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**NEC**  
**notes**

Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 2011

**“Opera is  
not natural.  
It has to be  
bigger than  
life.”**

—Stephen Lord,  
*NEC Artistic Director  
of Opera Studies*



**PLUS**  
Leslie Wu Foley  
Abreu Fellows update  
NEC in Afghanistan  
Young pianists on tour

# NEC's NEW Opera TEAM

Having worked with emerging singers from the very start of his career, **Stephen Lord**, NEC's new Artistic Director of Opera Studies, is turning his attention for the first time to young singers on the conservatory level. A conductor with a busy schedule that takes him from San Francisco to St. Louis, Houston, Chicago, and across the pond to London, Lord assumed his NEC position in September. Beginning with the 2011/2012 academic year, he will conduct one mainstage production a year as well as overseeing the Opera Studies program. (As a sneak preview, he brought Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* to Jordan Hall for a single performance this winter.) Lord is implementing his vision in concert with mezzo-soprano **Luretta Bybee**, newly appointed Executive Director and Chair of Opera. Notes recently spoke with NEC's new opera team.

"The advantage of working on the conservatory level is that hopefully you can get young singers and work with them before too many bad habits get reinforced," said Lord, who is famously plain-spoken. "Young singers are more malleable, less Svengalized. There's a big tendency in our profession—especially in America—to just copy or



"My job is to open their minds so they can make informed choices. That's what an artist is."

—Stephen Lord

voice-opera

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"The road to mediocrity is paved with safe little sounds."

—Luretta Bybee



follow someone blindly. My job is to open their minds so they can make informed choices. That's what an artist is." Bybee agrees: "Openness and a willingness to try new things, to take risks is crucial to a young singer. I often tell my students the road to mediocrity is paved with safe little sounds."

Lord and Bybee both bring with them a wealth of experience in professional opera performance that they are eager to pass on to the next generation of singers. Lord began his career coaching and accompanying young singers of his own generation like Catherine Malfitano, Neil Shicoff, Rockwell Blake, and Sherri Greenawald. As he became more recognized by the field, he worked with stars like Renata Scotto and Mirella Freni. When he coached Jon Vickers in the tenor's last *Otello* (and Lord's own first *Otello*), Vickers used to tell him: "The old man told me we have to do it this way"—the old man being Tullio Serafin, who had in turn learned *Otello* from Toscanini." In a sense, then, Lord brings NEC's students the legacy of Toscanini.

Bybee, who calls herself an "acting singer," has pursued a career guided by her intense interest in the "acting" or "theatrical element" of performance. She is particularly known for her *Carmen*, which she has sung at New York City Opera and Seattle Opera. Based on her experience in both traditional and new repertory, she urges her students to understand that "their whole body is their instrument. When they grasp that, doors open to vocal colors and dramatic choices." That's essential, she says, in an era when "expectations of singers are very high." In part due to the influence of Hollywood, opera singers "are expected to bring to the table the ability to tell a story."

Lord's goal for NEC's opera program is to choose singers who have "a spark of uniqueness and individuality" and to groom them. That means not only the best possible vocal training, but also development of the singer's "musicality, intellect, and culture." "To be a successful artist, a young singer needs to read, to have an appreciation for languages, poetry, and art." What's more, "having a love not for the sound of their voice but a love for the sound of the word that has been carefully chosen goes a long way to making a very interesting singer."

Bybee speaks of the need for students to see their art as "service." Young singers "should have a yearning to learn, a need to become better as an artist and person. They must learn to live worthy lives ... to take their gifts and their knowledge and serve the music."

## Rotisserie League Opera Season

Hop in your Lear jet and follow your favorite NEC artists around the world, with a Boston liftoff.

