

(RE)CONNECT *f*ESTIVAL

SAVE-THE-DATE
Saturday, May 5, 2018
Keene, New Hampshire



I proudly joined the BWV Board of Directors with a commitment to raise awareness about the work performed by Dobbs, help lead an effort to reconnect many of you to him and BWV, and celebrate a person who is dear and important to many of us.

As I reflect about the joy and purpose of music in my life as a professional musician and community member, I recall the numerous summer chamber music interactions with Dobbs between the 1970s and 1990s that sparked my understanding, love and curiosity about the meaning of music. Perhaps like many of you, his positive inspiration is a part of my musical projects and life outlook today.

How did Dobbs influence your life? Many of us have various musical and non-musical stories and memories with Dobbs to share. For example, I recall the many times I spent running miles with him in the woods on the loop (eventually a full marathon), which helped bridge our rehearsal room experiences to another life endurance and meaningful activity. With Dobbs, I experienced a community of friends, thoughtful conversations and laughs, dancing, new foods, and making skits that I loved. Fortunately, the opportunity to engage Dobbs by our communities is flourishing today in a larger capacity and with increased relevance. Let's consider the thousands of refugees, prisoners and community members reached by Dobbs that would not otherwise have received the benefits of music.

On Saturday, May 5, 2018, BWV will present the world premiere public screening of the film *Back to Bolivia: A Lifetime Later* in Keene, NH. The film follows Dobbs as he reconnects with remote communities and people during his first concert tour to the region 44 years ago.

We invite you for a day of events, gathering to reconnect as a community of musicians and friends. We will play J.S. Bach's Orchestral Suites, Brandenburg Concerti, listen to Dobbs' latest comedic stories, feast Nepali, tell jokes, and recall many good times. There may be spontaneous skits!

Please contact us if you are interested in participating as a musician or film attendee. Look for more details coming soon! Most importantly, let us know if you have advice or ideas to help connect the work by Dobbs and BWV with friends and associates. Follow us on social media.

I look forward to seeing you in the new year. Wishing you a wonderful holiday!

Peace and beauty, Michael Dabroski

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*Denotes gift in support of
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General gifts support all
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Bach With Verse

2016-2017 NEWSLETTER
Season Report by Dobbs Hartshorne, double bass

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2016-17 SEASON BY THE NUMBERS



5

Concert Tours
in 4 Countries
& 3 US States

83

Concerts &
Workshops

4998

Audience members
experiencing live
music & stories

3891

Incarcerated
men, women
& juveniles

1107

Children, teens
& caregivers

Bach With Verse is a registered
501(c)3 non-profit organization.

476 Apple Hill Road
Nelson, NH 03457
603-209-4133
www.bachwithverse.org

PALESTINE CONCERT TOUR

19 Concerts ~ March 2017

Traveling to Palestine is always difficult because one can't avoid the contrast between the warmth of welcome from engaged musicians, friends and the beautiful city of Ramallah on the one hand, and the continued suffering of the Palestinian people on the other. I jumped right in playing for children in the refugee camps. It seems like a lifetime ago when I



Performing a song and dance at the end of a story in the Palestinian Heritage Museum for a nearby girl's school.

first started playing in the camps in 2005. Back then, it was hard to get the kids to be quiet. I've learned a lot since then. Once they are ready to listen, they are entranced by the music of Bach and love the fun of the stories. One powerful example of the effect that Bach can have came in Jalazone camp in a concert for boys in 3rd and 4th grade. I always ask them to listen to the Sarabande and tell me what feelings they get. One boy in the front row began weeping halfway through the Sarabande of the 4th Suite and had to be taken out of the room by a teacher. They told me later that he was thinking about his uncle who had recently been killed. When he return, he was sad during the beginning of the story, but when I started my silly dance he looked up at me and smiled.

Breaking new ground at Al Kamandjati (a music school offering free lessons for children in refugee camps and the poor families who live in old Ramallah),

I formed a string quartet and coached them in the first movement of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 1. This



Boys and Girls at Jalazone Refugee Camp



was especially satisfying because I have known the first violinist of the quartet and the person I created this project with, Ala Shelaldehy, since she was 5 years old. Her family lives across the street from the Al Kamandjati center and in 2005 while I was there, the center opened it's doors and started enrolling students. Ala's older sister began flute lessons while Ala played with her friends on the roof of her house, often wandering into the music center to ask questions. I got to know her even though we didn't



Shostakovich quartet: Ala and Shaidi (violins), Muntaseer (viola) and Aseel (cello)

share a language. The next year she was taking violin lessons and then progressed to be one of the stars of the program. She is on the cover of Sandy Tolan's wonderful book "Children of the Stone" which is a fabulous account of Ramzi Aburedwan's life and his founding of the Al Kamandjati center. The quartet struggled with the second violinists' cold, the cellists' erratic counting and the violists' lack of technique (he is a very advanced clarinet player but a beginning viola student, mostly self-taught). But we persevered and learned the piece.

They gave a very moving performance. It was the first Shostakovich performance that anyone knows about in the West Bank and the first time that a string quartet of Al Kamandjati students was on stage alone playing a string quartet with no faculty conducting. A triumph and to be continued!



Amazing bass student, Ranim, who is self-taught. Today she learned finger movement with the bow.

PRISON CONCERT PROJECT

New Hampshire Prisons
14 Concerts ~ September-October 2016

The highlight of this series of concerts was doing 6 performances at the Merrimack County Jail. What made it special was that I got to play for every single inmate in the jail. There was no sign-up sheet and no self-selection. My host just took me into every pod in the jail to play for everyone: men, women, minimum security, maximum security, about 600 inmates. I love it because you can really see the music working without the filter of the fact that they self-selected. I performed for the women first very early on both days. Some were still asleep or were just crawling out of bed but they were quickly won over. In the maximum pods, some of the inmates weren't allowed out of their cells but they could keep the windows in their doors open and listen. My host made sure that I talked to one of these guys because he was a musician and used to tour and play with the Paul Winter Consort.



