



# Mystical Contemplations

## Taylor returns to Kennedy Center

Imagine this appointment in your datebook: give a combined lecture and meditation on the nature of the divine, touching on physical manifestation; spiritual transformation; the creation of the universe; the expression of joy, love, justice, and grace; and the acceptance of death as a means of renewal. And you're to deliver this lecture without uttering a single word.

That's just what **Christopher Taylor**, assistant professor of piano at the School of Music, did on February 18 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. There he performed the *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jésus*



JEFF MILLER

**Known for the "beauty, tenderness, and white-hot energy of his playing," piano Professor Christopher Taylor turns a performance into a lecture without words.**

### COLLECTION

## On and on and on Wisconsin

Twenty-first-century technology is making UW-Madison history much easier to get your hands on. The library's online archives now offer the University of Wisconsin Collection, a digital compilation sure to prove useful to everyone from serious researchers to those who want to see Uncle Ed in his Badger basketball uniform.

The collection is available at [webcat.library.wisc.edu:3200/UW/](http://webcat.library.wisc.edu:3200/UW/) and includes yearbooks dating from 1885 (when it was not yet the *Badger* but the *Trochos*) to 1977; issues of *The Wisconsin Engineer* from 1896 to 1984; and a sizable collection of historical photos. And for our devoted readers, there are issues of UW-Madison's alumni magazine dating from Volume 1, Issue 1, back in 1899, when it was called *The Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, up until 1990, when it finally became *On Wisconsin*.

"The collection is full of all sorts of unexpected things," says university archivist **David Null**. "And we've been adding to it based on what seems to strike people's current interests. For the Union's seventy-fifth anniversary, for instance, we added a group of Union photos. And at the release of **David Maraniss's [x'70]** book about Madison in the 1960s, we added some pictures of student protests."

The entire collection is searchable, both by text and by images, and Null says that it will soon grow to include the *Wisconsin Literary Magazine* and other UW publications.



— J.A.

by Olivier Messiaen, one of the most challenging works ever written for the keyboard. But then Taylor has been giving such "lectures" regularly.

"After ten performances, it's starting to get familiar," Taylor laughs, "but it's still scary. You can't take it for granted."

His February performance was a triumphant return to the Kennedy Center, where eleven years ago he won first prize in the William Kapell International Piano Competition and began a rise to national prominence.

The *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jésus*, which roughly translates as "Twenty Reflections of the Christ Child," was completed in 1944 and was described by its composer as a work seeking "a language of mystical love." Messiaen wove a number of structural influences, including rhythmic patterns created in thirteenth-century India, into the piece.

For all of its technical complexity, Taylor finds this to be a joyous piece, accessible through its honesty and sincerity: "Audi-

ences are amazed at how invigorating it is. It's not a grueling slog."

Taylor himself revels in the work's juxtaposition of intimacy and grandeur. In his first recital after joining the UW faculty in 2000, he performed just the first half, and he gave his first performance of the complete work in February 2001. His performances regularly elicit excitement from piano enthusiasts, and the *New York Times's* Anthony Tomasi has praised the "beauty, tenderness, and white-hot energy in his playing."

Taylor continues to learn and refine his approach to the work, concerned now with a more "coherent vision of pacing." He applauds venues such as the Kennedy Center, which make a point of presenting unconventional programs, but he is also thrilled at the prospect of someday sharing the work at the university. "Madison is up to the whole thing," he states confidently. "There should be no expectations other than to be open-minded."

— Lori Skelton

# Breaking out of Hollywood

Wisconsin Film Festival helps moviemaker earn more than *Chump Change*.

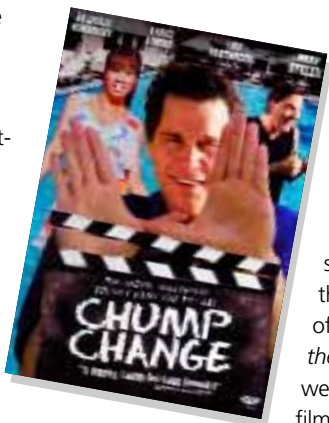
**Stephen Burrows '84** wasn't made for Hollywood. With a middle-American background and looks that his own agent describes as "pleasantly unattractive," he's not the sort of person who would be prominently featured on *Entertainment Tonight*.

Perhaps that's why his first feature film, *Chump Change*, is a scathing (and hilarious) indictment of the Hollywood film industry. And perhaps that's why he needed the Wisconsin Film Festival to get that movie off the ground.

