

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

STORIES 'BEHIND THE SCENES'

DEVELOPING WIRED ENSEMBLE, OCO, RESURRECTING MUSIC AFTER COVID: FALL 2009 – SPRING 2024

2009-10

Olin's music groups have become an integral part of the College. As the Music Program grew over the years, it increasingly became associated with various offices and departments at the College. The Music Program now responds to nine Olin community constituencies: Admissions, Development, President's Council, Office of Student Life, Council of Olin Representatives, Alumni Relations, Olin Families, current students/staff/faculty, and the town of Needham.

Part of my job is to ensure the vitality and health of all the music groups at Olin, thus enabling year-to-year improvement and innovation for this successful program which includes course ensembles (Wired Ensemble, OCO) as well as club ensembles such as the PowerChords (an a cappella group requiring an audition), the Cheerios (a cappella group not requiring an audition), and various chamber music groups. Yet Olin has less than 300 students compared to the far larger enrollments of our college and university neighbors.

As a result, our student musical groups depend on a small coterie of musicians, many of them already in one or more groups at Olin. As is well-known, engineering students have very little time: for our musicians, it's an even tighter schedule. So we faced a challenge when Wellesley's then department chair wanted to directly solicit our vocalists and instrumentalists for their various choral, instrumental, and orchestral ensembles. In May 2010, I wrote the following to the then chair:

Dear [____] – thank you for contacting me about the desire to invite Olin students to audition for the [music groups]. Over the past years quite a few Olin students have joined Wellesley music groups and enjoyed them very much! Our students have pursued music, math, science, arts, humanities, business, and social sciences at Babson, Wellesley, Brandeis and elsewhere. With access to the web and all it offers, they (like all students today) can find virtually any scholarly or passionate pursuit they wish to undertake.

I'm writing to assure you that Olin wants its students to enjoy access to all that your Department offers. An open atmosphere has always prevailed on our campus: there is nothing that prevents a student from pursuing all that Wellesley, Brandeis, and Babson have to offer. This has been nicely evident in the past, and I expect our students to continue such pursuits in the future.

As you may be aware, there are several vocal groups on our campus. Ditto for instrumental groups. Olin's music groups have become an integral part of the College. A little bit of background: As the Music Program grew over the years, it increasingly became associated with various offices at the College. At the present time, the Music Program responds to nine Olin community constituencies: Admissions, Development, President's Council, Office of Student Life, Council of Olin Representatives, Alumni Relations, Olin Families, current students/staff/faculty, and the town of Needham.

Yet we have less than 300 students compared to the far larger enrollments of our college and university neighbors. As a result, our student musical groups depend on a small coterie of musicians, many of them already in one or more groups at Olin. As is well-known, engineering students have very little time: for our musicians, it's an even tighter schedule.

Part of my job is to insure the vitality and health of the music groups at Olin. With only 300 students compared to our BBOW neighbors' thousands, we do not have a large pool that can perform in myriad groups. If [your groups] issue a special invitation to our students, it's only fair that other school and community musical organizations have direct access to our limited numbers of students, all of whom already have time-management issues.

Our students are very aware of what's available at neighboring colleges/universities. I would like to continue leaving that in their hands, without additional solicitations.

At some point, Olin is going to grow the size of its student body. That will be a win-win for all of us!

Kind regards to you and also to [____] –

Diana

Innovations included adjustments to the AHS Capstone Syllabus written by Caitrin Lynch and Rob Martello to suit the Music Capstone. We implemented weekly performances by students during the last six weeks of the AHS Capstone course, regardless of whether class was scheduled to meet or not, in addition to class and instructor constructive commentary on weekly performances, audio recordings of weekly performances so each performer could re-visit the performance to make improvements for next week, "just-in-time" tutorials on musical analysis at the piano, and individual sessions on student creative work that I scheduled outside of class meeting times.

OCO reached another milestone at the end of the Spring 2010 semester. Since the formation of OCO in the Fall of 2002, the orchestra has consistently risen to a higher level each year. Yet at the end of the Spring 2010 semester, I felt the only way to further improve OCO was to introduce major changes to the orchestra. I spent the summer of 2010 thinking about it and met personally with all OCO students on campus during summer 2010 to solicit direct feedback in 30-minute meetings. The resulting innovations impacted the 10-11 academic year.

