

THE PENGUIN

The Commencement Issue

Congratulations
Class of 2020!



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My Last Note for The Penguin...

I sit on my sofa. I think to myself, "I have no idea how to write this." I stand up. I dig out my copies of issues past, hoping the words will come to me. Then I realize, although I was terrified at the prospect of handing out *The Penguin* to all the parents as they would've been walking into Jordan Hall for our Commencement Ceremony, I never thought I wouldn't be able to hold my last issue of *The Penguin* in my two hands.

This year has been a ride, to say the least. I am not one for pomp and circumstance; never really cared about high school graduation, and never expected to care about commencement. But I never expected this. I remember my last day on campus, I was reading on the second floor of the library. I looked down, out of the floor-length windows and saw a scene in March, that I should've seen in May: moving boxes, hugs, cars, and friends.

I wish I could thank you in person, all of my readers, writers, and all the people who fell victim to my nagging. Thank you to the people who stopped me in the halls to comment on the latest issue. Thank you to all my people who texted me their congratulations after every new issue came out. I don't think I could have made it how it is without you.

But my biggest thanks are to Suzanne Hegland. Thank you for riding out this year with me and for trusting me no matter how bizarre my late-night-early-morning ideas are. Thank you for never judging my writing and always being there to correct my often-overlooked editorial oversights.

I am going to miss editing until my eyes are crossed. I am going to miss venting about the late nights and the missed deadlines. But as I pass on my editorship to Madeleine Wieggers and Caroline Jesalva, I can't wait to see the many more stories they will create. On that note, *The Penguin* will see you again in fall!

Until then,

Tracy Tang, BM '20



From Faculty & Staff

Congratulations Class of 2020!

Andrea Kalyn

President

A note to our graduating students:

Graduation is a moment when we look simultaneously backward and forward, celebrating past achievements and anticipating future opportunities. Even in “normal” times, the moment can hold both a sense of accomplishment and some anxiety, as the present becomes the past, and the future has yet to emerge. So not surprising, then, that in this most extraordinary of times, anxiety might try to overshadow accomplishment. Please don’t let it.

Rather, I hope you find great confidence in this time, because you are actually beautifully prepared—even, and perhaps especially, for a rapidly changing world.

Every skill, every piece of knowledge, and every disposition you have developed and honed over many years to bring you to this moment will also see you through it. Passion and vision, commitment and hard work, courage and creativity, and the optimism inherent in the very idea of making music will be needed more than ever as we create a new, post-COVID world, and these qualities are the hallmarks of your work and person—certainly, you have proven that over the past eight weeks, in your focus and perseverance, your support of one another, and in the myriad ways you have shared your music with a socially distanced world. And these are the same qualities that will empower you to create a new future for music, as well as to help heal and elevate humanity through your artistry.

Now, more than ever, please hold onto the joy in what you do—in all the work you have accomplished during your time at NEC—and carry it forward to the work you will do next.



It is heartbreaking not to be able to honour you in person this spring, but please know how very proud we all are of you. NEC will always be your home, for you are forever part of the history of this place. I can’t wait to celebrate you at our in-person commencement ceremony in the fall, but in the meanwhile, please be well and please revel joyfully in all that you have achieved.

Thomas Novak

Vice President and Provost

I want to first express my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you on your graduation. Given the current state of the world, this is a particularly impressive achievement which deserves to be celebrated in all ways!

It seems hard to fathom that we have been away from one another for two months, and, despite many, many video meetings, FaceTime chats, and FB posts, I find myself increasingly thinking about the need for connection. For me, this is a very important value that is meaningful and powerful, perhaps now more than ever with the social distance requirements. One of the most awe-inspiring aspects of connection is that it can manifest itself on so many levels - personal, artistic, large groups, couples, family, friends - the list can go on and on. As musicians, this concept can extend to connections among players in small and large ensembles, between performer and audience - it can be a palpable exchange of energy. In order to successfully connect in any way, it requires that we are genuine and sincere, qualities that are essential as musicians and humans. It can take courage and a willingness to be vulnerable, but the rewards are great! I am certain that you have made many connections on a variety of levels during your time at NEC, and I am willing to bet that these have shaped your musicianship and growth. May your future journeys provide you opportunities for new connections, as well as nurturing those you made with the NEC community.

