work, including *Pass Over* and its predecessor, *Breach*, as attempts to use theater as “therapy.” (*Breach* presents a young writer-teacher trapped between competing expectations and struggling to forge her own identity.) She stands by those plays, and the version of herself who wrote them, but now sees them as “masochistic” at the root, she says. “I’ll never hurt myself to make art again.”

But Nwandu’s childhood also bequeathed her artistic instincts: the theatrics of the church, the particularities of her family dynamic, and the ideas of 80s popular television. And she remains interested in autobiography, if not in reopening old wounds: the protagonist in *Tuvalu* is a black woman looking back on her adolescence in Los Angeles, amid the O.J. Simpson trial and violence in her own home. Now, Nwandu says, the challenge is to marshal those elements to leave the audience with something more than a reiteration of pain.

The current political moment sharpens the urgency of that challenge. Living through what she calls “the day-by-day formation of a fascist state” has given her a new mission: to build community through storytelling and create a space to heal. For Nwandu, television, especially in the era of streaming, presents an unparalleled opportunity to experiment and to speak to a diverse America that exists nowhere in physical space. “I’m not asking people to forget their hatred as a way of glossing over it, but to engage with their hatred as a way of letting it go.”

But for transformative emotional journeys through storytelling, Nwandu believes theater remains the place where it’s truly possible for humans to really connect. In her words: “We are meat packets who need to sit next to other meat packets sometimes, at a very basic level.”

In *Tuvalu*, Nwandu meditates on the notion of apocalypse. What happens after the worst happens? What new kinds of relationships and realities become possible in the wake of true disaster? But for the moment, in the midst of intensive rewrites, she can’t be much more specific than that. “I just don’t want to pin it down yet, even for myself.”

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**Montage**

*Hot Pursuits*

**Bassist Matthew Berlin**

*by Lydialyle Gibson*

Matthew Berlin ’89, a jazz and blues bassist who also knocks around in folk, ragtime, and classical and performs sometimes three or four nights a week, is quick to tell people that he’s not a real musician. “A hack,” he insists, half-kidding. His regular job is as a trust and estates lawyer in a Boston firm. But the truth is, he’s been a musician—a serious one—longer than he’s been anything else. “It’s just always been there,” he says.

That comes through in his most recent project, a jazz album released this year: *I Just Want to Be Horizontal*. Berlin produced it and played bass; the album is a collaboration with two of his oldest friends and bandmates: singer Samoa Wilson and the legendary folk guitarist Jim Kweskin (whose eponymous 1960s jug band attracted imitators including the Grateful Dead and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band; for this album, Kweskin gathered a nine-piece jazz ensemble). The album takes its title, and its inspiration, from the music of swing pianist Teddy Wilson (no relation to Samoa), who ran a studio band in Kansas City during the 1920s and ’30s and played with jazz greats Benny Goodman, Lena Horne, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. “His band was incredibly tight,” Berlin says. “The feel was that they were swinging so hard, and it just was so effortless and clean and dignified and cool.”

That’s a feeling the album tries to replicate: the way the piano intro to a song like “Lover Come Back” opens up into a winsome, easy swing; the way the guitar and bass take their time soaking into the notes of the title track, “I Want to Be Horizontal”—a 1934 jazz ballad transformed here into a modern blues—while Wilson’s voice glides across the melody. Many of the album’s songs were recorded by Teddy Wilson’s band; Berlin and Kweskin made a point of unearthing old verses, lost in the intervening decades, even as they updated some of the arrangements.
“Bert Fields, who could be the greatest consigliere of them all.”

—Mario Puzo
Author of The Godfather

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SUMMING UP
A Professional Memoir

BERTRAM FIELDS

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MONTAGE

Chapter & Verse
Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Margeret Lindsey hopes someone knows the source of “Unmeasur’d space is the Lord’s habitation. His hand upholds creation’s realm…”—“the beginning of a hymn-like chorus which was one of the pieces our school choir sang at a schools’ competition at the Sydney Town Hall some 60-plus years ago. Certain things on Google are somewhat similar textually, but no cigar, and there is nothing musically. Any assistance would be most welcome; this has been driving a friend and me mad for decades.”