2010-11

OCO made a number of changes that took effect in the Fall 2010 semester: a clear-cut attendance policy, “creative injections” (surprise musical activities produced by two different students each week), biweekly string sectional coaching, biweekly wind sectional coaching, and optional coached chamber music. After OCO’s first concert at the end of October, I cleared a day and checked in with each member of the orchestra for 20- to 40-minute individual feedback sessions in order to gauge their response to the changes we had implemented. The results were affirming: Students supported the changes and suggested a few more, e.g., “can we include weekly sight reading?” On December 20, 2010 (the Olin Fall Exposition), OCO gave its best concert to date before a packed Milas Hall mezzanine/balcony audience. This performance was videotaped by Joe Hunter.

The Wired Ensemble also reached a high point this year. On December 20, 2010, the class performed a concert of 13 original student compositions which was the best collective class concert we have had in this course. Working with these students from the class of 2014 is a joy—they’re creative, open, and responsive. I was able to connect the arts of writing text and writing music to a much fuller degree this year by making explicit analogies between musical composition tools/concepts and those associated with writing. For instance, linking the end of a musical phrase with the beginning of another is analogous to transitioning from one paragraph to the next.

Because Olin is a tight-knit community and since I know most of the musicians, I was finding it difficult to turn down students who wanted to join OCO on the basis of an audition, so I started the practice of inviting a professional orchestral musician to hear OCO fall and spring auditions with me. We heard 9.5 hours of auditions in the Fall and 4.5 hours in the Spring.

The Spring 2011 semester included six Candidate Weekends (CWs) concerts, a joint concert with BOW music groups in the Sorenson Performing Arts Center, and a Spring Expo concert. A week before the first Candidates Weekend (CW1) performances, I got an email late at night from an OCO student: “Hey Diana, I have some pretty bad news... I just hurt my finger and had to go to the emergency room. There were small chunks of wood that went into my thumb and they had to cut a part of my skin to open up the area to extract the foreign objects. [...]” This resulted in a mad scramble to re-arrange parts and find another player who luckily was available.

Then one hour before the same CW1 concert, I got an email from another player: “Diana, I am sorry but I can’t come to the concert tonight. One of my friends just committed suicide.” With this news, I found myself doing two things at once: quickly re-scoring some of the player’s key parts to avoid any holes in the two pieces OCO would be performing and thinking about the suicide. I knew that life has to go on; we want to go with it and do what needs to be done. On the other hand, a young life was lost and it almost felt like a sacrilege to carry on as if nothing had happened.

On an uplifting note, after that performance, the mother of one of the candidates saw me at dinner and later wrote an email for the orchestra :

Dear Professor Dabby--It was very lovely to talk to you at candidate's weekend. My son and I had a wonderful time, and we both found Olin College to be a very special place.

I had expected to get a feel for the curriculum, students, physical plant, which I did, but I never imagined how much impact the performance of the Olin Conductorless Orchestra would have on my experience; it seemed to offer a beautiful symbolic representation of what the school is all about. I was moved to tears by the performance. I hope the members of the Orchestra know how truly amazing and transporting it is to hear music played collaboratively, without a conductor. From my perspective, the unique quality of the sound seemed to emerge from both the musicians' capacity to be intuitive about each other, modulating tonality and volume to achieve a balance, and a shared intense focus on the nuances of the pieces. I thought about how the qualities needed to achieve such a beautiful performance are what every good leader needs to cultivate.

I tried to articulate something of what I felt to one of the orchestra members, but I think was embarrassingly way too choked up to be clear--after all, I am a nervous mother with her first child going off to college! The musical performance was like no other that I have ever experienced. I hope that you will share my reflections with these wonderful musicians.

Sincerely,
Laura Crain

Here is the OCO videotape from CW 3 (March 4, 2011) that Laura Crain attended:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFd453aYudU&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL

The Wired Ensemble was also showcased for all three CWs, performing four compositions I selected from the Wired Ensemble Event concert of December 2010. They were good pieces, and audiences of the candidates and their parents seemed quite taken with what the students had composed. In any case, it was 'standing room only' for the three CWs Wired Ensemble showcases which was exciting for the student composers. On the other hand, it was a crazy quilt of performers that I put together for these performances. Twelve performers were needed and not all of them could make each of the three CW concerts so there was a lot of searching for additional performers, shuffling and extra rehearsals to make it all work. And thankfully it did!

