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More Than A Choral Conductor: An Interview with Erica Washburn, Interim Head of Choral Activities

by Robert Cinnante

It's pretty cool when I think of all the changes I've witnessed at NEC in my short time here. The first thing that might pop into my mind is the new roof on Jordan Hall or the transformation of St. Botolph Hall into what is now Pierce. Thinking further back to my freshman year I recall the celebrated inauguration of President Tony Woodcock in my first semester or the highly anticipated appointment of Hugh Wolff as Director of Orchestras in my second. It might be fair to say that Erica Washburn's arrival last semester didn't garner as much attention as the aforementioned events. But in her short time here she has already proven herself to be a skillful, talented conductor, and an all around wonderful person to work under.

In what has become a seemingly necessary interview cliché, my final question asks Erica to share her secret to success. But I think her answer came earlier in the interview when I erroneously characterized her solely as a choral conductor. Instead she culmi-

nates her multiple musical identities into one that seems too obvious to have not realized in the first place: "First and foremost, I am a musician." Her thoughtful answers give you a sense of who Erica Washburn is, but words cannot articulate as well as music can the continuing successes she has helped to achieve in NEC's Choral Ensembles. Instead I would encourage you attend our next concert on March 8 in Jordan Hall. In the meantime though, please read on.



Robert Cinnante: Looking at your biography you've studied both vocal performance and choral conducting. As recently as 2008 you sang with the Eastman Opera Theatre, and prior to coming to NEC you served on the voice faculty at the Greatbatch School of Music of Houghton College (in addition to your position as the director of the Women's Choir and Camerata Singers). How does your experience as a solo singer/voice teacher influence your work as a choral conductor?

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Reaching out With DBR

by John Elliott

As budding professional musicians, many students here at NEC have probably done some amount of youth outreach work, deliberately or otherwise. For those of you who have done these performances, you've most likely realized that it's harder than it looks. Especially when performing for middle school aged audiences. In a world of

So who is Daniel Bernard Roumain? A composer? Check. An Emmy-nominated composer, he's written music for films, documentaries, theater, modern dance, electronica, orchestras and chamber ensembles across the globe. A performer? Check. The Bobby McFerrin of the violin, DBR is known for his engaging and entertaining performances which often use extended techniques to create sounds from a hip-hop drum set, to a heavy metal guitar to a Baroque ensemble; the key to his success as a violinist is perhaps that he approaches the instrument as a composer, always on the lookout for a new sound or form of expression. Collaborative artist? Check. His collaborations range from a recent performance on American Idol with Lady Gaga, to performing his Voodoo Violin Concerto with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra at the 2010 Winter Olympics, to giving duo concerts with artists such as Phillip Glass and DJ

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auto-tune and million-watt face-melting guitar solos it can be tricky to get middle schoolers as excited about that Mozart string quartet as you are. So what does it take to get an audience of 500 Facebook-addicted middle schoolers to enjoy a string quartet about the life of Martin Luther King Jr.? Daniel Bernard Roumain might have the answer.

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Role of the Performer

by Joan Arnau Pàmies

The whole world is facing economic and ecologic crises, compounded by social and energy upheaval, and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed, it has become obvious that we, the human race, have not been able to stop ourselves from ruining the planet even though we have a relatively advanced knowledge of technology and science. The Western world works the same way it did centuries ago: powerful nations or societies take advantage of poor ones. This dynamic tends to occur because of a conservative way of thinking. Conservative thinking does nothing but increase the differences between the rich and the poor. The more the rich have, the less the poor have. But the time has come when our species cannot afford this situation anymore. The continuous destruction of the planet is now a fact, and we all need to be fully conscious of this if we want to survive in the coming decades. There is no more time for fairy tales, superheroes, or gods who will save us all in the end; there is no more time for other fantastic creatures that we've created in our dream world. We must face the music. And the truth, however ungracious, is here now. If we hope to be saved, we are the only ones who can do it. Therefore, a conservative way of thinking, which is inherently related to dogmatic ideas, does not have a place in a world that needs now more than ever to be cured.

