

A Quiet Revolution The Transformation of Education Through the Arts

By **EDWARD BILOUS**

We are all familiar with the names of Juilliard alumni who have achieved extraordinary success in the arts. Whether they are on stage, on screen, or on recordings, they carry the name and image of Juilliard into the global community.

There is now another group of alumni who are quietly transforming the arts in America. While they may not be household names, they have earned positions of leadership at prominent institutions around the country and are bringing with them a new brand of arts advocacy that they first encountered at Juilliard. We will share the stories of six of them in this article, but there are many others who have taken the challenge of arts education into their hearts, including Katherine Cherbas (cellist and development associate for the InterSchool Orchestras of New York), Dan Coleman (composer-in-residence at the Tucson Symphony Orchestra), Aaron Flagg (executive director of the Westchester Music Academy), Misty Tolle Pereira (director of educational outreach at the 92nd Street Y), Janice Potter (on the faculty at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.), and Tanya Dusevic Witek (a teaching artist with the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Institute).

If that isn't impressive enough, consider the fact that the vast majority of the teaching artists at the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Institute are Juilliard graduates.

[Read more](#) about the Insights Into Learning class.

Return to the [Center Stage index page](#).

This is a remarkable bit of information and it says a great deal about the changes that have taken place at Juilliard in recent years. For these and dozens of other alumni experienced firsthand the difficult challenges that face the arts in contemporary American society. But instead of joining the "chorus of doom" and lamenting the so-called decline of American culture, this group of unlikely warriors turned to aesthetic education, depth psychology, holistic

studies, improvisation, interdisciplinary work, and Texas fiddling to build bridges between the music they love and the people in the communities they serve.

While all the individuals featured in this article share a view of education that can be traced back more than 50 years to the presidency of William Schuman, what they are planning is far beyond what Schuman could have imagined; it is essentially the transformation of American schools through the progressive teaching of the arts.

Driven by a passion for teaching and a desire to advance the cause of arts education, each of these artist-teachers has used his or her skill and imagination to create career opportunities, often where none previously existed. This article is a small tribute to the contributions so many of our alumni are making daily on the behalf of the extended Juilliard community.

Even the brightest flames begin with a small spark, and so it is with the artist-teachers who have emerged from our ranks. I would like to describe some of the remarkable contributions they are making, but before doing so, it is important to say something about the program that inspired them.

There is at Juilliard a collection of classes and programs that were created more than a decade ago to help students develop teaching skills. They include three graduate-level courses—Insights Into Learning, Teaching Music Theory, and Arts in Education—as well as several teaching fellowship programs: the Morse Fellowship, Concert Fellowship, and Literature and Materials of Music

Fellowship. This collection of efforts is known unofficially as the Arts and Education program. The different opportunities in the A&E program range from preparing students to teach college-level theory to helping performers create preconcert family presentations.

While there is no single mission statement for the Arts and Education program, there are some philosophical principles upon which much of our work is founded. Chief among these is the conviction that learning is a product of the imagination. As teachers, we are at our best when our students experience learning through the use of their imaginations. When provided with an environment that encourages creativity, independent thinking, and personal engagement, learning becomes a holistic process.

In planning any program of study, it is impossible to separate *what* is being taught from *how* it is taught. Learning in any subject takes on greater depth and importance when it is the result of a creative inquiry, fueled by curiosity and sustained through interest and passion. In a creative classroom, teachers are far more than translators of information. They are enablers of self-discovery, guides on a journey through the imagination.

In classes that feature creative and interactive work, students see a work of art not as a *product*, but as a *process*. On a deeper level, art becomes a metaphor for life, for personal experience—not limited by fixed meaning, but rather, rich with limitless possibilities. This is the first step in creating a career that is fulfilling and self-actualizing.

It is thrilling for me to see how students at Juilliard have embraced their training in arts education and how they have used it to create career opportunities for themselves and, in turn, to serve their communities. I regret that there is not enough space in these pages to share the stories of all our alumni who are working in the field of arts education. Their efforts are shedding new light on the importance of the arts in our lives.

J. Todd Frazier

Founding Director of the American Festival for the Arts, Houston, Tex.

I remember Todd Frazier vividly as a student in the first Arts and Education class in 1994. He was a composition student with a great deal of interest in teaching and was applying for a fellowship in the Literature and Materials of Music Department. Todd imagined, as many young composers still do, that he would one day get a position at a university teaching theory or composition.