Candidates' Weekends ended on March 5. By then OCO had selected new repertoire, including the Dvorak Ninth Symphony (4th movement). Everyone wanted to do the piece so we got started on it—in preparation for the next concert, to take place on April 10. OCO had been invited to play in a concert at the Sorenson Center for the Arts, along with two musical groups from Wellesley and another musical group from Babson. This was a big deal. And two weeks before the concert, the Dvorak was in miserable shape. Further proof of this hit me when the string section coach, a professional violinist, said, "It's not going to make it." Unfortunately, I couldn't accept this, believing we didn't have that option. So I scheduled more rehearsals and brought in pizza. The extra practice helped and things started to look up. But there was still one problem: Sorenson Theater does not have 'live' acoustics (it's excellent for spoken voice and theater) which meant that the Dvorak needed to be beefed up. I had already re-orchestrated the piece with that in mind. But three days before the concert, I felt it needed more heft in the bass (we had only one cello but an excellent one). So I did something I'd never done before with the OCO re-orchestrations: I added another low E timpani part and doubled it wherever possible with the trombone. I took a chance that even in the trombone's low register (really, its lowest

note E – often kind of fuzzy and unfocused), the trombone would help underpin the bass line; I banked on its fuzziness being covered up by the low timpani. Then the cello line would be able to focus the sound as best it could. It was a gamble and it worked. A violinist Paula Zeitlin (string faculty at Wellesley) wrote Michele Oshima, the Director of the Sorenson Center: “[...] thank you so much for all the work organizing this! My students are definitely interested in performing again. It was wonderful to hear all the groups AND finally meet Diana--whose orchestrations for OCO (especially the Dvorak) were just AMAZING! [...]” The orchestra played last on the program and really did a fine job. So it ended well. OCO found it exciting to have their backs to the wall but all of us agreed, “Never again.”



Figure 19. The 2010-11 OCO in the Milas Hall Mezzanine after our 3-hour Final Exam Rehearsal (preparation for the upcoming 2011 Spring Expo concert)

2011-12

Well, ‘never again’ didn’t last very long. In Fall 2011 OCO had an opportunity to perform at the Great Hall of Cooper Union in New York City. Five weeks before the concert, the orchestra chose a new piece: the Waltz Finale and Apotheosis from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*. I re-orchestrated it, again facing the issues of creating a big romantic sound (think lots of strings) with an orchestra that numbered 22 players, only 9 of whom were string players. All the players got their parts before Thanksgiving and each promised to have his/her part down by our first sectionals/rehearsal slated for the week after TG break. I happened to attend the wind sectional to get a sense of how the re-orchestration was working with the players. They started the Tchaikovsky and it sounded horrible. So to find out where the problems were, I asked each of the players to individually play their parts. Three players did not know their parts at all. It was demoralizing and embarrassing. Yet the students who didn’t know their parts rallied, and by the next sectional their playing had improved. The OCO tour to NYC was a first for the orchestra. It happened because so many people pitched in: The offices of Facilities, Admissions,

External Relations, Development, Family and Alumni Relations worked together seamlessly. A real pleasure to work with all of them, and fun too!

Still, a few issues surfaced: I found myself taking heat for having “a perfectionist musician streak” and was urged to “Stop emphasizing always ‘reaching a higher level’”, according to two students’ feedback taken by the OCO Board. It seemed that some of what were considered innovations/improvements to OCO during Spring 2011 and Fall 2011 had not pleased all the students. I implemented these innovations/improvements because of feedback from the Spring 2010 OCO so again met with students to hear their thoughts about what they’d like to see happen for OCO this semester. I’ve also made some changes, though I’m not sure I can abandon ‘reaching for a higher level’. Progressing to a higher level means imagining something better and realizing it—in other words, a very creative process.

2012-13

OCO made a total turn-around this year. By the end of the Spring 2012 semester, personality conflicts had undermined the group dynamic. In fact, these conflicts were present during the past two years as well, but they really became apparent last spring. So in May 2012, a committed group of OCO musicians and I met over a period of two weeks. At one point I asked them: “who do you want to play with” and all of a sudden it hit us – we needed something similar to the Admissions ‘group interview’ at CWs. Thus the idea that new players would have to pass both an individual audition as well as a group audition was born. The purpose of the group audition was to ensure everyone accepted into OCO would be on the same page. We drafted an ‘OCO Action Plan’ and re-invented the orchestra.

