The Play’s the Thing
STAGING AN AMATEUR PRODUCTION PROMPTS REFLECTIONS ON THE JOYS OF ESCAPING THE GRAD-SCHOOL GRIND AND EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN BY TRISHA URMU BANERJEE

ON DECEMBER 5 AND 6, 2013, THE DUDLEY ARTS FELLOWS PRESENTED Inherit the Wind, a play directed by Ursula DeYoung (AB ’04), produced by Trisha Urmu Banerjee, a PhD student in English, and performed entirely by Harvard graduate students. What follows are Banerjee’s reflections on the process — and the fears, worries, and unexpected joys that came along with it.

T HE DEFINING FEATURE OF EVERY PHD CAREER IS UNCERTAINTY. LONG before the job market rears its dreaded head, threatening to impose geographic instability and unemployment, the graduate student must cultivate faith in a project whose most thrilling aspect is also its most terrifying; that no one has ever done it before. “Can it be done? Will it be good?” The young academic must willfully invest time and energy in a universe of unknowns. So why should someone so engulfed in question marks decide to pursue, without being asked or expected to, an extracurricular project ridden with still more uncertainty of success and value? When I became one of the Arts Fellows at Dudley House last fall, there hadn’t been a graduate student theater production in recent memory. It was uncertain not only that a play could or would be produced, but that it was even worth trying. Forget a whole cast—was there even one rational PhD student who’d devote precious intellectual energy to unnecessarily memorizing text? Commit sparse free time to putting on costumes and regularly playacting with other (potentially bizarre) grad students? All for one or two hours of performance that nobody but local family members might come to watch?

One afternoon in late August, I mused aloud to my new officemate how great it would be to stumble across someone who wanted to direct a graduate student play. To my wonder, he showed me a message sitting in the Arts e-mail inbox. It was penned by one Ursula DeYoung, the particular “someone,” I’d soon discover, who was exactly what such an enterprise required:

The full cast of Inherit the Wind posed after the production in December. Below, scenes from the performance.

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Get Into the Act
The Harvard Graduate Play returns this spring with The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard. All graduate students are welcome to audition. To learn more, come to the information session in the Graduate Student Lounge at Dudley House on February 3, 7 p.m., or contact dudleyhouse.arts@gmail.com. And if you have a hobby or an interest that’s calling to you, or an extracurricular path you want to follow, Dudley House is a good place to find out how to make it happen. Contact the Dudley Fellows or the House administrator via www.dudley.harvard.edu.

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Focus on Your Wellbeing
EVENTS TO SUPPORT YOUR PERSONAL, ACADEMIC, AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

Bureau of Study Counsel
5 Linden Street  •  617-495-2581
www.bsc.harvard.edu

Reading Strategies
Thursday, February 6, 3:15–5 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Learn to read strategically, effectively, and efficiently. A mini-version of the Harvard Course in Reading and Study Strategies. Register online.

Zen and the Art of Student Life
Monday, February 10, 9–10 a.m., 5 Linden Street. Develop awareness and balance through meditative exercises and discussions. Register online.

Speaking Up In Class
February 19 and 26 (2 Wednesdays), 2–3:30 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Develop strategies to increase self-confidence and manage anxiety about speaking in academic settings. A 30-minute pre-group consultation required; call the BSC to register.

Procrastination Group
February 20 and 27 (2 Thursdays), 3–4:15 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Explore the roots of procrastination and develop practical strategies for engaging tasks when you find yourself resistant or paralyzed. To register, call the BSC.

Attending to Attention: Strategies for Focus & Concentration
Friday, February 21, 1–2:30 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Develop strategies to increase self-confidence and manage anxiety about speaking in academic settings. A 30-minute pre-group consultation required; call the BSC to register.

Perfectionism: A Double-Edged Sword
Friday, February 21, 2:15–3:30 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Explore the distinction between healthy achievement and perfectionism. Learn strategies to overcome some of perfectionism’s many pitfalls. To register, call the BSC.

What Should I Do? For Students Concerned about Someone
Wednesday, February 26, 3:30–5 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Get support and guidance about whether and how to address someone else’s behavior that concerns you. No registration required.

Peak Performance
Friday, February 28, 2–3 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Develop strategies and principles to help you do your best in the performing arts, athletics, and other endeavors. Register online.

Attending to Attention: Strategies for Focus & Concentration
Monday, March 3, 4–5:30 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Develop strategies to manage difficulties with attention. Register online.