Rebecca Teeters

Senior Associate Dean of Students

Congratulations Class of 2020! I think back to all the performances, classes, conversations, and events that I have seen throughout the past few years and I am so impressed by the growth, dedication, and musicianship that I have witnessed. You are a resilient, creative, and amazing group of musicians and I cannot wait to see what the next chapter in your lives will bring. Welcome into our talented community of NEC alumni, I cannot wait to see what you do next!

Nick Tatar

Dean of Students

There's no going back... and that's ok

So much has changed since the start of the semester that I'm hesitant to mention notable touchpoints from the last few months because I know more has happened since I emailed this letter to Tracy. The days go so fast that we often lose track of what day of the week it is and which major decision was being made on Monday and what happened the week before.

All that said, we've been working through this together and while the changes are coming daily, sometimes hourly, we are adapting. Change is happening. We are moving forward with purpose. For instance, we've moved away from awkward handshakes and mastered the art of a thorough handwashing. We've given up commuting in traffic for clear skies and mountain skylines because we cut carbon emissions by 20%. We have lost some face-to-face meetings with classmates but found new ways to reconnect with friends, teachers, and family that we haven't seen in years through Zoom, FB, and Teams. We've watched the number of people watching our concerts go from 1,000 to 50,000 and taken note how effectively communities and entire countries can come together when we focus on the health and well-being of one another. As a wise philosopher once said, "The secret to change is to focus all or your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new!"

Annie Phillips

Entrepreneurial Musicianship, Associate Dean

You did it! Congratulations on all you have accomplished during your time at NEC. I can't say for certain what the future will look like, but I am glad you are the ones who are joining us in helping to build it. Always remember that as a newly-minted NEC alum, you are still a member of this community, and we are here to support you! I look forward to hearing from you as you make your lives in music.

Lluis Claret

Strings, Chair

“These uncertain times make the 2020 Graduation very special for NEC’s community, and I am convinced that we should take it as positive as possible. We could see how music has been these days an unavoidable way to communicate and to stay together for many people all around the world. Also, the confinement gives us more time to think about ourself and about what could everybody do to get a better world once this situation will be over.

Music is the best way to heal and comfort people souls, so we will definitely need all of you!
Congrats for you graduation!!”

Helen Greenwald

Music History and Musicology, Chair

Imagine commencement as academic Halloween. Faculty, a collection of witches and sorcerers in full regalia, flashes its brilliant plumage. You there, in your black robes and cap, our goblins--a touch demonic, but more daemonic, in the Greek sense: imbued with passion.

This year there is no cosplay, and we faculty are fully unmasked as equal parts professor and parent. You are, after all, the children of NEC, your alma mater [Latin: nourishing mother]. We, having acted in locus parentis, however briefly, weep with pride and celebrate your ineluctable talent, commitment, and achievements. We know that music can never be taken away from you. I sit alone at my desk on this day and wonder joyfully and Seuss-ly, “Oh! The places you’ll go!”

Karen Holvik

Voice, Professor

So, there we all were, going full steam ahead into the welcome week we call Spring Break, when – SURPRISE! – suddenly someone slammed on the brakes! We went from washing our hands more frequently and trying not to touch our faces to a sudden cessation of our normal day-to-day lives.

The remaining weeks of the semester took on a form that was barely recognizable as we were forced to abandon our customary musical collaborations and shift our work onto the two-dimensional platform of the computer screen. We began meeting behind closed doors, in living rooms, bedrooms, and at all hours of the day and night depending on our location on the globe.

The faculty and staff at the New England Conservatory met the challenge of the new paradigm head on and overcame great obstacles to help ease the transition for everyone. The semester was saved by virtue of these efforts, but that doesn’t mean it was easy or as satisfying as it would have been absent our unwelcome surprise. We at NEC are still hard at work designing a Commencement experience that will be as close to our normal ceremony as possible. We want the Class of 2020 to know how much we value each and every one of you!

Until we meet and can make music together again, hearty congratulations on achieving this important milestone, and all possible best wishes to you and your loved ones.

