

The Penguin

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2011

Dear graduating students,

In a recent blog entry, I quoted some invaluable advice that Larry Lesser gave me four years ago when I became President of NEC. That was: “Trust the Young.”

The more I get to know the students at NEC—and I have now followed the progress of one class through a full four-year undergraduate cycle—the more that phrase has become a kind of mantra for me. Having watched you and heard you perform, I know that your great talent and accomplishment are a given. Perhaps even more arresting, though, is how that talent is coupled with creativity, innovative thinking, versatility, technological savvy, humanitarian ideals, and a profound belief in the power of music to transform. What this adds up to for me is a firm belief that music will be in good hands as you go out into the world and make your careers.

I thought about this the other night when the alumni Jupiter and Parker Quartets returned to NEC to perform together in a *First Monday at Jordan Hall* concert. Their individual playing of Beethoven and Haydn quartets and their collaboration in the Mendelssohn *Octet*, were full of energy, brilliance, and revelation. But also remarkable is the way these two ensembles have been going about making their careers. And already, they are achieving extraordinary recognition—including a Grammy Award for the Parkers.

I am similarly reassured when I attend performances by A Far Cry, another (mostly) alumni group that is injecting excitement, innovation, and audience engagement into the all-too-often bland world of the chamber orchestra.

And I am further encouraged when I look at the fascinating projects that have been kick-started by our Entrepreneurial Grants program—Samantha Angstman’s Burlington Ensemble which brings chamber music to Burlington, Vermont and shares proceeds with worthy charities; or Colin Thurmond’s *AcousticaElectronica* event around which he has created the collaborative ToUch Performance Art company. His goal is “an immersive performance experience in which classical music, electronic music, live performance, dance, videography and visual arts blend to reject the passive obedience usually expected of audiences;” or Nell Shaw Cohen’s original music and video project, *The Faraway Nearby*, about artist Georgia O’Keeffe and her special relationship with the New Mexico landscape. And those are just three examples.

Even as we can be dismayed at the creative destruction going on in the traditional music performance world (just as it is taking place in the distribution vehicles and business models of recordings, books, film, and television), we can take heart that something valuable and gratifying, that infuses the art of music with new vitality, is being shaped for the future. I have every confidence that you graduating students are going to play an important role in this process. I’m putting my trust in the young.

Warm wishes for your future success,



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!!!!Ea\$y ca\$h no experience required Work from home!!!!

by Beth Blitzer

Hello grads.

For the first time since I began writing this column in the fall, I find myself on the same level as you, my loyal reader: I, too, am graduating in a few short weeks, and it has only now become apparent that we have a very daunting task ahead of us. I mean, bam, we're supposed to suddenly make a living off this stuff??? I thought agreeing to play for friends' recitals was enough... But don't dismay, dear reader, for I have scoured the internet to find a collection of inspirational quotes that I think can help us all in our mission to eke out a life after NEC:

"Why do today what you can put off 'til tomorrow?" - Don't worry! Go get some ice cream!

Speaking of which: "Ignorance is bliss." - Never, ever open envelopes from loan agencies.

"There's more where that came from." - Go back to school! That's the greatest way to avoid crushing adult reality, at least until you max out your federal loans. Even better, get a doctoral fellowship—if you don't mind ramen and plain rice, you can live off your stipend. And doctorates are like Pokémon: gotta catch 'em all!

"No pain, no gain." - Explore the market and seek out the most miserable entry-level jobs you can. Hate interacting with people? The field of customer service beckons! Have pale skin that burns easily? Playing summer parades can be a great opportunity!

"You are what you eat." - You heard 'em, eat your CD collection == BECOME JOHN COLTRANE*.

"The early bird gets the worm." - It's appropriate to show up 2-3 hours early for a job interview, and then spend those hours pecking around the waiting room nervously hunting for seeds. Employers will appreciate the seed removal services you offer.

"Actions speak louder than words." - Therefore, wear reflective jumpsuits at job interviews so your actions can be seen more clearly.

"Practice makes perfect." - As any music student knows, the key to getting a good job is practicing 6-8 hours a day. Your muscles don't need time to rebuild after extensive scale study, go go go go go go!

