

2

BOV tackles safety,
South Lawn

5

Johnson promotes
"No Child Left Behind"

8

Rasbury conjures
soundscapes

9

Johnston seeks excellence
for alumni

OFF THE SHELF

Recently published
books by U.Va. faculty
and staff

■ **Jeffrey W. Legro**, associate professor of politics, "Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order" (Cornell University Press).

■ **Larry J. Sabato**, politics professor and director of the U.Va. Center for Politics, "Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election" (Longman).

■ **Rosalyn W. Berne**, assistant professor of engineering, "Nanotalk: Conversations with Scientists and Engineers about Ethics, Meaning, and Belief in the Development of Nanotechnology" (Lawrence Erlbaum).

■ **John L. Gittleman**, associate professor of biology, co-editor for "Phylogeny and Conservation (Conservation Biology)" (Cambridge University Press).

■ **David Glen Mick**, Robert Hill Carter Professor in Marketing, "Inside Consumption: Consumer Motives, Goals and Desires" (Routledge).

■ **Leah Renold**, lecturer in history, "A Hindu Education: Early Years of the Banaras Hindu University" (Oxford University Press).

■ **Jeffrey J. Rossman**, associate professor of history, "Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor" (Harvard University Press).

■ **Robert Jackson**, instructor of history, "Seeking the Region in American Literature and Culture: Modernity, Dissidence, Innovation" (Louisiana State University Press).

■ **Jonathan Haidt**, associate professor of psychology, "The Happiness Hypothesis" (Basic Books).

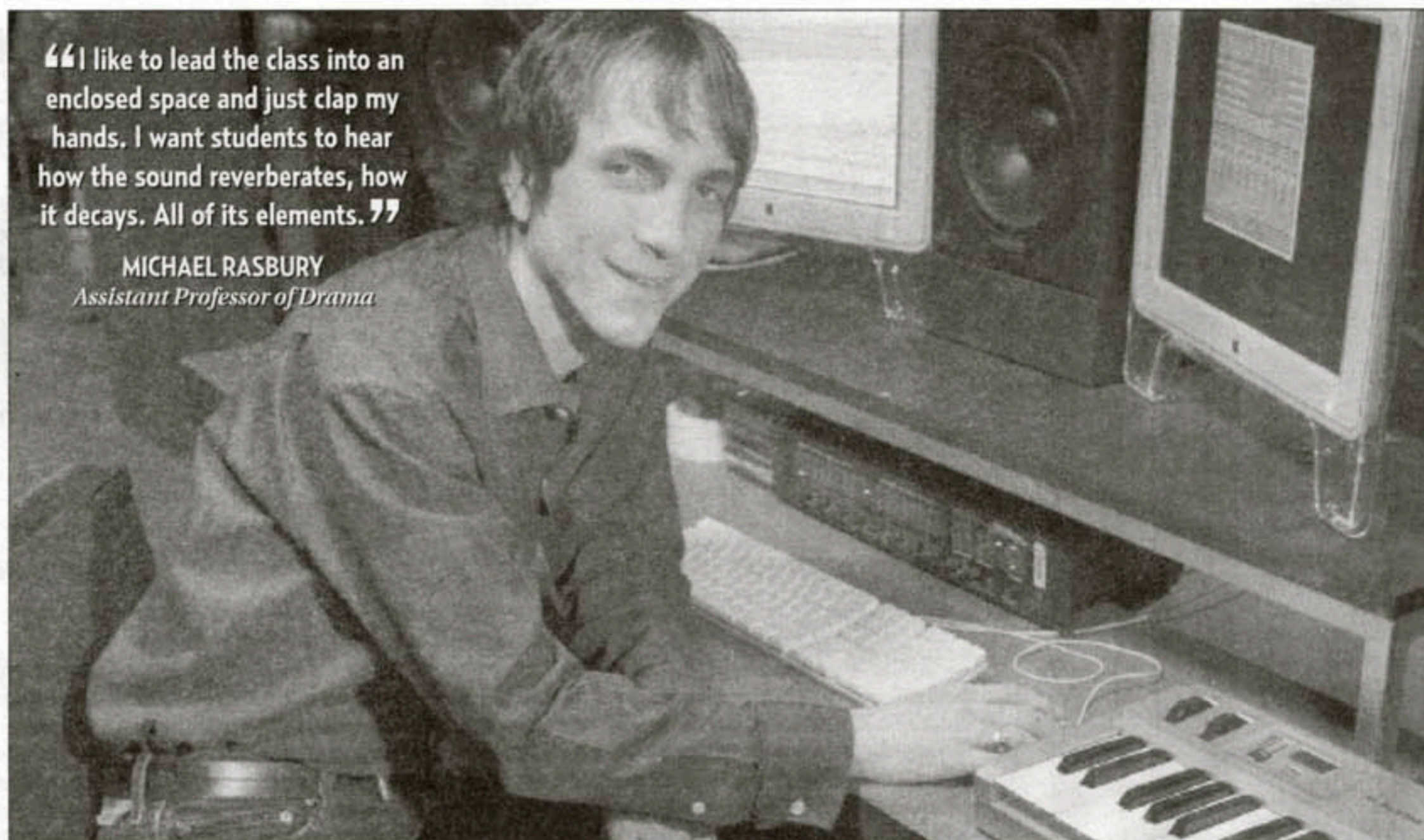
■ **A. C. Spearing**, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English, "Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics" (Oxford University Press).