It might seem that as musicians, we do not have much power to change this catastrophic situation. If we think that our job should only be performing for the "bourgeois" audience that simply expects mere entertainment, we will not be able to do much. Based on this thinking, we become puppets performing services for the system, and the system is the entity that we must change if we desire humanity to exist for the next centuries. Instead of becoming puppets, we should truly understand the purpose of art and the reasons why it exists right now. It is my belief that the purpose of art is to contribute to human progress, and that I am not the only one who thinks so. But how can music contribute to progress? This is a tricky question because first we must define what progress is.

The idea of progress has been present in philosophy since ancient times. The Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius described progress as a sort of technical and intellectual evolution that helps us to adapt to the planet. In *City of God*, Saint Augustine described progress as the consolidation of the seventh stage of the history of the world - a stage that represented absolute peace and happiness. During the 18th century, William Godwin, who is considered by some to be the main precursor of anarchism, described progress as a social, intellectual, technical, and scientific entity that could prevent mankind from experiencing any sort of danger, even death. Herbert Spencer, who is now known as the father of social Darwinism, considered progress a biological necessity. Marx and Engels also tried to contribute to progress with their writings on class struggle. Even Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Max Stirner believed in some sort of progress although their beliefs were much more individualized. The idea of progress has been described in many different ways according to the ideology of the person who describes it. Nonetheless, the conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet points out a constant in the idea of progress, saying that most of the descriptions of progress are related to the improvement of the whole community. In fact, we would need a vast essay to understand the mechanisms of progress, and still that would be only one of the definitions of progress. In this article, I define progress as the social, economic, technological, scientific, cultural, and artistic advance in terms of equality, human rights, and freedom of speech in the whole community of people although as I have said before, this is not the only definition.

How then can music contribute to progress? Music, when viewed as an intellectual type of art, has an inherent capacity to raise questions.

Listening to Bach, Mozart, Wagner, Cage, or Babbitt raises questions about who we are or what we need. Because of its nature, music raises questions that may be helpful in understanding ourselves and our world better. The French philosopher and musicologist Jankélévitch alluded to this idea with his thoughts on music: "[music] means nothing unless it is for association or convention. (...) Man feels the necessity to attribute a metaphysical meaning to the musical speech because music, since it does not express any communicable meaning, is suitable for the most complex and dialectic interpretations". It is undeniable that we decide how we listen to music; moreover, we decide how we understand it and what we learn from it. This is how music can contribute to progress: we can use our thoughts inspired by certain pieces to find answers to today's distressing situation in the world.

So how can the classical performer contribute to progress? What are the reasons that performers still play music of composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, or Liszt? Is there still a way to provide new sonorities and new thoughts with pieces that have been performed many times? We should try to answer these questions. First of all, the main reason performers in general still prefer to play music written before 1945 is the fact that this music comprises the main repertoire. If a performer wants to become a great pianist and have a successful career, he or she has to be able to play some Bach, some Chopin, some Liszt, and some Rachmaninoff. Second, this is the kind of music that the "bourgeois" audience pays for and expects to hear when it goes to a concert hall. The majority of classical musicians view the performance of this music as a way to make a living. Finally, the average performer chooses to play this music because he or she "likes" it, which is not surprising since he or she has been practicing it since age five.

Certainly, the quality of several classical music pieces is undeniable. I do not question this. However, is it still possible to contribute to human progress through the performance of classical music? Perhaps it is, but it is definitely harder now than it was years ago, months ago, weeks ago or simply yesterday. After a century of recordings, if somebody mentions "Glenn Gould," we instantly think about Bach, especially the Goldberg Variations. If the name "Jacqueline du Pré" is said, we instantly think "Elgar." After a century of recordings, performing the main repertoire is not very effective anymore within a mass-media society that is used to listening to these pieces over and over. In other words, there is not much more that can be done with the performance of the major repertoire. For instance, can anybody introduce new ideas into performing Beethoven's piano sonatas after Brendel, Ashkenazy, or even Gould? To do so at this point would be difficult. Are there really any other worthy ways to perform Bach cello suites after the interpretations of Casals, Rostropovich, Maisky, Ma or Bylsma? Probably, but whether or not they are useful to society is uncertain. In a way, the greatest performers have been trying to innovate through old music, and some of them have succeeded in doing so.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the majority of classical performers worldwide are not going to be at the same level as Richter, Barenboim, Brendel, Bylsma, Perlman, or Pahud. These people have without a doubt contributed to human progress. Besides being hard workers, they are also naturally capable of performing a specific type of repertoire that allows them to innovate and to present a whole new idea of what a piece should be. The music they perform sounds new and different; it is basically "new information" which might raise new questions in society. In a way, it is this natural tendency that makes them "good" at classical repertoire, which is com-

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parable to the way some people are good at cooking or at running.