"Trick or treat." - Going door-to-door begging for food: it's not just for Halloween anymore!

"The road to success is uphill." - Whenever you're discouraged by life's challenges, hearten yourself by imagining that you are the Greek king Sisyphus.

*=Results may vary.



Beth Blitzer is GRADUATING!!!! See you cats in Jordan Hall! The Penguin strives to keep this column free of factual accuracy. If you notice any truthful statements, please send an e-mail to beth.blitzer@gmail.com.

FedEx Language—Reflections on Being an Editor

by Elizabeth Erenberg

It was almost midnight in December, and in downtown Boston it was 8 degrees. Not 28, and not 18...8. Inside Fedex in Copley Square, an employee held a cell phone to his ear that belonged to a customer named Zach Preucil. On the counter in front of him stood a box with 200 copies of a little publication called *The Penguin*.

"I know this is not your fault," my voice said through the phone. "But this is the THIRD TIME today that we have tried to pick them up. First, you delivered us 200 giant posters of the front page. This morning we were told they would finally be ready and correct, but only if we picked them up. So Neal came to get them, but lo and behold, they weren't ready. Then a few hours later, a woman named Nina told me they were definitely ready."

"Nina doesn't work here anymore," said the man. "Ah," I said. "Sounds like it's been a great day at Fedex. Well nonetheless, I arrived only to see that they hadn't even been printed yet. Now this time, I was told they would be ready by 8 o'clock without question. It is almost 12 o'clock now and our third editor stands before you. I understand this probably isn't personally your fault, but what DO we need to do to get that box of Penguins? Beg? Okay. PLEASE can we take that box of Penguins?"

"Now granted, I am a flute player, not an expert at the printing business, but there's something kind of wrong with this."

"But I am not supposed to give them to you without being paid first," said the man.

"Okay," I said. "But for the last two years our school has worked with you, the payment is always taken care of by the Student Activities Center. They're not open right now, believe it or not, mainly because it is almost midnight. Now granted, I am a flute player, not an expert at the printing business, but there's something kind of wrong with this. This system has been in place for years now. YEARS." Silence on the other end.

"Okay," I said calmly. "I get it. We are mere students...kids...and we caused you to waste 200 giant gloss sheets of paper because the order got messed up. It's been kind of a bad day. While it may not be YOUR fault, this is just not acceptable. I'd like to talk to your supervisor."

"I am the supervisor," he said.

Zach collapsed his head in his hands. The man handed the phone back to him.

A few minutes later, Zach walked out of the store holding a box tightly under his jacket into the cold night. When he texted me to let me know, I didn't know whether to be elated or completely shocked. Perhaps a combination. The next morning you read the December issue of *The Penguin*.

R.E.M.—Collapse Into Now and the Year End Review

by Neal Markowski

In my years of writing record reviews, I always try to pick something that people might not have heard of. I also realize that this can irritate the potential “Record Review Reader” at NEC, or even worse, my parents. So, due to some off-handed comment my dad made during spring break, ladies and gents, here’s a review of this newfangled R.E.M. album.

Following *New Adventures in Hi-Fi* and Bill Berry’s departure from the group, R.E.M. released a stream of albums that were all fairly lackluster, lacking energy and missing the elements that made R.E.M. sound so special in the first place. It wasn’t until 2008’s *Accelerate* that R.E.M. started to actually *rock* again. The problem was that other than *Monster*, R.E.M. didn’t really rock in that way. Any listen to the late 80s/early 90s output is full of cute little folk elements and somber moods. The impeccable I.R.S. years (that’s early to mid 80s for you folks keeping track at home) had just all-around great songs, and sure, you had stompers like “Begin the Begin”, “Finest Worksong” and heck, even “Pretty Persuasion.” BUT it never felt forced like *Accelerate* did. So what does R.E.M. do now? They’ve proven that they haven’t lost the energy, but they lost something else in return.

