professor at Carleton? And what does that mean for Carleton?

As I near retirement, this issue has more meaning for me and particularly for Carleton. The presence of female African American professors at Carleton is a necessity. Because of the racial makeup of Northfield, it was once difficult for my friends to imagine that I could have a social life here in Northfield. They wondered how I managed without having an immediate social network of black friends. But I have friends here!

The fact that I'm the only female African American tenured professor never even occurred to me until five years ago when Harry Williams (professor of History at Carleton) said to me, "You know you're the only one!?" In some senses there has always been a presence of African American women at Carleton in the staff, if not specifically on the tenured track. When I think about when I first came to Carleton and how my family was the very first black family in town, and then I look at Northfield, today I see progress.



Mary Easter

"I would like for my students to be doing something that makes a world of difference to them."

As you referenced in your convocation speech, you have had to overcome a lot of obstacles such as growing up black in the south and being a black female professor among mostly white male professors. What have these experiences done for you?

In faculty meetings, I was aware of who I was, as in contrast with who everybody else was. Like I said in the convocation, they hadn't done anything to me. It's just that my perspectives on life, as a dancer and a body person, are really different from many of the other faculty members. There was a great difference of perspectives, and those differences were going to surface eventually. Not only was I thinking a certain way, but I was aware that nobody else was thinking like me! I have used my life experiences as great inspiration for my work. My life has proven to be a rich vein for my work as a dancer; this is how I connect with the world. I'm also aware that I have lived a privileged life. My story is not that of total oppression OR that of "smooth sailing." I am somewhere in between, and so often we forget that those people have stories to tell.

What lasting impression do you hope to leave on your students? What impressions have your students left on you?

Carleton students are fabulous; they are. I'm continually impressed and moved by them. In general, I really appreciate the students. I like smartness. I like when students' eyes light up. And I truly love being a part of that. In composition classes, a lot of their subject matter is more interesting than they know. So often I think of my students material, "Hey, this is really fascinating!" I love the feeling that I am letting my students in on some of the most fun they're ever going to have. In my own creative work, I get the opportunity to "create the world according to Mary." My students are always in pursuit of that one interesting or quirky thing, the thing that I hadn't thought of yet. It's an extremely satisfying environment. When I assign a creative assignment sometimes a student will come in with something that wasn't really what I assigned, but it will be BRILLIANT! I love the unexpected, seeing something that I hadn't thought of before. I would like for my students to be doing something that makes a world of difference to them.

What did you hope for people to take away from your convocation?

"Learning How to Disturb the Peace" was the subtitle of the piece. I want young people to feel like they can connect with the politics around them. They can do something about the events going on around them! I want people to be able to recognize when the status quo doesn't serve them and to do something about that. The phrase "knocking over the chair" actually came out of the piece itself. I was working on it, and I knocked over a chair in the middle of it and suddenly realized that this was what it was all about. I then tried to think of instances that I'd done that throughout my life, knocked over the chair. I hope that people who attended the convocation feel like they were able to relate to my piece. I want people to feel like it wasn't just about ME and MY experiences, but I want them to be able to relate with their own life experiences of "knocking over the chair."

A Gay in the Life

By Derek Zimmerman, '07

Less Than Apparent

I recently wrote a letter to my father in which many emotional and heavy things were said. One of them happened to be “by the way, I’m gay”. He then called me and left this message, “yeah, I’d kind of suspected”.

Now I don’t know why this irks me so much, but it really does. Is it really so obvious that I’m gay? I mean, I don’t wear shirts exposing my bare midriff that say “dirty boy” on them. I don’t love Rent, or any musicals for that matter. I’ve never had a whit of interest or talent in the fields of fashion, antique selection, dancing, lisping or personal hygiene. Why then was it clear to my father, for whom I’d put on my best good ol’ Nebraska boy persona every time I went home?

I’m sure that his suspecting is partly due to my stepmother’s being a small-time comedian and dragging Dad to her shows in gay bars. It’s pretty hard not to think about homosexuality when you happen to be sitting next to two guys with moustaches playing tonsil hockey. In addition, I guess I violated too many rules of the Midwestern man-code. I certainly wasn’t ever that interested in sports; for a Nebraskan, not giving a damn about Husker Football is tantamount to reli-

gious heresy. And the first tape I ever bought was by Paula Abdul, which is just gay.

All of those gender-defying actions on my part are probably why my Mom made it a point to emphasize Ellen Degeneres’ coming out when it happened in the mid-90s. She told me that the first boy she ever dated ended up gay. I can only assume that it was kind of difficult for him being from a town of 150 people in the middle of the heartland.