James Klein
Liberal Arts, Professor

The Penguin began this year with Madeleine Wiegers' guide to good places to cry here at NEC. It was funny, and it was sad, and it has proven far too useful for us all. Now The Penguin closes the year – the strangest one in memory, marked by loss and distance. Your calendars probably reflect that; mine has nothing but X's for all those recitals in March and April, and for graduation in May.

Instead of gathering in Jordan Hall, we have scattered: not until we began scheduling classes at 9:00 at night did it dawn on me how far and fast we have gone our separate ways. Now, though, the school is gathering again, to thank you for your contributions to this odd, unique place, to reaffirm its commitment to community, and to celebrate your success – this time, really, in despite of it all.

Congratulations!

Alexander Korsantia
Piano Performance, Professor

Congratulations!

There is no doubt in my mind that after the pandemic is over there will be a spectacular “invasion” of deeply developed talented musicians on international scene. In financial terms, market of musical talent will go up as never before. You ask: how come it is possible with the backdrop of unheard-of world-wide disaster? Answer: we, artists - more than people of other professions – now have an amazing luxury of having actual time to look as deep at our skills and craft as we will ever be able to given how busy we normally are. My message to all my colleagues of all ages: use this precious time for being creative, tackle heavy projects of learning new repertoire which would be impossible in academically heavy school year. Compose, read, write. This will make you a winner when the terror of COVID19 will be over!

David Loebel
Associate Director, Orchestras

Since March, we've heard all the clichés: “We're in uncharted waters,” “Out of an abundance of caution,” and many more.

But there is one cliché to which I hope you will stubbornly cling: “We need music more than ever.” As musicians, we need our art, almost as much as we need air to breathe. But our communities desperately need us--through music—to affirm life in the face of chaos and grief.

Never forget the high standards you learned here and the idealism that fuels them. With excellence and passion as your guides, go forth and heal the world.

Eden MacAdam-Somer
Contemporary Improvisation, Co-Chair

This is certainly not the spring any of us had planned. And yet, here we are, learning, growing, discovering new challenges and new opportunities opening up for us every day and in every way. At times like this, it can be especially difficult to stop and acknowledge the important moments in our lives. So please, take time to celebrate – you have worked hard to get to this day! Taking time is something that we often forget to do, and it only becomes more challenging as our lives become more complicated. Moving forward, I encourage you to cultivate the art of taking time: breathe, sit in silence, rest, dance, seek out and ask for what you want and for what you need to live your lives fully. Heartfelt congrats to each and every one of you. Come back and see us soon!

Joshua Major
Opera Studies, Chair

Uncertainty is certain. I ask that you embrace this, despite the insecurity it implies. The world needs your creative leadership, musical voice and indefatigable humanism more than ever. Wear your stripes boldly and be in constant search for the true self.

Make music tell stories
It is too dark without this
But most of all, love

Efstratios Minakakis
Composition & Theory, Professor

Congratulations on reaching this important milestone in your musical journey. While the challenges posed by the present circumstances may seem at times overwhelming, please remember that they do not negate who you are what you have accomplished. You are a formidable group of performers, composers, scholars, thinkers, and individuals. As you enter this uncertain world in a field that is rapidly transforming, rest assured that you can do so with confidence. The talent, skills, resourcefulness, and sheer strength of character that you have demonstrated throughout this journey will help you navigate life and pursue your dreams.

To my graduating Composition students: I am extremely proud of the artists you have become. You have already created a substantive body of work, and I am convinced that you have the potential to become some of the defining voices of your generation. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to teach you at a formative stage of your development. Your dedication, creativity, and resilience have been a constant source of inspiration. Never look back; to paraphrase a teacher far wiser than I, compose “the music of your future!”

Bert Seager
Contemporary Improvisation & Jazz, Professor

For perhaps the first time in your life, no teacher will be assigning you work to complete. Congratulations. You have earned that. That said, the uncertainties of living during a pandemic loom large. I urge you to take advantage of this time, aware that an unknown future can also lead you more fully into the present. And if you can, bring an affectionate curiosity and attention to your practice that nourishes the inner resources that have carried you this far. These will bring purpose and joy into your music and your life, which, by the way, are not separate things.

