

Alumni Gazette



The Dancer Claimed Them

Murray '64 and Peggy Topf Schwartz '65 collaborate on a biography that's a scholarly project and more.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IT'S A PREMISE FOR SOME GOOD NOVELS: A lead character or two, settled in their lives, have a life-altering encounter that sets the plot in motion.

It's also a pretty accurate depiction of what happened to **Murray '64** and **Peggy Topf Schwartz '65** in the spring of 1981.

Murray was an English professor and dean at the State University of New York at Buffalo, when he came home to Peggy, the chair of the dance department at the Buffalo Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts, with a 30-page resume from Pearl Primus.

Primus was applying to become headmaster of SUNY Buffalo's Cora P. Maloney College of Afro-American Studies. She also happened to be one of the most magnetic and pathbreaking figures in modern American dance. A dancer and scholar who eventually earned a doctorate in anthropology, Primus choreographed solo works that were deeply informed by her research in the American South as well as Africa and the Caribbean. But she had made her debut almost 40 years earlier and "a lot of what she'd done had been forgotten," Murray recalls.

What Primus had done was to offer, through her solo dances, political commentary on racism and poverty that was radical for its time. Born in Trinidad and raised in New York City, she made her solo dance debut at New York's 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association in 1943, with her dances "Strange Fruit" and "Hard Time Blues," wrenching explorations of lynching and sharecropping.

That June, she performed at the Negro Freedom Rally, held at Madison Square Garden. And the following summer, she toured the American South, posing as a sharecropper and studying the communities whose lives she was intent on portraying through dance. These activities, along with her participation in communist and other left-wing organizations, attracted zealous attention from the FBI throughout the 1940s and early 1950s.

Murray hired Primus. It marked the be-

ginning of a deep and enduring friendship between her and the Schwartzes that offers an added dimension to the Schwartzes otherwise scholarly work, *The Dance Claimed Me: A Biography of Pearl Primus* (Yale University Press, 2011).

Both admit that friendship with Primus, however rewarding, was not always easy. "She called Murray her angel and said it would be a lifetime assignment," says Peggy.

Indeed it was. The friendship was marked by "frequent telephone calls, either early in the morning or at dinner time,

ally, starting after Primus's death from diabetes in the fall of 1994.

"Shortly after Pearl died," Murray says, "Peggy, partly as an act of mourning, started to interview people who knew her—childhood friends, people in the dance world. Peggy spent years doing these interviews. Around 2004 or 2005, we realized we should team up."

"We went to a little house we have in Vieques, Puerto Rico—500 square feet," he says. "We sat at a table and we literally emailed chapters back and forth to one another. Peggy wrote drafts and I shaped them. And after a while, we couldn't tell who had written what."

Friendship with Primus came naturally



surprise visits to Murray's office or to our house, sometimes just to sit together quietly," and many conversations about plans for performances, institutes, and academic exchanges, the Schwartzes write.

The idea for the biography came gradu-

DANCE PARTNERS: Murray and Peggy Topf Schwartz (above), who met as students at Rochester, tell the story of Pearl Primus (opposite), a pioneering dancer and scholar, in their new book. "A lot of what she'd done had been forgotten" by the time the Schwartzes met Primus in 1981, says Murray Schwartz.

to the Schwartzes, both of whom have embraced the arts and political activism their entire adult lives. They met at Rochester, where, Murray recalls, not only were they both studying English but "we were both in the honors program, which meant we had small seminars our junior and senior years."

They married as students, and after Murray's graduation, moved to Berkeley, where he pursued a doctorate in English and Peggy began working at a pilot Head Start program, designing a movement and dance program, while completing coursework toward her Rochester degree.

Peggy, who was raised in the Bronx

and in Great Neck, N.Y., still remembers the shock she felt when, on a high school camping trip to the Smoky Mountains, she encountered the “Whites Only” and “Colored Only” signs that were posted at water fountains, restrooms, restaurants, and public places throughout the South in the late 1950s and early 1960s. “Growing up in New York, I had never seen anything like that,” she says. “My desire to be involved started in high school. Everything was just bubbling to the surface.”

Murray, who grew up in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, says his father was active in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, a magnet for Russian Jewish immigrants who had brought with them to the United States the secular socialist politics they developed in protest against the Russian Empire.

