

INTERN REPORTS: MUSIC-IN-EDUCATION AT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

— A guided interview conducted in 2004 by MIE Interns —
under the guidance of David Beauchesne, Associate Director, Center for
Educational Partnerships in Music, Georgia State University

APRIL (TURNER) O'KEEFE,
JOHN SAMUEL ROPER, AND JASON MRAZ

April (Turner) O'Keefe was among the first participants in Georgia State University's Music-in-Education program. Her internship experiences culminated in a residency with a string quartet. She also participated in a double quartet in an elementary school with members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. After completing her Bachelor of Music degree in Cello Performance, April enrolled in the Master of Music in Music Education program at Georgia State. Among her aspirations are classroom music teaching, new music performance, and concert hall architecture.

John Samuel Roper participated in the MIE program for three years. In addition to his early internship experiences, he was a member of residency groups including a woodwind quintet and a flute-oboe-composer trio. He graduated from Georgia State in the spring of 2004 with a Bachelor of Music degree in Flute Performance and began studying in fall 2004 on a full scholarship at the University of Minnesota in the Master of Music program in Flute Performance.

Jason Mraz was one of the first students enrolled in Music-in-Education. He participated as one member of a percussion trio that developed into a residency group for an elementary school grade level. He is currently pursuing a Master of Music degree in Percussion Performance at Cincinnati College-Conservatory. He also received a B.S. degree in Mathematics from Georgia State.

APRIL (TURNER) O'KEEFE

Bringing Authentic Musical Experiences to Children through Collaboration

Briefly explain what you have done as a participant in Georgia State's Music-in-Education program.

In the first year, I was responsible for formulating my string quartet's presentation to take into schools. Our task was to fit in with the general classroom teacher's objectives while tying in as well with the music teacher's goals and the GSU/Atlanta Symphony's Sound Learning model. The next year, I was the contact person for my groups: a cello duet and a string quartet. There was a lot more inner-group collaboration, and I did not formulate the entire presentations. Our string quartet worked directly with the ASO String Quartet and even performed with them. The cello duet worked directly with Gloria Jones (assistant principal bassist, ASO) not only in preparing presentations, but also in tying them in with the goals of the general classroom teachers.

This year, our string quartet has a residency, but because I am now student teaching, my responsibilities are more limited. Because of my earlier experience, I am able to work with my fellow students to help them develop good programs, and I do not need to take as

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE THREE REFLECTION
PIECES FROM GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MIE
PROGRAM FROM ITS INCEPTION. EACH
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PROGRAM, EVENTUALLY BECOMING PART OF
A RESIDENCY IN A PARTNER SCHOOL. THEY
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EACH OTHER REGARDING THEIR EXPERI-
ENCES IN MIE AND THE ROLE MIE HAS
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FOR BECOMING PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS.
FOR MORE ON THE SOUND LEARNING
PROGRAM AT GSU, PLEASE SEE ARTICLES BY
DAVID BEAUCHESNE AND KRISTEN POTEET
IN PART III OF THIS JOURNAL.

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much responsibility myself as I did in the first year.

What were your expectations for this program before you started?

I honestly didn't have any. I was getting ready to graduate with my Bachelor's degree in Cello Performance. Before we started the MIE program, most of us had no clue what was going to happen, nor did we expect that the program would extend beyond Georgia State. I had visited other music schools before, but I had never participated in a program with this extent of collaboration. As the semester progressed, and we began to learn of our responsibilities, I started to glimpse just how important and challenging this work was. I remember one time when Dr. Myers met with our class I could barely contain my growing excitement as he explained the values of a program such as this. Afterwards, I went up to him and said, "Tell me what I can do to help this succeed." I definitely did not expect this program to have such a profound impact on my life.

How has this program made an impact on your life?

Before I began this program, I had wavered between majoring in Music Education and Music Performance, finally deciding on Performance because I felt I wasn't confident enough to be in front of children. But then after beginning this

program, I decided that not only was I able to build the confidence to teach, but I truly enjoyed teaching and seeing young minds appreciate and understand music. I got a rush out of seeing students grasp new information so readily. So now I'm getting my teacher certification. It's a huge change; my whole perspective shifted.

Talk about this change in perspective. How has this program changed your perspective on your career path?