Time Management
Friday, March 7, 1–2:30 p.m., 5 Linden Street. Identify your priorities, learn how to plan and manage your time more effectively, and develop strategies for dealing with challenges. To register, email Claire Shindler cshindler@bsc.harvard.edu.

Honor Your Mentor
EVERETT MENDELSOHN EXCELLENCE IN MENTORING AWARDS

Good mentoring is key to happiness and success in graduate school. Let’s recognize and celebrate it when it happens! Do you know a faculty member who deserves to be feted for their outstanding mentoring — for going above and beyond the call of duty in order to guide or advise you personally, professionally, or academically? Make your nomination for the Graduate Student Council’s Everett Mendelssohn Excellence in Mentoring Awards! Nominate online: www.gsc.fas.harvard.edu

Wine, Cheese, and Archive Stories
DRINK SOME PRETTY GOOD WINE.
EAT EXCELLENT CHEESE.
AND DEMYSTIFY ARCHIVAL RESEARCH.
Wednesday, February 12, 2014, 5 p.m.
Robinson Upper Library

Assistant Professor of History Kirsten Weld will be the first speaker of a broad series on methods for historical research, sponsored jointly by the American Studies Junto and the Henry Adams Society, with support from the GSAS Graduate Student Council.

Get Tax Help, Via Fellow Harvard Students
Do you need to file a tax return? Let us do it for you! TaxHelp is a volunteer organization of Harvard Law School students that prepares federal and state income tax returns for free for people with incomes under $51,000. We can also prepare a 1040NR and Form 114 for foreign students. We will be at the Cambridge Public Library (449 Broadway) on Fridays from noon to 4:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., starting February 7 and continuing through April 12th (excluding March 14–22). To appoint- ment is necessary. Bring all tax forms, driver’s license, and Social Security cards (or ITIN letters) for you and your family (if applicable). For more information, visit www3.law.harvard.edu/taxhelp.

Lost Cities and Landscapes in the Heart of the Assyrian Empire
The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology presents
A talk by Jason Ur, John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences
Department of Anthropology
Thursday, February 20, 6 p.m. Geological Lecture Hall, 24 Oxford Street
In 2012, Harvard began a new archaeological project in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. This area was the core of the great Assyrian empire (ca. 900 to 600 BC), which at its largest stretched from Egypt to Iran. The project marked the return of Harvard to Kurdistan after an absence of over eighty years. Archaeologist Jason Ur will discuss the team’s findings, as well as his use of declassified Cold War spy satellite photographs to locate ancient towns and cities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON UR

GSAS BULLETIN  |  FEBRUARY 2014
When he thinks about the goals he has for this new outreach effort, Jinich remembers a student named Manuel Razo, who had taken Jinich’s classes in Guanajuato and who stood out from his classmates for his passion and skill. Manuel eventually wrote an email to Rob Phillips, a professor of biophysics at the California Institute of Technology, which led to a Skype conversation, which led to an invitation for Manuel to work with Phillips in the wet lab over winter break and a summer research stint at Cal Tech. Manuel eventually became first author on a paper about the metabolism of lactose in E. coli. After returning to Mexico, Manuel organized a science club of his own.

Hernandez-Lopez hopes that Harvard’s outreach will encourage more students to follow Manuel’s example. “The purpose is to engage more students to decide on science as a long-term career,” he says. “People usually think that science is really difficult, and only a career for geniuses — but that’s because there are still inequities in the way we teach science. If we can introduce students to people working in science, we hope they’ll say ‘I want to be where he or she is.’”

“You find the best and the worst in Mexico,” adds Jinich. “You have institutes with world-class researchers. But you also have the worst reading and math scores among OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries.” Both Jinich and Hernandez-Lopez describe deficiencies in the Mexican public education system, where there are seldom the resources for laboratory work and where teachers often have little science education themselves. The burden often falls, they say, on extracurricular organizations like the Science Olympiads. Now they want to help, with their own organization.

“The dream is to recruit more tutors from more schools, and expand to other cities in Mexico,” Jinich says, and Hernandez-Lopez agrees: “We want to take advantage of all our friends here in graduate school who are doing interesting research. We know we’re privileged to be where we are, so we try to figure out ways to share that privilege.”

Harvard PhD students from Mexico lead outreach efforts back home, encouraging others to follow their lead by Nicholas Nardin

When GSAS students from Mexico get together, says Rogelio Hernandez-Lopez, a PhD candidate in chemical physics, the conversation always seems to come around to the same topic: “We always end up talking about what we can do for Mexico.”

