

A passion for making meaning

By Linda Schmidt

Judith Rock, MA '77, heard a calling. And then another, and another, and another. Yet as she has followed that calling from one vocation to the next—as a religious scholar, dancer, teacher, cop—she has gathered experience and knowledge that find expression in her role as author of several immensely entertaining historical mystery novels set in 17th-century France.

Rock's first stop on her circuitous route to crime novelist was as a student of theology. She earned her MDiv from the San Francisco Theological Seminary, but realized soon enough that a different calling was even stronger. "What I wanted to do was dance," she recalls. "I wanted to dance more than I wanted to breathe."

For Rock, the change wasn't at all illogical. "What I loved was a passion for making meaning. It seemed, and still seems to me, that both religion and art are ways human beings make meaning. That's where my vocation has always lain."

In her 20s and with no significant dance experience, she talked her way into the graduate program in dance at Mills. "It seemed to me the best place to play catch-up as intensely as I could and to begin to get connected to the dance world," she says. While at Mills, Rock stumbled across an intriguing footnote referring to a "ballet ambulatoire" performed in Italy in the early 17th century. One of her private modern dance teachers was also, coincidentally, a seminal dance historian with deep knowledge of that period.

Before long, Rock was learning the intricate footwork of baroque dance (performing in her own custom-sewn costume), leading the Body and Soul Dance Company, and pursuing a doctorate in theology and art at GTU, where she restaged a baroque ballet for the Jesuit School of Theology. A Jesuit-themed dance is not as unusual as it may seem, she explains: the order has a long-standing dedication to the performing arts and values eloquence both of voice and of the body.

After the Body and Soul Company disbanded in 1988, Rock moved to New York to continue dancing, touring as a solo artist and choreographer around the country. During that time, she became fascinated with the women working for the New York Police Department. "Women had not been assigned to patrol for

very long, and I got to wondering, what could it be like to do that job?" Rock says. "So I went through a little training and found myself walking patrol in the 20th precinct as a member of the volunteer auxiliary unit. I absolutely loved it. I loved not knowing what was going to happen." A tenure-track position in the dance department then lured her to St. Olaf College in Minnesota, where she again volunteered with the local police and eventually was hired as a part-time officer.

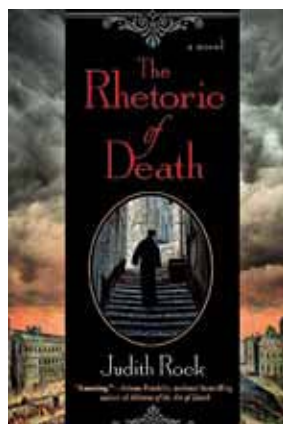
Another vocation, however, soon drew her attention. "While I was at St. Olaf, I got a commission from Luther College in Iowa to do a public lecture." With the directive to "do something different," Rock delivered *Response Time*, a one-woman stage show asking the question, what happens when a middle-aged female artist hits the street as a cop? Recognizing that her heart did not lie in academia, she left teaching, expanded the show, and performed in various small venues for several years.

"During a two-week run in a little theater in New York, a woman came backstage and said, 'I'm a literary agent. What else are you writing?'" she recalls. "She became my literary agent and, without her, the novels would never have happened."

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The Rhetoric of Death, the first installment in Rock's Charles du Luc series, was released by Berkley Books in October 2010. The second book, *The Eloquence of Blood*, was published on September 6 this year, and both have won high praise from reviewers like *Publishers Weekly* (which gave both books starred reviews), mystery readers, dance aficionados, and history buffs.

"I was always interested in history," says Rock, who, after writing two contemporary police procedurals that remain unpublished, began to wonder if she could make a story out of her earlier doctoral research. The long-ago dance commission from the Jesuits had paid for her first trip to France and she had made several subsequent visits, living in a



Jesuit community north of Paris for months at a time. Her studies unearthed intricate details of the dance and much more besides. "I became fascinated with the whole way of being in 17th century," she says. "The thing that I want to do most in my books is to take people there and be with those people then."

In her imagination, one of "those people then" became Charles de Luc, a Jesuit teacher of rhetoric and ballet newly assigned to the college of Louis le Grand in Paris—and who almost immediately finds himself investigating the murder of a student. It is July 1686 as *The Rhetoric of Death* opens; less than a year earlier, Louis XIV had revoked the Edict of Nantes and exposed Protestants throughout France to brutal persecution.

