

HEBRON ACADEMY Semester



SPRING
2011
SUMMER



Violinists Polly Drown '11, Dong Hee Lee '12 and Kexin Wang '13 tackle a passage from Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherezade*.



Sound track

by Jennifer F. Adams

Polly Drown '11 squares her shoulders, sets bow to string, and begins the famous violin cadenza in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*. The rest of us wait quietly for the cue to come back in and together recreate another world, another time. The 18 of us—from four different countries and ranging in age from sixth grader Tehya Johnson to “seasoned” adults like me and language teacher Cynthia Reedy—are playing nineteenth century music on instruments made in the twentieth, while just off stage a student records the concert using the latest twenty-first century technology.

Music is all around us these days. Everyone seems to have an iPod, we can get radio streamed to our computers or cars and millions have weekly television dates with shows like American Idol.

Music marks our rituals and iconic moments. We play national anthems at Olympics medal ceremonies and “Taps” as a farewell at funerals. Do you remember the screaming teenagers who greeted the Beatles when they came to the

United States? How about Marian Anderson singing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial when she was denied the opportunity to perform for an integrated audience at Washington's Constitution Hall? And who can forget the sight of the United States senators and representatives gathered on the steps of the Capitol on September 11, 2001, spontaneously singing “God Bless America” at the end of that horrible day.

THE BEE GEE BEEES



Lean on me. The Hebeegeebees performing in 1993, their first year. Founded by science teacher Jen Craig (left), the group included Marie Quirk '94 (hidden), Anna Labykina '94 (hidden), Roby Peabody '94, math teacher Bob Gunn, Julie Chick '93, Lydia Pottle '96 and Erica Litchfield '94 (kneeling).

In 1993, new science teacher Jen Craig found herself missing the *a cappella* singing she had done at Amherst College. On a whim, she decided to start a group at Hebron. "It was just a lark, learning to arrange one song at a time, starting with three girls who loved to sing and me," she recalled. "I think we sang 'Lean on Me' in the church."

Small as they were, the Hebeegeebees were an instant hit, and both students and faculty eagerly joined the group. Eventually the interest was so strong that Mrs. Craig had to hold auditions. After two recordings and seven years, the Craigs moved on to Hotchkiss, where Mrs. Craig leads—and sings with—Calliope, a girls' *a cappella* group. The Hebeegeebees slowly faded but were revitalized with the arrival of arts chair Beth Barefoot in 2008. Students audition in the fall, practice one evening per week and perform several times throughout the school year, both on campus and at alumni events.



R-e-s-p-e-c-t. The Hebeegeebees perform their showstopper at the spring concert in May 2011. Rob MacLellan '11, Elijah Moreshead '13, Yena Kang '12 (R), Charlotte Middleton '14 (E), Christina English '11 (S), Allyson Strachan '12 (P), Erika Thomas '11 (E), Polly Drown '11 (C), Max Middleton '12 (T), Ian Choi '12 and Jai Kim '11.

I have been involved, off and on, with Hebron's music program since I started playing again in the mid 1990s. It was great fun to be "one of the kids" and I loved not only the music, but getting to know some of the students better. Workload being what it is, however, I decided to take a break for a couple of years. Now that the fine arts program is settled into its new home in the Lepage Center for the Arts I was curious about the state of Hebron music today, and I rejoined the Orchestra this winter.

And what did I find? Hebron's music department accommodates students with a casual interest in music as well as advanced musicians looking for more instruction and opportunities. The curriculum includes classroom courses in music appreciation (required for ninth graders) and music theory as well as various ensembles such as Chorus and Orchestra, which are open to all ages and skill levels. The ensembles typically rehearse twice a week before the school day begins, and perform twice each year, in the fall and spring. Smaller, more focused ensembles are formed as interest allows. Jazz Band meets one evening a week, as do the Hebeegeebees, Hebron's popular extra-curricular *a cappella* group. Although there are only two full-time music faculty—department chair Beth Barefoot and instrumental teacher John Lawson—their flexibility allows them to cover music courses and also to draw on the greater community for additional opportunities for students.

"I don't know how we do it," Ms. Barefoot said. "Except that John and I are both very experienced musicians, and if we can't cover it, then we'll find a way to address whatever their interests are." Last year, for example, Seung Woo Kim '10 felt that studying with a male instructor would be better for developing his voice. Ms. Barefoot arranged for him to study with John Corrie at Bates, and he went to Lewiston for his weekly voice lesson. This year, Max Middleton '12 began working with former Hebron teacher Karen Chapman, who lives just over the town line. Over the years, outside teachers have come in to provide piano, string and woodwind lessons, as needed.

"Whatever suits the student is what's best," Ms. Barefoot said, "I think that's a great feature, in this small private school, with two people on staff."

Meet the faculty

Believe it or not, arts department chair Beth Barefoot has a BA in economics (with a minor in accounting) from the University of Michigan. She left corporate America to work as a freelance musician for 15 years and has conducted and played in nearly every theater—equity, professional, community, high school—in southern Maine. Ms. Barefoot handles the vocal groups and voice lessons, and music-directed the last three winter musicals.

Although Ms. Barefoot uses modern technology in her classes, she often demonstrates concepts on the piano in her classroom.