Yet despite our new Action Plan, only three string players chose to audition in September. The core group of OCO players tried hard to recruit additional strings. For my part, I kept thinking how to re-orchestrate pieces for a group that had only three strings. During the night of the September auditions, we were all trying to keep our spirits up; still, there was tangible concern in the air. Finally, as yet another string player said no, we decided to turn the page and rally behind what we did have: a great, committed group of 12 players. My closing thoughts that night: maybe we’ll look back on this day and find a blessing in disguise. And amazingly, that’s exactly what happened.

The students chose Beethoven’s Marcia alla Turca from the *Ruins of Athens*, op. 113, and Stravinsky’s *Suite No. 2* as their first pieces. Beethoven wrote his March for piccolo, 2 oboes, two clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, and ~ 40 strings. But OCO only had a violin, viola, cello, 2 flutes, tenor sax, 2 trumpets, French horn, piano, and percussion. To arrange the music from 54 to 12 players, I altered the texture of the original piece. For example, I wrote an introductory bass drum line to introduce the March, as if from afar, then had only the tenor sax—rather than the original piccolo + oboes + clarinets + bassoons—enter ‘pianissimo’ with the main theme. Gradually I added other instruments, all entering ‘piano’ so that the texture and dynamics built up with each entrance until the last statement of the main theme. Then I thinned the texture again, adding a glockenspiel for touches of color, along with ‘subito piano+crescendo’ expressions applied to an ever increasing number of instruments to create the illusion of a climactic larger ensemble. I continued using the addition and absence of instruments, including quite a few that Beethoven didn’t use. Beethoven wrote extensive parts for triangle, cymbal, and bass drum which play together from start to finish on every eighth and/or quarter beat. I felt these would be overbearing for our ensemble, so I altered them, stressing their ‘color’ attributes, while adding new parts for snare drum, bass drum, and timpani.

I re-scored the Stravinsky *Suite no. 2* as well, writing additional parts for marimba and xylophone, timpani, and more, in order to suit OCO's instrumentation and create a coherent ensemble sound. OCO performances of the Beethoven and Stravinsky were featured for Olin's *Decade One Celebration* in October 2012.

The students then selected a third piece. Several works were nominated, one of which was *Danzon No. 2* by Arturo Marquez. There is a splendid recording of this 10-minute piece with Gustavo Dudamel conducting a ~150-piece orchestra on YouTube. I loved the piece but was hoping the students wouldn't select it. Sure enough, they loved it too and selected *Danzon*. My job was to then score it from 150 down to 12 players. In retrospect, it turned out to be an engaging challenge. I created a new ensemble sound for the piece, manipulating instrumentation and dynamics that the composer didn't write in order to create something exciting for 12 players. *Danzon* was a hit with the students and with the Fall Expo audience. As a result, two excellent cellists asked if they could audition for Spring 2013 OCO. The orchestra had really turned a corner. I had too. Though I worked just as hard with OCO as in past years, I found myself enjoying the rehearsals and board meetings as never before. We had two excellent navigators this year—Philicia Chow and David Pudlo—who both helped move OCO into its next, re-vitalized incarnation. During the fall term, the three of us met twice a week for about 1.5 hours to plan the rehearsal agendas, performances, and to keep everyone on track. This 'behind the scenes' work was key to our success. Though I've always done a lot of work for OCO and the Music Program 'behind the scenes', working with such team players has been a pleasure—and an inspiration! A spring 2013 performance is captured here: <http://youtu.be/8uHrZku3V8I>

As always, it was a joy to teach Wired Ensemble. It's different every year—new projects, new students, added material, performance classes. And this year I managed to take Wired Ensemble to the Metropolitan Opera in New York. It was a great trip, and I still have a suspenseful memory of all of us running 10 blocks through Chinatown two weeks after Hurricane Sandy and noticing 'business-as-usual' in what had been flooded Chinatown. We ran those 10 blocks to catch the Fung Wah bus—and made it!

