



Here from the Beginning: Bill Hollman's Brandeis Days

by Joyce Lazarus

When Bill Hollman joined BOLLI almost eight years ago, it was a homecoming. "It felt natural for me to be back at Brandeis. As an alumnus, I felt as though I had never left."

Bill is a man of many interests and talents. A retired high school history teacher, he taught for almost 30 years in Newton where he chaired the social studies department for many years. He also served as Social Studies Curriculum Director at Weston High School. Bill is an accomplished violinist, a member of both the New Philharmonia Orchestra and Shir Madness, a klezmer band affiliated with Shir Hadash Reconstructionist Congregation in Newton. It comes as no surprise that he has particularly enjoyed many BOLLI courses focused on music, history, and politics.

I learned from a recent conversation with Bill just how much Brandeis shaped his career and his lifelong love of learning. We all know Brandeis University today as a major research university that has produced Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners as well as recipients of MacArthur Foundation "genius grants." But what was Brandeis like during its early years?

Bill first attended classes in 1949, joining the University's second graduating class. He recalls that the campus was marked by religious and ethnic diversity, though two-thirds of the students were Jewish. When a group of classmates decided to form a Newman Club, a Catholic organization, they needed to have at least ten members to be

officially recognized. Bill, who is Jewish, became an honorary member so that the Club could reach that number.

The new university consisted of about 200 students--both men and women--and 20 to 30 faculty members. There was just one classroom building, along with the beloved Usen Castle, and a horse stable that had been converted into a library. Bill remembers the jarring sound of jackhammering during classes, as lecture halls rose up in what had been an open atrium.

Academic standards were very high, and reading assignments were quite strenuous. Humanities and World Civilization courses were required for all students. Top students were invited to professors' homes for weekly seminars, several hours in length. Some professors conducted classes as true Socratic dialogues and challenged **(continued on page 6)**



Bill Hollman, long-time BOLLI member and Brandeis alumnus. (Photo from Bill Hollman.)

Welcome, Carolyn Cross!

by Sue Wurster

When meeting Carolyn, BOLLI's new program coordinator, it is clear that the only thing "cross" about her is her last name. Carolyn Cross brings her bright smile to every aspect of her work at 60 Turner Street.

Carolyn comes to us almost directly from her graduation exercises at Connecticut College. She particularly relished her experiences there, as she says she has always been an avid reader who loves to learn new things. She says, in fact, that she chose Connecticut because, when visiting the campus and sitting in on a psychology class, she was impressed by how engaged the students and professor were. She was not disappointed. "The school encouraged me to see patterns and to question assumptions," she says. "I hope to continue utilizing those skills in whatever context I might find myself in the future."

At this point, she is excited to be working at BOLLI, in the field of education, and says she is looking forward to immersing herself fully in what Brandeis has to offer. "I plan to begin taking classes in the spring and eventually completing a Master's degree, perhaps in Project and Program Management."

Carolyn grew up in Wilbraham, MA with her parents, two older siblings, and the family dog. Growing up, she played lacrosse and soccer, and she points to both her high school and college experiences as having emphasized the importance of academic travel. Because of that, "I have been able to go to France, Nicaragua, Spain, China, Namibia, and Chile." She is clearly itching to see other parts of the world as well, but, for now, she is content to take long, exploratory walks "with no set destination in mind." Hanging out with her roommates and cooking are

also favorite activities. In addition, she is a *Saturday Night Live* fan and likes watching documentaries.

The *Killing Us Softly* series, for example, she says, "reveals the disturbing ways in which advertisements silence, objectify, and infantilize women. It is extremely frustrating to watch--but essential in becoming more media literate." On the other hand, she says that *Tough Guise* is about "toxic masculinity and its societal ramifications, specifically violence as the result of hypermasculine gender performance." And then, there's *Food Inc.* that "definitely makes you think about what you're eating and where it comes from!"

With her warm, youthful energy and smile, Carolyn has already become an integral part of the BOLLI community. Welcome, Carolyn!