Ken Schaphorst

Jazz Studies, Chair

I want to offer my most sincere and heartfelt congratulations to NEC's class of 2020. I wish I could be with each of you and your families to mark this significant achievement. It's been a pleasure working with you. And I know that your training as improvisers will come in handy during this challenging time. Please stay safe. Stay healthy. And stay in touch. I'll miss you. But I'm looking forward to hearing all of the music you'll be making. We'll get through this together.

Donald Weilerstein

Dorothy Richard Starling Chair in Violin Studies

How fortunate we are to have music in our lives to constantly inspire and stimulate us! It's wonderful that we can constantly interact with and give this great art to others from our love of it.

There has never been a time that needs you more!

Hugh Wolff

Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras

Orchestral Conducting, Chair

Well, it is certainly not what you expected! And it is a time in your life that you will never ever forget. So as you finish your degree and head out into our fragile and troubled world, think and think again about how you might make a difference. It may seem that the arts are forgotten and it may be some time before a large audience gathers to hear you (or any of us) share music. So vow to make it more meaningful and more authentic and more passionately felt when that chance comes. The artist holds a mirror up to society to make us think more deeply about who we are, what we have been, and what we might be. Embrace that role. It will be more important than ever.

With best wishes to all of you!



Messages from the Graduating Class of 2020

Andrew Barnwell

Piano Performance BM '20

"Whether you're reading this in 2020 or years from now, I dare you to reach out right now to an NEC colleague you haven't spoken to in a long time- or to someone you've never spoken to- and say something nice to them. I just did, did you?"

Suni Norman

Violin Performance BM '20

"Insider knowledge of 2020 seniors: Bistro 33, Firestone, UNO's, 295 Huntington, late night lounge hangs in 33G, continual construction, OG logo, the 2 hour wait for practice rooms on 2nd floor of JH. We are the class that went through it all."

Alex Garde

Percussion Performance BM '20

"Scenes I'll never forget from NEC: watching the sun set from the stoop, roaring applause after every ensemble concert, living in 33G, the frightened look of people lost in the percussion basement, and the view of Jordan coming back from Amelia's. Thanks for the great times, and best wishes to everyone!"

Marquis Wincher

Trombone Performance BM '20

"In a time of such unprecedented uncertainty, invest in your most valuable skills, and expect nothing in return other than the completion of the task itself. Then you will be prepared if one day fortune is graciously bestowed upon you."

Ally Bennett

Vocal Performance BM '20

"I am so incredibly grateful for the community at NEC and the uplifting wonderful musicians that make it up. To my friends leaving who I couldn't say goodbye to: I love you so much and I wish nothing but the absolute best for you. To my friends staying here in Boston: I cannot WAIT to continue on with you all as I start my masters here and see you in person again!"

Tyler Bonilla

Jazz Performance BM '20

"I have been able to make life long relationships and learn more about myself than I ever thought possible. Thank you NEC for helping me grow as a musician, as well as an individual."

Geneva Lewis

Violin Performance BM '20

"Congratulations Class of 2020! Despite everything, we made it - thank you to everyone who made these past 4 years so special. I can't wait to see everyone again in better times <3"

Cassandra Cavaliere

Bassoon Performance BM '20

"Life at NEC has been a whirlwind of an experience, and it's a shock to have to say goodbye to it so soon. What I'm going to miss most are the teachers, colleagues, and friends who shaped and defined my college experience. I don't think I can adequately express how grateful I am to anyone and everyone who has been a part of this journey in ways both big and small."

Mark Macha

Trumpet Performance BM '20

"I am thankful for the people who have dealt with me for too long and the teachers who have shaped who I am. Thank you to my colleagues for being the best version of themselves and always trying to do the right thing."

Yen Chun Angela Wang

Violin Performance BM '20

"I've had so much joyful, magical, and precious memory during the past four years. I made friends for a lifetime, I learned from teachers I'll admire for a lifetime, and I discovered a better self that I'll like for a lifetime."



Mary O'Keefe

Oboe Performance BM '17, MM '20

"I've survived a lot during my time at NEC: snowpocalypse, the death of UNOs (and subsequent death of NEC's community), bass/percussion hangs, and getting caught building a snowman on the roof.