### Boston Lyric Opera

Handel *Agrippina*

March 11–22, 2011

**Gary Thor Wedow** '75 M.M.

Conductor

**David M. Cushing** '02

Lesbo

### New York City Opera

Schoenberg *Erwartung*

March 25–April 8, 2011

**Kara Shay Thomson** '97 G.D.

She (monodrama)

### Chicago Opera Theater

Machover *Death and the Powers*

April 2–10, 2011

**James Maddalena** '76

Simon Powers

### Opera Boston

Donizetti *Maria Padilla*

May 6–10, 2011

**Barbara Quintiliani** '99

Maria Padilla

### Oper Frankfurt

Purcell *Dido and Aeneas*

July 2011

**Paula Murrihy** '03 M.M., '04 G.D.

Dido

### Santa Fe Opera

Puccini *La Bohème*

July–August 2011

**Keith Phares** '00 M.M.

Schaunard

### Opera Southwest

new contracts announced

**David Bartholomew** '67 M.M.

Director of Artistic Operations

and Principal Stage Director

**Anthony Barrese** '99 M.M.

Artistic Director and

Principal Conductor

### University of Chicago Press

2011 publication announced

Verdi *Attila*

critical edition edited by

**Helen Greenwald**

of the Music History faculty

RICHARD STRAUSS  
**ARIADNE AUF NAXOS, ACT I**

WITH

HENRY PURCELL

**DIDO AND AENEAS**

Kelly Kuo, conductor

Joshua Major, stage director

April 29, 30 and May 1

Cutler Majestic Theatre

necmusic.edu/opera

# What You Don't Know about Leslie Wu Foley



**NEC** President Tony Woodcock is fond of saying, “You only get one chance to make a first impression.” First impressions on meeting **Leslie Wu Foley**, NEC’s new Dean and Executive Director of Preparatory and Continuing Education, include her open, bright spirit and her complete lack of preconceptions. Upon further acquaintance, these impressions persist, and point to what it will take to bring NEC’s two “other” schools to the next level.

Following an uninterrupted line of school directors with deep ties to the NEC family, Foley appears to be an unknown quantity. Looks can be deceiving. Foley’s own lineage in the world of the arts exhibits both breadth and depth.

A cellist—who just happens to have studied at the NEC Preparatory School—Foley was an art history major at Princeton, where she was also principal cellist in the university orchestra. Apparently born with two left brains—one for the visual arts, one for music—Foley has had a bifurcated career as an arts administrator, having most recently served at Dana Hall’s School of Music in Wellesley and at the Massachusetts

College of Art and Design, a few blocks down Huntington Avenue from NEC. You might also know her from the BSO, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, or the Iraqi Children’s Project.

At MassArt, Foley introduced the “neighborhood immersion” concept that produced today’s “Neighborhood Art Zone,” which has been a magnet for a Kresge grant. While at the BSO, she spearheaded the creation of free Community Chamber Concerts, which continue to this day. This sensibility persists in Foley’s approach to her work at NEC, where she feels she has inherited a valuable community music school. Her task: to make that value better known to the community, and to learn more about the community’s own values in order to evolve programs that align the needs of students with the needs of the music field.

President Woodcock has held to his first impressions of Foley, calling her “our visionary for the future” as he expresses his “delight” at her presence as a new member of his leadership team.

Foley’s first impressions of NEC? “The one sure thing at NEC is that I can never predict what exciting developments each day will bring me. And while I promise to continue developing a dependable pathway of learning that meets the individual goals of our students and families, I also hope that their connection with music will be a continuous source of inspiration in their lives during and beyond their engagement with NEC’s Preparatory and Continuing Education.”

**What Else You Don't Know** Foley acknowledges that the value of Prep’s more senior ensembles is well known. “The touring orchestras, our most advanced students—those are what is expected of our conservatory-level training.” But here’s what else Foley wants you to know about NEC’s Prep and Continuing Ed:

- We not only nurture future professional and amateur musicians, but also arts advocates, appreciative and knowledgeable audiences, creative and critical thinkers, effective collaborators, engaged citizens, and community leaders.
- Our community programs are breaking ground in such previously untapped venues as the Chinatown YMCA.
- We guide very young children through their first musical steps with Eurhythmics.
- We offer teens specialized ensembles with expert coaching: the NEC Youth Jazz Orchestra, trombone choir, percussion ensemble.
- Our students’ dynamic exposure to the living world of music includes intensive residencies with major composers—and encouragement for young compositional talent.
- We step up to the needs of adult learners who are not an exact match for traditional full-time college enrollment, through certificate programs and distance learning.