In addition to classroom courses, Mr. Lawson also directs the Orchestra and Jazz Band.

Like Ms. Barefoot, instrumental instructor John Lawson came to Hebron in 2008 after working as the manager of the Bangor Symphony and teaching privately. He graduated from the University of Louisville with a degree in music performance, and taught there and at the University of Southern Maine. During the summer you will often find him in the pit band at the Maine State Music Theater.

As Polly settles into the flow of the *Sheherazade* cadenza, I take a moment to reflect on my fellow musicians. Two seats to my right is Jo Haunold '12, a flute player from Austria. She and I will share a small solo passage later in the piece, and I know she's already worried about it. In front of me, I can see Korean violinist Dong Hee Lee '12 playing along with Polly in his head. Behind me Meng Dong Zhuang '12, who hails from China, is carefully following Mr. Lawson's cues to add piano accents at certain points during Polly's solo. It fascinates me to think that we are all playing from the same score without needing to understand each other's spoken languages.

Right next to me is the youngest member of the ensemble, sixth grader Tehya Johnson, one of four middle schoolers who join us. I am nearly forty years older than Tehya, yet in orchestra we are simply clarinet players, following the director and adding our own talents to the mix. To my left is Chris Alberi, a senior at Oxford Hills High School. Chris plays tenor saxophone and his deeper sound augments senior Rob MacLellan's euphonium and Tom Clark '12 on cello. A future music education major, Chris relished the opportunity to experience a program very different from Oxford Hills

in size. In Hebron's small ensembles, *everyone* is a soloist.

Playing together like this is just like being on a team. Individual practice and skill development is very important, yet the music we create together is greater than what we can do alone. Unlike a sports team, however, we practice all season and only play one game.

Ms. Barefoot and Mr. Lawson are not afraid to blend age-old techniques and fundamentals with new technologies. Ms. Barefoot is a big fan of the SMART-board, which looks like a whiteboard, but it

is much more. A projector combined with touch technology turns the board into a giant touchscreen. Ms. Barefoot can project videos and presentations onto the board and or use special markers and music software to create interactive lessons.

"It has all kinds of tools for different classes: English, foreign language and music," she said. "We can put a staff up there, like a math problem, and work right on the board itself. Then we can save it, print it out and everyone can have a copy. It's a wonderful tool. And if I find a piece of music on the internet, I can put it up here and then use my SMARTboard program to write on the score,



Ms. Barefoot's ninth grade music appreciation class watches a dance video on the SMARTboard. Ms. Barefoot also uses the board for interactive lessons and student presentations, including music videos done by her eighth graders.

as a way of illustrating and highlighting what we are discussing in class.”

Ms. Barefoot finds that the board is invaluable in her music appreciation class. She can show short documentaries and interviews, such as a “60 Minutes” story on rapper Eminem or pop phenomenon Lady Gaga. “I can say, ‘I saw this great interview with somebody you love,’ and show them that these are real people, not just superstars. They love it.” Students are able to share presentations on the board and Ms. Barefoot also uses it for the basic music theory that she teaches as part of the course. She can put a blank staff up for students to write on, demonstrate rhythm and pitch, or have students build chords.

Along with directing Orchestra and Jazz Band, Mr. Lawson teaches a new course called Digital Recording. He has a very basic setup—a single computer and software—with which students can record and manipulate all kinds of sounds. The recording equipment that once filled a room and took sound engineers to run can now be found on a home computer, with software

that almost anyone can afford and learn to use.

Mr. Lawson starts the year with the basics: how to create and manipulate sound using ProTools, which is essentially the same software used in recording studios today.

“We use the MIDI [musical instrument digital interface] keyboard for input, or we take something that’s already been recorded and paste it in. The software helps put the two together,” he said. “In the second half of the year we focus less on the ‘how to’ and more on manipulating the sound. It’s interesting to see the different ways that the students approach it. The musicians are better at doing the intuitive musical things. The tech people are really quick at learning the software, but have no idea about the musical side of it. I pair them up when I can, for balance.”

Ms. Barefoot and Mr. Lawson both hope that plans for a dedicated recording studio and much-needed practice rooms will become a reality during the next phase of renovation in the Lepage Center.

Polly finishes with a flourish, and the whole orchestra begins to play again, watching Mr. Lawson and listening to each other, while reading the music, keeping time and adding expression.

Although he loses his baton partway through the piece Mr. Lawson never loses his cool, and quietly leans forward to unscramble us as collectively we lose our way. As we stand to acknowledge the audience’s applause we all know that we could have played better (Jo and I only got our solo *half* right), but we are also elated by what we accomplished together.

As budget shortfalls threaten music education in public school systems across the nation, I am grateful to be part of Hebron’s modest but vital program. Ms. Barefoot and Mr. Lawson insist on excellence, but support and nurture every student, from beginner to advanced. Music students tend to do well in math and science and often top Hebron’s honor roll. As Mr. Lawson said, “As much as I am teaching these kids to play music, more importantly I am teaching them self confidence.”



Mr. Lawson looks on as Tom Clark '12 (left) and Andrew Burgess '11 record Dong Hee Lee '12 in a temporary backstage studio at the Androscoggin Theater.