

## When Opportunity Knocks

STUDENTS GET A GLIMPSE OF THEIR FUTURE PROFESSIONS

BY TRISH CHARLES

Rarely do undergraduate students get a chance to work on real projects that result in professional-quality products. Except at the University of Hartford.

Hartt students regularly appear in Hartford Stage productions and at Goodspeed Musicals. Engineering majors are designing new components for spacesuits at NASA's Johnson Space Center.

This semester, Hartford Art School students and communication majors from the School of Communication are getting a chance to work at the professional level too, thanks to John Feierabend, professor of music education and director of the music education division at The Hartt School.

Feierabend is an internationally known expert on early-childhood music education. In 2001 he approached Dan McNamara, manager of the campus's Kent McCray TV studio, about producing a DVD for educators who teach music and movement to young children. His publisher, GIA Publications, provided a budget to pay McNamara's student employees. Any leftover funds went to the studio for supplies and equipment.

The first DVD, called *Move It!*, came out in 2002. This year, students are working under McNamara's supervision with Feierabend on *Move It 2*, which also has a budget from GIA. The students plan to finish editing and creating the DVD during the spring semester. Plans are already under way for a third DVD, this time of Feierabend's lectures.

"These kids learned so much on these projects, it was incredible. And it all goes on their résumés," says McNamara. "When John brought us these projects, he really elevated the TV studio to a professional level."

Feierabend, who has done dozens of educational books and CDs, and now

DVDs, is always looking for new ways to capture the attention of young children.

After seeing student work in the art school's *Senior Show* last spring, Feierabend wondered if illustration students could work on a new series of 18 children's picture books that he was planning. He ran his idea by Power Boothe, dean of the Hartford Art School, and that conversation led him to Associate Professors Dennis Nolan and Bill Thomson, both published book illustrators.

"We're always looking for ways to give our students experience with off-campus projects," says Thomson. "And this is a great example of collaboration between the schools as well."

This fall, Feierabend visited Nolan's book illustration class and had the students sing the two American folk songs they would be working on and dance all the steps that went with the lyrics.

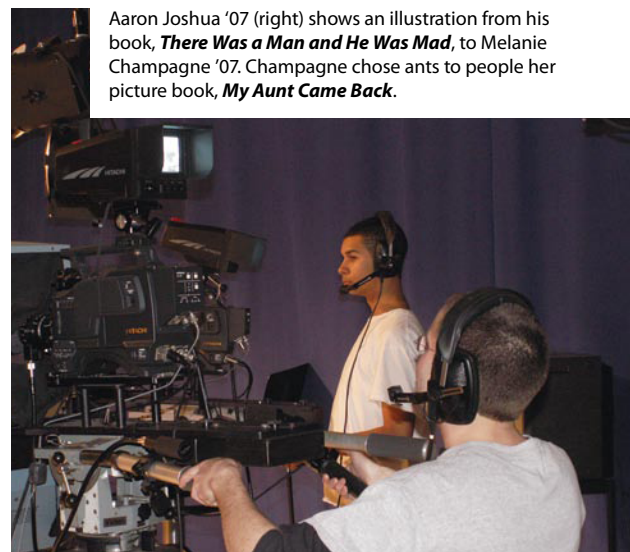
"They were stomping their feet, and swinging their hands, and singing," says Nolan. "I thought, this is wonderful!"

Nolan's class spent the semester working on book dummies—each page shows a sketch of the artwork and any copy that will appear on the finished book page—and completed three illustrations. The two finalists, who will have their books published by GIA, are Melanie Champagne '07 and Aaron Joshua '07. They will complete their books in Thomson's Senior Project class this semester.

"Right now, Aaron and I are doing everything that professional children's book illustrators do," says Champagne. "I think it will be much easier for us to transition into the professional market because of this experience." ■



Aaron Joshua '07 (right) shows an illustration from his book, *There Was a Man and He Was Mad*, to Melanie Champagne '07. Champagne chose ants to people her picture book, *My Aunt Came Back*.



Mark Helpm '08 (foreground) and Darrell Kee '09 are mass media majors in the School of Communication. Here they are operating digital cameras during the Feierabend DVD project.