of our stories.” (The production premiered in Boston last year, and a weekend of performances in Washington, D.C., is planned for November. Jehlen is seeking funding to tour it around the country and the world. Grant-writing, she acknowledges, is a punishing endeavor of its own: sometimes “as time-intensive as creating art.”)

Some artists can think back to the moment they knew that music or dance or poetry was what they were meant to do. Jehlen resists origin stories. “I have no idea why things happen,” she insists. “I think it was probably my aunt,” she offers. “I really don’t know.” She’s reluctant to provide an explanation for her pursuits, perhaps partly because she doesn’t view her work as marked by any particular interest in a specific tradition—bharatanatyam or Sufi mysticism or the Japanese dance-theater form butoh—but instead by the larger, mysterious, interconnected human experience. ANIKAYA has also produced works inspired by the Hebrew Bible; the concept of gender; and the idea, common to world religions and modern physics, of a time before creation. “To me, physics is as awesome and fascinating as anything else,” she says. “I live for awe, and that’s very strong in the parts of Islam that I’m interested in. I live for cognitive dissonance and things that force you to wrap your head around other things.”

For Jehlen, it’s important that performances convey a specific emotional experience to viewers. Contemporary dance, she says, often focuses more on self-expression or exploring movement itself, and less on content. “My work is very much about content...We want viewers to understand it in the way we intend.” Next year, she hopes to tour with Sholeh Wolpé, the Iranian-American poet and playwright who translated the most recent English version of The Conference of the Birds. Wolpé would read a condensed version of the story before the performance, to give viewers a frame for understanding the dance.

“I think our work as artists is to train people to be empathetic,” Jehlen adds. Though she doesn’t often address it directly, she also thinks about the connection between her work and current culture and politics. “People get so much more attached to their identity when they perceive themselves as under attack. It can be a dangerous situation culturally because it makes you want to freeze your culture and label everything and separate everything.” But as Jehlen knows, the intersections of culture can be every bit as magical, and generative, as their core.

MONTAGE

Photograph by Autumn de Wilde

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Cabaret and Cooperation

Pink Martini bandleader Thomas Lauderdale is at his best bringing people together.

by Jacob Sweet

A cabaret singer, known simply as “Meow Meow,” struts onto the stage—her golden dress shimmering, her Disney-Villainess black wig bouncing—and lifts her arms triumphantly. Nothing happens.

“Usually someone throws flowers at this point,” she stammers, in faux-shock. She lifts her arms a second time. Again, no flowers. She walks off stage in a huff, fetches her own bouquet, returns to the stage, and hands it to a woman in the audience. Then she walks off again. Moments later, Thomas Lauderdale ’92, seated at the piano, re-introduces Meow Meow, “international singing sensation.” She takes the stage as if for the first time. But now, there are flowers.

As much of the Sunday evening show at Boston’s Berklee Performance Center, Lauderdale—the creator and band leader of Pink Martini, an eclectic “little orchestra” with about a dozen members—plays the silent straight man. There is no need for excess flair on his part. Some performers are described as “dynamite.” Meow Meow is more like a fusion bomb.

This subdued display by Lauderdale is surprising. He grew up in rural Indiana, one of several adopted siblings from across the world, later moving to Portland, Oregon, with his family. At Harvard in the early 1990s, he was the unofficial social leader of Adams House, which he described over the phone as the “artsy, gay, international freak House.” He founded Café Mardi, a Tuesday-night coffeehouse within Adams, and hosted the party that allegedly led to the closing of the Adams pool. “It feels like most of my weekends were in cocktail dresses,” he recalled.

After graduating with a degree in history and literature, he moved back to Portland and planned to run for political office, at-
tending “every political fundraiser under the sun.” Finding them boring, he found himself on stage in 1994, again in a cocktail dress, opening for a concert in opposition to a proposed anti-gay rights amendment to the Oregon constitution. That was the birth of Pink Martini, a Portland-based group that would go on to perform mostly classical, jazz, and old-fashioned pop music in more than a dozen languages. They soon found themselves performing at fundraisers for every possible progressive political cause: civil rights, affordable housing, library funding, education.

