

Responses to Andreea Pauta's MIE Online Portfolios

BY LYLE DAVIDSON & WARREN SENDERS

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LYLE DAVIDSON

Andreea Pauta is one of many outstanding graduates of the New England Conservatory who exemplify the Artist-Teacher-Scholar model that informs the Learning Through Music program. A pianist, composer, and vocalist, Andreea already has two CDs of her own compositions in her portfolio. As an administrator in the Music-in-Education department, she not only successfully facilitated the work of both faculty and students, she also left her imprint on the portfolio process that is required of all NEC candidates for the Music-in-Education competency. Currently a degree candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Andreea brings an articulated vision, high energy, deep-seated discipline and clear focus to her work as artist, teacher and scholar.

ONE THING THAT IS IMMEDIATELY EVIDENT FROM THE PORTFOLIOS IS THE CREATIVITY OF APPROACHES TAKEN BY STUDENTS IN THE MIE CONCENTRATION. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF GROUP-THINK, ON THE ONE HAND, OR OF MERELY FILLING IN THE BOXES ON THE OTHER. THEY USE THE PORTFOLIO STRUCTURE FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. GIVEN THE SPECIFIC CONSTRAINTS OR GUIDELINES OF THE MIE PORTFOLIO PROCESS, THEY ADAPT THE CONDITIONS TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL VISIONS—AND MISSIONS.

Her article in this issue of *The Journal for Learning through Music* provides some indication of the scope of her scholarship. Below are some of the features of her work that I found particularly interesting.

Creativity: One thing that is immediately evident from the portfolios is the creativity of approaches taken by students in the MIE concentration. There is no evidence of group-think, on the one hand, or of merely filling in the boxes on the other. They use the portfolio structure for their own purposes. Given the specific constraints or guidelines of the MIE portfolio process, they adapt the conditions to their individual visions—and missions. Thus, we see examples of portfolios that function as:

- tools for learning
- windows on creative work
- supports for students in a private studio
- personal mission statements
- personal visions of the nature of teaching and learning
- supports for collaboration

Generative scaffolding: The scaffolding provided for the MIE portfolio is far more than a checklist. It is generative. It supports (or even forces) reflection, goal-setting, and selection. It reflects a process that intentionally shapes a wide variety of chosen content toward a coherent summarization of educational experiences. Using the MIE scaffolding, students turn an inert collection of documents into an illustrative narrative of their own development.

Role of reflection in learning: In most colleges and universities, let alone conservatories, the educational path taken by student is rarely retraced. Reflective work (if there is any at all) takes place in the form of the traditional academic model—i.e., as an honors paper or a thesis within the domain of the student's major. In contrast, the MIE portfolio provides the student with opportunities to reflect on his or her entire education. The portfolio process supports reflection on past experience, but also provides motivating purpose by linking that reflection to a view of one's future, whether as an artist, a teacher, or a scholar.

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WARREN SENDERS

One of the most revealing elements of the MIE process emerges in the discussion of Melanie Howell's work. When we read that Melanie is "continually learning from her present studio students," we are reminded that a good teacher is more than anything else a good learner, demonstrating to her/his students what learning looks, sounds and feels like. This is especially

EDUCATORS MUST BE ENTREPRENEURIAL IN THEIR THINKING AND ORIENTATION, NOT JUST IN TERMS OF FINDING JOBS IN A COMPETITIVE AND UNDERFUNDED MARKET, BUT IN TERMS OF FINDING MEANINGFUL AND POWERFUL WAYS TO CONVEY THE RICHNESS AND JOY OF MUSICAL EXPERIENCE TO THEIR STUDENTS. AND "ENTREPRENEURSHIP" MEANS A CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO START AFRESH, TO VIEW THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE, TO TRY NEW ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES IN A FREEWHEELING SPIRIT OF EXPERIMENT AND EXPLORATION. WHICH IS, ULTIMATELY, WHAT LEARNING IS ALL ABOUT.

viduality of my students' own teaching and learning outside of class. Any successful teacher must find a particular conceptual "style" which informs the overall arc of her or his professional life. While some may build a pedagogy around a body of musical and performance competencies (music as "skill set"), others may focus primarily upon the development and nurturing of individual creativity (music as "expression"), around fostering a contextual awareness of other people and their needs (music as "community-building agent"), or around principles of which we may yet be unaware. It is crucial that we recognize the correctness of all these approaches—that we develop a meta-epistemology in which the variety of pedagogies our students adopt is understood as an expression of an essential vitality. While a "method-oriented" critic could find Peter Stoltzman's pedagogy nebulous and unquantifiable, and a "holistic" reader might find Melanie's checklists and agendas to be constricting rather than liberating, I'm thrilled that two of my former students have found such different ways to learn from their own teaching. When I talk with others, like Sara Lieb, Dana Sandler, Gretchen Iverson, Sean Frenette, Jarrett Cherner, and Andreea herself, I am continually amazed and delighted by the tremendous diversity their teaching experiences display.

The online portfolios required by NEC's MIE concentration are interactive, dynamic and evolving — and therefore representative of the MIE approach: our students are empowered to develop transformative pedagogical and epistemological approaches which will enable them to adapt to constantly changing socio-cultural factors without compromising their own integrity. Educators must be entrepreneurial in their thinking and orientation, not just in terms of finding jobs in a competitive and underfunded market, but in terms of finding meaningful and powerful ways to convey the richness and joy of musical experience to their students. And "entrepreneurship" means a continued willingness to start afresh, to view things from a different perspective, to try new attitudes and approaches in a freewheeling spirit of experiment and exploration. Which is, ultimately, what learning is all about. ¶

important when conveying elementary material; because it is so familiar, the teacher may become jaded or bored, ceasing to find interest, challenge or stimulation in the process. The complementary strands of learning outlined in the MIE paradigm help prevent pedagogical anomie; once a teacher can analyze and contextualize a student's progress in multiple dimensions, s/he can learn anew the richness and complexity of the material and the nature of the individual who is responding to it. Both parties are gaining from the interaction; "learning" and "teaching," are not "opposites," but near-synonyms denoting complementary perspectives on a single phenomenon.

In my own classes, I constantly challenge the students to identify questions and concerns that loom large on their own personal horizons as they embark on careers in music, and I measure my own teacherly successes by the diversity and indi-

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