I've also witnessed some great joys: the inauguration of a female president, Beethoven's 9th in 2014, a rise in student-leadership, clubs, and activism post-2016 election, Paul Burdick (existing), Golden State Warriors blowing a 3-1 lead (go Cavs), and simply getting to make music with you all.

After 6 years at NEC, the only legacy I hope to leave is this:
the tunnels under Jordan Hall are real. Go have fun."



Hunter O'Brien

Flute Performance BM '20

"Thank you NEC for bffs, inspiration, tears, laughs, frustration, motivation, stress, the QUEEN of flute, bagels with peanut butter and strawberry jam (sorry I just ate them SO OFTEN), killer calves from all of those stairs, a closet full of concert black, rooms with breathtaking views, rooms without windows, endless crushes (sorry X2), oh yeah and a whole lot of music. To all of you penguins - sending love your way!"

Kevonna Shuford

Viola Performance BM '20

"After four year at NEC, I can truly say it was an experience like no other. Thanks for the memories."

Adrian Liao

Piano Performance BM '20

"Who would have guessed our year would be cut short like this? Redeem the time! Thank you NEC for everything!"

Ryan Jung

Piano Performance BM '20

"Once upon a time while leaving the SLPC with a friend I go to pick-up my ID card. The security guard, an unsuspecting man, opens to ID booklet only to find an assortment of cards with many Asian male faces. Using his best judgement, he picks one up--he would soon regret this decision as the face ultimately did not match my countenance. That day I lost a friend, but instead gained a chuckle."

SENIOR SUPERLATIVES



Most likely to be found at pavement:
Matthew Henson



Most likely to be found camping in the
practice room: **Tracy Tang**



Most likely to brighten someone's day:
Emma Burge



Most likely to be venting about the old dorm
and undercooked chicken: **Grant Houston**



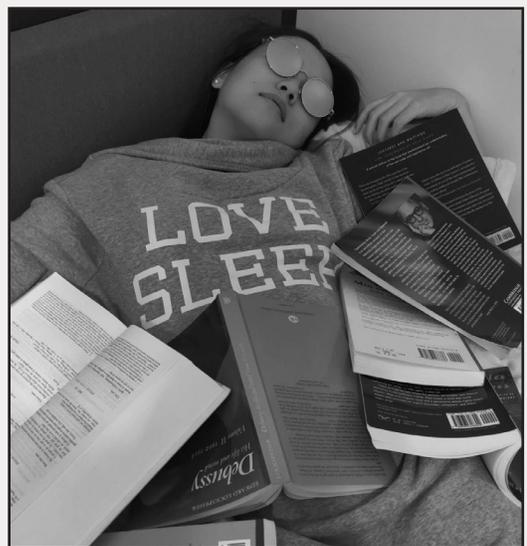
Most likely to takeover the music industry overnight: **Jolee Gordon**



Most likely to teach at NEC: **Matthew Henson**

MISSING

Most likely to be caught sneaking into rehearsal: **Kebra Seyoun Charles**



Most likely to fall asleep in music history: **Ariel Mo**

Dear Class of 2020

“A BIG FAT CONGRATULATIONS FOR MAKING IT THIS FAR!! Remember to cherish every bit of your time at NEC. You’ll miss it more than you think- the walks over to BSO, Jordan Hall, post concert hangs, Pavement Coffee, maybe even struggling to get up for 9am rehearsals. My time at NEC and the people I met have taught me so much about how to make music and love it. I hope it has for you too. So go **CELEBRATE!** And after that, love your friends, stay in touch with your teachers, and most importantly do what you do best: keep making music.”

Sage Park BM, ‘19

“After being at NEC for four years you built a strong sense of **CONFIDENCE** and **COMMUNITY**. It’s always important to let your past experiences remind you of what you’re capable of and **CHALLENGE** yourself to keep opening new doors as you start a new chapter in your life. Don’t be afraid of **REINVENTING** yourself.”



Abraham Martin, BM ‘19

First and foremost- create a website and don’t be afraid to promote it because that is how people find you! Another tip is don’t be afraid to **REACH OUT** to people, **ASK** questions, and get feedback!

“Sometimes, the healthiest thing you can do for your musicianship and your career is to take a break. Don’t push yourself to do this because you feel like you have to. Be **FEARLESS**, and spend time away from your instrument. Just don’t forget to find your way back again.”