So here, once again, R.E.M. teamed up with Jackknife Lee to make this record, which was recorded in three separate three week sessions. The energy from *Accelerate* seems to have stuck, but within the album, the songs have more variety. Slowly but surely, the R.E.M. we know and love come creeping back out, but this time – with friends! Yes, friends! As you know from all the times you’ve listened to “E-Bow the Letter,” R.E.M. and Patti Smith are solid bros. If you’d seen their induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, you’d know Eddie Vedder is also a huge fan, and he’s on here too! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaand if you knew, well, I guess I don’t know how R.E.M. and Peaches are good friends, but she’s on here too! Granted, most of these are just backing vocal spots, but hey, like anyone is going to complain about Patti Smith?

As for the songs, they range from full-out rockers to some folkier stuff. There are a lot of tunes that might keep this from being an album that I’d drive to (in the Markowski house, we have a “No listening to R.E.M. on car trips after it gets dark out” rule.) But songs like “Uberlin,” “It Happened Today,” “Me, Marlon Brando, Marlon Brando and I,” and “Oh My Heart” are all wonderful tunes. Even the big dumb rock songs like “Mine Smell Like Honey” and “Alligator_Aviator_Autopilot_Antimatter” sound great. Like, the best big dumb rock songs they ever wrote! And “That Someone is You” is less than 2 minutes long and is an actual song! With like, notes and stuff. Then you get a song like the album closer “Blue,” dirge-y and dark, with Stipe reciting some text and Patti Smith singing some random stuff. I mean, I guess it works? Also, can I just say – Mike Mills rules, ok? He’s just doing his thing, playing the bass (like Frank Ojeda) and singing the harmonies, and it’s so great. Honestly, you need to recognize this. Am I being clear here? Yeah. Oh, I might as well mention Peter Buck – he plays guitar and mandolin like a rock and roll legend. I keep thinking the album sounds like *New Adventures in Hi-Fi* meets *Accelerate*, but that might not be wrong. You see, I’ve listened to this a lot,



but maybe not enough.

Honestly, I don’t like it better than *Reckoning* or *Fables of the Reconstruction*, but it’s still well worth your time. Just think – they could’ve done much worse. In fact, they have! Many times! But not this time. Nope, it works plenty good.

Rock over London, rock on Chicago – R.E.M., Athens, GA rock and roll legends.

OVERALL RATING – 2 whole Fausto Sierakowski’s!

KEY TRACKS – “Mine Smell Like Honey”, “It Happened Today”, “Me, Marlon Brando, Marlon Brando and I”, “All the Best”

During this year, I bought a lot of great albums – some old, some new, but all great. However, due to *The Penguin* only having some 10 issues or so, I had to be very selective about which albums I could review. There are a whole mess of releases that should’ve been reviewed, but just weren’t. Here is only a partial list of what was amazing this year, both new and old that you should check out:

- Dead C – *Patience*
- Sun City Girls – *Funeral Mariachi*
- Neil Young – *Le Noise*
- The Feelies – *Here Before*
- Kurt Vile – *Smoke Ring for My Halo*
- Lou Reed – *Metal Machine Music* (LP reissue)
- Henry Flynt and the Insurrections – *I Don’t Wanna*
- Arthur Russel – *World of Echo*
- Paul McCartney – *Band on the Run* (reissue)
- Wire – *Red Barked Tree*
- Breaking Circus – *The Ice Machine*
- Neu! – *Neu!, Neu! 2, Neu! 75*
- Disappears – *Live at Echo Canyon* (cassette)



Neal Markowski is a sophomore composition major. Send comments and questions about this article to Neal.Markowski@necmusic.edu. Visit his blog at <http://recordreviewandtacosalon.blogspot.com>.

Permission to Fail: The Psychology of Performance

by Zach Preucil

Although it has been nearly three years, I still remember the first time I stepped into Paul Burdick's office for my first solfège examination. It was September 24th, 2008, and I was but a naïve freshman trying to make sense of the 'Do, Re, Mi' jargon I had only heard of previously in *The Sound of Music*. Now, after only a few weeks of classroom instruction, I was expected to sightread basic examples with correct rhythm, intonation, and syllables for a grade. As my colleague Will Myers, who was also sitting out in the hall awaiting his examination, can verify, I was very nervous. *Why*, I thought desperately, *couldn't I just sightread with my cello? At least that was something I was comfortable with!*