The newest member of BOLLI's staff, Program Coordinator Carolyn Cross (photo by Wurster).

The BOLLI *BANNER* is published by The *Banner* Committee: Jack Curley, *Managing Editor/Articles Co-Editor*

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Summer Leadership Retreat

By Jack Curley

There will be much to celebrate next year when BOLLI marks its 20th anniversary. Among the numerous achievements of the past two decades are an ever-increasing membership, enhanced programming, development of a strong and capable group of study group leaders (SGLs), and construction of a supportive organizational structure. Not surprisingly, our success brings with it the need to adapt and adjust some aspects of the organization to keep pace as we enter our third decade. Among them, the space limitations posed at 60 Turner Street and the need to increase our stable of excellent programs and qualified SGLs to stay apace with swelling membership numbers. If, as some believe, these issues point to an inflection point for our organization, it's all the more important that we plan now to ensure additional decades of success.

To that end, this summer BOLLI director Avi Bernstein met with key volunteers for an all-day retreat to “take the temperature” of today’s BOLLI and to begin the development of a strategic plan for tomorrow. Participants, members of either the curriculum committee or the study group support committee, were Arlene Bernstein, Linda Braun, Sarah Carter, Tamara Chernow, Ollie Curme, Liz David, Susan Erdos, Dennis Greene, Jan Hilley, Marty Kafka, Carl Lazarus, Emily Ostrower, Abby Pinard, Marjorie Roemer, Quinn Rosefsky,

Sue Wurster, and BOLLI Assistant Director Megan Curtis. Items for consideration included:

- Ensure that information about course successes and challenges is readily available to program chairs and director.
- Enhance communication/coordination between the support and curriculum committees.
- Make additional resources available to our SGLs as they prepare their course materials.

Asked to comment about the retreat and follow up plans, Avi said, “This is an important moment in time for BOLLI, with many challenges and opportunities ahead. What do you do in the face of an opportunity? You plan. And that’s what we’ve begun to do. Our goal is to equip leadership and members with the support, resources, and roadmaps they need to help BOLLI prosper, and by doing so build a satisfactory and satisfying experience for themselves and their successors. I’m deeply grateful to the members who participated in the retreat, many of whom will lead the process forward.”

Further study and advancement of retreat outcomes have been passed to an *ad hoc* committee guided by Arlene Bernstein and Jan Hilley, in close coordination with Susan Erdos, Sue Wurster, and the BOLLI staff. Watch for updates in future communications.



Leadership Retreat participants (from left) Ollie Curme, Emily Ostrower with Carl Lazarus, and Quinn Rosefsky. (Photos by Wurster)

Steve Middlebrook's Lifetime Journey

By Phil Radoff and Jack Curley

In most instances, “lifetime journey” serves as a metaphor for the events and accomplishments of an individual life. For BOLLI's Steve Middlebrook, the phrase also serves, quite literally, as an accurate description of the professional and musical pursuits that have brought him a life of travel and adventure. Steve is perhaps best known at BOLLI for his two stints as Study Group Leader (*WTF—What? The Fugue!* and *J.S. Bach and the World He Lived In*), both courses largely devoted to the works of his favorite composer, Johann Sebastian Bach.