"On the most outward levels, Charles is a young man with all of the energy, passions, and attitude that most young men have. He's an ex-soldier and has been wounded; he's good-looking, there are women in his past," says Rock. "But he becomes more interesting because of the ways he's more than that. His family is both Protestant and Catholic, and that experience has led to one of his most basic religious convictions: that cruelty in God's name is blasphemy."

Rock acknowledges that the religious conflict presents an obvious parallel to modern tensions between the Christian and Muslim worlds. But her dedication to historical accuracy dictates not only her keenly observed details of dress, manners, architecture, and food, but also the morality and motivations of her characters.

"I read a lot of historical novels in which the characters are far more feminist, or aware of diversity, or act in some way that just could not happen in the period," she says. "Avoiding that is really important to me. Charles has to be of his time. He has his feelings and opinions, but he can't have them for 21st-century reasons."

Already under contract for two more volumes, Rock makes an unusual comparison: "Having been a choreographer, I understand that you have to take your audience from the point where they begin and, whether it's through minutes on the stage or pages in a book, lead them somewhere new. Somewhere they didn't expect to be."

Judith Rock lives in Sarasota, Florida. She will be signing The Eloquence of Blood on September 24, 4:30 pm, at Murder by the Book in Houston, Texas. For updates on additional appearances see judithrock.com.

Cut Through the Bone

By **Ethel McDonnell Rohan '02, MFA '04**
Dark Sky Books, 2010

With deft precision, Rohan's 30 very short stories—most only a few pages long—present piercingly intimate sketches of people who have suffered some form of physical or emotional loss, from an aged widow to antagonistic sisters to a young woman relearning her own body following a radical mastectomy. So much of the beauty in this collection lies perhaps in what is *not* said: the simple, lyrical prose illuminates a mere moment of what is clearly a much larger story, and the reader is left to ponder and to feel haunted—or inspired.



Plum Gorgeous

By **Romney Steele '02, MFA '04**
Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Following the success of her cookbook/memoir *My Nepenthe*, Steele delves into a more usual cookbook format with *Plum Gorgeous*. Bursting with sweet and savory fruit-based recipes, the book's luscious photography perfectly complements the author's imaginative dishes, with their unfussy preparations and inventive combinations of color, texture, and flavor. Best of all, Steele encourages readers to use her book as inspiration more than instruction and, though each of these dishes seems worthy of a special occasion, they are accessible even to busy cooks who need weeknight meals in a hurry.



Making Limonada

By **Diana Hirsch Cohen '81**
Dona Quijote Press, 2011

As a young widow with three small children, the author found refuge in a tiny Spanish village on the Costa del Sol. After remarrying, she returns to that simpler life and, as she learns the history of Spain's brutal civil war and equally brutal dictatorship, discovers that each person must find their own way through tragedy. This memoir relays Cohen's process of making peace with her own history, but shines most brightly in her depictions of the sights, sounds, and smells of village life and in the lovingly drawn characters that inhabit her small town.



In Memoriam

Notices of death received before June 13, 2011

To submit listings, please contact alumnae-relations@mills.edu or 510.430.2123

Alumnae

Sarah "Sally" Land Holland '27, April 16, in Sunnyvale, California.

Meryle Martin Evers '33, September 25, 2010, in Los Angeles. Survivors include two daughters.

Margaret Swetnam Raney '33, May 11, in Mitchellville, Maryland. She was 100 years old. She was involved in several community groups and active in the Episcopal church. She is survived by her daughter Gail Raney Fleischaker '60, a son, and nine grandchildren.

Catherine Spainhower Anderson '39, March 22, in Lone Pine, California. She earned her private pilot's license and became an officer in the Women's Air Corps, later working as a teacher and volunteering for many civic organizations. She is survived by her daughter and a grandchild.

Alice Gill Scofield '39, October 13, 2010, in Lodi, California. Her long career in education included work as a professor of English at San Jose State University. She is survived by a daughter.

Francoise Aron Ulam '39, April 30, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A Paris native, she left Europe at the beginning of World War II and married a scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project. She is survived by a daughter and a granddaughter.