Like most college students getting ready to graduate, I was a little apprehensive about where to go next. This program opened my eyes to an entirely new world in which music education and performance are not mutually exclusive, as many feel, but just the opposite. I learned that I can teach music in a traditional music classroom or I can teach music as a supplement to another's music teaching while performing the traditional or not-so-traditional chamber music that I enjoy so much. Music is most rewarding when you have others to share it with. Above all, I have learned that I have multiple ways of being able to teach and share music with others.

What was the greatest challenge of the program?

Learning to do it. Building the confidence to not be afraid of small children (especially missing accidentals in front of them). It was a challenge to come up with a program that was fresh and exciting for the

children, but it was a much greater challenge to admit that what you wrote out of the sight of the children doesn't work the way you expected in sight of the children. You have to learn to go with the flow and take a different route despite the most carefully laid out plans.

What aspect of the program at GSU do you think is the most unique?

The total collaboration among all these different people: the classroom teacher, the school music teacher, the School of Music faculty, the performance professionals, the school administration. It was very exciting to be a part of—a whole group of people using their individual talents to serve the greater goal of bringing authentic musical experiences to the children.

Why is a program like this important?

There are of course obvious benefits to musicians in general, such as building the music-loving audience of the future. Obviously, you can't appreciate something you have never been exposed to. There's also the education-enhancement factor. It's important to have the same teacher each day, but sometimes the children need a fresh face to reinforce their other subjects. We look at the eager faces of these young children as they encounter this marvelous new beast, and we know that they appreciate it, that they enjoy it, and slowly they look forward to it, until finally, they crave it. Since music is so important to the young minds, it

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should be important to all of us. It's not about how good this looks on a resume or a reference letter; it's about helping a school-aged child develop a very basic appreciation and understanding of the joy and learning opportunities that are in music.

JOHN SAMUEL ROPER
Becoming a Well-Rounded Musician through MIE

Spring 2004 was your last semester in the MIE program. What have you gained?

As a performance major, I never would have expected to gain so much from the



John Roper participated in the Georgia State University MIE guided internship program for three years, first as a flute performance major and then as a music education major. He explains that "Making music for and with the kids remind[s] me why I fell in love with music to begin with."

MIE program. Going into classrooms and making music for and with the kids reminded me why I fell in love with music to begin with. It reminded me about how wonderful and special music is, and what an extraordinary thing it is to create. As a performer in training, I'd spend hours practicing, and on days when I didn't feel I was progressing, I'd become very frustrated and my whole day would be ruined. Then I played the first time for the kids. The introduction called for me to play the Bird solo from *Peter and the Wolf*, crouched in a closet. I was having trouble with the highly technical excerpt and had been battling for weeks to get it perfect. When I played it for the kids that morning, I did a good job, but I didn't nail it. However, before I had time to beat myself up, the kids' excitement boiled over. They said, "Wow! Was that a flute?...It's a FLUTE! That sounded like a bird! Play it again!" That response brought back memories of hearing the flute when I was young. I wasn't listening for perfection then. I wasn't judging a person's worth by their talent. I was into how cool music was, and how neat the flute sounded. Playing music wasn't about stress then; it was about enjoying something very special and unique.

I've applied these feelings to all of my performances. Just remembering that music is fun eliminates even a trace of stage fright. Also, learning to convey musical ideas to younger audiences has helped me express musical ideas non-verbally when I perform. I've learned so many things about how to present concepts in a musically educational way. I've also been forced to work under pressure and to collaborate on many levels. As a flutist, however, the most important benefit is the improvement in the comfort and quality of my performance.

Why do you feel that this program is so important?

This program is vital to anyone who hopes to become a well-rounded musician. In any situation, a musician will be called upon to teach. This program supplies effective ways of doing this. So many symphony musicians struggle with outreach performances because they have no idea how to go about them. At the same time, thousands of former musicians have moved on to other careers because they didn't make it into an orchestra. They felt like that was the only hope they had to make a living as a musician. This program gives us options.

AS A PERFORMANCE MAJOR, I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED TO GAIN SO MUCH FROM THE MIE PROGRAM. GOING INTO CLASSROOMS AND MAKING MUSIC FOR AND WITH THE KIDS REMINDED ME WHY I FELL IN LOVE WITH MUSIC TO BEGIN WITH.

What goes into a performance for MIE?