One such conversation happened this July, at the apartment of Adrian Jinich, a systems biology PhD student. When he was a master’s candidate at the Center for Mathematical Research in Guanajuato, Jinich had organized informal science outreach programs for local high school students, leading Saturday workshops and inviting professors to give presentations. “I always had really great science teachers,” Jinich says, “so I wanted to help give some of that back.” The informal talks were soon formalized as the Clubes de Ciencia Mexico, a nonprofit organization that sponsored talks and workshops across the country. Reflecting on the success of this venture, Jinich asked himself whether it might be continued and expanded by using instructors who were PhD students at Harvard.

This January, Jinich and 6 other graduate students and postdocs at Harvard traveled to Mexico — along with 6 more graduate students and postdocs from other elite universities — for the debut of what Jinich hopes will become a recurring program of science education and an enduring exchange between Harvard and Mexico. Over three weeks, they will teach high school and undergraduate students course modules of their own design, on subjects drawn from their own graduate research. Topics being explored this pilot year include rooftop gardens, the physics of waves, and “how a worm thinks.” One course, led by Roberto Olivares, PhD ’12, is based on Olivares and Jinich’s collaboration with Harvard computational chemist Alán Aspuru-Guzik. It concerns their effort to design and analyze millions of molecules with the aim of perfecting materials for solar cells.

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Job Talk

PERIODIC UPDATES ON CAREERS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND LIFE AFTER GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Scientist’s Conundrum: CV, Resume, or Something In-Between? Thursday, February 13, 3:30–5 p.m. Longwood Campus, TMEC Room 227 Every scientist needs a CV, whether you are planning to pursue a postdoctoral research position, a faculty position, or a position outside of academia. Using sample documents that helped scientists land positions in academia and beyond, we will discuss how to optimize the presentation of your relevant skills and experiences in an aesthetically pleasing style that is most appropriate for different types of PhD-level positions. GSAS students, please register through Crimson Careers.

GSAS Job Search Check-in Friday, February 21, 10–11:30 a.m. OCS Conference Room. If you are job searching, then you know it continues to be a tough job market; staying motivated and proactive can be challenging. This group can help you stay focused, connected, and goal-oriented. Joining this monthly meeting allows you to get together with other GSAS students searching for nonacademic jobs to share tips and advice. Even as fall recruiting has ended for this academic year, many organizations fill positions on a “just in time” basis, especially during spring semester. Eligibility: PhD/master’s students from all GSAS departments seeking nonacademic jobs. Registration is required; contact Heather Law (hlaw@fas.harvard.edu); include your name, G-level, and department.

Save the Date! Leveraging Your PhD in the Workplace Friday, April 25, 4–7 p.m. Are you curious about careers outside of academia? Be sure to attend this annual event—the flagship event of the Office of Career Services’ nonacademic career programming. You’ll hear from 2014 GSAS graduates who have successfully landed nonacademic jobs, and you’ll hear from GSAS alumni about how they made the decisions that informed their own career paths, as well as how the knowledge they developed during their graduate programs influenced their professional success. To cap things off, you’ll have a chance to network with all the panelists at a closing reception. This event will be co-sponsored by Office of Career Services and the GSAS Office of Alumni Relations.

Science By the Pint A STUDENT EFFORT BRINGS SCIENCE OUT OF THE LAB AND INTO YOUR LOCAL

Science by the Pint, a series of faculty talks held the second Monday of every month at The Burren in Davis Square, has announced its spring lineup. The talks, hosted by the GSAS student organization Science in the News (SiTN), offer a chance for non-scientists and the general public to connect with researchers in Boston and Cambridge and learn about new discoveries and promising areas of inquiry. These free events open with a short chat by a top-tier Harvard or MIT scientist. They allow plenty of time for audience members to interact one-on-one with the guest scientist and their lab members over dinner and a beer.

Science By the Pint, Spring 2014

February 10, 2014
Dr. Mahzarin Banaji
“Hidden cognitive biases of good people”

March 10, 2014
Dr. Stephen Blacklow
“Structures and Signaling: How your cells work at the subatomic level”

April 14, 2014
Dr. Michael Brenner
“Using Math to Answer Scientific Questions: From bird beaks, droplet splashing to the science of cooking”

All talks are held at 7 p.m. at The Burren, 247 Elm St, Davis Square, Somerville.

7th Annual German Conference at Harvard February 14 and 15 Radcliffe Yard

The U.S. and Germany: Drifting Apart? Perceptions of Security across the Atlantic

Speakers—who will include influential voices from German politics and policy—will discuss security concerns and their policy implications, focusing on political-military, data, energy, and economic security. The conference language is English.

