

Music carries on

Music heals Emmanuel Jal's psychological wounds. It is the vehicle by which Holly Near has been a champion for peace and women's rights for four decades. Music is at the heart of Amy Horowitz's academic pursuits as an ethnomusicologist and it is the College Chorale's lifeblood.

These presenters at the 19th annual Westheimer Peace Symposium Oct. 21 offered first person testimony into the role of music and the arts as a catalyst for peace, nonviolence and social change.

This year's theme was "From Resistance to Redemption: Rhythms of Hope."

James Reynolds, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty, introduced the day's activities for what has been described as the College's "signature event" each year.

"Our Quaker heritage places peace, nonviolence and social justice at the heart of the College's mission," he said. "These values shape what we do and inform who we are — these values are fundamental to teaching and learning at Wilmington College."

Reynolds also noted the "vision and generous support" of the late Charles and May Westheimer, the symposium's namesakes that financially endowed the program in 1991 with the hope it would be a forum for the Wilmington College community to be explicit about peacemaking, social justice and respect for all persons.

HOLLY NEAR: 'MAY THE WINDS OF CHANGE CARESS US EVEN THOUGH THEY BURN OUR EYES'

Holly Near believes everyone is an activist whether they realize it or not. Our actions influence, teach, inspire and motivate oth-

Emmanuel Jal



the winds of change

BY RANDY SARVIS

ers — for good or ill.

“Everything we do is an action, so we are activists,” said the long-time singer-songwriter, whose presentation was interspersed with vocal interludes from her 40-plus year songbook of promoting peace and social justice.

“But our activism needs to be creative, and come from a place of fascination rather than a place of fear.”

That’s why artists that know those places of fascination represent what she describes as “the most important form of revolution in any generation.”

Near, whose presentation was titled “The Power of Song,” cited an instance she witnessed in New York City in which parents were physically and verbally abusing a fussy child and no one protested until a Caribbean man in a non-confrontational manner began singing, “Don’t hit the baby, don’t hit the baby, mom.”

Also, on a more macro level, when the dictator Augusto Pinochet was thrusting Chile into the throws of brutal tyranny in the 1970s, one of the first outspoken opponents of the regime that he eliminated was that country’s John Lennon.

“But his music kept going and his songs went all over the world,” she said, noting that international reaction to Pinochet’s systematic “disappearances” of his opposition helped lead to a restoration of a democratic government in the 1980s.

“Tyrannical governments go after the artists first, then the academics, the students and then labor,” she added.

Near said a single person’s action can precipitate a movement. Witness the butterfly effect of a Rosa Parks, John Muir and Cindy Sheehan.

“Fugitive slaves couldn’t have known what they did led to Nelson Mandela becoming president of South Africa and Barack Obama becoming the president of the United States,” she added.

“What direction are you going to take your planet?” Near asked the students in

the audience. “Change happens and it happens because a group of people wanted it to happen — a group of people who are brave enough to move from a place of fascination rather than a place of fear.”

Near believes art and music completely changed her life and led her to act not so much for specific causes, but in taking action with “one humanity, one life and one world” in mind.

“How do we make the most of the time we have here?” she said. “All you have to be is a link that connects the past to the future — find something you’re interested in and do it well.”

AMY HOROWITZ: ‘WE MUST OPEN OUR EARS AND OUR HEARTS’

Amy Horowitz recalls becoming absorbed into a Tel Aviv marketplace amidst the blur of mid-day shoppers, the aromas of ethnic cooking, the colorful wares for sale, the din of sellers attracting customers to their stands and some of the most incredible sounds she ever heard.

“Suddenly I heard a music that made me stop in my tracks,” she said.

Horowitz is an ethnomusicologist at The Ohio State University with a keen interest in Mediterranean Israeli music, a regionally popular music created by Israeli Jews from Islamic countries.

While she has studied the work of some 200 musicians within this distinct genre, her talk focused upon Zehava Ben and her “Singing across

Irresoluble Geographic and Counter Constituencies.”

Horowitz is, in essence, a musical archaeologist in the Holy Land.

“In the digging, I began to understand the musical and cultural laboratory we call Israel and Palestine,” she said. “Music is so often a teacher.”

After World War II, some 300,000 European Jews and 27,000 Jews from North Africa came to Israel.

