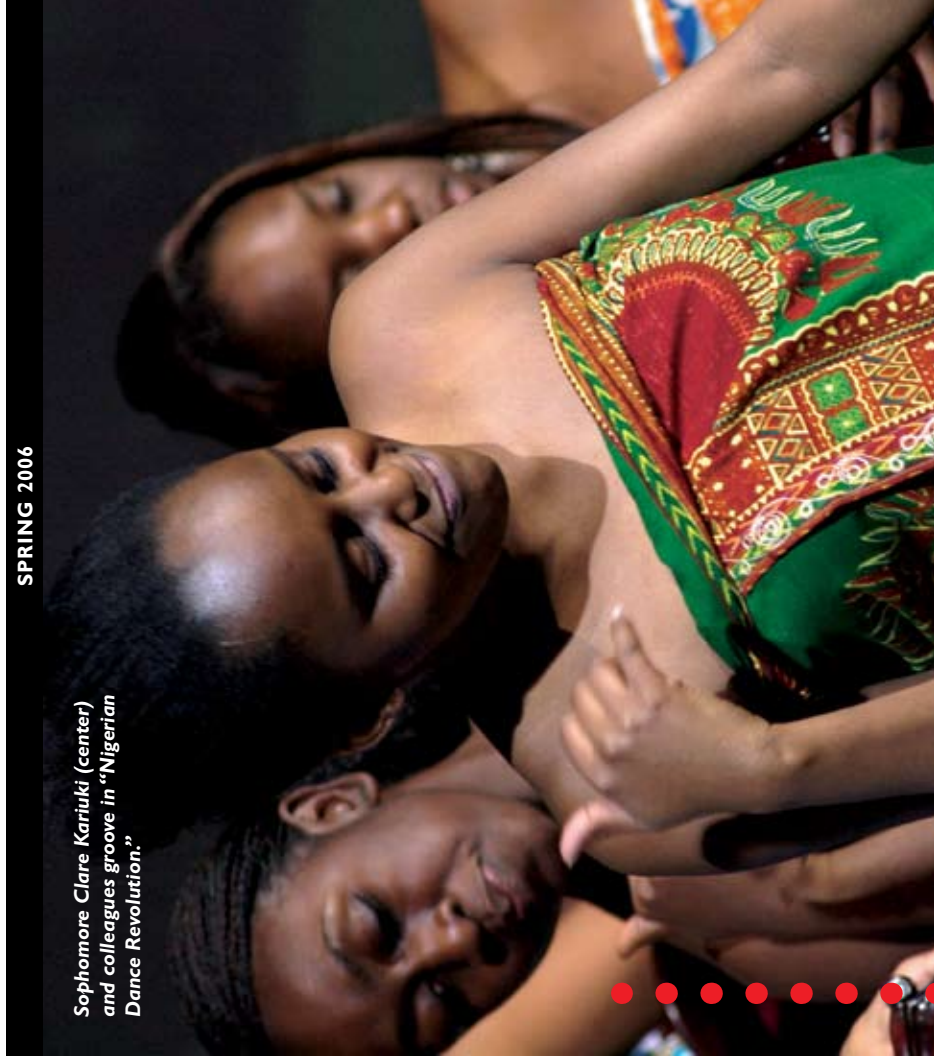


CALVIN
MOSAIC

A celebration of the many cultures in and around Calvin College

SPRING 2006

Sophomore Clare Kariuki (center) and colleagues groove in "Nigerian Dance Revolution."



'Fusion' theme energizes Rangeela

From year to year, Rangeela, the variety show that is a creative offering from Calvin's international students, adapts its rhythms, its tones and its staging to the creative vision of changing student directors. The show adds a gum boot dance here, a Korean fan dance there.

... story inside

MOSAIC

Volume 13, Number 1

Published by the Office of

Media Relations

Calvin College

3201 Burton St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

(616) 526-8771

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CALVIN

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Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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... continued from cover

Rangeela

This year, organizers of Rangeela (Hindi for “colorful”) put the whole show into the blender and came up with a cultural *mélange* that they called “Fusion.”

The sold-out show, held Feb. 24-25 at the Fine Arts Center, showcased dances that married West African and American Indian moves, Latin numbers that combined salsa, merengue and reggaeton, and a skit that united Dutch, French and Japanese tourists.

Other Rangeela numbers showed a modernizing and Westernizing influence on cultures. The Japanese So-Ran Bushi, for instance, though based on a fisherman’s chant, was updated with lots of motion. “It has a traditional style — with an electric guitar,” said junior Yeong Lim, the Rangeela administrative director.