Information and registration: www.germanconference.org

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The 2014 Norton Lectures: Herbie Hancock

THE ETHICS OF JAZZ

4 p.m., Sanders Theatre, 45 Quincy Street

Set 1: THE WISDOM OF MILES DAVIS
Monday, February 3

Set 2: BREAKING THE RULES
Wednesday, February 12

Set 3: CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND THE VOICE OF FREEDOM
Thursday, February 27

Set 4: INNOVATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES
Monday, March 10

Set 5: BUDDHISM AND CREATIVITY
Monday, March 24

Set 6: ONCE UPON A TIME...
Monday, March 31

Events are free, but tickets are required. Tickets available starting at noon on the day of each lecture at the Sanders Theatre box office and at the Harvard box office.


Sponsored by the Mahinda Humanities Center at Harvard
Give Blood
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 10 A.M.–2 P.M., Graduate Student Lounge. Your donation will go directly to Mount Auburn Hospital to save up to three lives! Contact dudleypublicservice@gmail.com to sign up. On donation day, bring your photo ID, drink plenty of water, and eat a good breakfast. Juice and snacks will be on hand.

Learn to Cross-Country Ski!
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 7:30 A.M. Cross-country skiing is a great way to explore the outdoors and get a fantastic cardio and strength workout. This outing will introduce you to the sport so you can embark on independent trips in the future. We’ll depart early from Dudley House and take the T to the Weston Ski Track (www.skiboston.com/skitrack), returning to Cambridge at 2:30 p.m. Ticket cost is $40 and includes ski rental, track pass, and a one hour group lesson with an instructor. See dudley.harvard.edu/outings.

80s Party — to the Max!
SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 9 P.M.–MIDNIGHT, Main Dining Room. Take a night off from the books and break out the shoulder pads and parachute pants as Dudley becomes a blast from the past with your favorite 80s hits. Open to Dudley members, MIT graduate students, and their guests.

A Swing in Your Step
SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 9:30 P.M.–MIDNIGHT. The Spring Swing, an annual Dudley House tradition, offers a chance to bring out your finery and take the dance floor in style, accompanied by the smooth sounds of the Dudley Jazz Band. Waltzing lessons precede the event (8:30–9:30 p.m.). Watch your email for information about tickets.

Save the Dates!
MONDAYS, FEBRUARY 10, MARCH 3, APRIL 7, 2014: Senior Common Room Dinners
MONDAY, APRIL 14: The Dudley Jazz Band in Concert, Paine Hall
SUNDAY MAY 4: The Dudley Orchestra in Concert, Sanders Theatre
FRIDAY, MAY 9: The Annual Fred Astaire Film Festival, Graduate Student Lounge

Don’t Miss!
OUR DUDLEY HOUSE PICKS OF THE MONTH. FOR MORE EVENTS, OUTINGS, AND GATHERINGS, GO TO WWW.GSAS.HARVARD.EDU/DUDLEYTHISMONTH.
With this opportunity for alternate identities came a true break from the inherently isolating framework of graduate programs.

mean having no play at all; worse, it would mean disappointing nine talented graduate students looking for, and deserving of, a specific artistic outlet. We were perfectionists working in a medium that admitted no logical imperfection.

But the play being cast meant a joy mostly untempered by worry. By last we could watch unfold, even as we pushed it along, the process we'd set into motion. In the alternate world that only theater could allow, a PhD student in history (Andrew Bellisari) could powerfully defend scientific inquiry against the dogmatic religious attacks of a SEAS student (Kevin Tian), who after a day spent in the lab came to rehearsal ready to bellow with the fervor of a Southern Baptist minister.

With this opportunity for alternate identities came a true break from the inherently isolating framework of graduate programs, which are not only broken into separate disciplines but also require a one-to-one ratio between dissertations and degrees, even in more collaborative scientific disciplines. To my gratification, former stranglers became conspirators, working together voluntarily on a complex aesthetic scheme. The play became a mission shared not only by its originators but by every participant, each of whom was absolutely crucial to its very existence.

When it all culminated in a successful and unexpectedly sold-out run, I could finally absorb the satisfaction of arriving at tangible and fulfilling answers to previous unknowns. It was a taste of what I hope — what every PhD student hopes — to feel at the end of graduate school: that the work has been played, and that the play has been worthwhile.

Long Live Print
As part of January@GSAS, Houghton Library offered a series of presentations and workshops designed to help graduate students examine books as physical objects. The sessions were designed to enhance understanding in any field of study, as students learned to "read" a book for evidence of its production context, its cultural value, and the experience of its readers through time.