Though Lauderdale’s loudest feature may be his flamboyant exuberance, his greatest skill is bringing people together. Before the undergraduate Houses were randomly populated, Lauderdale orchestrated a one-time party between Adams and Eliot, the “preppy” House. After college, he said, Pink Martini became like “Adams House on the road,” and he branched out in his social leadership role. In 1997, “Sympathique,” a single he co-wrote with bandmate China Forbes ’92, became a hit in France, allowing Pink Martini to tour overseas. This spring and summer, they will perform in Turkey, South Korea, France, Belgium, and Hungary, switching between popular songs from across the world and those written by Lauderdale and friends in myriad lan-

Off the Shelf
Recent books with Harvard connections

Matters military. Having really negotiated with North Korea (see “The Korean Nuclear Crisis,” September-October 2003, page 38), and later served as secretary of defense, Ash Carter (now director of the Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs) offers insights into running the Pentagon, U.S. strategic challenges, and more, in Inside the Five-Sided Box: Lessons from a Lifetime of Leadership in the Pentagon (Dutton, $29). Useful background heading into 2020—or for whenever the public and its leaders next take military and defense issues seriously. From a soldier’s perspective—far from the secretary in the hierarchy, but proximate to the Pentagon—U.S. senator Tom Cotton ’99, J.D. ’02 (R-Arkansas), a veteran (and prospective presidential candidate after 2020), writes about Sacred Duty: A Soldier’s Tour at Arlington National Cemetery (Morrow, $28.99).

100 Poems, by Seamus Heaney, Litt.D. ’98 (Far-
rar, Straus and Giroux, $25). A useful collection of the late Nobel laureate’s work, from first to last, selected by his family members—the first in several projected volumes by the publisher, including a biography. Until the latter appears, Adam Kirsch’s “Seamus Heaney: Digging with the Pen” (November-December 2006, page 52) provides a superb point of entry into the life and poetry.

Young Castro: The Making of a Revolutionary, by Jonathan M. Hansen (Simon & Schuster, $35). A fresh life, based on Cuban archival sources and interviews, of the origins of the larger-than-life figure whose nationalist uprising in his island country ultimately steered into its present, communist gridlock. The author is a senior lecturer on social studies.

Alfred Stieglitz: Taking Pictures, Making Painters, by Phyllis Rose ’64, Ph.D. ’70 (Yale, $26). The veteran essayist and biographer (Virginia Woolf, Josephine Baker, et al.) briskly portrays the pioneering photographer who made an even greater impact with his gallery, 291, the master photographer: “Spring Showers,” by Alfred Stieglitz, c. 1900, gelatin silver print by Lauderdale and friends in myriad lan-

Evolution or Revolution? Rethinking Macroeconomic Policy after the Great Recession, edited by Oliver Blanchard and Eliot University Professor Lawrence H. Summers (MIT, $39.95). Having attained “normalcy” after the protracted recovery from the financial crisis and Great Recession—and therefore a period suitable for both reflection and worry about the next, inevitable downturn—a pair of leading macroeconomists present colleagues’ best thinking about monetary and fiscal policy, and about the need for heightened focus on inequality and political economy. Academic, but not impossible.

Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven but Nobody Wants to Die, by Amy Gutmann ’71, Ph.D. ’76, and Jonathan D. Moreno (Liveright, $27.95). U Penn’s president, a political philosopher, and her faculty colleague, a medical ethicist, draw on the old song title to point out that although Americans “view the afterlife [as] an ideal place where no one has to pay the price of achieving eternal perfection,” it ain’t that way. Given merited concern about, say, the misuse of CRISPR technology to “perfect” embryos, their accessible exploration of American health care and bioethics is important and timely.