“Each of these communities brought a music they hold dear,” she noted. “So dozens of kinds of music converged in a very tiny place — it’s a musical laboratory.”

Zehava Ben is a Jewish, Moroccan Arab — “and incredibly proud of each,” Horowitz said. While she lives in a tumultuous land that’s often defined by Israeli versus Arab and Jew versus Muslim, Ben can identify with each of those entities.

“Imagine how it feels to have inside yourself the enemy you’re supposed to be fighting — she gives voice to those incongruencies,” Horowitz said, adding that many musicians like Ben command mixed audiences of Muslims and Jews.

“She’s changing peoples’ consciousness. She hopes her music will be a source for promoting peace,” Horowitz added.

While Ben’s music and that of her contemporaries are not overtly political or protest songs, their lyrics in love songs, party songs and religious songs often hold underlying subtleties and nuances that readily address political issues and other sources of conflict.

“There’s a lot of encoding going on in these love songs, lyrical twists,” she said. “Music is a possible way to slip across enemy lines, for us to know each other and work together for peace.”

Horowitz said the



Amy Horowitz



Sophomore Phillip Merritt offers a soulful solo during the College Chorale's presentation at the symposium.

popularity of cassette recorders in the 1970s gave many disenfranchised musicians an opportunity to develop an audience. In fact, the widespread trade in homemade cassettes led to the phenomenon of these musicians outselling the mainstream music heard on local radio's narrow play lists.

Horowitz urged students in the audience to delve beyond the initial riffs and chords of unfamiliar music, and become musical archeologists themselves.

"Instead of dismissing the sound, take a listen. What does it mean for the people who love it?" she said. "We must retrain ourselves to be diverse spirits on the planet by opening our ears and our hearts."

COLLEGE CHORALE: SONGS, THE BRIDGE TO UNDERSTANDING — REACH ACROSS THE LINES

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The Wilmington College Chorale has become such an integral part of the Peace Symposium in recent years that, this year with the "Rhythms of Hope" theme, it was especially appropriate for one of WC's points of pride to perform a 45-minute concert.

Under the direction of Catherine Roma, professor of music, the Chorale opened with "Bridges," words and music by Bill Staines. The song speaks of a bridge "being better than a wall" and having the ability of changing "two things to one."

"Let us build a bridge of music and let us cross it with a song. Let us span another canyon, let us right another wrong."

"Walk a Mile" by Pepper Choplin extends the metaphor of walking a mile in your neighbor's shoes: "See the world through your neighbor's eyes, so many things you'll come to realize."

Stevie Wonder's "Conversation Peace" ponders the shame in the fact that man's inhumanity to man is evident in both 2000 B.C. and 2000 A.D.

"All for one, one for all, there's no way we'll reach our greatest height unless

we heed the call: Me for you, you for me, there's no chance of world salvation 'less the conversation's peace."

In "Reconciliation" from *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Give Us Peace), the words of Walt Whitman come alive with music by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

"Word over all, beautiful as the sky, beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost."

Brian Tate's "We Are One" addresses the universality of humanity.

"And these words shall live forever within our hearts, and we shall teach them to our children, and remember them in our lives. When we walk, when we sleep, when we rise, we are one; when we laugh, when we sing, when we cry, when we run, we are strong, we belong. We are one."

EMMANUEL JAL: 'MUSIC HEALS'

The appearance by Emmanuel Jal was unique among guests over the 19 years of the Wes-

theimer Peace Symposium, as several hundred members of his large audience in Hermann Court were intimately familiar with his remarkable story before he stepped on stage.

The fall 2009 freshman class was assigned to read his autobiography, *War Child: A Child Soldier's Story*, over the summer for discussion during the New Student Orientation program in August.

So compelling was the book — about a seven-year-old who was abducted and placed among the 10,000 child soldiers in the Sudanese People's Liberation Army — that anticipation was especially high when the new students learned Jal was coming to WC in October.

Two of those freshmen are Audrey Ingram, a communications major from West Liberty, and Susan Dicken, an undeclared major from Loveland.

An active supporter of human rights as a high school student, reading *War Child* as Ingram's first college assignment was a great start to her WC experience.

"For me, it confirmed that I had chosen the right college," she said.

The book offered a compelling "human element" that complements her championing of international human rights.