Lois Mitchell Blackmarr '40, MA '42, April 26, in Menlo Park, California. An accomplished pianist and music instructor, she volunteered with the Stanford Music Guild, the Stanford Music Library, and the Palo Alto Area Mills College Club. She and her husband, a violinist, often played duets at local senior centers. She is survived by four children, including Gail Blackmarr '79, and five grandchildren.

Helga Wolski Dudman '42, November 24, 2009, in Israel. She was a translator in the Nuremberg Trials, a staff member with the *Jerusalem Post* for 30 years, and author of a dozen English-language non-fiction books, as well as co-author of the autobiography of Ruth Dayan, *Or Did I Dream a Dream?*

Marjorie Nicholls Gibson '42, April 6, in Palo Alto, California. An Oakland resident for 67 years, she was a longtime leader with Children's Hospital Oakland, serving as a member of the hospital's board of directors for several years. She was also the only woman among the five original commissioners for the Oakland Museum, where she served from 1963 to 1972. She is survived by two children and four grandchildren.

Elizabeth Fuller '44, April 29, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She worked as a teacher and travel agent and loved the history and landscape of the Southwest.

Stella Bowne Hoard '44, April 10, in Grass Valley, California. She traveled widely, circumnavigating the world on cruise ships and visiting every continent. Also an avid reader, she was interested in the arts, film, and birds. She is survived by three children and her cousins Margaret Gerber Cheyne '56 and Sylvia Gerber Bruce '58.

Hope Gregory Troyer '44, March 28, in Honolulu. A music major at Mills, she studied with Darius Milhaud. After returning to her native Hawaii, she was the music librarian at the Honolulu Central Library and was deeply involved in regional music and arts. Survivors include her sister.

Mary Jean Rosenberry Ferris '45, April 1, in Spokane, Washington. She ran a gift and furniture business with her husband and was a leader in many organizations, including the Spokane Symphony, the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, and the Junior League of Spokane, where she served as president. She is survived by five children, including Sara Ferris '74; three grandchildren; and her sister-in-law Ellen Graue Ferris '46.

Betty Dodson Kuntz '46, April 23, in Castro Valley. An art history graduate, she danced with the San Francisco Ballet and enjoyed playing the piano and doing artwork. She is survived by her husband, Ted; two children; and five grandchildren.

Helen Rosenfeld Lachman '46, April 11, in Portland, Oregon. She had a career in newspapers and public relations, following the food and fashion industries. After retiring she became a competitive runner, twice winning national age-group championships in the 5,000-meter event. She is survived by a son, three grandchildren, cousin Jane Kendall '38, and sister-in-law Elise Feldman Rosenfeld '47.

Patricia Bassett Pels '46, May 8, 2010, in Austin, Texas. She was a world traveler, duplicate bridge master, and a supporter of local theater groups. She is survived by her husband, John; four children; and eight grandchildren.

Nancy Bernheim Rogers '47, April 24, in Belvedere, California. She taught elementary school in San Francisco and was active in many Marin-area charitable organizations. She had a lifelong love of sailing and taught boating to children and young adults, served as a board member of the Belvedere-Tiburon Recreation Department for over 25 years, and earned numerous racing trophies as one of the first women members of the San Francisco Yacht Club, where she was named "Yachtswoman of the Year" in 1984. She is survived by her husband, Harvey; two sons; and two granddaughters.

Denise Higgins Guillemin '50, January 6, in Rancho Cordova, California.

Patricia George Peterson, MA '50, March 11, in Ballston Spa, New York. She established the dance department at Emma Willard School in Troy, New York, and organized numerous dance performances, festivals, and classes throughout her region.

We apologize!

Gifts in Memory recognitions were not available for publication in this issue of the *Quarterly*. All tribute gifts received from March 1 through August 31, 2011 will be reported in the winter issue of the magazine.

For information about making a tribute gift, contact 510.430.2097 or donors@mills.edu.

Jane Newhall '36

Jane Newhall had ties to Mills College well before she was born—her great-grandfather, Henry M. Newhall, was acquainted with Cyrus Mills and contributed to the original construction of the campus' first building. Jane Newhall called Mills Hall her home when she entered the College in 1932. She passed away July 27 at her family estate on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

A lifelong resident of San Francisco, Newhall was a Mills honors graduate in chemistry and worked in the laboratory of Shell Oil for 10 years, then served as a director of the Newhall Land and Farming Company from 1960 until 2004.