I recall the dismay he expressed when he learned about the diminishing support for the National Endowment for the Arts and the severe cutbacks music programs across the nation were facing. A natural teacher and leader, Todd decided to use his experience at Juilliard to help the cause of arts education.

After graduating in 1994, he returned to his home in Houston and continued expanding the American Festival for the Arts, which he had founded with a summer grant from Juilliard. Ten years after its opening, the A.F.A.—a community-based summer music conservatory for middle- and high-school students that works closely with school districts in southeast Texas to supplement and support the year-round curriculum—has an enrollment of more than 250 students from 72 schools in the greater Houston area. More than 350 of their graduates have gone on to such prestigious schools as Eastman, the Curtis Institute, Juilliard, and many others.



Todd Frazier with students at Ridgecrest Elementary School in Houston, Tex., where he served as "principal for a day" and introduced the students to a wide variety of music from different traditions.

Under Todd's leadership, the A.F.A. has become nationally known as a model of community-based

music education, and is about to open a second campus in Beaumont that will serve the youth of Chambers, Hardin, Jefferson, Liberty, and Orange counties in southeast Texas.

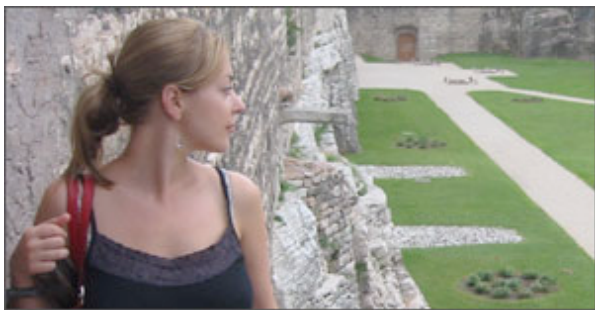
"What we really need today are more artists entering into communities and becoming productive and valued parts of those communities," Todd says. But conservatory students who have only practiced, taken the required theory and history courses, and given recitals often find the "real world" an overwhelming challenge.

But things are changing, he points out. "Just as I saw potential to make a difference by committing to safeguard the arts in education in Texas, others are waiting for the right time and place to stand up and contribute to their communities." Conservatories around the country have begun to recognize "that a new curriculum needs to be implemented to address these educational and market needs, but Juilliard is one of the few that has been proactive in implementing a curriculum that helps its students bridge the transition from college to the professional world."

Paola Prestini

Director of Education, American Composers Orchestra; Co-Director, VisionintoArt

Paola Prestini is one of the most independent-minded and productive individuals in the arts-and-education community. Upon completing her work in the Arts and Education program at Juilliard, she joined the faculties of both the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Institute as a teaching artist. Her extraordinary imagination and leadership skills brought her to the attention of the American Composers Orchestra, where she is now serving as the director of education. In the two years that Paola has been at the A.C.O. she's created an engaging program that identifies gifted high school students and introduces them to the work of American composers and musicians.



Paola Prestini

Paola writes, "I believe strongly in the continued development of music education programs in public schools. They provide students with a breadth of knowledge and understanding, and they are the foundation of a viable future for the arts in society. We at the American Composers Orchestra believe that change can be embraced at any level through the power of personal engagement with music. The education program at the A.C.O. offers workshops to high school students that introduce them to different compositional styles and live

performances by engaging directly with composers and performers. Students participating in our program compose and perform musical and interdisciplinary dialogues that develop listening skills and their individual creative voices through new music."

Many of the issues and inquiries raised in the Arts and Education program had a profound effect on Paola's creative work as well. While still at Juilliard, she and fellow student Nora Kroll-Rosenbaum combined their multiple talents in the creation of VisionintoArt, a collective of performing artists, writers, philosophers, and like-minded individuals who have produced and performed more than a dozen interdisciplinary works.

The open environment, philosophy, and social consciousness that Paola found in the class, she says, were invaluable in encouraging inclusive thinking. "In a time when arts audiences are severely divided by genre, we need to take responsibility for our art forms and their future. Whether it is teaching in schools, or adding an education component to concertizing, or programming with different audiences in mind, we are all part of a larger equation, and can be active in finding solutions to the many problems we face as artists."

