

Mentoring and Being Mentored: Guided Internships and Arts Partnerships

BY GAIL BURNAFORD

What happens when a young performance major takes a chance on a new opportunity for an internship in a school and an urban community? Jamie Howe was such a person when she became a part of the first cohort in the *Partnerships Through the Arts Guided Internship/FIPSE* program at Northwestern University. A sophomore music major at Northwestern, Jamie launched into the work of partnerships, learning about music-in-education at the high school and elementary level, bringing her a cappella group, Purple Haze, off campus and into an urban school, designing projects and engaging her peers in an adventure that was uncharted and often serendipitous.

What happens when a recent college graduate signs on to work with a project in which undergraduates engage with artists and teachers in communities, with her as the link? Larissa Nikola-Lisa was such a person. A recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin/Madison, Larissa was looking for a challenge. She offered to work with the undergraduates in the first cohort, 'shepherding' them to schools, (she even dressed in a shepherd's costume for Halloween!), attending their Partnerships class, and documenting their learning during the internships.

So what happens? A teacher friend recently reminded her students, "He/she who does the most work does the most learning." It seems that, if these two stories are any indication, successful interns in arts partnerships make of these experiences what they need in order to advance their own careers, teach those who are the designated leaders what is essential for success, and build on the internships to design future opportunities. They do the most work, and they also do the most learning. They make their own paths, in order to satisfy their own curiosities and creative needs.

In the years since the internship year at Northwestern, Jamie and Larissa have done precisely this. *Partnerships Through the Arts* opened a door for Jamie to become an intern at the National Arts Education Partnerships office, directed and guided by Dick Deasy. Larissa used the experience to sharpen her videographic skills, produced several videos for the project, including the piece *Purple Haze* which has been used as a discussion/model piece at the MIENC conferences to demonstrate the integration of performance and teaching among interns and urban children. She went on to attend graduate school to further study media documentation.

In the *Partnerships Through the Arts* program, we 'exposed' our interns and invited them to study this growing collaboration with us. They attended reflection meetings, investigated partnerships by interviewing leaders of such partnerships both locally and

nationally. They have been our 'guinea pigs,' and we have challenged them to go out and see what these partnerships look like and how they might play a role. That exposure has helped me, as a mentor, to crystallize what I have to learn and contribute.

Mentoring of guided interns assumes new definitions when university students are learning about schooling, artistry, and research both in and outside of the classroom, as well as within the university and out in the community. Interns develop new mentors who are teaching artists, classroom teachers, arts administrators, media technology coordinators, and children. Their activities offer new insights for what it means to mentor prospective professionals in schools.

For me, the role of mentoring has been individualized and particular to these two talented young people. The internship is for the short term; what participants do with this set of experiences over the long term is up to them. Creating that set of experiences for interns to work in is the job of the mentors. But then, mentoring, much like teaching, is about listening and learning about what wants to happen. It is about working with a project like the guided internships in *Partnerships Through the Arts* to carve out space for interns to participate in the design, implementation, and reflection/analysis of the work. And then, it's about getting out of the way. ¶



Dr. Gail Burnaford was the Principal Investigator for the Chicago initiative of the Music-in-Education National Consortium while a faculty member in the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University. She has since moved to South Florida to assume the position of Chair and Professor of Teacher Education at Florida Atlantic University, where she is the Site Project Director for the MIENC's Learning Laboratory School Network initiative.

INTERN REPORT: NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY'S PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE ARTS

by

JAMIE HOWE

MUSIC IN ISOLATION

A middle school music teacher works in his own wing of the building and is not involved in faculty collaborations. A college music major practices her clarinet in a small room for three hours every day. A symphony orchestra is concerned with its dwindling audiences but is reluctant to provide free concerts.