# Abreu Fellows class of 2010:

As El Sistema continues to intrigue the classical music world, President **Tony Woodcock** blogs about NEC's support of the Venezuelan program's ideals through the Abreu Fellows Program at New England Conservatory. Here is an excerpt.

**"We needed a new type of citizen, teacher, and artist to become inspired leaders."**

—Tony Woodcock

In 2008 I made my first visit to Venezuela to see El Sistema firsthand. Nothing quite prepared me for the impact of experiencing the power of music and music making that this

trip produced. Our group was composed of about 20 people—Board members, community partners, music educators, and (hopefully) future funders. We spent an intensive five days visiting *nucleos* (the after-school centres that are the foundation of Venezuela's programme), and also had the opportunity to meet with Dr. José Antonio Abreu, founder of El Sistema 35 years ago. We were privileged to hear his vision and to seek his advice on how such a programme could emerge in the United States.

Everything that we saw, everything that we heard, was transformational, passionate, emotional, committed. The inspiration of this visit brought our group back together. We realized that for *nucleos* to succeed we needed a new type of citizen, teacher, and artist to become their inspired leaders. And this is where the idea of the Abreu Fellows started.

By early 2009 when the TED organization conferred upon Dr. Abreu its special award "A Wish to Change the World," he addressed his wish to NEC: "I wish you would help create and document a special training program for at least 50 gifted young musicians, passionate for their art and for social justice, and dedicated to developing El Sistema in the U.S. and in other countries." In October 2009, we welcomed the first ten Abreu Fellows to NEC, thanks to some last-minute hand-to-hand fundraising.

This first group of ten were just amazing. The nine-month training programme took them to Venezuela for two months, not to observe but ... to work. At their Commencement, all ten were employed in major positions across the U.S.

And so to our second year of ten Abreu Fellows. I love their curiosity, their creativity, their musical excellence, their cosmopolitan backgrounds, their desire to make a difference. These Fellows are going to burst upon the world and make huge waves!

**Lorrie Heagy**  
Director of an El Sistema-inspired program in **Juneau, Alaska**, at the Glacier Valley Elementary School

**Christine Witkowski**  
Program Manager for Youth Orchestra of **Los Angeles** and Heart of Los Angeles, both with the L.A. Philharmonic

**Daniel Berkowitz**  
Program Manager for the **Los Angeles** Philharmonic's Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles

## Where are they now?



"I know a fox with dirty socks who likes to climb on dirty rocks."

The singing string players wore red tee-shirts and launched into their December concert program with an exuberant spirit. The near-capacity audience cheered, and some listeners shed tears. The musicians continued with "Lean on Me," "Jingle Bells," and "Feliz Navidad."

It was the debut of the **KidzNotes** orchestra of Durham, North Carolina, and the culmination of an intense semester in which these pre-Kindergarteners through Third Graders from this largely impoverished city began musical study, most of them for the first time. Under the direction of Abreu Fellow **Katie Wyatt**, the KidzNotes youngsters had devoted four days after school every week plus Saturday practice to ready themselves for the concert.

Along the way, they learned how to hold their instruments and produce tones, as well as the rudiments of score reading. They had attended a performance by the Durham Symphony and met violinist Nicholas Kitchen, of NEC's Borromeo String Quartet. And they found themselves written about and photographed in local newspapers.

So how has this affected them? According to one teacher quoted in *The Durham News*, "KidzNotes has brought out the courage, the self-esteem, the confidence in children who may never have found it."