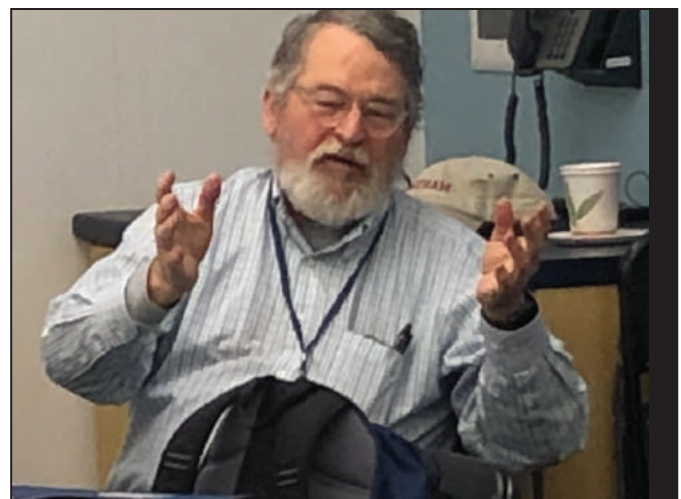
Born and raised in East Aurora, NY, a suburb of Buffalo, Steve is a graduate of the University of Virginia and received an MS in Special Education from the University of Western Michigan. His love of classical music came early, as evidenced by memories of attendance at concerts of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Saturday afternoons spent listening to radio broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera. Steve, who sings and plays the double bass, credits much of his lifelong interest in music to the excellent programs available to him in the East Aurora school system, from which numerous classmates went on to study at leading conservatories. His high school orchestra and chorus tackled many challenging works, including Faure's *Requiem* and Bach's *Crucifixus* from the *Mass in B Minor*. Road trips were also part of the curriculum. He fondly recalls a group tour to Fredonia State College where he heard a soloist in the Robert Shaw Chorale sing Bach with a pronounced Georgian accent.

A formative moment in Steve's life occurred during his sophomore year of high school when he was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Denied the opportunity to travel to Europe as an exchange student, he had to defer his dream of international travel until a post-college year of high school teaching, when he accepted an offer to teach sixth

grade at the American International School in Turin, Italy. He boarded a steamship to Europe and began a lengthy career as teacher and school head at numerous national and international schools. While in Osaka, Steve joined a Bach chorus, one in a total of seven in which he would participate during his time abroad and during three-year stints in the U.S. “Wherever there was a chorus, I tried to join.”

Upon the closure of the Turin school, Steve moved to Düsseldorf, Germany, where he lived in a small village near the Rhine. This stay has special meaning, since it's where he met his wife Susan. A return to the United States followed, where for several years he taught at a private school in Philadelphia. Next stop was New York City, where he worked as an editor for Scholastic Books.

Steve's travels and teaching experiences continued for many years, with stays in numerous far-flung locations, including Japan (where his children learned to speak Japanese), Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Greece, several postings in Germany (including Potsdam, the site of a celebrated meeting between Bach and Frederick the Great), and a stint at the Atrium School in Watertown.



Inveterate traveler, music aficionado, and BOLLI SGL Steve Middlebrook. (Photo by Wurster.)

Steve Middlebook's Lifetime Journey (continued)

Describing himself as a “binge reader,” Steve devoted considerable time during his early career to reading books devoted to classical music, including Mozart’s *Collected Letters* and Thayer’s *Life of Beethoven*. He greatly admires largely forgotten musicians such as Michael Haydn and C.P.E. Bach, although his abiding love is for the music of J.S. Bach and the great masters who followed him.

Steve has enjoyed his time at BOLLI and says

that researching and leading courses has brought him greater knowledge of the composers and their music. “There is still so much about them that nobody knows,” he says. “I continue to be amazed by how Bach and so many other of our greatest composers were able to overcome the often grim reality of their lives to leave us with these amazing works.”

Let’s hope Steve’s search for musical knowledge continues to point him in the direction of 60 Turner Street.

The Book Exchange

By Tamara Chernow

Have you checked out BOLLI’s Book Exchange bookcase lately? It’s time to pick up a few books to curl up with on the cold nights ahead. There is absolutely no quid pro quo here—you can bring books, take books, or do both. Literary fiction, classics, and newer non-fiction, particularly on current issues, are BOLLI Bestsellers. There are only four shelves, so please don’t bring older or worn books. Excess materials are donated to *More Than Words*, a youth-run, non-profit used bookstore in Waltham. Check them out at mtwyouth.org to donate larger number of books than the BOLLI Book Exchange can handle.



Retired librarian Tamara Chernow saw a need for sorting the Book Exchange shelves which she quietly stepped up to fill. Thank you, Tamara! (Photo by Wurster)

BOLLI Writers Share Their Work

Lunch Time Presentation - Thursday, November 21

BOLLI offers quite an array of opportunities for writers to discover, develop, and demonstrate the results of their strong efforts. On Thursday, November 21, many will share their work.

