Dear Penguins,

Happy Spring!

In this issue, we wish to highlight some of the transformations and adaptations that we as a community have experienced in the last year. In particular, we want this issue to be reflective and resourceful for you. We are introducing two new columns: ‘Ask a Therapist’ and ‘Question Corner’, which solicit your questions on self-care, artistry, and more.

With advice from the Health and Counseling Center, artist interviews, and new, emerging Creative Connections groups, we hope that you can find a means for renewal in the following pages.

We wish you well this month, and don’t forget to check-in with yourself and practice self-care. The days are getting longer and spring is ready to bloom; we’re one midterm-week away from soaking up the sun so hang in there!

Your Editors,
Caroline & Madeleine
NEW TO NEC: BOOK CLUB

“Winner of the Crime Writers’ Association, John Creasey (New Blood) Dagger and the Galaxy National UK Thriller, Crime Novel of the Year, 2011. Christine wakes in a strange bed beside a man she does not recognise. In the bathroom she finds a photograph of him taped to the mirror, and beneath it the words ‘Your husband’. Each day, Christine wakes knowing nothing of her life. Each night, her mind erases the day. But before she goes to sleep, she will recover fragments from her past, flashbacks to the accident that damaged her, and then - mercifully- she will forget. Chilling, exquisitely crafted and compulsively readable, S. J. Watson’s debut novel Before I Go to Sleep is a psychological thriller of the highest order. It asks primary questions. Are there things best not remembered? Who are we if we do not know our own history? How do we love without memory?”

INTERESTED IN READING? JOIN OUR BOOK CLUB! CHECK OUT PAGE 7 FOR MORE INFORMATION!

INTERESTED IN EXPLORING BOSTON?
Scan this to see what events are happening in Boston this month! Boston Weekend Activities shows all the events that can be attended both in-person and online. Enjoy!

ALBUM OF THE DAY WITH LEMEUL MARC BM’24
FOLLOW US ON @penguin.nec for more!
Now as we enter 2021, we celebrated Black History Month with pride knowing that there is a Black woman serving this country as the Vice President; a reminder that even though we have a very long way to go, we are making progress. Mental health, like history’s slow progress, is better than no progress at all.

As you read this you are probably reminiscing about 2020 and shaking your head and are grateful that you are still here. As you do that, I challenge you to check on your mental health. It is important to have an outlet, a safe place to process everything that you experienced in 2020 and the things you might have dealt with before 2020. Many people are currently struggling with anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders due to the lack of socialization, fear of the unknown, life stressors such as unemployment, and many other factors.

Practicing self-care is a necessity at this point. Everyone should be able to identify healthy self-care activities such as exercising, reading, long baths, whatever it is that will help you relax, reset, and rejuvenate. Counseling is also a great option; it is important at times to process the challenges that we have experienced in our past before we can start the healing process.

- Liz Conward, Psychotherapist LICSW
Welcome to ‘Ask a Therapist’: a new and recurring segment in the Penguin where students can submit anonymous questions to be answered by our counseling staff! As this is the pilot article and first call to action, we thought we’d start with a question we’ve been hearing a lot from students, particularly within the last year. Students have been voicing concerns as they notice their friends struggling but feel helpless as to what to do or how to approach them. College students across the globe are feeling more isolated than ever and many of the typical coping strategies have had to be adapted or left behind completely. There are also more barriers to asking for help as we aren’t engaging in the same ways socially and our sense of belonging to a community that cares about us has shifted. People who are struggling with their mental health are witnessing many around them going through the same thing, leading some to keep their feelings to themselves as they don’t want to feel like another burden. Some of us are taught to pretend we don’t see that someone is falling behind or seems to be suffering. We’re taught that it could be embarrassing for them if it’s brought to their attention, or worse, that they will feel even more terrible if we do. Alternatively, you may not feel equipped to handle their needs if they do open up. When you notice a friend who seems to be struggling, the best thing you can do is ask them directly about what’s going on for them.

This communicates that they’re not invisible, that you care about them, and opens up a conversation that could lead to them getting the help they need. If you fear there’s a possibility they could hurt themselves, ask about it directly: “I know you said you’ve been really down the last couple of weeks. Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself?” This can be hard to ask for many reasons; sometimes it’s helpful to practice how you would ask the question to raise your confidence in asking it in the moment. Many people share the concern that asking directly about self-harm may give their friend the idea to manage their pain in this way. Studies have disproved this repeatedly. It’s much safer to ask so that a plan can be made to keep them safe than to leave it as an unspoken secret. THEN WHAT? It’s important to remember that you’re at NEC to be a student, not a counselor. You can provide support and empathy as a friend, but if you feel your friend would benefit from meeting with someone trained in mental health, it’s time to reach out to that kind of resource. If it’s an emergency, let your friend know you’re concerned about them and need to get them connected to emergency care. If you feel it’s urgent but not life threatening, you can offer to walk them to the Health and Counseling Center or call with them to make an appointment. It may feel like letting their parent or parental figure know is enough if they are at home and have that supportive connection with them.