Sarah Johnson

Director of Education and Community Partnerships, Philadelphia Orchestra

In 2004 the world of arts education was rocked when a little-known, 28-year-old oboist was hired as the director of education for the Philadelphia Orchestra, one of the most prestigious positions of its kind in the nation. Sarah Johnson, musician and teaching artist for the Lincoln Center Institute and New York Philharmonic, is one of the remarkable examples of a new kind of artist-educator trained at Juilliard.

"I went to Juilliard for my undergraduate and graduate degrees in oboe performance between 1993 and 1999," Sarah says. "Although I grew in many ways as a musician and as a person, one class I took while in the master's program genuinely changed the direction of my life. In Arts and Education, I discovered a fascination for finding ways to engage people in music, and I learned early on that doing this kind of work inspired and nurtured me as an artist."

Sarah pursued this interest from her first teaching experiences in elementary school classrooms to her work as concert designer, host, and performer in the woodwind quintet that she co-founded while at Juilliard. "In my current position," she says, "I am happy to find myself engaged in interesting questions about the challenges facing the classical music world, and the orchestra world in particular."



Sarah Johnson

"How can orchestras become more approachable and welcoming to audiences who may not be accustomed to the rituals connected to the traditional concert experience? How can we change peoples' perception of classical music as an intimidating art form that requires extensive knowledge on the part of the audience member? What can we do to bridge the gap between the musicians on stage and the people in the audience? How can we preserve and nurture our great artistic traditions, keeping them vital within the context of contemporary American society?"

The ways in which orchestras face their responsibilities as cultural citizens within their cities—and conservatories prepare young musicians for careers that require more than virtuosity on their instruments—will no doubt be shaped by such forward-thinking young artist-educators as Sarah.

David Wallace

Faculty, The Juilliard School; Senior Teaching Artist, New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center Institute

From his earliest years as a performer David Wallace has been a maverick. Unlike many musicians, David never felt the need to choose between different musical languages for his own self-expression. Growing up in Houston, he studied classical music but also had a great passion for jazz improvisation and Texas fiddling, which he continues to play today. David received his M.M. in 1994 from the Mannes College of Music and a D.M.A. from Juilliard in 1999. His doctoral document, titled "Texas-Style Contest Fiddling: The Evolution and Performance Practice of an American Art Form," won the Richard F. French Prize in 1999.



His ability to bridge the immense stylistic divide in various kinds of string music had a profound effect on his work in arts education. Throughout his career as a teaching artist, David has explored ways of building bridges between popular and classical music. Indeed, his work as a teaching artist has been largely dedicated to exploring universal concepts present in all music. In doing so, he regularly combines musical forms and genres in creative lesson plans—such as having students compose a *concerto grosso*, an 18th-century musical form, using popular



David Wallace

rhythms and improvisational styles of our time.

Immediately after graduating from Juilliard, David was hired as a teaching artist by both the Lincoln Center Institute and the New York Philharmonic. The Philharmonic awarded him the Halee and David Baldwin Teaching Artist Chair in Arts Education, the first such appointment in the United States. He recently completed his first book, *Reaching Out: A Musician's Guide to Interactive*

Performance, with a publication date pending.

With regard to the role of the conservatory in general arts education, David recently wrote, "The 21st-century conservatory must do more than provide artistic training of the highest caliber; it must empower its graduates to become ambassadors for the arts. No one can convey the important role the arts play in our society better than artists. We communicate that ideal through our playing, our teaching, and by embracing life as sensitive and creative human beings."

Nicole Cherry

Faculty, Texas A&M University; Second Violin, Marian Anderson String Quartet

Unlike many students in the Arts and Education program, Nicole Cherry enrolled in the classes already knowing her life's work would include bringing music to the children and families of her home community. Not long after graduating from Juilliard in 1995 with a master's degree in violin, Nicole joined the music faculty of Texas A&M University and soon after was invited to become a member of the Marian Anderson String Quartet, which has been in residence at the university since 2001. In addition to performing music of the highest caliber, the quartet has created educational programs that, in Nicole's words, inspire "communities to commit to the development of their children as well-rounded individuals, our future leaders."

In describing the ensemble's mission, Nicole makes the observation that "not only is art music a representation of what is meaningful and expressive in the world, but it has been symbolic of what is not obtainable to many communities in America for decades."