Members of Betsy Campbell’s fiction writing class, Marjorie Roemer’s memoir writing class, participants in Writers Guild (led by Lydia Bogar and Larry Schwirian), and Poetry Writing Group (led by Peter Schmidt) will have an opportunity to share their efforts with the BOLLI lunch time audience.

A highlight of the event is sure to be the staged reading of *Locked In* by none other than BOLLI Banner’s own Phil Radoff. Phil’s first foray into playwriting will be presented by veteran CAST and Scene-iors performers, Sandy Clifford and Rachel Seliber.

Come and support these intrepid creative artists, and perhaps, as a result, consider getting involved in one of these courses or Special Interest Groups yourself!

Here from the Beginning (continued from page 1)

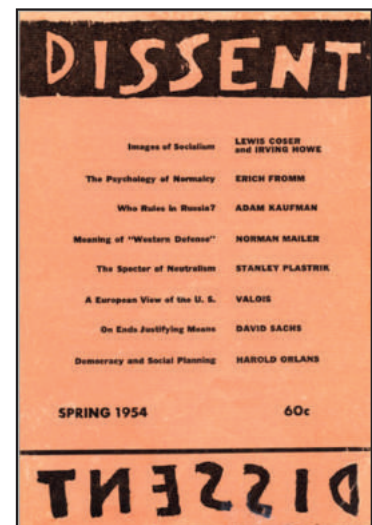
students to examine their assumptions. Famed educator and *New York Post* columnist Max Lerner and other faculty members created a required general education course that met once a week in the Castle, where prominent scholars, such as Margaret Mead, Eero Saarinen, and Aaron Copland spoke in front of a roaring fire. “They spoke from the hearth,” Bill quipped. Eleanor Roosevelt, a trustee, gave the first commencement speech in 1952.

Brandeis University’s motto, “Truth (‘Emet’) Even Unto Its Innermost Parts” and its values are exemplified by its namesake, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. These values include reverence for free speech and open inquiry in the pursuit of truth, as well as insistence on critical thinking. The years when Bill attended Brandeis, 1949-1953, were marked by Senator Joseph McCarthy and congressional committees’ investigation of “un-American activities.” Brandeis President Abram L. Sachar convened all students to reassure them that they had “...nothing to fear. We will defend all those who deserve to be defended,” he announced, puzzled by students’ laughter. Two prominent faculty members, Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, responded to McCarthyism by founding a magazine, *Dissent*, which promoted free inquiry

and outspoken criticism of American foreign policy. *Dissent* is still in print today. Coser encouraged debate about both current and historical events and used the theory of “realistic and unrealistic conflict” to describe how to navigate intractable public and private problems. He later became a mentor to Bill, inspiring him to major in politics.

Leonard Bernstein’s class, “Twentieth Century Opera,” introduced Bill to 20th century music and enabled him to attend the world premiere of Bernstein’s opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*, at the first Festival of the Creative Arts at Brandeis in 1952. Bill remembers Bernstein as “a man in awe of everything humane--poetry, art, literature, and humor--who shared all of these in his music, with his students, at Young People’s Concerts, with his own children, and with me.” **(For more of Bill’s memories of Bernstein, see page 7.)**

Students would challenge faculty and administrators at Brandeis even in its earliest years. One example was the students’ dispute with the administration over whether to have one nonsectarian chapel or several chapels for different faiths. After visiting the local Archdiocese, Bill co-authored an article in *The Justice* supporting a multi-faith chapel. All



Above left, Brandeis’s Usen Castle. Above right, the first volume of “*Dissent*” with the first article by founding member, Brandeis professor Lewis Coser. (Photos online)

Here from the Beginning (continued)

copies of that edition mysteriously disappeared, and the administration ultimately won out by building three separate chapels.

When Bill became resident advisor in a house adjacent to campus, he had the good fortune to have Visiting Professor of Sociology C. Wright Mills as his upstairs neighbor. At the time, Mills was writing a book called *The Power Elite*. Needless to say, Bill learned a lot about radical sociology and writing from their association.