Stephanie Chen, MM ‘19



Andrew Port, BM ‘17 MM ‘19



“Despite the complexity of mediating one’s relationship to the world around us and the music one loves, try to keep a **VITAL, CURIOUS** and, above all, **OPEN HEART**. It has become more important than ever to be compassionate in the face of suffering and open to the possibility of joy, as our communities isolate and move online. That the sharing of realities, the attempt at empathy, is foundational to the community around music links our craft to the greater soul-search motivated by the paradox of increasing social distance and connectivity. But as we all attempt to move on from this crisis, remember this loneliness and alienation, and don’t let them return to plague our hearts: can music help?”

Jingxuan Zhang, MM ‘17

Alumni Advice



“TAKE TIME TO ENJOY. Play/create what feels right. You will have all the time in the world to continue your training and take in all you have learned, but you don’t need to focus on that right away. Give yourself the **FREEDOM TO EXPLORE**, be it music or whatever else interests you. I took almost two months off after I graduated and I hiked, read, watched Netflix, traveled, danced, and hung out with friends. It’s your time to understand that music is not only your joy and love, but your career, and now is the time to explore **BALANCE.**”



Julia Cohen, BM '19

Life after NEC is a deep practice of learning to follow the energy of my passion and explore beyond the “status quo”. You can’t guarantee that the things you love will be there tomorrow, so treat everyday as a new opportunity to **EMBRACE** the talents, gifts, and creativity you contain. I’m realizing life is really about coveting **RELATIONSHIPS**-beginning with yourself, and then extending to musicians, artists, family, friends, teachers, mentors, and even plain strangers.

“A career in this field will most likely never be a straight or predictable path, but there will always be **UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES** that will come your way. Whether if they are exciting, scary, or intimidating, I encourage you to be brave and face those circumstances. You may surprise yourself!

Know who your **SUPPORT TEAM** is and never be afraid to **ASK FOR HELP**. Always be **CURIOUS**, it’s ok to not practice for a day (or even few weeks) and find out what other things interest you other than music!

You did it! Congratulations on graduating from NEC! You’ll be ready for what’s next as long as you remember to keep your mind, and expectations, open.”

Patricia Au, MM '08, DMA '17

Darynn Dean, BM '19

“UNCERTAINTY CAN LEAD TO A REALM OF POSSIBILITIES.

Use this uncertainty in a positive way to explore new things on your journey. Congratulations NEC 2020!!”

Nhyta Taguchi, BM '19



Do not let your “professional background” as a performing artist narrow your career. You have **MANY PATHS** to go to be a good musician.

Baichao Lan, BM '18

“Music has given you a mantle and status; with that status comes **RESPONSIBILITY**. Don’t let the weight of it crush you and don’t allow it to bitter your spirit. **KINDNESS** is key and it will unlock many doors for you while bearing the mantle of being a musician.”

Lewis Warren Jr., BM '19



BINGO BREAK!

Spent over 3 hours sitting in the Bistro/GRC	Survived on recital receptions for dinner for an entire week	Gotten a gift from "gift lady" while ushering	Almost got hit by a car on Prep day	Hid from security to keep practicing after Jordan closed
Complained about the cafeteria being too expensive-ate there anyway	Practiced in basement rooms by choice	Gave directions to Brown Hall-watched them go the wrong way	Got a Killians at UNOs RIP	Cried over a James Klein essay
Got hit on by Andrew at Farmer Horse	Stayed at Conor's until close on a weekday	Front desk ID scanner is broken (<u>FREE!</u>)	Took the elevator up ONE FLOOR	STUCK-MBTA DELAY (uber to rehearsal at your own risk)
Been on the roof or in the tunnels of Jordan Hall	Cried during a lesson	Spent more time hunting down stands than a practice room	Told an Uber/Lyft driver that you go to Berklee cause it's easier	Dirty look from Prep parent for swearing too loudly on a Saturday
Questioned reality after a conversation with Paul Burdick	"You take care, bud"- Tom the Security Guard	Sat in for more than one piece at another department's concert	Fell asleep during morning rehearsal	"What festivals/YAPs are you applying to this year?"

submitted by Mary O'Keefe BM '17, MM '20