She was an exceptionally generous benefactor of Mills College, serving on the Mills College Board of Trustees and as honorary chair of the Campaign to Save Mills Hall after the iconic building was damaged in the Loma Prieta earthquake. She was named a Lifetime Trustee in 1989 and was granted an honorary doctor of humane letters by Mills in 1992. Newhall was also a trustee of the Graduate Theological Union and of the San Francisco Theological Seminary.

As president of the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation, her strong support helped establish both the Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital in Valencia, California, and what is now known as the Boys and Girls Club of the Santa Clarita Valley. She will be greatly missed by the Mills community.



Sue Shafer Stenstrom '51, February 20, in Lafayette, California. She was active in school affairs and volunteer work, serving for many years as a member of the Junior League of the East Bay and as a volunteer at Samuel Merritt Hospital in Oakland. She is survived by her husband, Tom; three children; and a granddaughter.

Lee Hoiby, MA '52, March 28, in New York City. One of the greatest masters of opera and song of our time, his rich catalog of works encompasses operas, oratorios, choral works, concerti, chamber works, song cycles, and more than 100 songs, many of them championed by such singers as Leontyne Price and Marilyn Horne. He recently completed his last opera, a setting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. A pianistic child prodigy, he was influenced by numerous strains of the 20th-century avant-garde. His works have been recognized by awards and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Ford Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He is survived by his partner and longtime collaborator, Mark Shulgasser.

Gertrude "Muggy" Feather Anderson '53, February 9, in Colchester, England. An avid golfer, intrepid traveler, and talented cook, she met her husband while sailing to Europe and lived in England since 1955. She is survived by three children and five grandchildren.

Meredith Crossley Young '53, April 11, in Beaverton, Oregon. After growing up in Hawaii, she and her husband ran a small farm in Oregon; she also worked for Tigard Travel for 27 years. She was a member of the Junior League in both Honolulu and Portland, volunteered in her children's schools and 4-H, and co-chaired both the Catlin Gabel Rummage Sale and the OES Country Fair in the 1970s. She is survived by two daughters and four granddaughters.

Janet Blundell, MA '55, March 11, in Emeryville, California. She had a career as an artist and teacher in Santa Cruz and in Berkeley. Survivors include four children.

Joan Knuth Houston '55, February 15, in Capitola, California.

Sally Whitmer Thompson '56, March 5, in Long Beach, California. She was an Olympic-level equestrian and taught both Western riding and dressage, and served as a leader in several organizations serving children's causes. She is survived by her husband, Bill; two children; and four grandchildren.

Carol Smith Roper '57, February 9, in Foster City, California. She had a 40-year career as a teacher. She is survived by her partner, Don; three children; and seven grandchildren.

Gloria Westphal Bourke '59, March 29, 2010, in Homewood, California. Survivors include her cousin Jane Van Rysselberghe Bernasconi '53.

Reinhold Marxhausen, MFA '62, April 23, in Seward, Nebraska. An Army veteran of World War II, he taught art at Concordia College from 1951 until his retirement in 1990. He worked as a photographer, sculptor, and muralist, and was best known for his unusual "sound sculptures" and two mosaic murals that are on display in the Nebraska capitol. He is survived by his wife, Dorris; two sons; and two grandchildren.

Sharon "Joy" Nickals Hale '63, April 18, in Castro Valley, California. She was a floral designer for more than 30 years and a talented watercolorist. She is survived by her husband, James; two children; two grandsons; and her cousin Mary Luke '72.

Sari Herzig Millard '88, May 22, in Corvallis, Oregon. She was an educator in Fremont, California, for 17 years and enjoyed hiking, biking, entertaining, dance, and travel. She was also a creative writer, poet, and painter. Survivors include her husband, Larry; daughter, Jana Rogers-Pastena '07; a son; and three grandchildren.

