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Read/Listen/Watch

Eric Thomas
Colby College

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Eric Thomas, director of band activities

Later this summer my newest work will have its premiere. The commission is for a string octet, and I've decided to combine the sounds of the trains from my father's hometown of Miles City, Mont., with the sensibilities of the first movement of the Mendelssohn String Octet, the rhythmic content from West African music, harmonic motion from blues progressions, and melodic snippets drawn from Charlie Parker.

Most of what I'm listening to now is related to the way I process as I compose. The list includes

George Winston's album *Ballads and Blues 1972*, especially "Miles City Train"

The third movement of the Shostakovich String Quartet no. 14

Charlie Parker: "Bongo Bop" from *Bebop & Bird, Volume 1*, and "Love Don't Get You Nothing But the Blues"

"Okwanjula Kw'Endere" from Wendy Hymes's *African Art Music for Flute*

Herbie Hancock's album *Dis Is Da Drum*

Mustapha Tettey Addy's album *Master Drummer from Ghana*

Colby faculty members have rich lives that extend beyond the classroom. In this, the first installment of a regular feature, we asked musician and composer Eric Thomas what he's listening to—and why.

