GSAS’s David Suisman Wins Bancroft Award for Work on American Music’s Big Bang

By Katherine Moore

O ffering an historical per- spective on our current pop music culture, in which stars are marketed and branded like cars or sodas, David Suisman (GSAS 2002) has received Columbia University’s Bancroft Dissertation Award for his deep analysis of how the star-making machinery all began.

Suisman’s seminal work, “The Sound of Money: Music, Machines, and Markets, 1890-1925” (fall semester, 2003), explores the birth of music as big business in the United States, bridging the fields of cultural, social and economic history in the 1890s and early 20th century. Tracing American musical development from parlor to jazz hall, “The Sound of Money” draws on a wide range of sources, including sound recordings, oral histories, advertisements and business records.

“David Suisman’s dissertation is one of the most imaginative I have had the pleasure of supervising,” said Eric Foner, Columbia’s DeWitt Clinton Professor of History and Suisman’s advisor. “It takes a familiar subject—the rise of popular music in the early 20th centu- ry, and examines it from a host of unfamiliar angles, including how records and photographs were marketed to middle-class Amer- icans, how ‘celebrities’ like Enri- co Caruso were created and used to sell phonograph records and the complex interplay of race and the business of music. It was well deserving of the Bancroft award.”

Columbia’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences sponsors the award, which included $14,000 for publishing his dissertation. Once published, Suisman’s dis- sertation is expected to attract attention from scholars in many disciplines.

“It is simply an enormous pleasure and honor to receive this award,” said Suisman. “I have so much respect and esteem for many of the past Bancroft winners; it’s really an amazing thrill to join their ranks.”


A former employee of the Trustee’s of the University for out- standing Ph.D. work.

Students Take First Prize in College Fed Challenge

A team made up of students from Columbia College, Barnard and General Studies have won this year’s College Fed Chal- lenge, sponsored by the New York Federal Reserve Bank, with a $50,000 prize from the Moody’s Foundation to be shared by the Barnard and Columbia Economics departments, faculty advisors and the students.

The Barnard/Columbia/General Studies winning team of five com- prised of: DeVaughn Fowles, CC ‘04, Ken Harada, CC ‘05, Victoria Shenderovich, GS ‘04, Melissa Thompson, BC ‘04, and Jenny Tolochko, BC ‘04, who competed against teams from 12 other schools from the tri-state area. The team was coached for the Challenge by Steve Malin, a senior economist at the Federal Reserve Bank.

The College Fed Challenge, now in its third year, is an econom- ic competition organized by the New York Federal Reserve Bank.

Five-member teams from local New York colleges and universities create a 20-minute presentation about the status of different econom- ic conditions and forecast how the economic and financial conditions will affect monetary policy. The competition was initiated in 2001 by Barnard student Parastu Malik.

C USSW Professors Win Honors in Social Work

CUSSW Professor Jane Waldfogel and Assistant Professor Wen-Jui Han, in collaboration with Teacher’s College faculty member Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, have won the Soci- ety for Social Work Research (SSWR) award for Best Scholarly Contribution. Their article, “Ma- ternal Employment and Child Cognitive Outcomes in the First Three Years of Life: The NICHD Study of Early Child Care,” was first published in the journal Child Development in the summer of 2002. At that time, the article and their work received wide coverage.

The team’s basic finding was that 3-year-olds whose mothers had worked full-time in the first nine months of that child’s life, scored lower on a “school readi- ness test” than those children whose mothers had not worked full-time. While the quality of the home and child care environment mattered enormously, the results had broad implications on family leave policy provisions. “These results prompt- ed us to call for policies to improve the quality of child care, extend family leave provisions, and expand other family-friendly poli- cies to give parents more and better choices about how to balance their work and family responsibilities in the first year of their children’s lives,” said Waldfogel.

Waldfogel and Han say that they are “delighted” and “thrilled” to have their research honored. “We hope that our research will shed some light on our knowledge about what is best for the well-being of our children and families and what the government and society can do to enhance their welfare.”

The authors will receive this prestigious award, one of the high- est honors awarded for scholarly research in the field of social work, during a conference to be held Jan. 16-18, 2004. For more information, visit the CUSSW website at http://www. columbia.edu/sswr/index.html.