But then the door of doom opened, the student who had just taken the exam hurried out of Paul's office in relief, and I stepped bravely inside, wondering what my fate would be. *'We need to get over the fact that we're not going to play perfectly, because we're not - it's simply unrealistic.'*

Fast forward three years. It is now April 15th, 2011, and I'm back in Paul's office, with four semesters of solfège and nearly three years of similar pressure situations behind me. Now, however, I wasn't there to take a test; rather, I was there to get the answers. What was it that caused me to become nervous on that September day? What is the root of the specter of stage fright that haunts all of us performers? And most importantly, what can we do to overcome it, for art's sake?

Having given solfège examinations "since Moses," Paul has had decades of experience witnessing the effects of nerves and helping people cope with them.

"You wouldn't get nervous," he explains, "if it didn't matter. And if you're getting nervous, it matters. There are a number of reasons for that, but the biggest straight-forward reason is that it is very hard to believe that musical mistakes aren't personal failings."

Music is inexplicably a very personal entity, so much so that even non-musicians are able to identify with it intimately. It is "a deep cultural tattoo, just as it is," Paul elaborates. "and if you're actually in the process of making tattoos, then you're taking on a whole lot of responsibility."

Therefore, when we make a mistake as musicians, subconsciously our brain reacts in the same way as if someone has told us we are a terrible person. We don't consciously think of it in those terms; but the same emotional responses are invoked, purely because of the deeply personal link we have to what we are producing. In fact, Paul regularly uses this psychological phenomenon to calm a student's nerves during a solfège test, playfully telling them, "Here's the test. If you fail, you're a terrible person." The person in turn rationalizes that of course they're *not* a terrible person, and suddenly the situation doesn't seem all that terrible any more.

When we get nervous, Paul tells me, it's because we're psychologically making the situation into "a life event rather than a passing moment. You're seeing this as a wedding rather than a trip to Rhode Island." What we must do to overcome this is to reframe the task at hand - putting it into perspective and reinterpreting its importance. In other words, we have to be able to be completely okay with accepting the consequences of failure.

It all comes down to the deep psychological difference between work and play, Paul explains. In a game, we can risk everything and nothing terrible will happen to us; but in the real world, the consequences are - well - *real*. Musical performance, therefore, is unique because it incorporates both aspects of work and play.

"When people use musical instruments, they say, 'I'm going to play,'" Paul illustrates. "But they are working. And that's

fine, because high-order play resembles high-order work."

The trick in a performance context, therefore, is to realize the importance of the situation but also to realize that it's not a life-or-death situation.

"You have to take it quite seriously so that you focus and prepare," Paul explains. "And you need to take the fact that you're taking it seriously not seriously at all."

We all know, however, that nobody reacts exactly the same way in a pressure situation. At any given audition, we can find people who are the picture of calmness, and yet others looking as though they're about to walk the plank. Paul lays out two

primary reasons for why this is so.

One is that people who have more anxiety are having a more difficult time reframing the task and achieving the psychological disconnect that will prevent the subconscious

"terrible person" response. A great way for a person to overcome this, Paul advises, is for them to record themselves - because when they listen to a recording, they are literally and psychologically separating themselves from the music which they are creating.

"It has to be about you," he says, "and not be about you."

The second core reason stems from the Zen saying that a person must always strive to be perfect; and they must always forgive themselves. And as it turns out, most of us are "are pretty good at one of those and pretty bad at the other," Paul explains.

We need to get over the fact that we're not going to play perfectly, because we're not - it's simply unrealistic. If you tell yourself that you absolutely cannot miss a note in your performance, then you are going to miss a note. In essence, you need to ultimately give yourself *permission* to fail.

But it's hard to give yourself permission to do something which is both an unpleasant experience and an unknown one - because while we stress out and get nervous because we're afraid of failure, we don't know how that failure would actually happen - and even worse, we don't know how we would cope with it if it did. Therefore, we cannot give ourselves permission to fail unless we practice failing. Paul compares this concept with people such as mountain climbers who, unlike musicians, will face tragic consequences if they fail. A mountain climber has to practice falling where it's safe - just as we need to also practice *failing* in a practice room.

