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Stellaccio shares the arts with students at Johns Hopkins and Illinois Wesleyan

Story by AMELIA BENNER



While the works of the great composers may be timeless, Johns Hopkins University professor Cherie (Egbers) Stellaccio '66 believes that the process of teaching music is always changing.

“Lines of distinction among music genres are being redefined, as evidenced by titles such as *Hip-Hop Symphony with Classical Overtones*,” says Cherie, who is a vocal/general music specialist in the Music Education Division at Hopkins’ Peabody Conservatory. “Even gospel choirs and country music singers are now performing together in those great music halls which once programmed only classical music. Music educators like myself have had to adjust.”

Cherie has taken her expertise in teaching music all over the world. In July 2008 she led a workshop in integrated arts at the bi-annual conference of the International Society

for Music Education, held in Bologna, Italy. She has also presented at the Institute of Chinese Traditional Music in Beijing, and the International Symposium on Teaching World Music, held in the United Kingdom.

“I believe that the music of other cultures should be included along with the music works that are considered to be the pillars of Western culture,” Cherie says. “Our heritage in the 21st century is world music, not only western music. Personally, I’ve always had a passion for travel and a strong desire to know about other cultures, and those passions have influenced my teaching over the years.”

Those same passions inspired Cherie and her son Anthony to found the Anthony E. Stellaccio Visiting Artists Fund at Illinois Wesleyan.

The idea for the funds came about in 2004, when Anthony, a ceramic artist, organized a lecture tour after he spent two years studying art in post-Soviet Lithuania. “I happened to

be in Bloomington about that time, so I just dropped into the IWU School of Art to ask if anyone there might be interested in hosting this lecture,” Cherie says. The faculty were interested, but Cherie learned that the School of Art had no funds to pay for a guest speaker.

While Anthony was glad to speak at Wesleyan gratis, his mother “got to thinking how much visiting artists had encouraged Anthony’s endeavors during his undergraduate years.” She also remembered how Illinois Wesleyan’s Annual Symposium of Contemporary Music “had opened my eyes and ears when I was an undergraduate.” The result of these musings was the lecture series, which is now in its second year.

Cherie, who holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction (music education) from the University of Maryland, is a former president of the Maryland College and University Educators Association. In that capacity she initiated the action plan for meeting professional development school requirements in Music Teacher Certification, and she directed the Maryland Music Educators’ Mentorship Program. She also continues to pursue her choral and solo activities and performs with the Arundel Vocal Arts Ensemble.

Remembering her own years at Wesleyan, Cherie stresses the importance of a broad liberal arts education to her students.

“As much as I love music, I know that it is not music alone that will prepare them for life,” she says. “When my students at Peabody grouse about how the 26 credit hours of liberal arts they are required to take rob them of practice time, I encourage them to consider the rich and interesting lives they will discover if they regard their life goals in a larger context.”