I think that’s one of the most wonderful things my mother ever did for me; to let me know as soon as I was old enough to understand that it’s okay to be gay. I guess I’ll have to thank Paula. But I often wonder; what happens to the boys attracted to other boys who pass for straight?

Has anyone ever noticed how sissy the gay boys are at Carleton? I sure have. It’s great that my fellow limp-wristers and I are comfortable enough with our gender performance to violate our prescribed role, but I don’t think I’m alone in never being surprised by the people that end up coming out of the closet while they’re here. What I am kind of surprised by are the people who start to live a queer lifestyle after they graduate.

Case in point; I now know that in the last five years, after they

graduated from college, a bunch of guys from the Carleton Singing Knights have come out. I joined the group two years ago, and I was the only guy in recent memory who’d been admittedly gay while being a part of the crew. I guess it’s easier to just be straight when freshman girls inexplicably fawn all over you. And Knights rehearsals have been by far the most macho thing I think I’ve ever been involved with. Well, less macho...more like a bunch of boys on the playground...

Especially when you consider the anthropological studies that have been done around adolescent males that have discovered that their most abusive language is slurs against homosexuality and femininity (sissy, fag, cock-sucker). I realized I was gay in the 8th grade, which was the height of my being called a fag; it wasn’t just the power of suggestion, but when you’re told so many times, you begin to think...

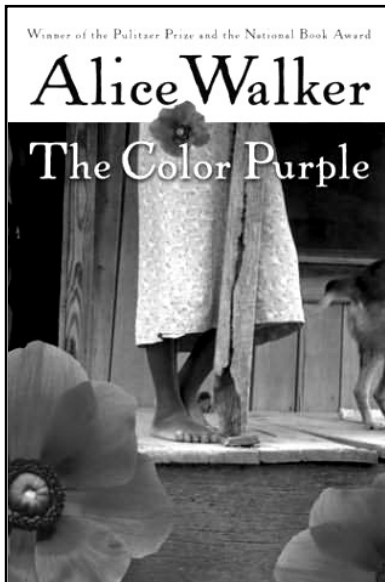
I sincerely hope that people who do fit more easily into the gender system aren’t suffering from repressing their desires. I know I’ve suffered when incredibly attractive men, who never seem to date or show interest in women (even when women throw themselves at them), wouldn’t take a little time off from soccer (or Frisbee, or football, or whatever) practice to violate some gender norms with me.

GSC Book Review

*Come check out the GSC library to find this book and others.
Lots of others.*

By Cindy Lys, '07

"You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy." These are the opening phrases of Alice Walker's The Color Purple, a life narrative from the perspective of Celie, a black girl who is fourteen years old, unloved and sexually abused. The novel follows the



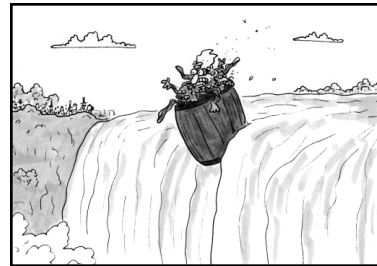
liberating journey through her education, family, children, religion, sexuality and the love that she finds in a singer named Shug Avery. Celie provides us with a refreshingly clear understanding of the world, how she understands it, and of how her understanding changes throughout the novel as she become herself. Despite the post Civil War

rural setting and the difficult issues addressed in this novel, the narrator, Celie, remains approachable, clever and honest throughout. No matter where the reader is coming from they are easily absorbed into Celie's small but significant world of diverse women and men. The Color Purple was also made into a Spielberg film, but heavily downplays the gay relationship, losing very essential portions of the plot and development of Celie's character. Read the book!

*"He love looking at Shug. I love looking at Shug.
But Shug don't love looking at but one of us. Him."*

Women's Moment in History

October 24th 1901: Anna Edson Taylor went over Niagara Falls in a barrel, the first person to survive such a stunt.



October 26th 1916: Margaret Sanger arrested for obscenity for distributing birth control information.

"I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them, and with a courage to make themselves vulnerable that I find moving beyond words."

— Gloria Steinem

MEET THE 2006-2007 GSC STAFF!!!



Kaaren Williamsen-Garvey

Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center
 "I work in the GSC because it pays me to do the work I love and the students are great!"

Kaaren's **Quirky Fact**: "When setting my alarm, I have to set it to an even number that is not zero, and I just recently found out that my dad does the same thing."

Lawrene Dykeman '09

Pittsburgh, PA

Majoring in either Japanese or East Asian Studies

"I work at the GSC because the work there involves important human rights issues."