Another dance traced the influence of popular music on Nigerian and West African cultures decade by decade from the 1960s until now. “It starts out with a lot more traditional influence and ends with a lot more Western influence,” said Rangeela creative director Elikplimi (Eli) Agbenorku.

Even the Indian dance number was more Bollywood than traditional.

Rangeela 11 wasn’t all innovation, however. Some acts maintained a traditional demeanor, among them the Philippine and Indonesian dances and the Chinese song played on the *zheng*, a stringed instrument invented during the Ching dynasty.

Yet the show’s directors had fun mixing it up. “The world is moving closer and closer together. You have the internet, satellite TV, cell phones,” Agbenorku said. “Cultures are also coming closer together because of the media. Culture is evolving.”

And this year’s Rangeela was an expression not just of globalization, he said, but of Calvin’s international student community: “Especially at Calvin, international students as a community learn a lot about each other, about each other’s food, languages, relationships, religion, cultural practices,” Agbenorku said. “So we want people to see that. We’re not merely here to get an education from an American school. We’re also getting a liberal arts education from each other in a lot of respects.” — MYRNA ANDERSON



Between two worlds

Nokomis lecturer Mira Nair discusses life as Indian-born filmmaker

“Now, more than ever, we need cinema to illuminate our own worlds in all their particularity,” filmmaker Mira Nair said to a near-capacity audience in the Gezon Auditorium.

The occasion was the biannual Nokomis lecture titled “Between Two Worlds: An Evening With Mira Nair.” The Feb. 23 event was sponsored by the West Michigan Women Studies Council (WMWSC), a non-profit, intercollegiate and community organization that includes representatives from Aquinas College, Calvin College, Davenport University, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University and Hope College. The lecture series is funded by the Nokomis Foundation, an organization that works for the empowerment of women and girls.

Nair, an India-born creator of documentaries and feature films, traced the history of her career, barely pausing for the laughter that erupted freely from the crowd. The Harvard alumna told of her disappointment that the theater scene at her alma mater ranged creatively only as far as *Oklahoma!* and of how she haunted the avant-garde theater of New York as a respite. After studying with the icons of cinema verité, Nair graduated from Harvard in 1979 and proceeded to produce documentaries about her native country, “exploring questions that had got under my skin and never let me go,” she said. She shared the stories behind some of them.

In *So Far From India*, Nair said her camera served as a link between an Indian man who immigrated to New York and his estranged wife and son. Nair lived with strippers to make *India Cabaret*, an “attempt to define the line between the good and



not-so-good women” in Indian society. (“My family didn’t know what to do with me,” she confessed of that bit of research.) And Nair said *The Laughing Club of India* (a film about 600 clubs where people practice 24 kinds of laughter) was the outgrowth of a creative despair: “I learned that people who take laughing seriously have come to it from some serious loss.”

Nair also discussed her mainstream feature films: *Monsoon Wedding*, *Hysterical Blindness* and the recent *Vanity Fair*. She showed her contribution to the film *11.09.01*, a cinematic collaboration of several filmmakers about the events surrounding Sept. 11, 2001. Nair’s piece — exactly 11 minutes, nine seconds and one frame long, like the others in the movie — is a retelling of the true story of a Muslim family whose son disappeared Sept. 11 and was falsely accused as a terrorist before being buried as a hero. “When I showed this film to the family, they said it was the first time they felt closure,” Nair said.

The filmmaker shared about her non-film projects as well, including the centers she established in Bombay, Delhi and Orissa to support and educate street children (like those she filmed for *Salaam Bombay!*): “My agenda was to create a place where street children could reclaim their childhood.” And she says her constant mantra to the people she trains at Maisha — an annual filmmakers’ laboratory she launched in 2005 in Kampala, Uganda — is “how to make something out of nothing.”

The theme that threaded through Nair’s stories was her experience as an artist who creates and lives outside of categories. “I was expected to be the ambassador of everything about my country, and I refused to be an ambassador,” she said. “They are diplomatic and, to me, boring.”

Nair spoke of film as a means of communication and healing. “What is happening to the world is outside the realm of common understanding,” she said. “I believe it is always a time for our stories, but now it is a time to tell them our way.”