The first in his family to attend college, Bill says, “I’m eternally grateful that I made the decision to

go to Brandeis. I have a need for novelty.” Bill later attended Harvard University where he earned a Master’s degree in education and began to create open-ended historical cases, including Supreme Court cases and historical decisions, for students to complete in junior and senior high schools.

For Bill, what made Brandeis most meaningful was the commitment of its faculty to seek and speak facts, even if this meant challenging longstanding truths and traditions. Here’s a fact: We are all thankful that Bill returned to his alma mater to make BOLLI his new learning community.

More Memories of Leonard Bernstein

By Bill Hollman

As for Bernstein, I don’t want to contribute to an entire bookshelf of hagiography, but greatness is goodness, and Lenny saw the goodness in the turn away from tonal music.

In his course, “Twentieth Century Opera,” he taught us to understand Berg and Schoenberg’s flight into atonal outer space, explaining--at the piano--how their music was, in fact, built on classical chords. I learned from him a need for novelty in music.

“Everything I write is theater,” Bernstein said, and he showed how his own compositions included everything from Bach cantatas to Coltrane. (Listen to the solo piano in *The Age of Anxiety*.) He incorporated Jewish music into everything from the *Chichester Psalms* (in Hebrew) to *Maria*, the aria in *West Side Story*. (Hum the first three notes. Now sing *Te-ki-ah*, and the Shofar blast hits Broadway.) He told us he regarded musical theater as “America’s Grand Opera.”



In addition to his teaching, Bernstein is remembered for his activism and staunch commitment to social justice, hallmarks of the Brandeis experience since the school’s founding. (Photos online)

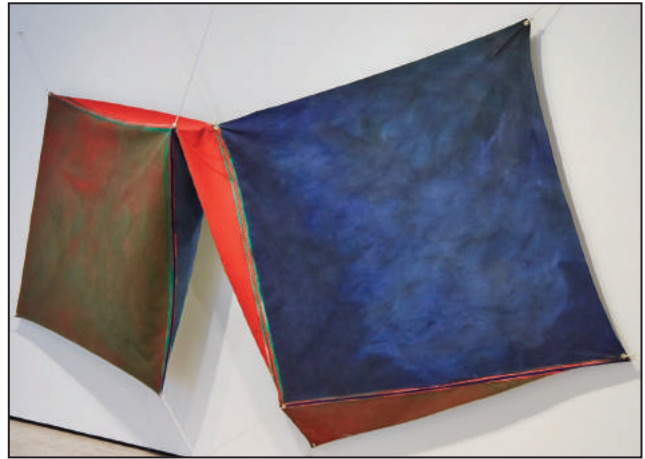
Inside the Rose: Joe Overstreet's *Untitled*

by Emma Peters, 2019-20 Sherman H. Starr Family Curatorial Intern

As the summer ends and the leaves change, Brandeis students are welcomed back to their museum with a new round of exhibitions to explore. These changing displays of art not only allow students to experience their museum in a new way every semester, but they also introduce newly acquired pieces of art. One of the newest and most engaging works in the Rose's collection is *Untitled* by Joe Overstreet, currently on display in the "Into Form" exhibition. Overstreet embodies the countercultural, radical nature of art in the 60's and 70's. Before settling in New York in the 70's and becoming a fixture of the abstract expressionist movement there, Overstreet spent the 60's as a member of the Beat movement in California. His exposure to progressive, innovative ideas laid a solid foundation for him not only to articulate the political through his art but also to use his work as a vehicle to explore abstraction, color, and form.

Untitled is part of a series Overstreet calls "Flight Patterns." These sail-like canvases, suspended from the gallery's architecture, engage space and medium, reflecting Overstreet's political impetus. The sails of *Untitled* conjure images of trans-Atlantic slave trading ships; the colors reference the freedom of jazz; and the knots suspending the sails hint at the terror and history of lynching. While the underlying inspiration is rich with political, historical, and cultural references, these themes support the formal innovation taken by Overstreet in the creation of *Untitled*.