Coffee Lids, by Louise Harpman ’86 and Scott Specht (Princeton Architectural Press, $19.95 paper). During the next crisis, the macroeconomists (see prior item) may
guages. His home itself is a monument to togetherness. Portland Monthly described it as “one of the city’s most important cultural hubs,” known for dinners, private concerts, benefit auctions, and “his legendary annual holiday party, replete with a towering tree, caroling, and arguably the most eclectic and influential gathering of Portlanders to be found.”

On stage with Meow Meow, with whom Lauderdale released the joint album Hotel Amour in March, he is the backbone, the steady pulse of the show. Throughout the selections, she runs through the audience, picking out men and parading them onto the stage, locked with them arm-in-arm. Then they become part of the performance. During one dramatic song, she gets four men to high-kick alongside her, like a line of Rockettes. Later, a group lifts her up and spins her around, in a sitting position, on their shoulders. By the end, she is crowdsurfing—getting passed, parallel to the ground, through the auditorium. Lauderdale has his eyes trained on her through all of these moments, adjusting the tempo, volume, or timbre to keep the performance steady, adding to the spectacle without distracting from it. He said he thrives in this low-key role. “I think I’m a good accompanist because I breathe with whomever I’m accompanying, and a lot of accompanists don’t do that,” he explained. “I like supporting, especially singers.” During delicate songs, he plays softly with warm phrases. When it’s upbeat, he doesn’t just play the piano—he slaps, flicks and bops it like he’s playing whack-a-mole. His support isn’t exclusive-ly musical. When Meow Meow gets into a split-legged position and leigns being stuck, Lauderdale holds a bottle of wine just out of her reach, inspiring her to get up and finish the performance.

In the end, his goal is to get everyone in the crowed laughing at and enjoying the same consume a lot of strong coffee. This unusual gem of a book takes seriously the business of designing disposable cups and lids. Copiously illustrated, with mind-boggling detailed diagrams, and the resulting products. You will never ignore your coffee topper again.

The Weil Conjectures: On Math and the Pursuit of the Unknown, by Karen Olsson ’95 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $26). A genre-defying exploration of the siblings Simone and André Weil, philosopher and mathematician, respectively, mashed up with a memoir of the author’s own undergraduate math infatuation, carried off in the style and skills she has since honed as a novelist and former editor of The Texas Observer.

Democratic and the Next American Economy, by Henry A. J. Ramos, M.P.A. ’85 (Arte Público/University of Houston, $22.95 paper). A progressive, in search of “where prosperity meets justice” (the subtitle), surveys the socioeconomic landscape and an array of social-justice organizations in pursuit of an agenda for federally guaranteed rights to basic social goods; a unifying civic culture; refreshed democratic institutions; environmental sustainability; and more. Given current crabbed and ugly discourse, it is hard to see how existing institutions could act on his list, but that doesn’t invalidate the making of it.

D-Day Girls, by Sarah Rose ’96 (Crown, $28). A deft, appealing account of the under-recognized role of spies who aided the resistance, sabotaged the Nazi armies, helped turn the tide of World War II. You’re in good hands from the get-go, in Trafalgar Square, as “under the eternal gaze of Admiral Lord Nelson…Mrs. Odette Samson races to an appointment at the War Office on July 10, 1942, “the 1,043rd day of the world’s worst war.”

Unequal Europe, by Jason Beckfield, professor of sociology (Oxford, $99). Globalization aside, Beckfield’s searching research leads him to conclude that the internal integration of Europe has prompted “a new era of restructuring welfare states in a way that signals the beginning of re-trenchment and the ending of Europe’s long-term trend to income egalitarianism.” Thus, just as U.S. critics have taken to bashing the Old World for its supposed sins of socialism and petty regulation in the name of greater equality, both “flaws” are fading away. More generally, an important analysis of the institutional bases of social outcomes, such as the distribution of income among households.

Chinese Architecture: A History, by Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, Ph.D. ’81 (Princeton, $65). A large-format work of scholarship and accompanying beautiful photographs and illustrations, by the professor of East Asian art and curator of Chinese art at the University of Pennsylvania. Important, indeed invaluable, as China’s explosive urban and industrial growth has transformed its cities and countryside, and destroyed much of its traditional building.