I also started preparing for OCO's upcoming April 12 Sorenson Center concert with three Wellesley groups (BlueJazz Strings, BlueJazz Combo, BlueJazz Ensemble), the Babson-Olin Jazz Ensemble, and the Olin Cheerios singers. As has been the case for the past two Sorenson concerts, there was some drama before the concert. At the OCO rehearsal the night before, the students played through *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saens. It was in poor shape. I went to one of the co-navigators and said, "I don't think we should do this piece tomorrow. For one thing, Sorenson has now limited each group's performance to less than 15 minutes." I felt we'd be hogs if we did *Danse Macabre* (10'), in addition to our other repertoire (10'), especially if *Danse Macabre* were poorly played. The group had mixed feelings about whether we could get it by the next evening's performance. So we started to work on it. Everyone pitched in, and the rehearsal became even more collaborative. The musicians quickly put into practice some additions/changes I made to the re-orchestration to ease things and provide instant fixes to togetherness issues, e.g., additional dynamics for the opening fanfare (typically taken by the violin soloist but re-orchestrated for two trumpets); taking the opening celli pizzicatos in the re-orchestration as 'call and answer' between the 2 cellists (rather than synchronizing the pizzicati); and adding timpani beats to a chromatic climactic run so that the entire orchestra would be together.

The concert was very good. All the groups played well. And the set lengths were just right. OCO played *Danse Macabre* better than the night before by orders of magnitude. OCO's second piece was incredible

(Arturo Marquez' *Danzon No. 2*). The Wellesley directors and I talked after the concert. They were so impressed with OCO, the students, and the arrangements: a total success for all of us.

It was also a success for a SERV-sponsored event ("_____ for life") to raise funds for the American Cancer Society. The OCO Board and I worked with Jessica Sutantio, SERV, and the Wellesley-Babson faculty involved in the April 12 Sorenson Concert to bring "_____ for life" into the concert hall. Voluntary donations for the American Cancer Society were collected at the door.

Another fundraiser involving musical groups occurred a month later but was first discussed in November 2012 with Mike Sullivan, Program Director for the Needham Lions Club, who wanted OCO to join PowerChords for an event to raise money for their charities. I worked with Mike and students in OCO and PowerChords to bring the concert to fruition (May 10, 2013). This fundraiser featuring PowerChords and OCO continued for the next five years (through Spring 2017).

Though on developmental leave for Spring 2013, I came in every Thursday evening for the OCO course. The changes we made to OCO for Fall 2012 (including a new Action Plan, Group Auditions, and bonding activities) led to greater cohesion among the players. So it was no surprise that OCO performed its finest concert since inception at the Olin Spring 2013 Expo. The opening cello solo in *Danzon No. 2* was cited as 'setting the stage' for a transcendent performance. This sentiment was captured in post-concert feedback, here summarized by a student:

In between pieces before Danzon, I remember thinking about how much I had played already and wondering if I had enough left in me for Danzon. But as soon as Abe started in on his solo, all of those thoughts went away and I was engrossed in the music all the way through the big ending.

The New Steinway B: We've been aware of the need for the Milas Hall (MH) Mezzanine Steinway for a while. For years, any concerts taking place in the MH Mezzanine—our largest performance venue on campus—have had to use an electric piano. So on Saturday, April 6, I made a round trip to Stamford, CT, to check out a Steinway B being sold by a private party. It's an excellent instrument and was bought new from the Steinway showroom in Manhattan in 1998. I wrote a proposal and sent it to key people (Provost/Dean of Faculty Vin Manno, Exec. VP Steve Hannabury, VP Joanne Kossuth, and VP Tom Krimmel). Then we discussed via email and in meetings. I wrote up answers to questions from all concerned, found a good piano technician in Connecticut to evaluate the Steinway prior to purchase, followed up with emails, phone calls and meetings with the piano technician, the seller, and Olin Facilities regarding placement of Steinway once it arrived. I ordered a piano dolly from Steinert Pianos in Boston, and communicated with Olin's piano technician to do voicing, string leveling, tuning, and regulation of the piano.

A new Steinway B costs \$80,000+. The seller asked for \$40K. At P/DoF (Provost/Dean of Faculty) Vin Manno's suggestion, the price came down to \$35K. We incurred \$5k of expenses for moving, repair/maintenance, and piano dolly. We started raising enough money to make the Steinway Fund of \$50K a reality. To start things off, a group of faculty and staff contributed the first \$5K.