**Rebecca Levi and David Malek**  
Directors of the El Sistema-inspired nucleo at the Conservatory Lab Charter School in **Boston**

**Alvaro Rodas**  
Project Director of the startup Corona Youth Music Project in **Queens, New York**

**Stanford Thompson**  
leading "Tune Up Philly!" at the **Philadelphia** Youth Orchestra

**Katie Wyatt**  
Executive Director of KidZNotes in **Durham, North Carolina**, in one of the state's poorest neighborhoods

**Dantes Rameau**  
Executive Director of **Atlanta** Music Project

**Jonathan Govias**  
freelance conductor and consultant on El Sistema in the **U.S. and abroad**

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**abreu-fellows**

# A fighting chance for music in Afghanistan

Since last fall, while on leave from the NEC master's program, Robin Ryczek has been embedded as a cello teacher in Afghanistan, one of the world's most intractable war zones. Stationed in Kabul on a two-year faculty contract with the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), Ryczek and fellow American William Harvey are giving lessons and building a set of Suzuki-style Afghan repertoire books. While American tanks

outside swerve arrhythmically down the main street in order to confuse potential attackers, Harvey and Ryczek are behind razor wire-topped walls, teaching young people how to count out the beats of their exercises in proper time. In the words of one veteran of desperate causes who is on the scene, they are "fighting a good battle in a bad war."

In January 2011, Tanya Kalmanovitch, Assistant Chair of NEC's Contemporary Improvisation department, brought CI doctoral student Eden MacAdam-Somer (a fiddler and songwriter) with her for a visit as guest artists of ANIM. Like chocolate bars airlifted to starving refugees, MacAdam-Somer dropped clogging lessons on bedazzled boys. These kids were born into a culture defined by the prohibition of dance, music, interaction between the sexes—anything that anchors musical culture—that began with the Taliban's takeover in 1996 and whose effects are still felt in today's fragile political order.

To be in Kabul at all, the American visitors are subject to a stringent regimen of security protocols and the proximity of regular bombings. Kalmanovitch finds herself billeted in a small hotel, adjacent to several embassies, that boasts "anti blast film in all glass windows" and a United Nations PR-18 security clearance. "My room has a small balcony lined with loops of razor wire, and is protected by armed guards, a solid metal wall, and two courtyards with locking metal gates. In other words, once you're in, you're in." She and her fellow musicians are rewarded by warm encounters with an "intensely welcoming people" and the possibility of effecting change, against daunting odds.

Where not so long ago there was an absolute ban on music, and education was closely guided by religious protocols, attempts to reclaim a connection to music are still targets of Taliban-inspired "enforcers," typified by attacks last year on music stores in Jalalabad, Afghanistan's largest eastern city. Even in a "safe zone for music," as Kalmanovitch describes ANIM, life during wartime presents very real challenges to the eager students. After giving a first lesson to one boy, "he declared his intention to practice four hours a day. Where will he find the time, when he sleeps just three hours a day after working two jobs as his family's sole breadwinner?"

Kalmanovitch talks about the current, uncertain "window of opportunity" for training Afghan teachers to continue ANIM's work. Teaching contracts for Westerners will reach their term, so the use of that time to create and pass on tools and methods is crucial. "We don't know what will happen when the U.S. withdraws—what kind of government will come in. So we're asking ourselves, what can we leave behind right now that will give music a fighting chance?"

necinafghanistan. tumblr.com



*"We're fighting a good battle in a bad war."*

—international relief official

Tanya Kalmanovitch

Tanya Kalmanovitch

courtesy ANIM

# Touring without a baggage allowance



Beethoven house, Vienna



Schubert is a star



Marilyn Roth



Marilyn Roth



Goldsaal, Musikverein

Marilyn Roth



When orchestras tour, the logistics of getting double bass cases on and off planes is just one of the challenges. But when NEC Preparatory School piano chair **Marilyn Roth** takes pianists on tour, all they bring is the thousands of notes they have memorized and their love for the great composers.