Lawrence's **Quirky Fact**: "Halloween is my favorite holiday because kids are especially bratty and hideous, which is probably more true to life."

Leahruth Jemilo '08

Chicago, Illinois

Majoring in Political Science

"I work at the GSC because I like working with such talented and enthusiastic people."

Leahruth's **Quirky Fact**: "I still sleep with a teddy bear; his name is "Bear Bear."



Cindy Louise Lys '07

Chicago, Illinois

Majoring in English

"I work at the GSC because I want to broaden the diversity of programming hosted by the office."

Cindy's **Quirky Fact**: "I have never had to participate in room draw."

Erin Updike

Hall Director/Res Life Liaison

Graduated from U of M

Majored in Biology, Psychology and Leadership

"I work at the GSC because I am very excited by the proactive nature and friendly faces in the office."

Erin's **Quirky Fact**: "Bare feet really scare me."

Jedda Foreman '08

Dogtown, CA (population 30!)

Majoring in Psychology

"I work at the GSC because while Carleton is usually a liberal and inclusive community, it still needs a lot of work. Jedda's **Quirky**

Fact: "I hate waking up to an alarm set with numbers ending in 0 or 5. 2s and 7s are particularly good. and I like to switch it up everyday."

Michael Lane '08

Ormond Beach, Florida

Majoring in Biology.

"I work at the GSC because I want other people to share in the joy of understanding their own gender and sexuality."

Michael's **Quirky Fact**: "I collect skulls of non-human animals."

Julie Nicol '07

Seattle, Washington

Majoring in Biology with a concentration
in Womens and Gender Studies

"I work at the GSC because I want to
save the world."

Julie's **Quirky Fact**: "I hate babies"

James Sanna '08

Concord, MA

Majoring in History with a concentration
in Medieval and Renaissance Studies

"I work at the GSC because I want to help
format the next revolution."

James's **Quirky Fact**: "I share my name
with Frank Sinatra's old producer (just
google me)."



Liz Snider-Lotz '08

Tucker, GA

Majoring in Psychology

"I work at the GSC because

Liz's **Quirky Fact**: "My hair
is "vampyre red," which is
somewhere between magenta
and burgundy."



Katie Paul '08

Norman, Oklahoma

Majoring in International Relations with
a concentration in Political Economy

"I work at the GSC because I come from
a very conservative state, and I am inter-
ested in working towards equality for all
people."

Katie's **Quirky Fact**:: "I wish I lived in
the 1950s."

Justin Smith '09

Crossville, Tennessee

"I work at the GSC because I like
being connected to the community."

Justin's **Quirky Fact**: "If I don't
doodle in class, then I can't really pay
attention to what the professor is
saying."



Dominic Vendell '09

Majoring in Classical Languages with a con-
centration in Women's and Gender Studies

"I work at the GSC because the gender and
sexuality binary makes me very very sad."

Dominic's **Quirky fact**: "I'd like to conceive
with Meryl Streep."

Derek Zimmerman '07

Lincoln, NE

Majoring in English

"I work at the GSC because I'm too gay
and bitter not to."

Derek's **Quirky Fact**: "I like to play piano
arrangements of video game theme music."



Let's Talk About SEX...

This advice column is produced by an alliance of SWAs and GSCAs in order to bring you the most up-to-date and comprehensive information about anything and everything you ever wanted to know about sex. Have sex questions of your own? Thought you'd never be able to have them anonymously –and thoroughly–answered? Well, place your questions in mailbox 1344 or 1143, and we'll try to have them answered in the next newsletter.

I've never had an orgasm. What am I doing wrong?!

Don't worry. It is common for women to have difficulties reaching an orgasm or to never have one. There are a variety of different ways that women experience orgasm, and there is nothing wrong with you if you haven't. One common problem that can hinder reaching orgasm is feeling guilty about having sex or masturbating. Feeling pressured and concentrating too much on specifically trying to orgasm may also prevent you from fully enjoying your sexual experience. It is important to feel comfortable to talk with your partner about what feels good and what doesn't. Another fallacy is that women can only reach orgasm through vaginal penetration. That is SO not true.

Remember that it's not necessary to have an orgasm to enjoy sexual experiences. The most important thing is to feel comfortable and have fun.

Some tips for reaching orgasm:

- Experiment!!
- Take your time. Some women orgasm in 5 minutes, others can take 30 or more minutes.
- Don't feel confined to one path toward orgasm. Human sexuality is not linear.
- Try sex toys, particularly a vibrator.
- Touch yourself :-)
- It's fun to fantasize.
- Never underestimate the power of doctor consultation. There may be something simple they can help you change.