However, what happens to most of the classical performers who do not have this natural capability to play classical repertoire? Regrettably, as they may be considered mediocre or second-class performers lacking this capability, there seems to be no way for them to contribute to human progress by performing such a repertoire. However, they are lucky because the repertoire is not only Beethoven and company, but also Schoenberg, Webern, Ligeti, Ives, Carter, Babbitt, Boulez, Cage, Rzewski, Stockhausen, Cardew, Takemitsu, Ferneyhough, Nono, Maderna, Reich, Riley, and the list goes on and on. There is a vast repertoire that most performers are not aware of. It is easier for a performer to make his or her contribution to our declining society through the performance of new music for one basic reason: it has not been performed as much as other classical works; therefore, the performer can introduce more new ideas to the music itself. I believe that the role of the performer who plays new music tends to be more helpful in our society than the role of the performer who does not play any music written after 1945.

The future of the useful performer can be found between the covers of the newest scores. The other type of performer only polishes works of art in a museum, which are potentially interesting, but no longer necessary. In contrast, through new music we can make new reflections, ask ourselves new questions, and therefore, try to find new answers.

Music provokes thoughts that we never had before. We can solve issues, even the biggest ones, through new music.

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Hopskotch

by Mary Kate vom Lehm

*When I was six
I sketched on cracked asphalt
A lopsided blue rectangle
And I cut it
In lopsided blue squares,
Trying to break down the imperfection.*

*I put my buckled shoe
Through each box,
Walked across disfigured
Quadrilateral country,
And hop-skipped
Over the border where
Blue men in blue berets
Control-patrolled blue line defection.*

*From state to state
Hop-skipped
My illegal left foot, and I
Without a visa,
Not citizen of broken blue nation,
This frantically homeless foreigner
Unhad by rectangular realm deception.*

Moments

Photo by Jesse Weiner



CD Review: The Pains of Being Pure at Heart - The Pains of Being Pure at Heart

by Neal Markowski

The Pains of Being Pure at Heart are 4 folks (3 guys and a lady) from the Brooklyn area who play and write songs with a terrible name. Other than that, I can find no reason that they should be listened to on a regular basis....Well, let me back up.

As lots of people know, in the early 1990's with that "shoegaze" movement, there was an influx of really great bands. Two that come to mind right away are Ride and My Bloody Valentine. While My Bloody Valentine became known for the landmark "Loveless", their earlier singles (anything pre-1988 or so) were pretty much nothing more than jangly guitar pop songs. But the songs were good and while it wasn't a "new" sound, they were doing it well and it paved the way for them to make such fantastic albums as "Isn't Anything" and the aforementioned "Loveless". However, I have a strong feeling that the Pains of Being Pure at Heart will never create an album that has any amount of impact greater than getting a "Best New Music" from Pitchfork.

The songs here all sound just way too similar. Never before have 34 minutes felt so repetitive. And this isn't good repetition that you can find on any album by the Fall, Faust, or Can. Instead, it sounds like they wrote a few songs and just rearranged them adding some new lyrics or a sparkly new keyboard line. Most pop music can be sweet, maybe even sweet enough to get a cavity from. This makes me sick to my stomach. Everything sounds like their main goal was to be playing 25 minute sets at outdoor music festivals where all they have to do is get up and rock out, say "Thank you (*insert generic city name*)!!!" and walk off the stage as a group of 20-somethings with messenger bags and rolled up jeans proceed to discuss the upcoming Pavement reunion and grab a bite to eat at the local vegan friendly diner after.

It's a shame too, because the Pains of Being Pure at Heart have the potential to be a good band. The cool sounding production (loud drums, slightly buried vocals, and emphasis on the guitars, all of which were definitely lifted from Ride's "Nowhere", or at least the early Creation Records LPs) is a nice touch and the melodies aren't bad either. But, it all comes off as being way too derivative of, well, pretty much every album that came out like this almost 20 years ago.