He speculates on what drew Primus to him and Peggy. “She trusted us to see what she was about. We were both so interested in taking an interdisciplinary approach to things.”

Peggy says that although Primus is known today almost exclusively in the dance field, her life crossed many boundaries—disciplinary as well as ethnic, racial, and cultural. And that made the prospect of writing the biography all the more enticing.

“We deliberately set out to make this book have a wide appeal,” she says. “Pearl’s life was so complex and rich. It touched on the civil rights movement, on the cultural history of New York City, and on the complicated relationship between blacks and Jews,” she says of Primus, who had a Jewish grandfather, was married briefly to the son of a Lower East Side Torah school principal, and participated in a number of organizations that joined New York’s black and Jewish political and cultural radicals.

In 1948, a trip to Africa financed by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, transformed her life, and arguably, the scope of modern American dance.

“After she went to Africa, she was interested less in performing and more in teaching—on bringing authentic African dance to the United States,” says Murray. Peggy notes that after Primus’s return from Africa, she wore only African dress in public.

A dancer and scholar at a time before dance departments had become a mainstay at colleges and universities, Primus had to rely heavily on her allies in administration. In 1983, when the Schwartzes moved to Massachusetts, Primus followed a year lat-



er. Peggy was to join the Five College Dance Department, a collaborative program of the four western Massachusetts colleges of Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith, and the University of Massachusetts. Murray was to become dean of humanities and fine arts at the University of Massachusetts, where he continued as Primus’s ally, but where she could only secure

▲ DANCE SCHOLAR: An anthropologist as well as a dancer, Primus helped bring African dance to Americans. Her life crossed many boundaries, including ethnic, racial, and cultural, according to the Schwartzes’ new book.

a string of temporary appointments.

“Dance didn’t really have an institutional base,” says Murray. “By the time she entered the academic world, it was just starting to gain a foothold.”

That’s something the Schwartzes have both found regrettable. Dance, as well as music, says Murray, “underlies all the other arts because they engage the rhythms of the body.”

That might be precisely the problem, Peggy speculates. Unlike art or music, she notes, “dance still has to justify itself as an academic discipline. It’s the Puritan culture that still doesn’t know how to deal with the body.” **R**

Q&A

Business Plan: Women in Leadership

Former U.S. Federal Reserve executive Cathy Jones Minehan '68 focuses on principled leadership as dean of a business school dedicated to fostering women leaders.

Interview by Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

WHEN **CATHY JONES MINEHAN '68** approached corporate recruiters on the Rochester campus in the spring of 1968, most told her they didn't take women into their management training programs.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York hadn't either. But it decided to take a chance on Minehan the following fall. That marked the beginning of her almost 40-year career in the Federal Reserve System during which she rose to become the president and chief executive officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. The first woman president in that bank's history, Minehan served with the presidents of the other 11 Federal Reserve Banks on the Federal Open Market Committee, the body that guides U.S. monetary policy.

In addition to chairing the executive committee of the University's Board of Trustees, Minehan is chair of the board of the Massachusetts General Hospital, chair of Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick's Council of Economic Advisors, and a member of MIT's Investment Company Board. She serves as a director of Becton Dickinson and Co., VISA, MassMutual Financial Group, and MITRE.

In August, she becomes dean of Boston's Simmons College School of Management.

The Simmons School of Management plays a distinct role in business education. Tell us about it.

The management school, and the MBA program in particular, is small, but it's iconic. It fills a particular position in the market both locally and nationally—and to some extent internationally—in that it has always focused on business education for women.

Its vision is to educate women to serve in positions of power and principled leadership. That term "principled leadership" means ethics, governance, corporate social responsibility, diversity management, and organizational behavior. We believe we have a special competency in this area.



LEADERSHIP: The new dean of Boston's Simmons College School of Management, Minehan says the school's vision is "to educate women to serve in positions of power and principled leadership."

Is this a response to the recent financial crisis?

No. Simmons has long made principled leadership training the capstone of its MBA program, and we've been recognized by the Aspen Institute as the No. 1 small MBA program for doing so. But the financial crisis has made the concept of principled leadership resonate even more strongly.

Why do you think there's a need for a business program focused on women?

Certainly there are many women at most business schools. But when you look around, and you see what happens when women get into middle management, how quickly many "drop out," and how few make it to top management, I think there's a role for a school where issues to do with gender and organization, with women and leadership get discussed. And that might happen more easily in a single sex environment.