"There are two steps to any deep mistake," Paul asserts. "The first step is to make peace with the fact that you're in the process of making a mistake, and gather yourself. And then, once you've gathered yourself, aim yourself at getting back on track."

Strangely enough, if we practice missing an important shift and then practice recovering and moving on, we won't be as nervous about missing that shift because we'll know exactly what to do. We spend so much time practicing to get things right; but we don't spend nearly enough time practicing to get things *wrong*. It is prudent that we must - for if we don't, we'll be just as helpless as the mountain climber who doesn't know how to fall. And that's not good.

Of course, the manners in which we cope with nervousness are not confined to how we are perceiving the situation, or how we've prepared for it. We all know the "myth" of the banana and its supposed nerve-reduction qualities, or of drugs such as beta-blockers that stop nervous adrenaline in its tracks. While these things may work for some people, it is important to

remember that we cannot become dependent on external means of coping because we can never guarantee that such devices will be at our disposal. However, there is one coping device that is both unrelated to our conscious and always available: oxygen. Breathing has a deep relationship with the biochemical reactions of the brain, and simple yogic exercises can have just the same effect as bananas or beta-blockers. Here's one that Paul showed me which would be great for you to try out while you're in the green room next week waiting to go onstage for your promotional: Inhale through your nose while counting slowly to four in your head. Hold your breath and count slowly to seven. Then, purse your lips and exhale to while counting slowly to seven again. Repeat this process three times. It may not be a permanent fix for nerves, but it will certainly get you a whole lot calmer. Focusing on breathing during performance is also crucial to keeping nerves in check. As my studio teacher, Yeeseun Kim, is fond of pointing out, we will never forget to inhale - but we will forget to exhale. And if you don't exhale and relax, then your nerves aren't going to get any better.

But all psychological or chemical coping mechanisms aside, putting a pressure situation into perspective is possibly the most unequivocal manner of approaching it. As our interview draws to a close, Paul recounts an experience in his youth where he witnessed a terrible and beautiful occurrence of this powerful psychological phenomenon. When Paul was in high school, his mother directed a community theater in small-town Kansas, where anybody in the town could come in and audition for a role in a play. One day, a man came in who didn't want to act, but just wanted to build sets. He was an obviously strong man, both physically and emotionally, and was in fact a Vietnam veteran. Paul's mother gratefully accepted his services, and for some time the man appeared to enjoy himself, constructing scenery and hanging out with the actors. After a while, it occurred to Paul's mother that this man would be perfect a role in the play, "Bus Stop," and she encouraged him to audition for it. The man tried out and got the part, even though he had no previous acting experience. And then, something happened that Paul will never forget.

"It's the night before the play," he recounts, "and I go backstage, and I see this guy and he's crying. And I asked him what was up and he said, 'I haven't been nervous since Vietnam. And that I am nervous now to make a mistake as an actor - I didn't know I could do that. I'm so glad I'm nervous now because I didn't think that anything could make me nervous again.' And I thought, 'Now that's a reason for art.'"

As we face the next two weeks, full of the stress of exams, departmentals, and promotionals, we need to keep that perspective. We need to remember that while we dread the sensation of nerves, we feel it because of the fact that we are so deeply connected to the beautiful and mysterious thing called art which we are producing. We must understand that the depths of human emotion are stimulated by the sounds of our instruments, that the spinning tones we bring to life transcend our abilities to think and feel. We must recognize our responsibility to bring art into this world, and how magnificent and wonderful that responsibility is.

As I step out of Paul's office, he offers what may be the best summarization of what we face when coping with that dreadful and yet wonderful sensation of nervousness.

"All art is personal and art is successful not because it's brave, but because it's personal. And the personal includes the mistakes. You get rid of the mistakes and you get rid of the personal. Art is not an attempt to find perfection, art is an attempt to find our humanity. And if you mistake perfection for humanity, you may chase your own away."



Zach Preucil is a junior cello performance major. Send comments and questions about this article to Zachary.Preucil@necmusic.edu.