Even the album artwork, which has been used on maybe 3 or 4 of their releases with color variations looks like it could've been used for either those early My Bloody Valentine singles (look up "You Made Me Realise" for reference) or any of the countless Belle & Sebastian

LPs since their first one. The Belle & Sebastian nods are also given in the song titles, which include titles such as "Young Adult Fiction", "A Teenager in Love" and "Gentle Sons".

However, some songs are just terrible. These include "The Tenure Itch" and "Everything With You", which also tend to sound less like their shoegaze influences and more like boring and uninspired 4 chord 3 minute romps through the land of 2 note keyboard lines and vocals.



The late Jay Reatard was talking about bands from Brooklyn and he made some comment about the Pains of Being Pure at Heart, saying "...oh it must hurt being so bland". I have to say he's right. Longtime friend and colleague Garret Kriston and I were discussing this and we both wondered why should anyone listen to this if you can just listen to the real thing?

Maybe it's also due to the album format. I'd be tempted to buy a single by these folks because sometimes you do need something to put on for 3 minutes that is just some pleasant sounding music that doesn't require an IQ larger than your shoe size to understand. But the ideas and execution suffer from trying to create an

album full of songs that all sound like they were made to open and close their live show. One or two songs in, I was doing some toe tapping. 4 songs in, I couldn't wait for the album to stop. I might be raving about them if I was only reviewing a single, saying words like "fresh" and "exciting", but even Guided by Voices and Rocket from the Crypt knew that you had to go outside of that realm every now and then. The Pains of Being Pure at Heart are probably fine for your summer nights, but just to listen to? I wouldn't be so sure...

OVERALL RATING - Bland, generic and mediocre - just like McDonald's, or at least the new Vampire Weekend LP which shouldn't be listened to by anybody.

KEY TRACKS - "Stay Alive", "Gentle Sons", "Come Saturday"

Be sure to check out <http://recordreviewandtacosalon.blogspot.com> for a whole mess of reviews, including a tribute to Jay Reatard hopefully by the time this is pressed.

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It's February. A lovely, short, symmetrical month. The holiday weekend commemorating the American presidents breaks the winter monotony as daylight continues to expand reminding us that spring is coming. Punxsutawney Phil lets us know how much more winter we can expect with a squint of his little rodent eyes as he looks for his shadow.

Although February has many of its own virtues, we are all too aware of the domineering holiday which insists on upstaging all of the other lovely

27 days: St. Valentine's Day. The local pharmacy decks its shelves in preparation with chocolates & hearts enticing us to literally BUY into the celebration, even if only to eat more Hershey's kisses and chalky heart candy. But for a holiday devoted to celebrating love, it seems to have intentionally excluded the un-matched, leaving many otherwise fabulous singles feeling quite forlorn. It is as if not having a romantic partner for whom we could buy a sappy card expressing our ardent devotion means that we are less than complete. We are led to feel that our uncommitted state is a problem or even more than a problem, a pitiable condition. Well, although I am now happily committed to the joys of couple-dom, being empathetic to a fault, I still feel the discomfort that this holiday causes so many of us.



by Colleen Palmer

Penguin Mastery

by Elizabeth Erenberg

These photographs represent American pop culture's version of success - the highest of the high and the lowest of the low. They make for great entertainment, but when the cameras are off, why are the agony of defeat and the height of success always so far apart?



In fact, I don't know if my delicate self can handle too much more drama, so let's try to split the difference. How often does one strive for success, but instead of radiating arrogance or utter despair, get something a little more healthy, and perhaps in between these two extremes?

I thought about these things walking down Huntington Avenue at night, alone, in the blizzard. I wasn't out for the scenery, but because I had reached all of the "American" emotions over the last four hours in the endless practice of difficult passages. I was left feeling like I was on a treadmill running for my life, working up a sweat, but definitely getting nothing out of it except for a large buildup of frustration.



What's my point? Well, let's go to basketball for a moment. Kareem Abdul Jabbar (seen on the left) was known for his "skyhook" shots during his twenty-year career with the NBA. Notice his face. The drama is still there, of course, but more in the situation than in his emotion. In his face you can see control, steadfastness, and swift execution.

Whether in sports, theatre, cheer leading, basket weaving, music or beauty pageants, the qualities required to become an absolute master at something are more often than not

superhuman. In order to achieve mastery, you have to sacrifice many elements of "normalcy."