Helen Sterk, WMWSC president and Calvin communication arts and sciences chair, said Nair told council members that she had been offered the next Harry Potter film and declined in order to continue working out her vision. “We applaud that distinct and independent vision,” said Sterk, who added that the Feb. 23 lecture marked the third time there had been community partnership with the council. “Each time we’ve had a large audience, and very appreciative, with people from the community who don’t normally come to Calvin. These things allow us to show a different audience who we are.”

— MYRNA ANDERSON

Asia Club welcomes Calvin community

Lectures, food, movies and games open to all

At the end of Interim — just in time for Lunar New Year on Jan. 29 (celebrated by China, Korea, Vietnam and other Asian countries) — students with an appreciation for Asian culture joined history professor Daniel Bays to prepare a delectable feast of more than 500 dumplings.

“It has become a tradition,” Bays said. “My wife and I have all of the kids in the Asia Club over into our kitchen, and we make dumplings together.”

Through this event and many others, the Asia Club at Calvin College strives to “inform the Calvin community about Asian

culture and expand their awareness of the multicultural state of God’s people.”

For years Calvin’s campus hosted the Anime Club for students interested in anime and Japanese culture and the China Club for those interested in Chinese culture. The two clubs, however, provided nothing for students interested in other Asian countries, such as Korea or India.

So two years ago support dwindled for the China Club, and interest in the Asian culture as a whole perked in the Calvin community. The Asia Club was born.

“It is really cool because now people can

learn about all of the cultures of Asia and how these cultures are affecting other cultures,” said Asia Club President Esther Kwak.

The club’s core membership includes students from countries all over the Asian continent, including India and Malaysia. Both Kwak and club Vice President JuShin Kim were born in Korea.

Despite heavy involvement from Asian students, non-Asian students are very welcome in the club. And the main purpose of the Asia Club is to educate interested non-Asians about the culture.

“It seems like a lot of Calvin students real-

ly are interested in the culture but they are just scared to ask us,” Kwak said. “We just want people to know that we are more than happy to talk about our culture with other people. We will not be offended.”

The club involves itself in events that seek to appeal to a broad range of students. Examples include showing Japanese movies with English subtitles, hosting delicious Korean stir-fry dinners, coordinating the Chinese war game of “Go,” and offering lectures on aspects of various Asian cultures.

February’s main event involved a lecture by Nicanor Tamang, a native-born missionary from Nepal. He informed students that when teaching members of the Asian culture that Christ died for them, it is important to do so in a way that is unique to their understanding. Tamang challenged the students to provide Asians with “the water of life” in their individual career paths. “We need more professionals; we need good doctors, good nurses, good engineers,” he said. “Can you be an engineer and still give the water of life? I think you can.”

“As a club that promotes Asian culture, it is also important to promote missions in the Asian culture and see how it is growing,” Kwak explained. “It is really important for students to know.”



A few of the many faces of Asia Club.

The Asia Club fluctuates between 10 to 50 members during the academic year, said Larry Herzberg, professor of Germanic and Asian languages. And the interest continues to expand.

“We have an amazing Asian studies program here, but the Asia Club fills in the gaps,” Herzberg said. “We don’t have time to make food or play ‘Go’ in class; young people need a chance to just play.” — CARA DAINING

My experiences in Birmingham

A busload of 50 students from Calvin College and area high schools spent Jan. 12-15 on a civil rights tour of Birmingham, Ala. Markeisha Jordan, a first-year student studying child psychology at Calvin, was among them.

My trip to Birmingham, Ala., allowed me to reflect on my history, and through that reflection I learned some meaningful lessons. The first of these I experienced the moment I stepped off the bus and laid eyes on Birmingham. I began to envision myself being an actual resident there during the 1950s. Immediately, I was in a puzzled state of mind; I did not know what to think, nor did I know what to say.

This feeling was caused by seeing a church called Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, where in 1963 four little black girls were killed by a bomb. I was able to view the outside corner of the church where the bomb hit (which is still in need of repair). I was also able to view the church from the inside, sitting in the pews where the four little girls used to sit every Sunday. As I continued to roam the church, I came to the area where the little girls were killed. The time I spent in Sixteenth Street Baptist Church made me realize that these girls were not that much younger than me; their innocent lives were taken away from them within a blink of an eye.

I was also privileged to experience



Markeisha Jordan

the actual neighborhoods and homes of Birmingham that were bombed by the Ku Klux Klan. (I had learned before coming to the city that because there were so many bombings going on, Birmingham was some-

times called “Bombingham.”) As I looked at the homes, I could envision people being asleep, unaware that a bombing was going to take place on their home.

After a while, I began to get a little emotional because of the thought of people who would go to such lengths to keep segregation in place.