Since 2006, Roth has led these tours to the European music capitals that spawned the great keyboard literature: Vienna for Mozart and Haydn, Leipzig for Mendelssohn and Schumann, Budapest for Bartók and Liszt. Here and in other cities, the students take in masterclasses, play where the music was originally written and performed, and breathe the same air that inspired their musical heroes.

These trips recognize pianists' hunger for deep engagement with their vast literature, and the late John Diebboll (*The Art of the Piano*) recognized this lofty mission by donating a tour shirt design in his distinctive, self-invented genre. Roth also co-directs an adult-level intensive piano seminar in NEC's summer session, but it's her dedication to teaching youngsters that has earned her NEC's Jean Stackhouse Excellence in Teaching Award. The students audition for the tour, and come from a variety of studio teachers. In Vienna, they have home stays with students from the Musikschule Margareten, who in exchange visit Boston. You can hear the Viennese students perform at NEC on April 19.

# NEC People

news

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Grammy winners announced in February included the **Parker Quartet**, 2008 graduates of NEC's Professional String Quartet Training Program. Five NEC musicians were selected for the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, a world-spanning group that will travel to Australia to work with **Michael Tilson Thomas** in March. New faculty include Boston Symphony Orchestra players: **Bo Youp Hwang**, violin; **Stephen Lange**, trombone; and **Jessica Zhou**, harp. Violist **Edward Gazouleas** and Contemporary Improvisation assistant chair **Tanya Kalmanovitch** teach the new course "The Entrepreneurial Musician." **Roger Tapping** is now chair of chamber music; **Katarina Markovic** chairs Music History & Musicology. Trombonist **Luis Bonilla** and the uncatagorizable **Carla Kihlstedt** joined the jazz and CI faculties. Opera star **Lisa Saffer** joined the voice faculty. **Antonio Viva** is the new Head of School at Walnut Hill School for the Arts, where students participate in ensembles and music lessons through NEC@Walnut Hill. **Suzanne Wilson** is President Tony Woodcock's new Chief of Staff. **Randy Wong** is Program Manager of Community Engagement, capitalizing on his previous work with local schools. Trustee **Wendy Shattuck '75**, a major supporter of NEC's voice and opera studies, was honored at NEC's 2010 Leadership Dinner—the first alumna to take this spotlight. Along with many scheduled composer residencies, **Oswaldo Golijov** made an impromptu visit to rehearsals of a new orchestral work, brought here by conductor **Mei-Ann Chen '95, '98 M.M.**, Loebel's successor at Memphis. **Gunther Schuller's** jazz reworking of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* had its first U.S. performance with **Ken Schaphorst** leading the **NEC Jazz Orchestra** and **Charles Peltz** as narrator. Music by **Kati Agócs** was performed at the Olympics. **Hugh Wolff** led the **NEC Philharmonia** in two major concerts away from Jordan Hall: at Symphony Hall and Harvard's Sanders Theatre. As NEC continues to seek creative solutions to the space needs of an urban school, **Ann Beha** was selected to design NEC's proposed Student Center. Back in August, when music didn't require a roof and four walls, NEC opera faculty collaborated with **Steven Maler** to create Commonwealth Concerts, a series of prelude concerts paired with Maler's Shakespeare on the Common. **Angela Myles Beeching**, who since 1993 built up NEC's Career Services Center and its online resource Bridge, has left NEC and is now working as an independent consultant. Several faculty members with long NEC histories died last year: **Sa Davis, Eric Rosenblith, Jay Wadenpuhl.**

◀ **David Loebel** has visited NEC to conduct almost every year since the 2004/2005 academic year, when he contributed to NEC's Ives celebration. Following an 11-year tenure as music director of the Memphis Symphony, Loebel became Associate Director of Orchestras at NEC last fall.