Inside UVA

Page 8

INSIDE UVA

Feb. 17, 2006



“I like to lead the class into an enclosed space and just clap my hands. I want students to hear how the sound reverberates, how it decays. All of its elements.”

MICHAEL RASBURY
Assistant Professor of Drama

Rasbury brings sound design to U.Va.

BY PETER MANSEAU

Sound can take you places. Anyone who has ever plugged in a pair of headphones and let the worries of the day fade will tell you that. Whether you favor the sylvan trickle of new age music, or the pounding drums of arena rock, there is often no quicker route away from where you are than the one that runs through your ears.

No one knows this better than Michael Rasbury. Before joining the drama department faculty in 2004, Rasbury spent seven years as a musician, playing a "mixture of reggae, salsa, merengue, blues and mambo" at dance halls and music festivals. Born, raised and educated in Louisiana, he learned early on to use sound to see the world. After earning degrees in music and theater, he composed scores for theatrical productions and traveled with touring companies throughout the United States and Europe.

Rasbury's history of sonic exploration is proving useful in his latest role. As assistant professor of drama specializing in sound design, he teaches students how to transport an audience from the comfort of their seats to the varied worlds created on stage. In the process, he is bringing one of the newest, and fastest growing fields in the theatrical arts to U.Va.

"It seems more and more people are interested in sound design everyday," Rasbury said. There are, however, few places equipped to train them. In many drama departments, he explained, "there is usually someone who knows about it, maybe a lighting designer who can also work with sound. But to have an actual sound design faculty, that is more rare than people realize."

According to Rasbury, fewer than 15 schools nationally offer courses similar to those he began teaching in fall 2004. Under his leadership, U.Va. is in good position to meet a growing demand.

"Rasbury's artistry and expertise bring a whole new dimension to what we are putting on the stage," said Tom Bloom, chair of the drama department. "Available spots in Michael's courses are limited by existing lab facilities—so his courses fill quickly." Currently courses are taught in Wilson Hall but plans are underway to create a lab in the Drama Building so sound design will be close to production at all times.

As the field develops, sound design seems to have as many definitions as it has practitioners. Some are technicians; others are composers; many, like Rasbury, do it all. Whatever their forte, most sound designers would agree that their job comes down to meeting the wide-ranging auditory needs of theatrical production.

Once upon a time this might have meant simply making sure the actors could be heard from the cheap seats. In recent years, though, advances in audio recording, editing and amplification have drastically changed both the possibilities and demands of the field.

"When I started working with sound, we had reel-to-reel machines and cassette decks," Rasbury said.

Both he and the technology have come a long way since then. Using the most up-to-date computers and mixing software, designers today must master the creation of sound effects, the meticulous crafting of audio environments and the production of original music. They are responsible for every sonic element required to complete the illusion being conjured

on stage: anything from the wallop of a full orchestra to the whine of a swarm of bees.

This spring, the U.Va. community will have several opportunities to hear the work of Rasbury and his students. Their sound designs will be featured in the drama department's productions of "Truth and Beauty" and "Luminosity." Rasbury also created an orchestral and pop piece for last fall's production of "Cloud 9."

Fourth-year student Ben Justice has taken several sound design classes. The self-described computer geek likes Rasbury's hands-on, experimental approach. "He's a strong proponent of learning as you go," Justice said. "There's no textbook or manual to tell you when you've done sound right; you just need to work at it."

Rasbury would agree with that assessment of his teaching style. "My goal is to put people on a path," he said. When teaching the introductory Survey of Sound course, he added, "I like to lead the class into an enclosed space and just clap my hands. I want students to hear how the sound reverberates, how it decays. All of its elements."

To hear Rasbury talk about sound is to gain an understanding of how something so intangible can summon such powerful emotions.

"Every day on my computer, I look at sound as wave forms, and in those wave forms you see a perfect balance occurring," Rasbury said. "You see air moving this much in one direction and then, because of Newton's Law, you see it moving equally in the opposite direction."

"That fascinates me," he continued, "because when I look around the world I see the same kind of cycles happening. We see this balance everywhere. Sound is a neat way of looking at how everything in the universe works." ▽