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If you have a question about what to do, feel free to reach out to the Health and Counseling Center at (617) 585-1284.

Remember, offering your friend a space to be vulnerable and open up about their pain with a trusted person can be deeply meaningful and healing. A lot of people, especially right now, are suffering silently. Being asked about struggles or sadness or worries directly can feel like a relief, and reduces any internalized stigma your friend may be experiencing which could be acting as another barrier to seeking help. If you’ve been concerned about a friend or want to be better prepared to help friends and loved ones in the future, the Health and Counseling Center is offering a Helping Skills Primer: a one-hour workshop in April. This workshop will give students tools to better identify signs of mental health distress and know how to effectively reach out to others with concern. Students will be led through helpful ways of showing support in these conversations as well as what to try to avoid. Further community resources will also be provided with guidance on how and when to use them.

Email Zoë Bryan at zoe.bryan@necmusic.edu if you’re interested in attending.

Have a question to ‘Ask a Therapist’?
Submit it anonymously at https://www.custominsight.net/box/?cb28310mwmv or scan the QR code below and you could see it answered in an upcoming issue of the Penguin!

Zoë Bryan
she|her|hers
Psychotherapist, Health and Counseling Center
New England Conservatory of Music

HEALTH AND COUNSELING RESOURCES
If you’re concerned about yourself or someone else, you can reach out to the Health and Counseling center Monday through Friday from 9a-4p to consult with a therapist on staff. We also offer crisis walk-in hours Monday through Friday from 1p-2p.
This question is a wonderful reminder that even in a difficult time when we may feel we’re barely keeping track of everything, teaching is a continual source of renewal and transformation. For me, that comes not simply from my research for my courses but also, in the most inspiring ways, from my students. Each day, in our discussions, students enliven our course materials with their willingness to explore new ideas and with their curiosity and insights emerging from both distinct and shared experiences.

Teaching synchronously and asynchronously has presented new challenges in providing students with diverse course materials and equitable methods of engagement, leading me to even deeper consideration of my course materials and methods. It’s hard, it’s impossible to perfect, and it’s incredibly important.

Jill Gatlin
Professor of Liberal Arts

Covid gave me a chance to focus on a book project that has been on hold for several years as well as focus on and improve my video skills. The book project is based on my research of classical Ottoman/Turkish vocal music written in Byzantine neumes and it includes the transcriptions of 102 pieces published in a collection from 1830 into the modified staff notation used by Turkish music currently. I do feel a sense of accomplishment by being able to return to this project and finally complete all of the transcriptions. However, I must admit that focusing on video productions was more fun. Luckily, I already had one professional camera and good enough lighting equipment to get me started. First, I learned how to properly use lighting by watching enough YouTube videos. Then I learned about aperture, a variety of lenses, frame rates, editing, color correction, and more... In the end, I have managed to produce four videos all of which are posted on my YouTube channel and I do feel proud about each video.

Mehmet Sanlikol
Professor of Music History, Musicology

I would say that being completely online has challenged me to think differently and better about how to teach. It has made me use words more concisely and creatively, and has reminded me of the central importance of the student’s imagination. When teaching voice live it’s so easy to hyper-focus on the physical components of singing. Not being able to do that has made me think harder about how to present ideas and physical instruction through ideas. It’s been incredibly interesting, and I feel that most of my students have made good progress. I hope I can bring what I’ve learned through this time back into a live studio, if that EVER happens. :)

Lisa Saffer
Professor of Voice
We’re lucky as a group to have NEC as a launching point for transformation in our music making. For us, renewal comes from the sheer creative power and genius of the spectrum of music we are lucky enough to play, and the process of ever refining our ability to more convincingly bring it to life fuels us. While this year has been difficult in not being able to look forward to real live performances, there have been many blessings for us. Being able to delve deeply into our repertoire in our work with Mr. Katz, Mr. Kitchen, and Mr. Weilerstein at a pace without as many fixed deadlines has benefitted us greatly. We hope this work pays off when we do get to connect with more people in-person through music making once again. It will also be great to meet and hopefully collaborate with more of the NEC community when more things are no longer online! We have tried various ways to interact with audiences and different kinds of people. Our Instagram @balourdetstringquartet has been a fun outlet for us, and our violinist Angela Bae does some amazing video editing for it.