"Fedex language" was a term then invented. It refers to whatever I said to get those Penguins out of there. Zach didn't hear any of what I said, but the mystery of my persuasiveness is what got the job done. The only problem is that my persuasiveness is still a mystery to me too.

A couple months later, we called Staples to check on the status of our order. Time was getting a little tight. It was almost the end of February, and if we couldn't get the paper out in the next few days, we would break the tradition of having one issue come out every month, something we are proud of upholding. Staples said that there would be a further delay...unfortunately they had run out of paper.

The next month, once they had ample paper, we discovered after the delivery was made that we had sent them the wrong file.

On March 27th, the box of newspapers was delivered, but they weren't the normal monthly format. They were for a special holiday coming up. And we made extra sure that they would be here on time, because if not the entire day would be ruined. Once they arrived, a scramble ensued between Zach, Neal and myself to hide this box somewhere before anyone saw what was in it. It was like a scene from Grey's Anatomy, obtaining a bodily organ in a cooler from the helicopter to go directly into the patient on the operating table, and or James Bond getting rid of the brief case before the bad guys got to it.

Times like these are my most fond memories of being an editor of this newspaper, but not for reasons you might suspect. It wasn't for the time it took away from other things in my life, the

nightmares about margins in Microsoft Publisher after spending late nights on weekends designing layout, finding out that the *track changes* tool does NOT actually *track* the changes from Word to Publisher, and of course the process of getting the physical newspaper. What was really valuable was feeling that all the editing, reediting, revising, designing, and putting our collective souls into this publication made a real positive contribution to this school. *The Penguin* makes NEC unique not just for its personality and substance, but because the fact that students are responsible for it almost in its entirety.

This experience also stretched me in various ways. I was able to obtain skills technologically, from barely being able to turn on my phone to now being able to design an entire 8-10 page publication from scratch. It also stretched me musically, for talking about the environment in which I play music helped me to appreciate it more as I made the music itself.

Some 75 pages of Penguin over the last 10 months have resulted in the following lessons: Take things in strides. Take breaks. Be honest. Most importantly, no matter what the temperature, time, or obstacle, never give up.



Elizabeth Erenberg is a second-year graduate flute performance major. Send comments and questions about this article to Elizabeth.Erenberg@necmusic.edu

In Their Own Words: Thoughts and Advice from Members of the Class of 2011

by Yijuan Geng

As we approach commencement, now is a good time to look back at this fruitful year. I have been fortunate to gain close friendships with some of the graduating students. Since I am approaching the middle of my journey in NEC, I decided to have a conversation with several of them. I'd like to share some of the thoughts and suggestions they have for younger students. The students I interviewed are Michael Dahlberg (Cello), Bethany Worrell (Voice), Ethan Tabibian (Piano), Zenan Yu (Piano) and Alexandra Frana (Clarinet).

When I asked these students to describe their studies at NEC, they based their responses on experiences that were challenging, inspiring and rewarding.

"There is so much more to being a musician than I ever realized through the study here at NEC," Alexandra said.

Michael added, "One thing I like most about NEC is the opportunities to perform, as well as going into diverse genres of music such as the combination of classical and jazz." He continued, smiling, "these opportunities also enabled me to gain a full perspective of what I can do and set a path to pursue what I'm interested in doing."

Along the lines of performing, Bethany explained that, "One of the things that made my experience most rewarding is collaborating with different musicians. By doing so," she continued, "it helps cultivate my artistic awareness and increase the appreciation of the beauty around us."

I then asked them about the process through which they understand music.

"Creating music is like inhalation and exhalation; both inhalation and exhalation affect the world," Bethany said. "Inhalation is awareness, and it views what is happening in the world, while exhalation reacts to the world and makes a mark on it. Something in between inhalation and exhalation keeps me motivated."

Zenan referred to different senses: "Music means a pure state of mind to me. It is about attitude, poetry, language, life, everything. It is the simplest emotion but profoundly fascinating."

While most of these graduating students want to continue expanding their musical horizons and shaping their musical personalities, Ethan Tabibian decided to take a different turn in his path. He plans to enter the medical field after graduation.