There are also real social advantages in finding ways for women to advance. Just look at it from the perspective of the pipeline of people entering industry. The student body at most graduate schools, including business schools, can range from 30 percent to 60 percent women.

If your pipeline is filled with women and you can't find a way to move them into senior management, there's something wrong. You're losing brain power. And that can't be good—for society, for businesses, for anybody.

It's sometimes said that balancing family responsibilities is what slows women down. Do you agree?

There's something about this issue that really raises the hair on the back of my neck. It seems to say that women should be seen as secondary contributors solely because of family responsibilities.

In my experience, even if shorter hours are a factor, good women contribute greatly; and they should be expected to do so. My husband and I both worked while we were raising our two kids. We made a lot of adjustments. I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all solution. I think it's something that each couple, each family, each staffer needs to figure out how to do whether it involves child care, elder care, or simply having a life outside work. And businesses should recognize and support those decisions.

How should employers respond to these challenges?

By welcoming diversity. And I think, in general, businesses are much more focused on diversity now because they realize that if they don't, they could be missing out. They could be missing out, for example, by assuming that because someone is a woman, they're going to be raising children, and that raising children will make a woman less valuable on the job; or because someone is an African American and didn't come through the same schooling that a manager is accustomed to, that makes them less valuable. That's not smart business decision making. There just isn't enough talent to go around. We have to create an environment in which everyone who can contribute feels comfortable doing so. **R**

Jazz—with *Kavanah*

Saxophonist and composer Shauli Einav '08E (MM) captures the attention of critics with his blend of Israeli themes and traditional Western jazz.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IN THE PAST DECADE OR SO, JAZZ CRITICS have remarked widely on a recent spate of exceptional jazz musicians emanating from a place that might seem unlikely: Israel, a nation with no historical connection to the African diaspora, and a population of just 7.7 million people in an area smaller than Massachusetts.

One of those musicians is saxophonist, composer, and arranger **Shauli Einav** '08 (MM), a native of Jerusalem who got hooked on jazz as a youth, during his family's annual treks to the Red Sea Jazz Festival, a four-day event held since 1987 in the southern resort city of Eilat.

His debut release, *Opus One* (Plus Loin), has attracted the attention of critics writing in jazz media such as *DownBeat* and *Jazz Times* and news outlets such as National Public Radio and the *Jerusalem Post*. He's been called "emerging" and "noteworthy." "Découverte assurée" ("Discovery assured"), noted a Belgian critic.

Saxophonist and composer **Walt Weiskopf** '80E initially drew Einav to Eastman, where he was teaching in the early 2000s. He calls Einav's playing "authentic and rooted."

"Shauli is extremely talented and has tremendous instinctive love for every aspect of jazz," says Weiskopf. "He's a singularly motivated and original jazz musician."

Einav says his approach is to "play the truth."

"It's like when you talk to someone, and you sense they're telling you something true, with integrity," he says. "It's the same thing in music. You can sense when a player is playing the truth versus just moving his fingers around, showing off. The music should have essence."

One might also say *kavanah*. *Kavanah* is the title of the second track on *Opus One* and a Hebrew word describing a state of



mind for prayer, and more broadly, the state of concentration and intention that infuses spoken words—or musical performance—with meaning and sincerity.

▲ **TRUTH TELLING:** Saxophonist Einav says his musical approach is to "play the truth." "It's like when you talk to someone, and you sense they're telling you something true, with integrity. It's the same thing in music."

Einav also says that his work exudes "a feeling of urgency."

The opening track, *Jerusalem Theme*, is an exploration of many dimensions of Jerusalem's past and present, while *Hayu Leilot* ("Those Were the Nights") is Einav's interpretation of a 1940s Israeli standard. *The Damelin* is a tribute to his friend, David Damelin, who was killed by a Palestinian sniper in March 2002, when the two were

both in the Gaza Strip, during the tour of military service that's mandatory for young Israelis, men and women alike.

As a high school student, Einav was captivated by the late Arnie Lawrence, a jazz saxophonist who founded New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, then moved to Israel in 1997 on a mission to unite Jews and Arabs through music. It was Lawrence whom Einav credits with inspiring him to "play the truth." He recalls walking two miles each day from school to Lawrence's studio, where he took master classes. The walk was long and often hot, but as Einav says, "for a 16-year-old guy, it was great."