Answers adapted from The Whole Lesbian Sex Book, and Our Body, Our Selves. Come check them out in the GSC library if you would like more information on this or a number of other topics.

Our thoughts on sex...in 10 words or less:



a smile that grows inside of me

It's liberating

exotic
thrilling

*Start thinking of yourself as a confident
sexual being.*

my body

is my own and this feels so right

naked before my partner

my soul

Women of Color retreat forges new connections

By Hannah Maras '09

The Women of Color Retreat was two days worth of bonding and sisterhood shared by all who were there. Together we talked, ate, danced, laughed, cried and shared the entire time. We looked to ourselves and each other for strength to help each other as a community on this campus. The only common denominator between the people present was the fact that we were all women. Each of the fifty three people, including me, added something different to our circle every time we met. I know I got to know myself better and had a chance to really think about our campus environment in a neutral place.

Life is a continuous struggle that none of us are exempt from and to know there are those who will be there for you when you need them most is powerful. I know I'm willing to call on the women I met and got to know better this weekend, and I hope they feel the same way about me. This retreat has proven how connected one group can become in a short amount of time. Our job now that we are back on campus is to keep those connections going and to outreach to those who were not there to stay strong throughout the year. It is very comforting to know that you are not alone here at Carleton, and that's one of the biggest things I will take away from this retreat.

Baltimore Waltz sheds light on the consequences of illness

By Dominic Vendell '09

First-time director and sophomore Kristine Mackin is putting *Baltimore Waltz*, a play by Paula Vogel about illness, mourning, and relationships, on the Nourse Little Theater stage from Thursday, October 12 until Saturday, October 14 at 7:30 pm. Following the opening performance will be a discussion with Gender and Sexuality Center Associates.

Baltimore Waltz portrays the mourning and reconciliation process of Anna, a woman whose brother Carl is dying of AIDS. However, the roles are reversed so that Anna seems to be the sick one, and throughout most of the play, she processes the illness by putting herself in ridiculous romantic situations.

Mackin, as stated above, is directing for the first time after acting last year. She stated, "Because it's a small show, and pretty lively, it's giving me a great

directing thing."

After reading *Baltimore Waltz* in her Queer Theater class last spring, junior Rachel Teagle suggested the play to Mackin, who immediately loved both

the comedy and drama of the play. In addition, she chose the play because of its clever subtext.

"I think her position as the family member of an LGBT person provides a different view of things, especially for those of us at Carleton who are LGBT ourselves. It's an understanding and an acceptance that is unconditional,"



Mackin stated.

In addition to the direction of Mackin, *Baltimore Waltz* stars senior Jennifer Harrington as Anna, senior Drew Brisbin as Carl, and freshman Eric Naeseth as the mysterious Third Man.

Celebrate National Coming Out Week 2006!

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Jedda Foreman, Em Harris, Leahruth
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Derek Zimmerman

CONTACT INFORMATION AND EDITORIAL POLICY

The Gender and Sexuality Center publishes this newsletter monthly for the campus community and friends. Information in the newsletter is based on the best available information at the time of publication. Items in the newsletter are provided for informational purposes only, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gender and Sexuality Center or its employees, nor do they represent the views of the students, staff, faculty, or administration of Carleton College.

Please submit articles, calendar entries, letters and news to the Gender and Sexuality Center or via e-mail to:

vendell@carleton.edu. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and space.

**Newsletter Team: Dominic
Vendell, Leahruth Jemilo, Katie
Paul, Jedda Foreman, Derek
Zimmerman**

National Coming Out Week & LGBT Reunion Events

Friday, October 6th

- Convocation: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Born and Raised: Human Sexuality and the Nature/Nurture Debate."
- 2:45-4 P.M. "Conversations about the Intersection of Race and Sexual Identity." Boliou Auditorium
- 8-10 P.M. Multigenerational Conversations about the Carleton Experience. Arena Theater
- 10 P.M. Queers and Allies Dessert Potluck. Prentice House

Saturday, October 7th

- 9:15-10:30 A.M. "LGBT in Politics." Leighton 305
- 10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. "Same-sex Relationships in Afghanistan: New perspectives on some very old practices." Leighton 305

National Coming Out Day is observed on October 11 by members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities and their allies. The day commemorates October 11, 1987, when 500,000 people marched on Washington DC for LGBT equality. Carleton celebrates this occasion with a week of events and every 4 years our annual celebration coincides with the LGBT Family Reunion.