A concert piano permanently residing in the Mezzanine makes a strong statement about our college, serving as a tangible, powerful symbol of the multiple intelligences that we often talk about. The piano opens up opportunities for students, staff, and faculty, in their roles as musicians, listeners, and educators. It can also be used for Development/Presidential receptions, gatherings, not to mention a future concert series that would be welcome not only by the Olin community but by those in our

external community, e.g., residents of the town of Needham, residents of North Hill, and the list goes on. It will be a huge plus for the college and may yield a big return on our investment that we haven't yet foreseen.

2013-14

OCO attracted additional instrumentalists for Fall 2013, including first-years, an excellent clarinetist from Babson College, and Olin seniors. After individual and group auditions involving 12 potential players, OCO selected eight. OCO grew to 20 musicians, including four percussionists and two pianists. On Sunday of Columbus weekend I spent 2.5 hours playing/testing the new Milas Hall Mezzanine piano (a real pleasure) to assess its current state for Olin's piano technician. He then did the voicing, string leveling, tuning, and regulation on Columbus Day. I arranged to take the seller of the Steinway (Louise Harris) and her guest to the Metropolitan Opera with the Wired Ensemble and then out for pizza with the students. She was very generous with us regarding the Steinway and we wanted to respond in kind. She loved interacting with the students and they really enjoyed talking with her too. It was a perfect day!

Discussions with VP Tom Krimmel, VP Charles Nolan, Development Officer Sindy Wayne, and others during Spring, Summer, and Fall 2013 helped with funding the new Steinway, including an initial funding solicitation, e.g., Asst. VP (AVP) Joe Hunter and I met immediately after OCO's Fall Expo concert (Dec. 20, 2013) to select a short clip from their performance which used the piano.

Now that Olin had a concert Steinway in the Milas Mezzanine, opportunities opened up for student concerts in the MH Mezzanine, e.g., AHS Capstone projects involving performance and composition. I also worked with the Olin piano technician and CORE (Council of Olin Representatives) to get the East Hall Steinway A fixed and on a sustainable maintenance schedule. Since we needed additional instrument storage space, Facilities built another music instrument closet on the third floor of the Academic Center (AC) and expanded the AC318 closet with double doors so we can easily move timpani without damaging them.

To help bring more music-related activities to Olin students, Director of Post-graduate Planning Sally Phelps and I worked with Lee Zamir, and Darius Mobed of Bose Corporation to bring the Bose Speaker Workshop to Olin, enabling students to build their own Bose speakers.



In Spring 2014, we started the Ann Schaffner Concert Series at Olin with a generous grant from the Schaffner family. On June 19, 2013, the Olin community learned that Ann Schaffner had passed away. Ann was Olin's first Director of Institutional Research from 2001 – 2011. I last saw her when she sang with the vocal group Boston Harmony on April 27, 2013 in Cambridge. It was a great concert. I looked for Ann afterwards. Asst. to the Dean of Admission Susan Johanson and AVP Joe Hunter happened to be there as well. When Ann saw me, she said in the most excited voice, "Did you hear me sing? Did you hear me sing?" Her husband Stu and son David were with her at the concert. The evening was poignant. Susan and I rode the subway back to our respective destinations and talked about Ann – how she radiated her love for music and interacted with us over the years. Susan remembered Ann's words to the Olin community at her retirement reception in Dec. 2011, "And there's one more thing I'd like to say—be kind to one another."

I thought back to all that Ann had done for Olin, the numerous late nights I had seen her working in her office, the support she gave the music program and me personally. She was always thoughtful and reflective. As I mentioned to her son at the April concert, I felt her goodness each semester for 10+ years at Olin. I believed her position was critical, especially in the early days of the college. Before Ann became head of assessment at Olin, there were many avenues that process could have taken. Some might have turned the position into a more regimented procedure with the person in charge of assessment functioning as a kind of drill sergeant. But Ann got things done with gentle persuasion. I can't tell you how many times she gave me a little extra time to get material to her. That extra time made the difference between stress and ease. She could have wielded her power in a heavy way, but didn't. I admired her for her core and who she was as a human being. Ann came to virtually every music performance at Olin. I always looked for her; her presence gave a boost of encouragement.