Einav remembers distinctly his first encounter with Weiskopf, whom he says was "one of my favorite saxophonists growing up."

"When I saw him perform at the Red Sea Jazz Festival, I went up to the stage afterwards, when he was putting away his instrument. I asked him if I could take some lessons with him. I asked him where he taught. He said he taught at the Eastman School." From there, says Einav, going to Eastman was "my top priority."


Einav calls the band he assembled on *Opus One* his "dream band," crediting pianist Shai Maestro, trombonist Andy Hunter, bassist Joseph Lepore, and drummer Johnathan Blake, with much of the recording's success.

But Einav is the first to note that starting out takes more than talent in a band and its leader. It also takes connections, since one of the first things people in the industry want to know are the names of your mentors.

"Four reasons the 29-year-old Einav garners attention in a crowded field are his mentors," writes John Ephland in *DownBeat*, referring to Lawrence, Weiskopf, Harold Danko, the composer and pianist who chairs Eastman's jazz and contemporary media department, and the saxophonist Dave Liebman.

Starting out also requires entrepreneurialism.

"Jazz is a very competitive field. You spent a lot of time promoting your band and your solo career. We have to do everything—the bookings, getting people to the gigs, everything. I spend many hours on the computer."

"It's a maze," says Einav of New York's jazz scene. "But I'm a big believer in opening up as many doors as I can." 

In the News

STEPHANIE MCCURRY '83 (MA) WRITES PRIZE-WINNING BOOK ON CONFEDERACY



Stephanie McCurry '83 (MA), a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, won dual honors for her book *A Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Harvard University Press, 2010). She won the 2011 Merle Curti Award for the best book in American social or intellectual history and the Avery O. Craven Award for the most original book on the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, both given by the Organization for American Historians, the main professional organization for scholars of American history. The book was also named a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in history. McCurry argues that the Confederate

experiment to build an allegedly democratic government in which political rights extended only to slaveholding white men—a minority of the population as well as a minority of the population of Southern white men—collapsed due to its internal contradictions and the agitation of groups long assumed powerless, namely slaves and poor women.

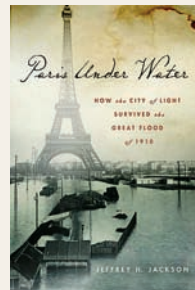
STEPHEN COOK '07M (MPH) HONORED BY AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Stephen Cook '07M (MPH), an assistant professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Dentistry, has been named Science Advocate of the Year by the American Heart Association. The national award recognizes a medical professional who engages lawmakers on issues related to heart disease and strokes. Cook chairs the childhood obesity committee of the New York state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and is a member of the National Advocacy Task Force of the Obesity Society, a national organization founded in 1982 to study obesity. He also helped develop the Monroe County, N.Y., program HEALTHI Kids ("Healthy Eating and Active Living THrough policy and practice Initiatives for Kids") and participates in the association's You're the Cure policy advocacy network.

ARTHUR MILLER '55 HONORED BY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Arthur Miller '55, University Professor at New York University School of Law, has received one of the United Kingdom's highest honors, Commander of the Order of the British Empire. The honor, bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, is an order of chivalry recognizing distinguished public service to the UK. For 15 years, Miller helped moderate panel discussions on public policy issues, modeled after the Fred Friendly dialogues he moderated for PBS, for the BBC and Grenada Television. In addition, Miller donated more than 1,800 woodblock prints by the 19th-century Japanese artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi to the American Friends of the British Museum, which were exhibited in 2010 at the Royal Academy in London and at the Japan Society in New York.

ROCHESTER ALUMNI CLAIM RHODES COLLEGE TOP HONORS



The Clarence Day Awards—the top two faculty honors at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn.—both went to Rochester alumni at the school's 2011 convocation. **Jeffrey Jackson '99 (PhD)**, an associate professor of history, won the Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity following the publication of his 2010 book, *Paris Under Water: How the City of Light Survived the Great Flood of 1910* (Palgrave Macmillan). **Bernadette McNary-Zak '88**, an associate professor of religion, won Rhodes's Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Teaching. Students and colleagues cited McNary-Zak's imaginative pedagogy and ability to inspire students. She has also

coedited a book on undergraduate research in religious studies to be released by Oxford University Press later this year.