The finished product that we present to the kids is a result of much work and research. Last year I was in a trio consisting of flute, oboe, and composer/guitar. Before anything else, a planning meeting was held at the school. All three musicians, our site coordinator, the music teacher, and the grade level teachers were present. We discussed what they had seen in outreach at their school in the past. We also asked questions to get an idea about the school's environment. As the school was failing in writing, we decided to make efforts to link writing into our visits.

After this initial meeting, our group got together and brainstormed about how to make valid connections between music and writing, how to engage children musically, and how to accommodate all of the learning styles. We then had our composer write music that would demonstrate our ideas and engage the children in active listening and performance. (See Stallings, "Staying Fresh: The Importance of Process over Product" in this *Journal*). We opened the gig with the oboist, Liz McKeown, reading the kids her wonderful story. It was truly a masterpiece. It was entitled "I Have a Dog," and I have her permission to use it here:

"I Have a Dog"
 By Elizabeth McKeown

I Have a Dog.
 The End.

The children were upset with the story, so I immediately jumped in and offered to play a piece I had "written." It was a three note ostinato which I played until the students threatened to riot. Jim Stallings, our composer, then jumped in and said we needed to add things to my piece to make it more interesting. He asked the kids for suggestions which they readily gave: "Give it a beat," "It needs more things than Boo Boo Boo," "Let Liz play with him," etc. Then Jim said these were all great ideas; they were all details, and it is details that make music, and writing, more interesting. The rest of the visit consisted of adding layers which Jim had crafted to go over my ostinato. These included rhythms the student performed in groups, a jazzy oboe melody, and snaps. By the time everything was added, the piece took on a whole new feeling, and the students were quite excited about it. Then Liz reminded students of the story she read in the beginning and asked for details the students might add. We suggested the teachers assign students to write a journal entry giving more detail to "I have a dog."

That was the starting point for our residency. After each visit, we'd get feedback from the school teachers, MIE students, and our professors. David always encouraged us to make as many connections as possible between music and writing. He was also adamant about making us figure out ways to communicate concepts with as little talking as possible. His suggestions and observations allowed us to fill our visits with only quality material. I never felt like anything was "filler." By the end of the residency, we didn't need much help. We found we'd become very flexible and could incorporate David's suggestions without overhauling the lesson plan.

Do you think this program required too much work?

Some people think practicing four hours a day is too much. But if you're passionate

about something, the work is worth it. This program has so many benefits that the work really seems minimal by comparison.

JASON MRAZ
Blurring the Distinction between Performance and Teaching

What was the most fundamental realization you had during the course of your participation in the MIE seminar?

Without a doubt, the most fundamental realization that I had was about the best ways to teach music to children. Music is an art form, and all art forms are inherently difficult to teach. Steve Martin has been quoted as saying that "Talking about music is like dancing about architecture." By studying theories of multiple intelligences and different learning styles, we learned how to present musical ideas in a more appropriate manner, but there was still another level I had never truly considered. The MIE classes were the first opportunity I'd ever had to try to understand the difference between children listening to music, and children being actively engaged in music. We had to scrap so many ideas for presentations that we thought were great, because when it really came down to it, the kids were being talked to and then just sitting and listening. It was so difficult to consider the child's individual active involvement in the music, to figure out what would make that child not just sit and listen, but be a part of a music experience. Though a difficult distinction to plan for, the pedagogical benefits were amazing.

An effective musical presentation is so much more than the children understanding the difference between long and short notes, or loud and soft notes. An effective musical presentation should teach concepts, but more importantly it should encourage the children to be mentally engaged in a musical experience.

What was one of the problems you encountered while designing presentations for the children?

One large problem that our percussion trio had while designing the programs was balancing in-depth coverage of



Georgia State MIE Guided Intern Jason Mraz challenges children to participate in an interactive rhythm exercise using sophisticated call-and-response patterns with movement and pitched boomwhackers at Centennial Place Elementary School.

material with a broader exposure of different ideas. Too often performance groups come into schools and introduce their instruments, play a few songs, talk about a lot of information, and then leave. A phrase I have always liked for this kind of presentation is “drive-by music education.” The other extreme is for a performance group to come in and teach one topic or idea in great detail. The problem here is that the advantages of the performance group are not being utilized; they are functioning as an expensive one-time teacher group. While there is something to be said for classical music exposure without specific topical learning, drive-by music education fails to impact the children’s musical education to the fullest extent.

The balance between the two was extremely difficult to achieve. Our trio was constantly having problems, either with far too many ideas to actually teach anything, or with too much talking about one idea and not enough involvement. Even though a guest performance group does not come to the school to be the music teacher, we were trying to put together educational programs, not concerts.