In September 2013, VP Tom Krimmel told me that Ann and her husband had donated \$25K to create the 'Diana Dabby Music Fund' at Olin. I asked Tom whether this shouldn't really be called the Ann Schaffner Music Fund and he told me that Ann was adamant about the name. Yet I wanted Ann to be remembered and directly associated with music at Olin. In talking with VP Charles Nolan, we came up with a concert series in her name—the Ann Schaffner Concert Series. Stu Schaffner agreed with the new details and signed a revised Fund Agreement to that effect: "I am OK with 'The Ann Schaffner Concert Series', since many other activities at Olin have sponsor names attached. I would rather you not include my name. I am rewarded enough by knowing how pleased Ann would be to see all of this activity in the Olin music community that she loved so much."

The series was initiated Spring 2014. During discussions about endowed fund logistics in late February 2014, Exec. VP Steve Hannabury suggested the series start in Spring 2014 rather than wait till Fall 2014. By a fortunate coincidence, Korean pianist Jongsun Lee had recently won a piano competition and would be playing a 'winners' concert in New York on April 20. Realizing Steve's preference for a Spring 2014 inaugural concert, I asked her if she'd like to perform at Olin. The answer was yes and we set the Olin concert for April 25. She decided to program the same pieces she had recently played in New York and Seoul. People still talk about how remarkable her playing was. Though the Schaffner family was unable to attend, they were pleased that we had started the series so quickly. The Ann Schaffner Concert Series live recording links:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTgl_DgaUtU (Ann Schaffner Inaugural concert, 2014: Jongsun Lee, piano)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNTt0YAs7Pk> (Ann Schaffner Concert, 2015: John McDonald, piano)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9d2hCmwL-M> (Ann Schaffner Concert, 2016: Longwood Symphony Orchestra String Quartet)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWwoi_lmHU8&t=1s (Ann Schaffner Concert, 2017: Mix and Stir Babson, Olin, Wellesley Faculty concert)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7slKmLAawk&t=2950s> (Ann Schaffner Concert, 2018: Jongsun Lee and Hyunjung Kim, 1 piano-4 hands)

https://youtu.be/G3dKQv_hf6A (Ann Schaffner Concert, 2019: Olin Conductorless Orchestra in a repeat of its concert for the 2019 ASEE Zone I International Conference in Niagara Falls, NY)

During August, I started preparing for both Wired Ensemble and OCO, as well as ramping up the Music Program, e.g., helping the new frosh musicians get acclimated to college life and its musical opportunities—both in the Boston area and at our neighboring BOW schools, including Brandeis—all of which involves a lot of emails, phone calls, and individual meetings. Every year Wired and OCO are different because of changing repertoire, whether written by students (Wired) or selected by students (OCO). Thus, the work is stimulating and engaging. The 2013 Wired Ensemble course was the best ever. Here is a Wired Ensemble 2014 CW2 performance clip of compositions from the 2013 class:

https://youtu.be/sj_0mKg01ng

On the other hand, the Fall 2013 OCO had some problems with new students not knowing their parts as well as expected. This upset other members. But discussions led to ways for addressing the practice issue that we plan to implement. During Fall 2013, I continued to bring in ‘external guests’—musicians in the Boston area—to provide external feedback and participate in the OCO collaborative mix. Though resisted back in 2006 when I first proposed ‘external guests’ to OCO students, the guest concept has become popular. Every year I try to identify guests the students will enjoy working with and also try to keep the guests involved by inviting them back. OCO’s Spring Expo on May12, 2014 can be heard here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWjYPrRno9M>

The orchestra was again asked to perform in tandem with Wellesley and Babson groups in Sorenson Theater at Babson (together they gave a Spring 2014 concert) which can be heard at this link:

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-itm-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=itm&p=appalachian+spring+olin+conductorless+orchestra#id=2&vid=1bd337d260fe7f185c4dffa7f8fef87&action=click>



Figure 20. OCO performs at Babson’s Sorenson Theater on April 4, 2014.

In Spring 14, I continued work with CORE president Larissa Little and Olin piano technician Mark Whitlock to finish repairing the Steinway A in the East Hall Student Residence (including new key tops, back checks replacement/adjustment, damper regulation, and voicing). We were able to put the Steinway A on a sustainable maintenance schedule. I also worked with Joe Hunter to make recordings available on the Olin YouTube channel.