Spouses and Family

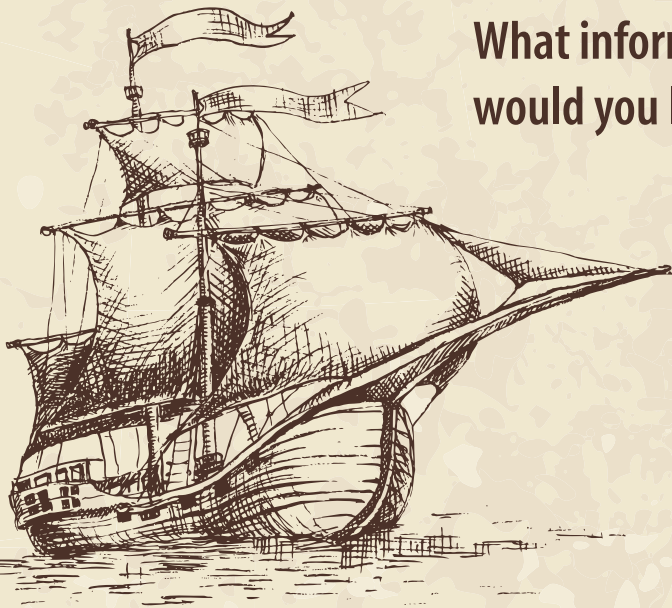
Douglas Doughty, husband of Carol Evans Doughty '63, February 11, in Florence, Oregon.

Riccardo Falchini, husband of Helene Donker Falchini '64, November 25, 2010, in Florence, Italy.

Edwin O. Wheeler, husband of Ruth Siren Wheeler '43, February 15, in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Sound off!

Alecia A. DeCoudreaux, who became president of Mills College on July 1, has made it a priority to meet alumnae and to hear their experiences and opinions. In advance of her Inauguration, we asked alumnae:



What information, advice, or hopes for Mills' future would you like to share with President DeCoudreaux?

I want Mills to preserve its lovely wooded campus with resident students (and not convert the grounds to parking for commuters). I want the college to maintain its undergraduate liberal arts focus and to continue to strive for excellence in all areas: the fine and performing arts, athletics, and especially academics.

—*Laura Buhl '97*

I so hope that President DeCoudreaux can help bring a feeling of sincere connectedness and shared vision between the various Mills populations—faculty, administration, students, and alumnae.

—*Jackie Gamble '00*

This fall, President DeCoudreaux will answer questions directly from alumnae with an “Ask Alecia” feature in the @mills email newsletter. If you do not already receive @mills, sign up by sending your email address to alumnae-relations@mills.edu along with your full name, any previous name, and class year. Write “@mills” in the subject line.

I hope Mills will continue as a wonderful institution of higher learning for undergraduate and graduate women and that it will keep the academic integrity that I was fortunate enough to experience throughout my college career. I hope Mills stays true to its commitment to increase and maintain a diverse student and faculty population through the curriculum offered, admission goals, and vital programs such as the Summer Academic Workshop (SAW).

—*Monique C. Parker '04, MBA '06*

I hope that the spirit of academic and artistic cooperation will continue to thrive. I did not realize how unique the atmosphere was at Mills, but I did not find that spirit in any of the other colleges in which I taught. (An assessment shared by alumnae I met who said they didn't appreciate Mills until they left.)

—*Mariana Bauman, MA '72*

I hope that President DeCoudreaux will keep the needs and desires of students foremost in her mind. It is also my hope that she try to maintain a close friendship with current and former students, with as much transparency about decisions being made as is humanly possible.

—*Rosalie McGie '06*

I hope that Mills will stop trying to be a vocational school and return to its liberal arts roots.

—*Louise Levis Weiss '52*

I hope that Mills remains a women's college with a strong focus on educating women for leadership, and that the Alumnae Association of Mills College remains a significant contributor to the process of defining and shaping the future of Mills. The AAMC played a critical role in moving Mills' board to retain the status of the College as a women-only undergraduate college; it also plays an important role in involving younger graduates to become and remain active in the College over their lifetimes.

—*Nancy Sirmay Banker '67*

ALUMNAE TRAVEL 2012



See the AAMC travel website at aamc.mills.edu for dates, prices, and full itineraries as they become available. For reservations or additional information, call the Alumnae Association of Mills College at 510.430.2110 or email aamc@mills.edu.



Peru

January 19–27, 2012

From the misty, magical hush of Machu Pichu to the ancient city of Cuzco, from the colonial flair of Lima to the Incan temples of the Sacred Valley, discover the diversity of the ancient and modern cultures that have shaped this extraordinary country.

9 days, \$3,095 plus airfare and VAT if booked by September 27, 2011

Tahiti and French Polynesia

February 23–March 4, 2012

Enjoy nine nights in Tahiti and French Polynesia, including a week aboard the small ship M.S. Paul Gauguin where an onboard naturalist guides your learning about the islands' history and heritage.