At a printing workshop led by Hope Mayo, Philip Hofer Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts, students explored the history and technology of printing from moveable type and then got a chance to set type and print a keepsake to take with them, using the iron handpress.

Learning about Learning
The innovative classroom assessment workshop offered to student-applicants as part of January@GSAS couldn’t have had a more apt and pointed title: "What Are My Student Learning?"

Twenty-four PhD students gathered “to explore what it means to examine your students’ learning in a robust and valid manner” across the disciplines, according to the course site. Participants discussed and evaluated various methods of studying their students’ learning and produced tangible examples of assessment techniques they could use in current or future teaching roles.

The workshop was offered by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in conjunction with the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning and the Harvard Medical School Curriculum Fellows Program. It was sponsored by a grant to GSAS from the Council of Graduate Schools and the Sloan Foundation, and participants will be contacted by CGS for follow-up surveys of the workshop’s impact. Kelly Miller (pictured above), a PhD student in SEAS, led portions of the workshop.
Getting Beyond the Jargon

ComSciCon — a workshop series dedicated to science communication, founded by PhD students at Harvard and MIT — debuted its first January workshop, a localized and more intimate version of the successful program it offered last summer for nationwide attendees. The January version, held at Harvard in two vibrant half-day sessions, gave graduate students from Harvard and MIT a chance to interact with peer instructors who are leaders in technical communication, learn from expert writers and communicators including Harvard and MIT faculty, and produce original works of science communication for publication. Learn more at comscicon.com/january-2014-workshop.

Sewing the Seeds of a Creative Life

Carolyn Zeiner offered the ultimate in practical January@GSAS sessions with her Basic Sewing Workshop, aimed at beginners seeking to empower themselves (no more trips to the dry cleaner when that button pops off!) and learn some simple home economics. Participants (like Andy Gray, left) gathered in the Dudley House Common Room, and under Zeiner’s friendly tutelage — in good company — worked hard to master the arts of button-replacement and hemming.

“Creating things by hand is a huge part of my personal identity, and has been since childhood,” says Zeiner, a PhD candidate in engineering and applied sciences. “Sewing, in particular, is such a gratifying adventure. I challenge myself to create custom-made garments that perfectly fit my precise proportions, and the time I spend on my hobby results in functional items that I use on a daily basis. It’s also a great creative outlet, as I can create a wardrobe that’s uniquely my own in an endless range of styles, fabrics, and colors."

Maintaining a connection to extracurricular interests while navigating a demanding PhD program is challenging for most students, and Zeiner is no exception. But the benefits of setting aside time that is purely personal — whether you use that time to sew, or follow the music scene, or play basketball, or write poetry — are clear. Hobbies help support personal happiness, but they also bolster academic wellbeing by promoting a balanced approach to research and scholarship. “It has definitely been challenging to maintain my creative hobbies as a Harvard graduate student,” she says, “but I make it a priority to fill my life with things I feel passionate about — both science and sewing. Some weeks I have more time to devote to my sewing projects than others, but I try to do something creative everyday, even if it’s only for a half hour.”
Get Out
EXPLORATIONS AND ADVENTURES ON AND OFF CAMPUS

February Film Festivals

Two great festival traditions return to local screens this month: The 39th Annual Boston Science Fiction Film Festival, February 7–17, at the Somerville Theatre (www.bostonsci-fi.com); and the 19th Annual Bugs Bunny Film Festival, February 15–23, at the Brattle Theatre (www.brattlefilm.org).

SURVIVING GRADUATE SCHOOL:
THE CONTEST

Welcome to the Bulletin’s monthly contest! We ask readers to answer a question or share a grad-school survival skill. We pick the best answer(s) and print the winner in the next edition, and you win a GSAS totebag!

THE FEBRUARY CONTEST
What — and Where — Is This?

Harvard’s architectural mysteries continue! Describe this structure and its location. The first two correct answers win a totebag.

E-mail your answer to bulletin@fas.harvard.edu.

The contest is open only to students at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. When submitting, include your full name and your department/program. We allow only one submission per person per contest.

OUR DECEMBER/JANUARY WINNER:
Aylin Yıldırım Tsoepe, a PhD candidate in Middle Eastern studies, and Gregory Bruich, a PhD candidate in economics, were the first to correctly identify this photo as taken from the Harvard Yard side of McKean Gate, located along Massachusetts Avenue across from the newly renamed Smith Campus Center (formerly Holyoke Center).