What a paradox it is that in education, music—one of the most uniquely communal experiences of human culture—exists in such isolation. When we talk about music, we use the term "musical experience," not musical event, encounter, or occurrence. It is so perplexing, then, that our music learning is not experiential. Not only does the music profession separate itself from the rest of the community, but it is even divided within itself: performers are separated from educators, instrumentalists from vocalists. Likewise, within the different sectors of music education there are chasms between the local schools and the universities, and between the artists and the teachers.

The reality of this strange and counter-productive isolation first became clear to me during my freshman year at Northwestern University. I was struck by how removed the music majors were from the world outside of the stage and practice room—not only from the rest of the college community, but also from the local community. While most of my fellow music students agreed that music was meant to be shared, they tended to feel they were "too busy" to sing at a nursing home or to get involved in any such music outreach program outside of their curriculum. Many felt they needed to reach a certain level of competence before they could enter the "real world" and share their greatest passion.

However, to me, the time to start sharing was right then. We already had a gift that other people wanted and needed to experience. I joined the Partnership through the Arts program (PTA) at Northwestern University because I wanted to get involved and make connections outside of my small college world. Not only did PTA pull me out of my music school bubble, but I realized the whole purpose of PTA was to bring together three isolated bubbles. The program was challenging the status quo: the separation of the university, the local school, and the arts organization; the dichotomy of the artist and the teacher; the divide between the professional sector and the "would be" professionals. PTA was making connections and proving that when partnerships are formed, resources are shared, people are linked, and arts education is stronger.

Through PTA, I was able to gain a sense of the bigger picture, of the ultimate goals and national struggles. My eyes were opened to the field of music education as a profession, raising it out of my limited experience—the varied academic courses and voice lessons—and bringing it into perspective. The foundation was set by my first course requirement, "Schooling in Communities," which taught me the value of local community in education—a sphere often marginalized. During my second year I was partnered with Tricia Sebastian, a Ravinia Teaching Artist, and we worked as a team with kindergarteners



JAMIE HOWE GRADUATED FROM NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY WITH A DEGREE IN MUSIC EDUCATION. SHE PARTICIPATED IN THE PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE ARTS PROGRAM DURING HER FIRST TWO YEARS AT NU.

at Cleveland Elementary School in Chicago. What a wonderful experience it was to develop a mentoring relationship with a working professional outside my university who was actually doing what I aspired to in the future. I was able to observe Tricia teach, collaborate with her on lesson plans, and work side by side with her—an effective and seasoned teaching artist. One of my favorite memories is spending the afternoon on the floor at her house discussing and planning the details of the “Around the World Musical Tour” Cleveland/Ravinia culminating event. Even just the fact that I could share ideas and feel like they were valued was an important experience for me as a developing teaching artist. These plans weren’t simply something I had to turn in for a class grade; we were actually going to carry out the entire process with real children and make our visions a reality.

What a beautiful thing, too, to see the children’s eyes light up at a new instrument or a new song. The kindergartners unabashedly expressed their amazement at almost everything we brought in to show and teach them. Whether it was a maraca or a new song, they would “ooh” and “ahh,” renewing my own excitement of the magic and power of music and learning. At Cleveland, I was directly involved in the music-making and learning process. I played games with them to discover new instruments and sat with them as we sang songs together. I demonstrated proper instrument playing and helped them remember their choreography. It always amazed me when I was working with children or conducting a workshop how much I actually received from those people and interactions. With every challenge I ran into, with each piece of feedback I received, I grew as an artist and a teacher and learned just as much as those with whom I was working. I was also constantly (and usefully) humbled by my obvious lack of experience. Once when we had a few extra minutes while the classroom teachers were discussing the next activity, I thought we could sing “Row, Row, Row your Boat” in a round and pretend like we were in a boat. However, we got absolutely nowhere; first of all many of the children didn’t know



As a guided intern in the Partnerships Through the Arts program at Northwestern University, Jamie Howe worked as a musical artist-in-residence doing hands-on demonstrations of instruments as a prelude to engaging in authentic music-making activities.

the song, and second, the exercise was way over their heads. They were in no mood to sit and listen to me explain how it worked; they just wanted to sing and play and do something familiar!