Send inquiries and answers to Chapter and Verse, Harvard Magazine, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via email to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.
could always get work. Kids like us could put in for a grant and somebody would find the money to put up a stage and lighting for a concert at two o’clock in the morning at some square in the old Barrio Gótico.”

A year later he came back, renewed, to Cambridge and Harvard, where he concentrated in social studies and played with the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Bach Society, the Mozart Society, and a handful of campus ensembles and pop-up jazz clubs. “My days were just totally lit up, after the academics, with jazz and classical music.” That was also true after college, when Berlin headed to law school at the University of Oregon: “Eugene has a great music scene.”

Today he plays regularly with half a dozen Boston-area bands with evocative names: the Dixie Cookbook, the Busted Jug Band, Jazz Is in the Air, the Racky Thomas Blues Band. Whenever he puts together an ensemble of his own, he calls it the Berlin Hall Repertory Orchestra, a nod to the juke joint that his grandfather, a Latvian immigrant, ran above the family’s dry-goods store in Newport News, Virginia. For some years, Berlin played and traveled with country-bluesman Howard “Louie Bluie” Armstrong, “the last of the great black string-band musicians.” When Berlin goes to other cities for work, he tries to set up gigs with musician friends, who are scattered all over. But most of his performances are local: Sinatra standards at a cocktail fundraiser with pianist Shinichi Otsu, or Chicago-style electric blues with the Tall Richard Blues Band at a club on the South Shore. Last October, on one of the late mild evenings of the year, he was in Somerville’s Davis Square, busking with the Dixie Cookbook, which plays early New Orleans jazz. An instrument case stood open for tips at their feet, as the quartet filled the plaza with jaunty syncopation: “My Blue Heaven,” “We’re in the Money,” “Tiger Rag,” “Sweet Sue.” Students and after-work commuters lingered, while children gamboled over from a nearby restaurant’s outdoor tables, dragging their fathers by the hand.

“One thing I’ve learned,” Berlin says, “is the more you play a tune”—whether an improvisation or rehearsed set pieces—“the more dimensions open up, the more space for interpretation.” In improvised music, “The opportunity for open landscapes is quite extraordinary, but even if you’re playing the same tunes over and over, it’s like you find these little internal structures. It’s like discovering a cathedral inside something very small.”

Legal journalist Adam Cohen ‘84, J.D. ’87—last seen in these pages with an excerpt from his book on eugenics, focusing on University leaders’ support for that species of social engineering (“Harvard’s Eugenics Era,” March-April 2016, page 48)—has now cast his eye at the past half-century of Supreme Court jurisprudence. What he has found is summed up in the title of his new book, *Supreme Inequality: The Supreme Court’s Fifty-Year Battle for a More Unjust America* (Penguin Press, $30). The introduction begins with several examples, including an African-American catering assistant at a university who was racially harassed at her workplace, followed by this one:

**Jack Gross**, an Iowa insurance executive, had a similar difficulty with the Court a few years earlier. He was one of a group of high-performing workers over the age of 50 who were demoted by his company on the same day. Gross was forced to hand his responsibilities over to a younger worker he supervised. A jury ruled that he had been a victim of age discrimination and awarded him damages.

The Court overturned the jury’s verdict, again by a 5-4 vote. Gross met the standard of proof required in race and sex discrimination cases. The Court decided, however, that victims of age discrimination had a higher burden of proof, even though the federal laws against race, sex, and age discrimination used identical language. The dissenting liberal justices accused the majority of “unabashed … judicial lawmaking.”

...The financial and emotional toll on the losing parties in these cases has been considerable. Jack Gross was devastated when the Court manipulated age discrimination law to reject his case. “One of the things I have always counted on was the rule of law,” he said. Gross was also upset that, in addition to losing the damages the jury had awarded him, he was out more than $30,000 in legal expenses. “That is money,” he said, “that was intended to help my grandchildren get a college education so they wouldn’t have to starve their way through like I did.”

...As shattering as decisions like these have been for individuals, in the aggregate they add up to something much larger: a systematic rewriting of society’s rules to favor those at the top and disadvantage those in the middle and at the bottom. The Supreme Court has played a critical role in building today’s America, in which income inequality is the largest it has been in nearly a century. The Court’s decisions have lifted up those who are already high and brought down those who are low, creating hundreds of millions of winners and losers.