Dobbs with bass ready to go on top of car.

At the Cheshire County Jail one man told me that he had been thinking of me and my performance from last year. Just as he was planning to talk to Lieutenant Dixon to ask if he could get me back, he saw the flyer posted that I was coming. An inmate who I had played for last year in Valley Street Jail told me he was inspired by my experimental tunings on the bass and retuned his guitar in fifths.

New York Prisons
11 Concerts ~ February & April 2017

There were a couple of highlights in my travels across upstate New York. One was a number. In Livingston Correctional Facility, there were over 300 men in a gym and they were quiet and respectful during the 3rd Suite and then laughed uproariously during my new story. They clapped after the songs that comment on the action in that story. That's a lot of people and especially on bleachers in a gym with no sound system. I didn't need or want a sound system but if people aren't quiet you can't be heard. But they were very quiet. Another triumph was in Wende Correctional Facility. I didn't know this ahead of time but Wende has a large population of special needs and mental health inmates. When I came into the gym, there was a group of inmates already sitting at one end of the bleachers as another group was filing in. The new men sat not very close to the first group. I asked the rec guy, who I had met years ago



Albion Correctional Facility for Women

down at the Taconic Women's Prison, if we couldn't move them closer together. It wasn't a huge number but it's always better if they sit close together. He said, "No, not really. You see the ones at the end are the special needs group and it took us an hour to get them seated and settled where they are. Plus, the regular inmates don't want to be close to them because sometimes they spit and they don't smell so good." OK, now I got the picture. But like it always does, the Bach calmed them down and everyone was perfectly behaved and enjoyed the show. My friend commented afterwards on how amazing it was to see the special needs group so engaged.

California Prisons
23 Concerts ~ May-June 2017

It's become normal for me in whatever prison jail or youth facility to run into people who have heard me play before, but this year I took it a step further and sought out two inmates who I have come to admire and respect. They were both incarcerated at "SAC" (California State Prison – Sacramento), also known as New Folsom, for years and I had come to know them and appreciate their artistic work. Marty Williams is a wonderful musician and teacher of music as well as a poet and painter of mandalas. He is a great spirit in the prison world doing his best to bring music and art to fellow inmates, atoning for the life he says he owes the universe. Spoon Jackson is a poet and writer who came to prison semi-illiterate. His work has now been translated into several languages and he is very well known in Sweden. My mother read his autobiography "By Heart" and was so impressed she gave copies to everyone in my family. Three years ago, I wrote a small song cycle using poems by Spoon and Marty, but before I returned to SAC that year, they were both transferred to other prisons. This is ultimately a good thing as it could lead to eventual release, but I missed seeing them.

This year, I was able to visit both prisons where they are currently residing and sang and played those songs. Marty's line was classic, "Well, here's someone I thought I'd never see again." Spoon was able to come to a writing class where I was performing even though he was not enrolled in it. He's been in prison since 1978, so he knows how to do things. He was moved by the music and enlisted me in his efforts to get a pardon.

In SAC, I had the great pleasure to work again with the classical guitar students and hear the progress that Jacob, formerly "Drifter", has made on the instrument and as a performer and teacher. He had recently prepared a complete recital and researched the composers and did verbal program notes. What a transformation he has made.

Other concerts up and down the state were also wonderful and I found people who had heard me at nearly all of them. Also, included on the trip were two fund raising house concerts hosted by Irene Herrmann and Mimi Do. They provided a chance for me to talk about the mission of BWV.



Mimi Do with Dobbs after a concert.

UGANDA CONCERT TOUR

16 Concerts ~ April-May 2017



Dobbs acting the part of a tree in the story "Another Fairy Tale" for the Dwelling Places boys.



Dobbs greeted by 400 thankful inmates at Mbale prison.

I began in Kampala returning to Dwelling Places schools and centers to perform for rescued street kids as well as additional outreach programs for young mothers and pregnant teens. The tour then became not only a concert tour but also adventure travel. After my time in Kampala, I went with Kristen Fry and our faithful and enthusiastic driver, Farouk, to the hinterlands. We visited prisons far north in the Karamoja region. I was able to get a translation of one of my stories into the language spoken there and was rewarded for my efforts by huge cheers. The highlight of the trip was one performance at a prison in the town of Soroti where I played for 400 men sitting under two trees. They sought the shade so looking out from the porch where I was playing it looked like a pair of yellow eyeglasses; the yellow of their jumpsuits in the two patches of shade. They listened attentively to the 4th Bach Suite and then screamed and laughed at my story in Luganda. Afterwards, the warden who was sitting next to me said that two men wanted to thank me by playing songs they had spontaneously written for me. So they each stood up and sang for me and the rest of the men one with a thumb harp and the other with a plucked harp called an udungu. Some of the lyrics were in Luganda but some were in English; "Thank you Dobbs music man" etc. Afterwards, I walked into their midst and every single man gave me the complicated Ugandan handshake. What a day.

My last concert was a return to "Death Row" at Luzira main prison. As I walked in, the men were muttering "Billy and Brenda, Billy and Brenda" from my story they had heard 2 years ago.



"Auntie Christine" cares for the girls who have been rescued off the streets until they are placed with family or in a school. Her face is a permanent smile.

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Proceeds go directly to fund BWV programs around the world.

2017-18 SEASON EVENTS

- New Hampshire Prison Tour
- Iraq Concert Tour
- North Carolina Concert Tour
- Costa Rica Concert Tour
- California Prison Tour



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