The ride back home allowed me to think about what I learned from my many experiences in Birmingham, where I envisioned so much suffering. Through this experience, I was able to learn that the residents of Birmingham continued to have a steadfast spirit and faith in God through all of the adversities they were forced to face. This experience in many ways was meaningful, educational and thought-provoking. Since the trip, I have been compelled to share my experience with my peers, educating them on a culture that suffered greatly but successfully overcame that suffering. I thank God for Birmingham, Ala. It has taught me in numerous ways as a young African-American woman to know that God is still in control of this world.

— MARKEISHA JORDAN

‘Cuban Dutchman’ navigates through a turbulent life

Jorge Fernandez says his Calvin experiences ‘led me in my path’

Turmoil has pretty much been a constant in the life of Jorge Fernandez '70 — from fleeing his country as a young boy to life as a refugee in the United States during the tumultuous 1960s to working in Miami's city attorney office during the turbulent decade of the '80s.

Yet, the 55-year-old self-described “Cuban Dutchman” has much to be thankful for, he said.

Landing in Miami as a 12-year-old refugee unable to speak English, Fernandez is still surprised by the route his life has taken.

His route initially took him decidedly north to Michigan, after Montello Park Christian Reformed Church in Holland adopted the 11-member Fernandez family. There, Fernandez and his school-age brothers and sisters were enrolled at Holland Christian School.

“For a Cuban family to get itself adopted and integrated into life in a Dutch community — that’s an experience I would like to write about someday,” laughed Fernandez.

“After I graduated I had no plans to come to Calvin College,” Fernandez said. “I didn’t do that well, and I didn’t have any money. My parents were more interested in my getting a job, but I had an English teacher who would not take ‘no’ for an answer.”

At Calvin, Fernandez majored in education, but it was the entire liberal arts experience that significantly influenced him, he said.

“Clearly, I am who I am today because of the values and philosophy that Calvin successfully infused in me,” Fernandez said. “At Calvin I heard teachers and speakers and went to demonstrations that radically addressed issues that I was dealing with. My experiences there have led me in my path for the last 30 years.”

That path continued to wind. Fernandez started as a second-grade teacher in Miami and within a few short years was named principal of Booker T. Washington Middle School there.

“I was the youngest principal in Dade County, but I was extremely frustrated,” he said. “I didn’t feel like I was making any difference.”

So, Fernandez decided to pursue a law degree, which he earned from Wayne State University in Detroit in 1979. After a job with a major law firm and a few years of private practice, Fernandez became assistant city attorney for Miami, eventually moving up to city attorney in 1988.

“I finally felt like I was going to have the opportunity to continue to do what I had



Jorge Fernandez

learned to do at Calvin,” he said. “I wanted to redeem whatever part of culture was around me; I wanted to get out there and be part of the solution to Miami’s many problems.”

For a few months, Fernandez felt he had found his place.

“Two or three times I started seeing lights,” he said. “I had a few moments of epiphany where I thought I could make a difference. I felt invigorated, renewed, passionate about what I was doing.”

But Miami was in a state of great chaos in the mid-'80s.

“There was so much drugs coming into Miami and corrupting Miami government at that time,” he said. “Between 1987 and 1991, Miami was in a state of siege three times. Elected officials chose to turn a deaf ear and blind eye to everything that was happening. I started to feel powerless because those to whom I reported were turning a blind eye or wreaking havoc themselves. I didn’t have the wherewithal to handle it.”

Yet, after a 12-year hiatus from Miami, during which time Fernandez served as Sarasota County’s attorney, he is back in Miami, already taking over right where he left off.

“I thought that I had had a totally forgettable experience in Miami the first time; I thought that I had made no impact,” Fernandez said. “But a few good people, who had survived all of the things that Miami had gone through, remembered me.”

It’s a different city now, though; Miami is on the mend. “There’s been a rebirth,” Fernandez said.

Daily, Fernandez applies what he learned at Calvin, he said. “Even when I’m not consciously aware of it, it’s at the essence of what I’m doing. Sometimes people say to me, ‘Why can’t you be a little more flexible; don’t you see the end justifies the means?’ But there are absolutes. I have to use their language; I can’t break into singing from the Psalter Hymnal, but I still make my point.”