As a result, I became increasingly aware of the process of learning music, or anything for that matter. When my private adult piano student becomes frustrated at her inability to play what is on the page, I have learned to notice even tiny steps of progress. Even in my own learning I have become more realistic in my expectations; I try to focus on the small victories and not be upset when I don’t achieve perfection right away. Art is a product, but it is also a process. In calming my piano student’s fears of performance, I end up relearning myself what performance is really all about and coming up with a step-by-step process that I also can follow when I am about to perform.

In another PTA class, “Creating Partnerships,” we did a lot of work on the scholarship of artistry and teaching, studying the most recent research from the Arts Education Partnership (AEP),

Critical Links. I was so intrigued by this level of arts education leadership and advocacy that after my sophomore year I applied for a summer internship with AEP. It was a fascinating experience; I soon became immersed in a completely different perspective, viewing arts administration, advocacy, organization, and research at the government and national level. It was exciting to see these arts organizations and their constituencies meeting together at the national conferences to develop initiatives and discuss current issues. I watched people from all over the country explore topics such as arts education research, arts integration, building community, etc. They discussed common challenges and brainstormed solutions and were updated on the status of arts education on the government level. By sitting in on breakout sessions and special presentations, I was able to see firsthand the marvel of many organizations with their own unique focus and goals coming together to share knowledge and resources, build partnerships, and thus advance the cause of arts education. My original focus on music education thus broadened into arts education,

MUSIC SCHOOLS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP MUSIC MAJORS GROW INTO ADVOCATES AND WORKERS IN THE COMMUNITY, NOT SIMPLY PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF SKILL AND TALENT. THESE EXPERIENCES SHOULD BE VALUED AND ENCOURAGED ACADEMICALLY; IN FACT, THEY SHOULD BE A PRIMARY PART OF AN UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE.

which I began to view as a profession, rather than just something I enjoyed studying at Northwestern. I also now see the many possible connections that can exist among usually isolated sectors in arts education. It is as if there are all these single chain-links sitting on the ground—the university, the public schools, and the arts organizations—and they are just waiting to be linked so that together they can reach much further and become much stronger than is possible as individual efforts.

Even when these sectors do join together, a link that is so often left lying on the side of the road is the one to the community. There are adults, children, and whole families who are thirsty for what we (as musicians, as artists, as educators) can provide. An organization I started with a friend called the Music Learning Community began giving private piano and voice lessons at a local church to underprivileged families in the Evanston, Illinois area. In just a few months the number of NU students teaching and the number of people desiring lessons nearly doubled! People were constantly being added. Soon after, the town of Evanston went through the difficult process of making cuts in education; however, when the music programs were on the line, the town strongly raised their voices to keep the music. So many performances received standing ovations at the finish. People are overwhelmed by the power of music and don’t get to hear live music often enough!

Our art and our expression become that

much more real and extraordinary after we have personally touched people with it. I remember when I asked my friend’s adult voice student, a sweet elderly woman, how her lessons were going, and with a surprised and content smile, she replied, “He thinks I can do good!” Likewise, it wasn’t until I shared a song I had written with my church congregation that I realized what kind of an impact it had. When one is working with people in the community who are so eager to receive and give inspiration, one feels enveloped in a whole other world. In fact, I now find it bittersweet to walk out of a school after my cappella group has just done a workshop, or out of a nursing home after we have just shared a short recital. Leaving those bright, shining faces that just light up as you give your gift to them brings both fullness and emptiness at the same time. You have just given and given, and yet you are full of a renewed passion. But you feel empty too because you know there is so much more that could be done—that you could do.