Burrows's film was languishing in post-production with no distributor and an exhausted budget when he managed to get a rough cut onto the Madison festival's lineup in 2000. The positive feedback the film received helped propel it through the Hollywood system and into the arms of the film studio Miramax. It opened in theaters in November 2003 and was released on DVD this past January.

The Wisconsin Film Festival generated "the first good reviews we got," says Burrows. He particularly cites help from the *Wisconsin State Journal*, which gave the movie repeated and enthusiastic support. "I could give [State Journal reviewer] Tom Alesia a kiss on the mouth," he says.

*Chump Change* is based on Burrows's early experiences in Hollywood, where he tried to forge a career as an actor, comedian, and screenwriter. "It's about the inexplicable insanity of the movie business," he says.



Burrows, whose work includes directing commercials for Budweiser, DiGiorno frozen pizza, and Ball Park Franks, conceived the idea for *Chump Change* in February 1998, wrote the script in twenty-five days, and later that year, shot the principal footage in just three weeks. But after that, the *Chump*

*Change* team had run out of money, so the film sat unseen for more than a year.

"We had a budget of about \$500,000," Burrows says. "I think that was the budget for one day of shooting on *Lord of the Rings*, but it was all we had for our whole film."

After *Chump Change*'s Wisconsin debut, Burrows was able to get the film seen in other

venues: in 2000 at the American Film Institute and SlamDunk film festivals, and in 2001 at the HBO Comedy Festival, where it was named the audience favorite. That honor caught the attention of the Miramax studio, which helped polish the film and arranged for its theatrical release.

Making a film that pokes fun at the people who make films is "a dangerous game," Burrows concedes, but he remains excited about the effort. "Every time I see this movie," he says, "regardless of all the troubles we had making it, I see that it's what I needed to say about the movie business."

News about *Chump Change* is available at [www.chump-changethemovie.com](http://www.chump-changethemovie.com). This year's Wisconsin Film Festival will run at various Madison theaters from April 1 to April 4.

— John Allen

## Welcome to Buddhatopia

"Technology," says **John Dunne**, "is very Buddhist."

And soon at UW-Madison, Buddhism may be very technological — at least if Dunne has his way. An assistant professor in the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia, Dunne is working with artist **Scott Roberts MA'00, MFA'00** and programmer **James O'Keane '85** to create Buddhatopia, an online, three-dimensional, multi-user "cosmological and mandalic space for the interactive study of Buddhism" — in other words, something like a video game to help students learn the basics of this influential religion.

"We use the engine of a video game, but it's really more of an educational tool," says Roberts. "The format has a lot

of appeal because it's something students are familiar with."

In the online world of Buddhatopia, students would be able to experience Buddhist concepts that wouldn't be as available in a classroom environment, such as reincarnation and karma.

"During a character's life, it would do good things and gain karma. Then it would be reborn in a more favorable form," says Roberts.

Currently, Buddhatopia is only in the developmental stages, though UW-Madison's Department of Information Technology has awarded Dunne and Roberts a technology grant. Roberts hopes a prototype will be ready by summer.

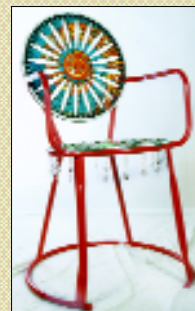
— Staff

You don't have to call him Sir, but R. Byron Bird PhD'50 is a **knight** nonetheless. The professor emeritus of chemical engineering was honored by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands (by way of her consul general in the U.S.) for his efforts to maximize awareness of the Dutch language and culture. He's now a member of the Order of Oranje-Nassau.

The story of Madison just received an update, thanks to David Mollenhoff MA'66. The author has released an extensively revised and updated version of his classic, **Madison: A History of the Formative Years**, adding new maps and photos to illustrate the rise of Wisconsin's capital. The UW Press released the 496-page book in November.

The Memorial Union's **Terrace Chairs on the Town** exhibit may be coming to an end, but you don't have to bid the big ol' seats farewell.

The Union plans to auction off the six-foot-tall artworks. Pictures of all thirteen chairs, as well as information about the auction, can be found at [www.union.wisc.edu/75](http://www.union.wisc.edu/75).



When the UW Press published Professor Gary Rosenshield's new book, **Pushkin and the Genres of Madness: The Masterpieces of 1833**, last winter, it was helping cement the UW's reputation as the place to go for Pushkiniana. Rosenshield's book examines the ways in which Pushkin represented madness in various works to create a new interpretation of the Russian author's genius.