Fernandez admits that he has failed more often than he has succeeded, but he constantly reminds himself of Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

“When cars around me are burning and people around me are being taken away in handcuffs, I remind myself of my partnership with God to take care of the world,” he said. “That gives me a sense of encouragement.” — LYNN ROSENDALE

Toyin Adegbite Moore '91 received the 2006 Outstanding Service Award from the Calvin Alumni Association for founding the Black Alumni Chapter (BAC). Established in 1995, BAC supports current and prospective black Calvin College students, faculty and staff members through mentorships, partnerships and other forms of encouragement. At 36, Moore is one of the youngest alumni to receive the award.



Toyin Adegbite Moore

Turning pages, spurring dialogue

Readers for Reconciliation bookworms consider issues of race, gender, class

This spring, as around 40 students delve into *Wild Swans*, the story of three generations of women from China, they will also be maintaining a vital Calvin literary community. Readers for Reconciliation, a book club entering its fourth year, has already explored a reading list that spans cultures, histories and continents.

“I started the program shortly after I started this position,” said Jacque Rhodes, Calvin’s dean of multicultural student development, “and I wanted a creative forum to dialogue about issues of race and class and gender. Reading is one of my all-time favorite pastimes, so I merged two of my passions.”

The group began with a mere seven students and two staff members, Rhodes included, and has added members with each title. “Each year, it just grows and grows and grows,” she said.

The group’s first assignment was *Things We Couldn’t Say*, the true story of Berendina “Diet” Eman, a young Dutch woman who saved hundreds of Jews’ lives through her work for the Dutch resistance during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. “She lives here in Grand Rapids,” Rhodes said of the book’s heroine. “After we read the book, we met her. You felt like you were truly in the presence of Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King or another amazing historical person — and yet she was this ordinary person.”

Eman’s visit during that first semester spurred another Readers for Reconciliation tradition, the custom of enhancing the reading with expert speakers and cultural offerings, such as a trip to an art gallery or a special dinner.

Throughout the years, the group’s dedicated readers have ventured into missionary life in the Congo through *The Poisonwood Bible*, ’50s-era racism in the American South through *Black Like Me*, the vicissitudes of life on and off the reservation through *Black Elk Speaks*, the struggles of Mexican immigrants through *The Short, Sweet Dream of Eduardo Gutierrez*, and the life of an African-American girl in the South of the ’60s through *The Secret Life of Bees*. Last fall, they read *The Kite Runner*, the story of boyhood friends set in Afghanistan.

“People are always amazed that I’m able to get that many students to read a book ‘just because,’” Rhodes said, “and I tell them they would be surprised at how many students simply love to read. I’m just tapping into those bookworms like myself.”

She enjoys the fact that the group is as



A typical Readers for Reconciliation literary lunch.

diverse as its booklist: “They’re from every major, every discipline you can imagine. They cross disciplines. On campus, off campus. Very multicultural,” Rhodes said. “I have international students; I have AHANA (African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) students; I have white students. And I love that. I don’t see another opportunity on campus where you see such a mixture of students.”

The mix makes for some good discussions. Rhodes remembers in particular a conversation about *The Poisonwood Bible*. The talk moved from the role of the missionary in preserving a foreign culture into the implications of *From Every Nation*, Calvin’s multicultural statement of mission. “I remember being blown away by the level of conversation,” Rhodes said.

Two student leader-coordinators, Peter Ippel and Christina Ludema, help to keep Readers for Reconciliation reading along. Their most important chore for the club is to join Rhodes on a long journey of reading and culling titles for the upcoming year. “They started with me back with *The Things We Couldn’t Say*,” Rhodes said. “They were in that first group, and they’ve stuck with me, and each year I’ve given them a little more responsibility — and now they’re seniors,” she added, mock-weeping.

The three leaders look for a specific kind of book: “I want a book that can engage students in thinking about race and gender or even class,” Rhodes said. “Whatever the atrocity that is going on in that text —

because we pick books with conflict — we ask how is it happening around us right now, and how are we responding?”

The response is key, she believes. As she looks forward to a spring of *Wild Swans*, and perhaps picking new student leaders, Rhodes recalls the group’s first guest speaker: “I go back to Diet Eman who said to the students that each of them had been called by God to do something extraordinary that may seem very small in their eyes. But in God’s eyes, it was very big.”

— MYRNA ANDERSON

Readers for Reconciliation meets in three groups: from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wednesdays in the Knollcrest Room and from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Fridays in both the Knollcrest Room and Uppercrust. Contact Rhodes at jrhodes@calvin.edu for more information.



WEB EXTRA

To learn about Afro-Christian scholarship at Calvin, visit www.calvin.edu/mosaic.