"Parts of the book made me sick and parts of it made me cry, which is why I thought it was so good," she said. "My reaction was probably more intense than most because I've been actively trying to fight genocide for the past two years."

For Dicken, it was hard to fathom being a child with a gun in your hands and adults telling you to use it on others.

"Just the things he saw at such a young age are so hard to imagine," she said.

Dicken was excited to hear Jal's "life-changing adventure" through his own voice. "I was moved by the book and it was even more eye-opening to see him in person," she said.

Jal spoke of his mother and sisters being raped and father killed, and village burned to the ground — all witnessed by the seven-year-old, who, as a child soldier, wanted to "kill as many Muslims and Arabs as possible."

"What kept me going was bitterness," he said. "I wanted revenge for my family and my village."

After several years, he realized what was becoming of his tortured soul and that of his fellow child soldiers. Many committed suicide rather than cope with the day-to-day terror.

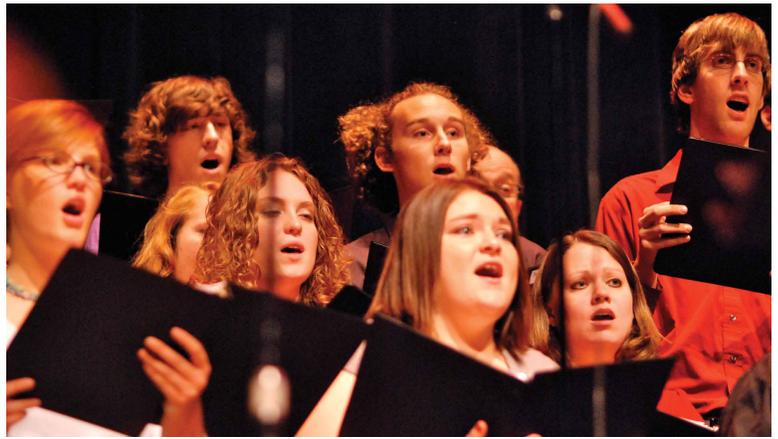
"You cry. You want your parents and nobody's there to answer. You begin to shut down," he said.

One day, Jal and dozens of others saw their chance and made a run for it, yet their 400-mile escape to the relative safety of Kenya was as harrowing in some ways as what they experienced under the militia's command.

He was forced to eat tree roots and roaches to survive. Then, after weeks on the run, he was dehydrated and literally starving to the point at which cannibalism appeared to be his only chance for survival.

"I told my friend, 'I'm going to eat you tomorrow.' I looked at my fellow human beings as food," he admitted. "That night I said, 'God, give me something to eat.' When I just about lost hope and was going to eat my friend (who had died overnight), another friend shot a crow.

"I ate."



The College Chorale prepared an impressive program of numbers, one of which included the line, "See the world through your neighbor's eyes, so many things you'll come to realize." Pictured are, from the left, Tesla Martin, Ely Bolitho, Angie Lauver, Jesse Ingels, Kristen Goans, Mandy McDonough and Keith Hamrick.

Jal, who's now been in exile from Sudan for 15 years, became a hip-hop artist as a means for expressing himself and telling his story. His talk at WC was interspersed with his musical storytelling, which especially resonated with students in the audience.

"I believe I survived for a reason, to tell my story, to touch lives," he said.

"I'm doing this for those who have no voice. For an old lady in my village who lost her children in the war, for my lost comrades, the kids that died on the battlefield," he added.

Oct. 21 marked the 321st day Jal had eaten only a single meal in a symbolic gesture to raise funds for his non-profit organization, GUA Africa, which seeks to put African children in school.

"We have a nation that's been crippled for many years and education is the only way out of this fight," he said.

Jal, now based in London, said what he's experienced will "haunt me forever," yet his faith and creative expression through music — along with his success in reaching others — have given him a new life.

"Music heals. Music for me became a painkiller and my faith gives me hope to want to see tomorrow," he said, adding that seeing persons moved to action by his story makes each day worthwhile.

"When you touch people's minds, it's only temporary," Jal said. "When you touch people's hearts, it's for a long time."

It will be a long time before those 900 people in Hermann Court forget Emmanuel Jal's visit to Wilmington College.



Holly Near presented "The Power of Song" in both words and music.