11 days, \$4,995 including airfare from Los Angeles

Waterways and canals of Holland and Belgium

April 18–25, 2012

Experience beauty, history, and culture aboard the MS *Amadeus Diamond*. The highlight of this trip will be a visit to the Floriade, a horticultural event that is presented once every 10 years. Antwerp, Bruges, Delft, and The Hague will also be part of the itinerary.

9 days, \$2,495 plus airfare and VAT if booked by October 18, 2011

Sketches of Spain

May 18–27, 2012

Journey to Pamplona, famous for the running of the bulls, and meander along the winding streets of San Sebastián's Old Town. Experience the cutting-edge Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the magnificent cathedral in Burgos, and the whimsical architecture of Barcelona. Vibrant Madrid and historic Toledo round out this exciting itinerary.

11 days, \$3,495 plus airfare and VAT if booked by January 10, 2012

Discovery Retreats Colorado

June 3–8, 2012

This unique learning adventure is infused with a love for the West.

Stay at the breathtaking Gateway Canyons Resort which was established by Hendricks and infused with his spirit and love for the West. Where else will you find dinosaur paths, ancient pueblos, uranium mines, and hideouts of notorious outlaws like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid?

6 days; costs are still under development

Discover Switzerland

July 19–August 2, 2012

This trip is a wonderful introduction to many quaint and scenic towns. From your base at the first-class Alpin Sherpa Hotel in Meiringen, travel by cable car to Magisalp and its magnificent views, visit the mountain village of Kandersteg, and make other excursions to Interlaken, Berne, and Lucerne.

16 days, \$3,695 plus airfare and VAT if booked by April 3, 2012

Cruising the Black Sea: A bridge of two continents

September 9–17, 2012

Join us for a seven-night cruise aboard the six-star, all-suite MV *Silver Wind* during the best season of the year to visit Istanbul, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. Choose among attractively priced shore excursions to such destinations as the 6th-century BC Bulgarian town of Nessebur; Ukraine's Livadia Palace, Khan's Palace, Odessa Opera Theater, and Potemkin Steps; and the Romanian port city of Constanta.

8 days, \$4,595 including airfare from select gateways

Italy's magnificent Lake District

September 19–26, 2012

Discover the beauty and magic of Italy's Lake District, a region where Italy kisses Switzerland. Visit unique and charming towns, majestic Renaissance villas, and lush gardens. Witness the baroque splendor of the Borromean Islands, and see the 18th- and 19th-century villas of Bellagio, built by the town's noble families. Visit the cosmopolitan city of Milan, the cultural and economic hub of Italy.

9 days, \$2,895 plus airfare and VAT if booked by May 8, 2012

Paris and the villages and vineyards of France

September 21–30, 2012

Discover the bucolic countryside, picturesque vineyards and charming towns of Champagne and Burgundy. Begin your exploration in Reims, once the coronation site of French kings, and your gateway to the idyllic landscape and renowned champagne houses in the area. Visit the towns of Dijon and Beaune, and travel the legendary Route des Grands Crus. Conclude with three nights in Paris, the City of Light, and discover the highlights of this cosmopolitan capital.

11 days, \$4,495 plus airfare and VAT if booked by May 15, 2012

Mills Quarterly

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Myra Melford

2011 Fall Concert Series

Saturday, September 10

Ikue Mori, David Tudor Composer-in-Residence

Laptop improvisations and multimedia compositions



Ikue Mori

Friday, September 23

Heaven and Earth: Songs by Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen

The Darius Milhaud Concert, part of Reunion 2011

Friday, October 7

Improvisation: Myra Melford, Nicole Mitchell, and Tomeka Reid

Spontaneous compositions for piano, flute, and cello

Saturday, November 5

Mills Performing Group: Hocket!

*Music by Ramon Santos, Pauline Oliveros, Danongan Kalenduyan,
and Chris Brown, featuring the Mills Percussion Group*

Sunday, November 13, 4:00 pm

Gianna Abondolo

Cello music by Crumb, Shostakovich, Tanaka, and Abondolo



Gianna Abondolo

All performances are at 8:00 pm in the Littlefield Concert Hall (unless otherwise noted).

\$15 general, \$10 seniors and non-Mills students, free to alumnae with AAMC card

For details or to purchase tickets, see musicnow.mills.edu or contact Steed Cowart,
steed@mills.edu or 510.430.2334.