"It was quite an accident," he explained. "I was reading a book about physics, because I've always loved science. The first chapter mentioned connections between art and science and I found it extremely fascinating. Both music and science try to demonstrate things from alternate perspectives, it creates a complete picture on one's understanding of the world when we bring them together."

When asked whether his love of science caused him to regret pursuing music first.

"Suppose you could go back in time," I asked. "Would you make a different choice?"

"No," he replied, "because I feel like the decision to be involved with music is what has ultimately put me where I am now, and I like where I am."

At the end of the interview, I asked each of them to offer one sentence of advice to younger students. All agreed on the importance of keeping an innate perspective towards music-making.

"Humility paired with confidence."

- Bethany Worrell

"Always approach your work with an attitude of full commitment."

- Michael Dahlberg

"You cannot force music, it's the sound of nature."

- Ethan Tabibian

"Be truthful and follow the heart."

- Zenan Yu

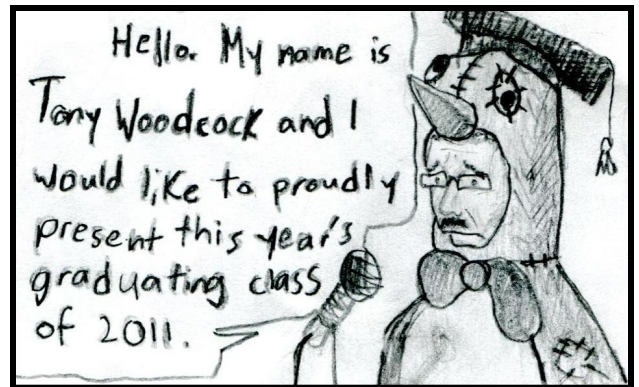
"School years are so valuable and irreplaceable; do not waste even one second of your time."

- Alexandra Frana

May we all learn from the inspirational words of these students, and wish them luck on their journeys to come.



Yijuan Geng is a sophomore piano performance major. Send questions or comments about this article to yijuan.geng@necmusic.edu.



Penguin Portrait by Joelle Wagner



Congrats to the NEC class of 2011! The official launch of the Entrepreneurial Musicianship Department has brought many rewards, the greatest of which has been working with and getting to know many of you. We've continually been inspired by your imagination, enthusiasm, and vision for the future. Your creativity and work ethic will allow you to pursue and design many innovative pathways in your career. The music industry stands at a pivotal moment in its history and is ready for NEC's "Special Forces Commando Unit" to take the reigns. We're excited to follow your development and hope to be a resource to you in the coming years. Stay in touch – our door is always open. Music world, watch out!

- Rachel Roberts and Eva Heinstejn, Entrepreneurial Musicianship Department

"You've learned and learned and learned and been talked at and coached and cajoled and criticised and encouraged and graded. Now stand in the tradition, as Schoenberg said of himself, and make it be what YOU feel it should be. Your musical (and non-musical) voice counts. Be brave enough to make the music and the world you want to live with."

- Lisa Saffer, Voice Faculty

FACULTY QUOTES

"During your time at NEC you've learned new ways of thinking, learning, and feelings. Push yourself to continue developing new ways of thinking, learning, and feeling' this growth will feed your own expression as well as your ability to empathize, providing pathways for reaching out to others and making the lives around you better."

- Jill Gatlin, Liberal Arts Faculty

Arcanopolis

a short story by Wesley Chu

Traveller, I was a poor man. I lived on the outskirts of an ancient city in a broken house, wearing ragged clothes and a torn cap. I had little food to eat, but what scraps I found from begging, scavenging, or by earning through various odds and ends I shared with friends. The city itself was warm for the body, but cold to the heart; the city-dwellers fancied themselves superior to anything that lay beyond their walls, and felt little sympathy for the unfortunate; by and by, my earnings dwindled almost to nothing. Eventually, even the other beggars began to shun the crumbs I offered, afraid that my severe poverty was the result of some unfortunate curse, and fled fearing that they may be affected also. By and large, the only company I kept was that of animals that strayed nearby, dallying in the strange border between dry city and untamed wilderness. All manner of peculiar and exotic creatures passed me, some so bizarre that the city-dwellers would surely have attempted to slaughter them had they been glimpsed; this never happened, for the city-dwellers lived too fully within themselves, and became increasingly withdrawn from the outside.