When I was grappling with these issues, I was recommended to read George Leonard's *Mastery, The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment*. Not normally drawn to the overly philosophical self-help section of the bookstore, I was suspicious at first. But I

Love continued Well, let's not dwell in the negative, it's such an uncomfortable dwelling. I am a woman of action, so this year I offer this simple solution: let's make Valentine's Day about the one most important human relationship we will ever have in our entire life, our relationship with our self. When was the last time you did something nice for yourself? Have you given yourself a compliment, a pat on the back, a pep talk?

Love is in the air this February for ALL of us to breathe in. Our love-dependent cells require it, so please, partake in it. Make this month a month devoted to loving and appreciating yourself. It's not something we are all taught to do, but just like practicing our instruments to improve our musicianship, we can also

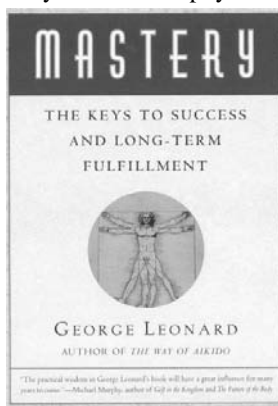
gave it a chance, and from the time I opened it to the time I closed it (which took about a day), I was a changed person.

As a master of the martial art "akido," as well as a pilot, George Leonard has explored and studied the process of achieving mastery to a point where he has risen to the top of not only his chosen fields, but also in describing how to actually do it. The things that apply to George Leonard and his journey to mastery are the same things that apply to me and mine, and you and yours. Every musician at NEC who has ever thought about or dare I say *struggled* with the journey to becoming a "master" needs to read this book.

In this light, easy read, definitions of "mastery" are sprinkled throughout Leonard's discussions of every human tendency, good and bad, which become obstacles on the life-long path toward it.

At one point Leonard says, "the essence of boredom is to be found in the obsessive search for novelty. Satisfaction lies in mindful repetition, the discovery of endless richness in subtle variations on familiar themes." Folks, if this is not a statement that applies to musicians, I don't know what is!

Only when reading this was I fully aware of how much success is mental way more than physical. But not everything is so black and white.



When Leonard discusses the human tendency to resist change, he brings up many real obstacles that come up on the path, like boredom, the teacher, society in general, and well, failure. By speaking honestly, Leonard makes the reader feel like they are being spoken to *directly* about these things, not lectured to, but *guided* to understand his philosophy that comes with years of wisdom, experience, and humility.

The definition of mastery becomes more detailed as the book progresses and Leonard applies the definition to many aspects of human life. To summarize his many approaches to explaining this complicated concept of mastery, the thing that you do on the path should mean more than the ego and success that comes from it.

This book aims to make you feel *grounded*, but while reading it, you are, without even realizing it, rising to a higher level in your mental approach to becoming successful at what you do. It surely helped me, one who has been known to be a tough nut to crack.

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practice loving ourselves to improve our quality of being. There are a multitude of things that are absolutely delightful about you. Get to know them, enjoy them, share them. You are fabulous, and it's likely that you don't even know how fabulous you are yet. So take the plunge and commit to loving yourself this Valentine's Day.

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Opinion: Minority Entitlement

by Brandon Delgado

In the spirit of transparency and oversight I would like to begin this first column making a confession to all of you. I...am...a MINORITY. (Of course you probably figured that out when you saw my last name). That's right, I am a member of the minority majority here in America. I am a Latin, American.

Now although I am proud of my heritage, I assure you that my admission was not made out of utter devotion to my background, but instead to cleverly transition into a more profound underlying point. You see, I have come to realize that as a conservative minority that supports the Republican Party, I am considered a sellout. Why would a member of the underprivileged class possibly support a party founded by an old white man, currently run by old white men whom every four years nominate an old white man?

To those that seriously pose this question I give this serious answer..."You sir, are ignorant". You see, I grew up, as many of my fellow minorities did, in a low income neighborhood. The school was nothing short of a prison, the neighborhood was not safe to walk through at night (nor by day for that matter), and each election season the voting booths were overtaken by the masses, hoping their liberal democratic vote would lead to a better future for them all. After all, their candidates stand for welfare, minimum wage, and other entitlement programs.