This America: The Case for the Nation, by Jill Lepore, Kemper professor of American history (Liveright, $16.95). Having recently produced These Truths, an enormous reinterpretation of the nation’s entire history (see the review, “True Lies,” September-October 2018, page 64), Lepore focuses more tightly (138 small pages) on what the community really is, the nature of patriotism, and the American traditions that matter—lest they be perverted by illiberal nationalism.

Don’t Read Poetry: A Book about How to Read Poems, by Stephanie Burt, professor of English (Basic Books, $30). As the subtitle suggests, Burt attempts, accessibly and successfully, to demystify poetry by focusing readers’ attention on individual poems, and the reasons for creating and engaging with them: feelings, character, wisdom, and so on. The author, who serves as poetry editor for The Nation, was profiled in “‘Kingmaker’ to Gatekeeper” (November-December 2017, page 78).
A Fragile Relationship
The parallel, perilous histories of China and Japan
by EDMOND S. STEINFELD

At a time when the United States is preoccupied with its relations with virtually everyone else in the world, it is worth being reminded that other nations have their own relationships with one another. As Ezra Vogel, Ford professor of the social sciences emeritus, so brilliantly argues in his latest book, China and Japan: Facing History, probably no other bilateral relationship comes close to combining the mixture of profound cultural affinity, intense national rivalry, and long-term geopolitical import found in that between China and Japan. Given his unparalleled knowledge of the language, culture, and society of both nations, Vogel is uniquely positioned to tell this story. He is, after all, one of the few scholars ever to have written pioneering books about each society—Japan as Number One: Lessons for America (1979) and Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China (2013)—that also achieved best-seller status within each society. With China and Japan: Facing History, Vogel now turns to the interaction between these two great societies.

As the book makes clear, Japan and China for more than 1,500 years have shared bonds of deep cultural interconnection and mutual learning. At the height of premodern cosmopolitanism during the Tang Dynasty (618-906 c.e.), Buddhism, Confucianism, and written language (Chinese pictographs) all made their way from China to Japan. The vector was neither war nor conquest, but instead a small number of individuals in the cultural sphere: Japanese monks who had studied in Chang’an, the great Tang capital at the eastern end of the Silk Road; Koreans situated geographically between the two great cultures and accustomed to navigating both; and a select few Chinese monks and craftsmen who had made their way to Japan.

A thousand years later, during the May 4th Movement (1919), the great intellectual burgeoning considered by many Chinese to be their nation’s first modern moment, the flow of ideas would persist, albeit in the reverse direction. So many of the era’s leading lights—including the writer Lu Xun and two of the co-founders of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao—all spent key formative years in Japan. It was there that they witnessed Japan’s standing up to the West, thanks to a strong state, a powerful military, and a citizenry galvanized by nationalism. While in Japan they were also able to be inspired by a Japanese society far more liberal, vibrant, and open to ideas—including many from the West—than anything comparable back in China.

If only cultural cross-pollination described the totality of the Sino-Japanese experience. But as Vogel’s book painstakingly describes, the two nations are just as inextricably linked through calamitous violence, bloodshed, and subjugation. Bookended by the years 1895 and 1945, each society through its interaction with the other suffered devastating civilizational defeat.

Loss came first to the Chinese, who in their stunning defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 would suffer not only the indignity of territorial loss—the ceding of Taiwan to the growing Japanese empire—but more existentially, the total collapse of their age-old system of domestic governance and social control. Within 20 years of the 1895 defeat, the last Chinese emperor had abdicated, Confucian society lay in shambles, and the country had split apart into warlord-run fiefdoms.

Into the breach surged an increasingly militarized and imperially ambitious Japan, first colonizing Taiwan and Korea in 1895 and 1905 respectively, then establishing a vassal state in Manchuria in 1931, and finally invading and occupying all of coast-