## InstantEncore

If you're in Dallas or Dresden, Busan or Beijing, and wondering how NEC's Boston concerts are sounding these days—here's your answer. Many of NEC's recent concerts—including some conducted by **David Loebel** and **Erica Washburn**—now appear as free downloads and streams at our InstantEncore channel—the day after the concert takes place. Repertoire includes such familiar works as the *Symphonie fantastique*, as well as music that is difficult-to-impossible to find on a recording elsewhere. Become a fan of NEC's channel to receive updates of new concerts and other music news.



instantencore.com/

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▲ After serving in an interim capacity for more than a year, **Erica Washburn** was named Director of Choral Activities at NEC. In December, she took NEC's choruses to Church of the Covenant in Boston's Back Bay; in April, she leads a tribute to her predecessor, **Lorna Cooke deVaron.**

▶ Just as **Jason Moran's** first semester on NEC's faculty got off the ground, news that he had been named to a MacArthur Fellowship brought fresh smiles to jazz lovers who look to Moran for "adventurous, genre-crossing jazz performances," in the words of the MacArthur Foundation. Moran becomes the ninth MacArthur Fellow with ties to NEC. In March, Moran joins Fred Hersch in an unprecedented dual pianist evening in Jordan Hall.





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## young-concert-artists

Pianist **George Li** is a 15-year-old who attends the Walnut Hill School for the Arts. Head of School Antonio Viva reports that you can find George eating a plate of pasta in the cafeteria or doing his science homework like any other Walnut Hill student. But George's focus and vision also add up to make a virtuoso pianist—an equation acknowledged by the Young Concert Artists International Auditions when they awarded him their coveted prize of three years of professional concert management last fall. For 50 years, this has been a career launch for music legends, including Paula Robison, Donald Weilerstein, and an astounding number of other NEC faculty and alumni.

Andrew Hurlbut

# George: 15

### Some other recent prizes and honors

Dudamel Fellowship	<b>Joshua Weilerstein</b> '05 Prep, '09, '11 M.M.
French Legion of Honor	<b>Marvin Gilmore</b> '51
Jenny Lind	<b>Jennifer Caraluzzi</b> '11 M.M.
Menuhin	<b>Xiang "Angelo" Yu</b> '12
Met Regional Auditions	<b>Michelle Johnson</b> '05
Paganini	<b>Dami Kim</b> '10, '12 M.M.

## news

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Since the start of the new year, NEC President **Tony Woodcock** has been keeping a blog. His topics range from turmoil in the professional orchestra world to a visit with his 99-year-old friend **George**. Here are 99 words describing the man of whom President Woodcock says,

# George: 99

**"When I grow up and reach 99, I intend to visit George and compare notes."**

George is the oldest person I have ever known. He is the real living embodiment of the heroic. A journalist who covered the European theatre in WWII, George found Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* hard to appreciate because he had known most of the historical persons described. When he speaks about his current situation, he is unflinchingly direct. "Everything above my neck is working fine," he says. "Below the neck, all the telephone lines have been cut. If you can't do it anymore then cut it out. Get on with what remains." And he says this with whoops of laughter.

*Tony Woodcock*

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## tonys-blog

# Sail Away Ladies throw a barn dance



Andrew Hurlbut

While there is photographic evidence from the 1950s of a conga line in Brown Hall, NEC's history with barn dances—if any—is obscure. But being barnless was no impediment to the **Sail Away Ladies** (a 2009–2010 NEC Honors Ensemble), when they filled Brown with eager dancers at the height of the 2011 blizzard season. Sail Away fiddler **Eden MacAdam-Somer**, whose weekends take her all over North America as a contra dance musician, has this to say about the surprise addition to NEC's winter schedule: "Barn dances (also known as ceilidhs, square dances, contra dances, hoe-downs, etc.) have long been a way of celebrating the seasons, gathering with friends, and passing winter nights. Community dancing is still an important part of life for people all over the world."



Andrew Hurlbut

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## sail-away-ladies-throw-barn-dance