During the recent presidential election, while visiting family in my old neighborhood, I walked through the streets of this Brooklyn "ghetto" to see many familiar faces; only this time sporting Obama t-shirts and pins. Overcome by the charisma and celebrity of their minority candidate they prepared to vote forgetting that their votes so many times before, never worked. He preached the message of entitlement and therefore he could win their hearts.

The belief that we deserve what we get is one that continuously hinders the progress of minorities in this country. We deserve nothing yet we ask for so much. I am a conservative because I believe that nothing is earned without fighting for it. Today, our nation is restructuring its system around this entitlement doctrine. The quality of our healthcare system and the already damaged finances are being sacrificed for the sake of entitlement. I guess we also deserve higher taxes and more debt in this nation.

Liberals have bamboozled us. Go to the inner city schools populated by the minority, plagued by violence, and then go shake the hand and congratulate those that are running them. Visit the housing project infested with gangs and drugs, and then go to the local representative and commend his progress. After all, you most likely support their party.



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Spooky. A musical entrepreneur? Check. He's been recognized as one of the Top 100 New Yorkers (New York Resident) and as a Top 40 Under 40 business people (Crain's New York Business). An educator? Check. His passion for sharing creativity and music takes him to schools all over the country. What makes him so effective is that he brings the artistic mindset to his work with young people.

On January 15, NEC students got the chance to work with this rising musical star. Vicky Lee (violin), Tony Parce (viola), Ginevra Ventre (cello) and Marty Wirt (drums) performed with DBR at Dover-Sherborn Middle School in a show that was one of the most innovative outreach performances I've ever heard of.



The Martin Luther King Jr. concert and presentation featured DBR's "King" quartet performed by DBR and the NEC based string ensemble dubbed "The NEC Band." What was particularly interesting was that

DBR also performed alongside DSMS's very own "Sharp 9 Jazz Band." Furthermore, the two groups performed one of his original works together. He even got the audience of students involved by having them clap and move to the music. To top it off, the event included a slide show featuring student artwork. Dover-Sherborn Middle School students were part of a totally unique and art-filled afternoon.

Although the focus of the event was to provide a meaningful and educational experience for the students, NEC students also took something away from the performance. DBR's intensity and passion had an immediate impact on the NEC quartet. Tony Parce reflects: "It was very clear right from the very beginning that...this absolutely had to be a high quality performance. This guy knew what he wanted and that it was time to make some real music." The spontaneous energy and excitement DBR had in rehearsals was brought to the performance. NEC recent graduate and two-year Community Performances and Partnership Program participant Ginevra Ventre says; "It was so great to have an amazingly inspired artist heading up the program. The energy of the audience played a big part of the program which resulted in us not always knowing what was going to happen next. This kept everyone really engaged." Vicky Lee adds "I didn't think I would be so musically involved in the performance. There was so much passion in the music and I was inspired to let myself move to the music and rise to the occasion." Senior Marty Wirt said "We all worked together to create something meaningful and beautiful. And I had a good time!"

If you're interested in learning more about DBR, his outreach, his music, or just about anything else, his internet home is DBRmusic.com. He can also be found on sites such as youtube, and the rest of the usual suspects for an artist of his caliber. However, the best way to get to know more about DBR will be to see him in action here in Boston as part of the NEC student-run Musical Diplomacy concert on May 14th at 8pm in the Fenway Center. Headed by directors Brian Kaufman and Michael Reichman, the concert and discussion will explore race and culture in the age of Obama. The program will feature DBR conducting an orchestra of NEC students in a performance of his *Symphony for the Dance Floor*. It's sure to be an awesome evening! If you're interested in Daniel Bernard Roumain, Musical Diplomacy, or anything you feel is worthy of being put into an email, feel free to contact me.



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Erica Washburn: *One of my greatest teachers once told me, "Singers earn their neurosis!" Having the experiential know-how of being a singer (the "how" and "what" we think) and voice teacher (being able to explain the "why" of what singers think) is invaluable when working with approximately 95 of them at once. While the choral rehearsal is not the platform to teach the intricacies of vocal pedagogy, it is the place to remind voice majors of the techniques they are learning in the studio, and to introduce pianists and composers to the basics of healthy, beautiful singing.*

RC: So what made you choose choral conducting as your primary vocation?