PTA and AEP have shown me that this is the “stuff” that really matters. When one looks critically at the typical undergraduate music major’s career, one can’t help but see so many missed opportunities to integrate learning with the community. Higher education music schools need to reflect seriously on what it means about their mission to educate musicians and teachers if the schools themselves do not value or encourage integrated and experiential approaches to learning. They need to ask, in what ways can the music school set an example of community involvement? Is

a monthly concert geared towards families and children enough? Are there structures set in place that facilitate music students going out into the community? Why not take some historically under-attended school concerts to an elementary school full of kids who will adore it? Why not help music students establish relationships with mentors in their own future field? Why not collaborate with public school teachers to share resources at the music library, to lead sectionals, to be pen pals with an elementary orchestra? Music schools have the responsibility to help music majors grow into advocates and workers in the community, not simply people with a lot of skill and talent. These experiences should be valued and encouraged academically; in fact, they should be a primary part of an undergraduate experience. The world really is their classroom.

This experiential, hands-on, interrelated, goal-oriented, collaborative, community-informed learning in the arts has been and will be so much more valuable to me than the chords I can aurally identify or the celebrated composers I am able to talk about. As Bruno Walter once said, “A musician who is only a musician is only half a musician.” I completely agree. I can now sense within me a set of firm but still developing beliefs about who I am and what I can give to my community. I am committed to balance—balancing my roles as an artist, an educator, an advocate, and a scholar. I am committed to connections—connecting students, professionals, and the community, and thus growing and strengthening the field of arts education. As a music teacher, I will give my students musical experiences and will educate them holistically—helping them connect what they do in the music classroom to the outside world, to their dreams, and to other people they may not necessarily ever meet otherwise. I will be an active faculty member in my school: I will bring in professional performance groups, I will take my students to sing at hospitals, I will establish partnerships with those people and organizations in the same endeavor. Above all, I will not let art—the unique experience that creates, builds, and strengthens individuals and community—isolate me from my world.

PURPLE HAZE AT THE CHICAGO CHILDREN'S CHOIR ACADEMY

When my faculty advisor (and the coordinator of the Partnerships through the Arts program) Dr. Maud Hickey asked me if my a cappella group, Purple Haze, would like to do a school workshop, I jumped at the idea. In class we had been discussing instrumental chamber ensembles going into schools and sharing with the kids, and my mind had already been ticking with possibilities for my own singing group. Dr. Hickey had partnered with the new music charter school, the Chicago Children's Choir Academy, and thought that my a cappella group could possibly do a workshop during one of their Friday morning guest artist sessions.

After we picked a date, all that was left was to create the program. Gary Wendt, the music director at the Choir Academy, and I communicated through email about appropriate ways for me and my group to interact with the students, but he was flexible and open to just about anything. Although we were glad to have freedom, this also meant we would start from scratch. Since Purple Haze hadn't done school workshops for a few years, there was no model to follow. I got together with a few members of the group and simply brainstormed ideas for a while. We came up with many fun and feasible ideas, but were disappointed that some activities we knew could be really great just weren't possible with such a large group.

After having recently completed some class sessions on what makes a good complete musical experience, I was committed to making this workshop as educational as possible. I tried to control that by including all aspects of musicking: listening, performing, analyzing, and creating. Another challenge we faced in creating this workshop was selecting appropriate songs from our repertoire. Purple Haze (as well as most college a cappella groups out there) performs popular music of most genres and styles. We wanted to make sure that most of the songs we sang would be familiar to the



Jamie Howe (top left) and the Northwestern University a cappella group Purple Haze were guest teaching artists at the Chicago Children's Choir Academy as part of Northwestern's Partnerships Through the Arts initiative.

kids, but also had to make sure the content was appropriate for elementary school children. For our future workshops we would have to pull out some songs that we hadn't performed in a long while and also change some lyrics in order to create a well-balanced and appropriate musical program.

A particularly neat idea that Mr. Wendt had was for us make a little sheet for the kids to receive the day before which would introduce our group and list some musical things they should remember and listen for during the workshop. Similarly, we made a worksheet which the kids could complete afterwards, a reflection on what we'd tried to present in the workshop. After the performance most of the students would spend time filling out this worksheet, while a select few (who had received special "backstage passes" for their good behavior) would work with us more closely in a small group setting.