Untitled eschews typical notions of gallery hanging. Rather than behaving like a flat, taut, static object,



Untitled smashes the rectangular boundaries of traditional canvases. Affixed by knots tied to the floor, ceiling, and walls, *Untitled* evokes a nautical, dynamic feeling. The sail-like canvases of *Untitled* reach out into the space around it, forcing the viewer to reckon with its subtle intrusion into both their personal space and the gallery itself. As one moves around the piece, new folds, patterns, and colors reveal themselves, creating an exploratory experience within the museum.

The physical form of the work is intriguing, but the colors of the sails draw the viewer in on a deeper level. At a distance, the sails appear forest green and deep navy with hints of red at the edges. Stepping closer, however, the viewer finds subtle shifts in tone becoming more apparent, giving the work a sense of contrast and chromatic tension. Overstreet's treatment entwines mystery and energy into an otherwise neutral, flat color. The pops of reds and greens on different folds and angles further highlight the three-dimensional nature of the work.

Untitled challenges preconceived notions of painting and sculpture, forcing the viewer to break down the binary opposition between two dimensional and three-dimensional art. Viewing and interacting with this piece is a multifaceted, engaging adventure, one which the viewer controls under the guidance of Overstreet's masterful blend of form, color, and medium.

Artist Joe Overstreet,
and "*Untitled*," (top
right), recently purchased
by the Rose Art Gallery.
(Photos online.)



Upcoming Campus Events

Compiled by Ellen Moskowitz

SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER



MusicUnitesUs Presents: *From East Asia - Unforgotten Song*. Saturday, November 16, 8:00 – 10:00 p.m. As artistic performance becomes ritual, we remember and honor the Comfort Women of occupied countries in East Asia who were forced into sexual slavery between 1932-1945. Tickets \$20; \$15 for Brandeis community and seniors (55+). Purchase online, by phone at 781-736-3400, or in person at Brandeis Tickets, located in the Shapiro Campus Center atrium.



Lydian String Quartet. *New Music Brandeis: Lydian String Quartet*. Saturday, December 14, 2019, 8:00 – 9:30 p.m. New Music Brandeis, a contemporary music series programmed and managed by graduate student composers in Brandeis's illustrious composition program, presents an evening of new works for string quartet, performed by Brandeis's renowned string quartet-in-residence. Free and open to the public.

WASSERMAN CINEMATHIQUE



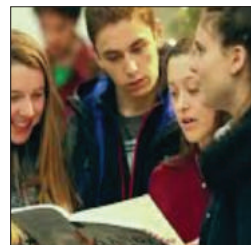
***Meet the Actors from "Shtisel."* Thursday, November 21, 2019, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.** The Film, Television and Interactive Media Program is thrilled to host a conversation with three of the stars from the hit Israeli drama series "Shtisel," now available in the U.S. on Netflix. Please join us as we welcome Shira Haas, Neta Riskin and Hadas Yaron to Brandeis. A free but ticketed event. Contact Lisa Brown: lisae-brown@brandeis.edu to reserve your seat.

ROSE ART GALLERY



***Close Looking: Zilia Sánchez, "Las troyanas," 1987-1997*. Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.** This interdisciplinary series features engaged looking and active discussion about art and other objects housed in Brandeis collections. In this session, Faith Smith (English) and Raysa Mederos (Hispanic Studies) will discuss "Las troyanas" (The Trojans) by Zilia Sánchez on view at the Rose in "Into Form." Free and open to the public.

SHAPIRO CAMPUS CENTER



***Annual Campus Messiah Sing*. Wednesday, December 11, 2019, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.** *Messiah Sing*, the beloved Brandeis tradition, returns to the Shapiro Campus Center atrium. All members of the Brandeis community as well as family and friends are welcome to celebrate the holiday season with the sing-along concert of selections from Handel's masterwork "Messiah." Scores will be provided. Stay for the annual tree lighting at 5 p.m. with caroling and kosher cookies!