Driven by a belief in the power of education, the Marian Anderson String Quartet has performed in hundreds of churches, libraries, museums, soup kitchens, and prisons. They have brought their craft to countless children across America, under the auspices of Young Audiences. In 2000 they were awarded a rural residency grant from the Texaco Foundation, which brought music and culture to small communities in the South and Southwest.



Nicole Cherry with children at T.T. Minor Elementary School in Seattle, where her quartet spent several days in residence in November 2002. (Photo by Lee Talner)

Nicole cites a 2004 residency at T.T. Minor Elementary School in Seattle (which the ensemble first visited in 2002, spurring the initiation of violin classes for all fourth-graders), as an example of what their efforts can accomplish. "For 10 days the Marian Anderson String Quartet taught about 15 young people at T.T. Minor Elementary School the art of playing classical violin," she says. "The students followed suit tremendously with an outstanding concert of short melodies to an audience full of family, friends, school board, and community. With the cooperation of many—including the school's devoted principal, who hand-picked instruments from around the city—the quartet was able to instill a sense of belonging and empowerment among a group of young people who would potentially be neglected by society." The music program is now an integral part of the school.

"In the end," says Nicole, "it is the children in reality who are teaching us. The children, with their

efforts to reach for more out of life, by simply playing a violin, remind us of the value and power of committing to an idea and how art can indeed have an impact on the meaning of our lives."

Airi Yoshioka

Assistant Professor of Violin, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Member of Damocles Trio, Continuum, and ModernWorks

Over the years, one comment I continue to hear from former students is how much their experience in arts education has affected their work as artists. For so many teaching artists, presenting music to new audiences in creative ways has inspired them to re-evaluate choices they make regarding everything from programming to program notes. Perhaps no one has combined her talents as performer and educator more seamlessly than Airi Yoshioka.



Airi Yoshioka (right) performed with dancer Elisabeth Motley at Juilliard's convocation in 2002, in an interactive work incorporating solo violin music by Bach. (Photo by Peter Schaaf)

"Observing children's responses to music is a constant reminder of what it means to be an artist," she says. "Children are so honest and expressive; often they can't contain their fascination or excitement when they hear a work for the first time. I try to incorporate that same sense of wonder in my relationship with music."

As a member of the Damocles Trio, Airi designs programs and concerts intended for children of all ages. She compares her work with students to a musical performance in the sense that they both require a great deal of interpersonal awareness—which, in turn, allows for meaningful interaction as well as moments of spontaneous creation.

Airi believes there is a symbiosis between her work as a teacher and as a performer. "In the past few years, I would often catch myself at moments saying, 'If it weren't for my work as a teaching artist, I would have never discovered this about music.' I believe that is because the fundamental tenet of working as a teaching artist is to make art experiential. By engaging with art that way, all of life becomes more vivid and tangible."

Being a teaching artist, she says, "makes us investigate the core of musical concepts and consider not only how they relate to a particular work, but also how personal experience can help bring them to light. In general, it has provided a whole new perspective on what I thought I already knew."

Airi was recently appointed to the faculty of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, as an assistant professor of violin. She has also developed an arts-in-education course and a community performing arts program modeled after the Morse Fellowship at Juilliard. In 2004, she organized a three-day symposium for artists, teachers, administrators, and community leaders in the Baltimore area to investigate the effectiveness of arts outreach. Eric Booth, director of the mentoring program at Juilliard, led the symposium.

Juilliard has taken a position of leadership in the world of arts education over the past 10 years due, in part, to the efforts of these and many other alumni. I wish we had the space in this article to profile them all; their work is having a profound effect on music education in colleges, performing arts organizations, public schools, and conservatories around the United States. They have achieved a remarkable level of success and recognition not only because of their skills as performing artists, but also because of the unique training they received while at Juilliard.

It has been an honor to work with these remarkable people, both at Juilliard and in the professional world. I thank all of them for the support they have given our program as we strive to create a new generation of artist-educators.

Edward Bilous is chair of the Literature and Materials of Music Department and director of the Music Technology Center.

[Return to Contents](#)

©The Juilliard School. All Rights Reserved.

No material on this site may be reproduced in part or in whole, including electronically, without the written permission of The Juilliard School **Publications Office**.