What was the best thing you learned about yourself during your involvement with the MIE program?

The target audience for the majority of our trio’s work was the first grade. Since our school had certified music specialists, we decided to focus on aspects of music outside their already existing curriculum. Teaching to children who were still learning the fundamentals of the musical language, we chose to isolate fairly fundamental and even visceral aspects of music. The end result was a series of programs that taught aspects of music which were basic and obvious but still exciting and powerful – ideas like production of sound, improvisation, musical styles, traditional and non-traditional instruments, and rhythm. Organizing these programs and playing for and with the children brought

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back all the reasons why I fell in love with music in the first place. I was not a child virtuoso; I just love music. Theory and orchestration were not the reasons why I went into music; MIE helped me remember why it is that I do what I do.

In what way did the MIE program most uniquely contribute to your overall musical education?

I have a degree in orchestral percussion performance. One thing I have never in my life wanted to do is teach music in a school setting. That does not mean, however, that I don’t have strong interests in every aspect of music – including concepts traditionally classified as educational. Most students, including myself, are too busy to take non-required courses from a separate concentration. MIE, however, is a ‘line-blurring’ class. The class is built around participating chamber performance groups. All of the presentations were fundamentally performance-based presentations, but the bulk of the class focused on educational topics. We learned about learning styles and multiple intelligences and such, but we learned how to implement them in an effective educational performance setting. We all know that being a well-rounded musician should enhance your performance and marketability. Whether you subscribe to the Artist-Teacher-Scholar model, or you simply believe in knowing as much about your trade as you can, the MIE experience really helped me flesh out my performance major into a fuller musical degree. ♪

STAYING FRESH: THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCESS OVER PROCEDURE

by

JIM STALLINGS

In the classroom, one always feels a generative tension between a structured approach to teaching and an unstructured approach—between the creative and the pedantic, the vicarious and the experiential, and the kinesthetic and the auditory. As teaching artists, classroom teachers, and music professionals, we need to be aware of how we are asking our students to interact with the presentation of musical ideas and concepts we bring to the classroom. An experiential, kinesthetic approach which involves the students in the actual doing of music and which reinforces the skills and experiences relevant to the student’s development as a musical person is central to effective teaching. At times, however, even the most creative lesson plans can succumb to the pull of the auditory or the pedantic. This is especially evident when one presents the same material in various group situations. An exercise in creative musical expression designed to foster independent reaction to a musical stimulus may in subsequent presentations be blunted by leading queries and directives on the expected response.

As teaching artists, we should be prepared with a clear objective and a well- thought-out method of presenting our ideas in the classroom. However, familiarity with the presentation can make us somewhat impatient with importing the experience to the students. We trade the risky course of allowing the students to have individual reactions or expressions for the safety of directing the responses in order to ensure that our point is reached in a way that we can easily ascertain. In doing so, we can ironically short circuit the very process we are seeking to encourage. We find ourselves devoting our energies to ensuring that the intended point of our lessons does not go undiscovered. This approach in turn reinforces any doubts we may have that we will not be able to interpret and respond to a variety of undirected expressions from our students.

Before becoming involved as a composer in the MIE program at Georgia State University, I had taught preschool music, served as adjunct music professor at the local college, and worked as a graduate teaching assistant. In each of these situations, I constantly worked to actively involve my students in the process of creative musical thinking and music-making. The music internship program at Georgia State has been an invaluable asset for me in refining my philosophies and techniques on teaching music, involving students in musical activities, and helping them discover the innate capacity for musical expression that lies within each of us. The discussion and evaluation process which we go through as a class following our school visits has proven particularly useful in helping me plan and work towards a classroom presentation. It was during this process that I discovered a potential pitfall which can easily thwart our efforts to bring creative musical experiences to our audience.

During our school visits, I have noticed that the first time a classroom teacher experiences a program by a visiting artist, the teacher, being unfamiliar with the presentation, is involved mostly as a spectator observing the interaction of the visiting artist with the children. However, upon subsequent collaborations, bringing the same program to a different group of students, I have observed that often the teacher begins to offer leading discussions, questions or suggestions in order to elicit “appropriate” responses to the material being presented. As a result, the aim of the presentation, which is to evoke genuine musical responsive behavior or to involve the students in independent creative expression, is immediately thwarted.

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