EW: *I wouldn't say conducting is my "primary" vocation. Conductor/Singer/Teacher, Singer/Teacher/Conductor, Teacher/Conductor/Singer – the labels are interchangeable for me, as my passion for all three run equally deep. First and foremost, I am a musician.*

RC: With several music degrees under your belt, what is the most important advice you could give to students in the process of completing their studies?

EW: *Finish whichever degree you might start! It may be physically, emotionally and/or financially difficult at times, but if being a musician is the only thing in the world you can imagine yourself to be, then you must persevere. You can never know enough, and you should never become complacent with your talents. Always desire to test your abilities and push your musical and intellectual boundaries.*

RC: The NEC Concert Choir is comprised of nearly 100 voices, both vocal performance majors, as well as pianists and composers. Does this present any challenges and how do you handle them?

EW: *Having such a variety of musicians working together in a choir is mutually beneficial for everyone. Each student brings some type of strength and a weakness to the ensemble. It is my job to discover what those attributes are in each singer and distribute them in a constructive way throughout the choir. For instance, I try to pair a musician with a lovely voice but not the strongest reading skills next to a musician who has first-rate reading skills but is not overly confident in their singing abilities. Peer-to-peer positive reinforcement is one of the key elements in my pedagogical philosophy.*

RC: When you're not busy teaching/conducting, what do you enjoy doing in your free time? What is a typical day off like in the life of Erica Washburn?

EW: *Well, today it was spent answering your questions, Robert! I suppose that sort of a day would involve running errands, possibly catching up on a bit of reading, attempting to triage my inbox, probably some score study...*

RC: What is your favorite piece to conduct and why?

EW: *Truthfully, I'm not sure I have a favorite. Great repertoire is great for a variety of reasons; harmonies, voice-leading, text, etc. I choose works that speak to me in some way, that I believe my singers can relate to, and if I'm lucky, they might someday label as their favorite.*

RC: Is there a piece you really would like to conduct that you haven't had the chance to yet?

EW: *Brahms' Op. 30 Geistliches Lied. It is a 5 minute stand-alone work for SATB chorus and organ. It is perhaps the most musically profound piece I have ever encountered to date.*

RC: I'm sure I speak for many when I say that in my time here the NEC Concert Choir has never sounded better and morale amongst choir members is much better than in years prior. What's your secret?

EW: *I am an educator. It's very difficult for me to stand in front of a room full of students and not be excited about what we are about to experience as a choir! Creating beautiful music in an ensemble setting is a two-way street; it is the conductor's job to provide the tools the performers need to be successful and to empower them during that process. It is the performers job to take musical responsibility and utilize the tools they've been given. The Concert Choir and Chamber Singers choristers have begun to reap the benefits of owning these new responsibilities.*

Robert Cinnante is a junior voice performance major.

Send comments and questions about this article to Robert.Cinnante@necmusic.edu.



Happy Hour Specials

Available 2:00pm - 4:30pm

Monday	Any size Coffee	\$ 1.25
Tuesday	Steak & Cheese -or- Chicken & Cheese	\$ 4.00
Wednesday	All Deli Sandwiches	\$ 4.00
Thursday	4pc Chicken Tenders	\$ 4.00
Friday	Grilled Cheese	\$ 1.25

@ theSAC: February

Weekly Thursday Nights Free Yoga @ 6:30pm, SBG14
Weekly Morning Coffee Mondays @ 8:30am, theSAC

Weekly Wednesdays Alexander Tchnq@ 7PM, G13

2/19-21 WorldFest Weekend

Friday WorldDanceFest @ 8PM, Brown Hall
Saturday WorldFilmFest @ All Day, Bistro33
Sunday WorldFoodFest @ 5PM, Bistro33

Join us for the fun!

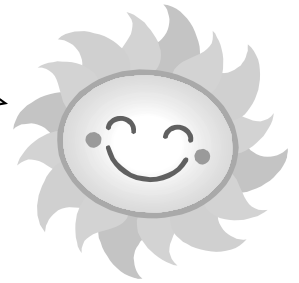
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To APPLY you MUST ATTEND One INFO Session

INFO Sessions:

MON Feb 8th @ 1:00pm Student Lounge
WED Feb 10th @ 7:30pm 8th fl Lounge in 33G

Questions? Contact the Residence Hall Office
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Meetings are every Wednesday at 6pm in NEC's Bistro 33.

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