On the other hand, I began to learn slowly of the world beyond.

One day, as I began my usual rounds, I chanced upon an old mirror in the dusty sand, no doubt left behind by some mysterious visitor in the night. I thought myself extremely lucky, for the mirror was ornate, and looked as though it might fetch a decent price should any patron fancy it. I shined it, and took it home. To my great surprise, I heard a voice, and thought I may have been followed, but it was not so. There was a face in the mirror – not my own – a faint image that slowly grew clearer, and it spoke to me.

The phantom in the mirror told me of its history. It had been entrapped in the mirror, a justice for some ills it had done in the past. It said that it possessed great power, and indeed I could sense its potency radiating from beyond the glass, and yet for all its mystical strength, it could not escape its prison. It had only one task – to bestow its power upon another, whereupon the other could succeed in its missions where it failed, and then it would be free to reclaim its rightful journey to the afterlife. I feared it, then; I wanted neither its powers nor what mission it bade me to complete, and yet after hours of ceaseless solicitation I was swayed. The thought of strength was intoxicating and the offer of power irresistible. I agreed, and in an instant the spirit was gone, and the mirror empty. My mission lay before me. I was to effect some great change in the world – to teach and encourage – and I thought, after so many years of fruitless begging and witnessing apathy, I would begin with the city whose walls unwelcomed me even now.

My new powers were fantastic, far beyond anything I had ever seen or heard. With a word I commanded those around me; fire and water heeded my every order, and even daylight obeyed my whims. Yet the hearts of the citizenry remained cold, and could not be warmed with kindness, amazement, or the touch of fire. Before long I found my patience wearing thin, and much thinner with every thought of my miserable past and my maltreatment at the hands of those who were now my subjects. In a fury, I left my post, and consumed with rage I tore blindly at the walls of the city, which crumbled like dry bread under my fingers. I returned to my home with a wild and unhappy heart, and prepared to smash the mirror that brought me greater misery than I had suffered before I found it. To my great shock, the voice of the spirit spoke to me again; it had not left, but had remained to observe my works.

Then, I lamented loudly, crying at the futility of my powers, which were great, but held sway only over the body of worldly things, and not their hearts. In the midst of my rage I caught a glimpse of the world beyond my shack, and saw the creatures that once visited me creeping into the city, over the walls that in a fury I demolished, and had kept them from the rampages they now perpetuated.

The fault was mine, as the spirit told. And the error I wrought was the same as its own, and in a series of visions it showed me that I had become consumed with my own strength, and had forgotten the humility that I nurtured over the years as a poor man. I was drawn into the mirror then as it fled, its debt unfulfilled but passed on, and I became the shade you see now, in this very same mirror. This was the tale of a man who could not wield the power I offer you now, but I offer something else – a cautionary story, to which I beg you consider. The glass in which I reside now is a relief from the burning sun under which I toiled in life, and subsistence here is not unpleasant to me; you need not free me as I did my predecessor. Still, behold the ruins, these in which you found me, where once a proud and mighty city stood before monsters overwhelmed it. Before I did. Should you feel worthy, traveller, seek me again. You may yet succeed where I did not.



Wesley Chu is a sophomore piano performance major. Send comments and questions about this article to Wesley.Chu@necmusic.edu.

Red Petals

A poem by Julia Partyka

they say thicker than water
flows the red potion mixed with blue spirits
temperature beyond the thoughts of passionate discovery
anger, risen
vitality with every breathe
reaching branches for oxygen's giving but polluted soul
spilled across the plains of hearts
once sorrow, yonder euphoria
king and queens acquire this taste beyond all else
it is their source, their knowledge, a victor of victory
what a piece of work is man
peace, gift free to all
somehow returned much quicker than received.
what a piece of work is man
peace, blossoming topic with a broken umbrella
I picked these for you:
White roses with red painted petals,
a scent of the earth's tears.
Careful, the last one has yet to dry.



Julia Partyka is a sophomore vocal performance major. Send comments and questions about this poem to Julia.Partyka@necmusic.edu.



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