The week of the workshop all of Purple Haze was clued into what was going to be happening that Friday. Everyone received a printed order of events, and we talked through the sequence and timing. Knowing we were working by the clock, we

ran through the program a few times to time it. We were excited as soon as we stepped into the school; the walls inside were painted different bright colors, and the kids in the hall were happy to see us. We warmed up offstage while all of the grades piled noisily into the auditorium and felt like rock stars when we entered to the raucous applause of 200 screaming children. Their enthusiasm was overwhelming; they even cheered when we demonstrated singing a scale!

Talk about audience participation—these kids sang with us practically the entire time! They knew just about every song and couldn't help raising their voices with us. It was great to see all the little heads of these children bobbing up and down as they sang along. (Their teachers, worrying that their students were being rude, at first spent a lot of time trying to silence them, but of course we loved the participation!) When it was time for questions, one darling boy stood up and asked us, "Can y'all sing another song, please?" Even though we knew beforehand that these students were especially keen about music, we were amazed at both their willingness to participate, their sophistication of musical skills, and level of talent. Our "backstage pass" time was sur-

AS A MUSIC TEACHER, I WILL GIVE MY STUDENTS MUSICAL EXPERIENCES AND WILL EDUCATE THEM HOLISTICALLY—HELPING THEM CONNECT WHAT THEY DO IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, TO THEIR DREAMS, AND TO OTHER PEOPLE THEY MAY NOT NECESSARILY EVER MEET OTHERWISE.

prisingly successful as the kids just dove right into improvisation and learning our music. One particular girl was just wailing her heart out on our Circle song (see activity list in sidebar) with no apprehension of the peers or adults around her. It was awesome to hear these big creative riffs pouring out of this small child.

After Purple Haze's first school workshop with the CCCA, we were energized and did plenty more in the local Evanston area and at after-school programs. During one spring break, we took a trip to Rome, Italy, and did three workshops at a middle school, high school, and elementary school. It was so rewarding to bring the college a cappella scene overseas to a completely new audience that hadn't been saturated with it already. In Rome, there was a sweet nine-year-old boy who jumped on our vocal percussionist after the workshop and exclaimed, "At first I thought you had a radio attached to your belt, and then I thought that there was something in your backpack sending electric signals to a receiver on your mouth, and then I realized it was all just coming from your mouth!"

Purple Haze learned an awful lot in crafting these school workshops about appropriate ways of having authentic musical interactions with children of all ages. We also benefited as artists; singing to these crowds of kids who just drank up all this music education and who rush to get your autograph afterwards refreshed our love of music as well as our love for our ensemble. No matter how many workshops we did, after each one we found we'd discovered new ways of tweaking our

"formula" so that we could be more effective. Reflection on our work wasn't a "task" to complete; it was part of a natural creative process we thrived on as artists.

Below are some very important lessons we found during the course of our work. Every situation is different, but these general bits of advice should help any ensemble group looking to engage students in authentic and enjoyable musical interactions:

- Make sure your program is appropriate

for the age and size of the group and that enough music will be familiar to them.

- Even though simply performing is always easier, infuse the entire program with educational material. The teachers will appreciate it, and the kids will feel more satisfied as well.
- Pay attention to the timing of your program. Have a plan for what to do if you end up with extra time or not enough time.
- Be animated! Even high schoolers who at first treat you with the "we're too cool for this" attitude will be won over when they see your sincere enthusiasm.
- Be personal! Get as much audience participation as you can without creating chaos and try to connect with individual kids.
- Transitions are key. Be snappy and professional, but still...
- Always maintain the laid-back, fun attitude that makes you love music in the first place.¶



The familiar strategy of identifying instruments and the motifs connected to Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" encourages musical artists to engage students as active listeners while observing a performance. Thus, the metaphoric and analogous representations of the musical character of animals can help to stimulate an ongoing conversation about the meaning of music in students' lives in relation to narrative, movement, and dialogue.