Some recent offerings on our page include a Netflix-themed collaboration with @monochromeviola, a 90’s-style infomercial (yes, we’re old!) for our Schneider Series virtual concert, and an Alvin and the Chipmunks holiday video. We were also able to give a dozen outreach performances for middle and high school students through the Fischoff Association, which ended up being a unique opportunity to see how the same presentation ends up being completely spontaneous for every audience, despite the online format. None of this replaces the thrill of live music making, however, which is what the music itself needs to be brought to life inherently.

Outside of the day-to-day demands of our rehearsal schedule, we’ve been lucky enough to find strength in each other’s company in downtime as well. Human connection has proven, in itself, to be the most precious thing in the world as much as ever. Music doesn’t even compare with something inherently so universal as connecting with people, but of course as chamber musicians it’s hard not to think of music and connection put together as pure magic exceeding the sum of the parts. There’s always the balance of the human element and music making in a quartet, and a fortunate effect for us is we can grow as people and musicians together, quite literally playing off of each other every day.

The Balourdet String Quartet (Angela Bae, Justin DeFilippis, Benjamin Zannoni, and Russell Houston)

Be sure to follow Balourdet String Quartet on Instagram @balourdetstringquartet for more awesome content!
The great part of creative work is that renewal and transformation is a built-in part of the process. The collaborative aspect of music encourages and demands continual change and growth. Every time I learn a new piece of music, I feel enriched, slightly altered. And every time I improvise or compose, playing and writing what I hear in my musical imagination, I’m processing my experience, changing my perspective in subtle but significant ways. When the pandemic began, I ended up playing the piano much more regularly than I had been.

In the spring I played through all of Bartok’s “Mikrokosmos,” composing my own short piano pieces, inspired by Bartok’s work. I don’t know how that will affect my music in the end. But I know there will be a change of some sort. We’ve all been transformed by the COVID pandemic. And yet we might not acknowledge or recognize those changes for some time to come. But it’s partly through the act of making music that we will learn from these changes, adapt to this new world. I look forward to hearing the creative work emerging from this period of imposed reflection.

David Loebel
Associate Director of Orchestras

THANK YOU

We want to thank Mr. Loebel, Prof. Sanlikol, Prof. Gatlin, Ms. Saffer, Mr. Schaphorst and The Balourdet String Quartet for contributing to this month’s edition of Question Corner!

If you have a question you want to see in future issues, DM us @penguin.nec!
BOOK CLUB

Looking for a little escape from reality? Like to read? The NEC Book Club will hold our first meeting on Tuesday, April 13 at 7pm. Our first read is “Before I Go to Sleep,” a thriller which one critic admitted, “...left my nerves jangling for hours after I finished the last page.” All are welcome!

For more information, contact Suzanne Hegland (suzanne.hegland@necmusic.edu) or Grace Allendorf (grace.allendorf@necmusic.edu)

BREAD MAKING

The bread making group met for several Zoom sessions of mixing, kneading, rising, and baking over the weekend of February 20th.

We all had a great time! Each student came away with a loaf of homemade rustic bread. Each loaf looked different, and each loaf was fabulous (just like NEC students)! We hope to meet again this spring for more baking.

Contact Matthew Duveneck (matthew.duveneck@necmusic.edu) if you are interested in joining the next session.

PARKOUR MOVEMENT GROUP

The Parkour Movement Group convened for the first time on Friday the 12th. We shared our interest in movement and how it relates to and informs music-making. We did a Parkour warm-up and are all going to climb on a playground before we meet again next week.

If anyone is interested we meet on Fridays at 2pm ET over Zoom. Contact Vanessa Mulvey (vanessa.mulvey@necmusic.edu)
Looking forward to connecting in person!
**FILM NOIR**

Ran Blake’s Film Noir group meets online once a month. Meetings are casual and include a fair amount of viewing of Film Noir and non-Film Noir excerpts, educational commentary, and discussion. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for

**Friday, April 9th from 5-7pm and Friday, May 7th from 5-7:00pm.**

For more information, email **Ran Blake at brooklineran@gmail.**
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for more content including

Album of the Day! with Lemuel Marc  
Boston Connections  
and MORE!

The Penguin is hiring new editors for the 2021-22 academic year! Stay tuned for more information about how to apply on our Instagram page or contact Faculty Editor Suzanne Hegland (suzanne.hegland@necmusic.edu)