2014-15

OCO attracted additional instrumentalists for Fall 2014, including another bass clarinet, a flutist, oboist, bass trombone, two cellists, and a percussionist. After individual and group auditions involving ten potential players, OCO selected eight. We also developed a toolkit of 20 rehearsal strategies. Here is an OCO performance clip from the May 11, 2015 Spring Expo—Two Symphonic Dances from Bernstein's *West Side Story*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LxaVDT1dCI>

The new Steinway B in the Milas Hall Mezzanine opened up opportunities for individual student performances, e.g., music for the February 2014 Board of Trustees. Working with IT, particularly Mary Fitzpatrick, we made the music notation program Sibelius 7 available to all Olin students which helped the music club groups like PowerChords, the Olin Rock Orchestra, and others.

While all the above was happening, I revised 28 handouts for Wired Ensemble to further strengthen our Composers' Toolkit. In tandem with the OCO Board and students, I implemented rehearsal strategies to motivate more musical aspects of performance and continued to re-orchestrate pieces selected by OCO for upcoming concerts.

AVP Joe Hunter produced videotapes of both OCO and Wired Candidates Weekend performances, e.g., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q54qB3AiOU> Prokofiev's "Dance of the Knights" from "Romeo and Juliet," op. 64ter, during the second Candidates Weekend, Feb 27, 2015, as well as the Wired Ensemble Candidates Weekend 2015 performance <https://youtu.be/rVRSSNKqG8A> (But sadly, for the past two years we've been unable to record hi-fidelity performances of Wired Ensemble during Candidate Weekends' due to sound carrying from events in the library.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sb0YbqIR7fs> SAME perf as above but shorter

For the Spring 2015 Ann Schaffner concert, I asked Prof. John McDonald (pianist, composer, and Tufts University professor) if he'd like to perform at Olin. Like Jongsun Lee the year before, he accepted right away. It was January 2015 and he thought April would work well for him. He then said, "I want to play a piece of yours." So I sent him *A Fire's Tale*. It's a dramatic piece and he's a dramatic pianist. Like the first Ann Schaffner Concert, this second concert was greatly appreciated by the audience. Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney designed smart programs for each, as well as for the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 Expo performances, and AVP Joe Hunter made excellent videos. The 2015 Ann Schaffner Concert videotape can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNTt0YAs7Pk>

The Music Program continued to build relationships with external organizations (e.g., Needham Lions Club, Needham Rotary Club, Wellesley Square Merchants Association, and the Musary), institutions (Wellesley, Babson, and New England Conservatory), and individuals (BOW faculty in music, NEC faculty, and Boston Conservatory faculty). I also worked with Marketing, Olin students and alumni to produce a photo exhibit in the Milas Hall Mezzanine (to address student requests regarding the backlog of photos, shot by Michael Maloney, of Olin musicians in action).

In closing out this year, I felt like the coach of a football team whose players inspire high expectations among themselves and fans. What counts for all is excellence: the art and consistent work of creating performances that everyone can be proud of and enjoy.

2015-16

Since starting in Fall 2002, the Olin Conductorless Orchestra (OCO) has performed for prospective students and their families at the Fall Open House sponsored by Admissions. Here they perform the overture to Beethoven's ballet, the *Creatures of Prometheus* on October 25, 2015. This was the best Family Day concert since 2002. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlkAZG106ek> Later that fall, OCO performed *Danse Bacchanale* by Saint-Saens to close out Olin's December Exposition. <https://youtu.be/zix7lwadvM>

Music Program Assistant Ryan Eggert '16 and I archived musical recordings and videos of student performances in Wired Ensemble, OCO, AHS Capstone, PowerChords, and the Olin Rock Orchestra, for the Music Program Sound Domes Project. We have two 'localizer sound domes' on the 3rd floor of the Academic Center (AC). Invented and patented by Brown Innovations, their hemispherical design provides a focused audio listening experience, but without headphones. Olin visitors and prospective students can step under either sound dome, activate the iPads (attached with wall mounts), and hear/see 'live' recordings of student musical performances.

OCO gave its best performance to date at a concert for the Lions Club Fundraiser in May 2016. It was caught in a great audio recording, but the student videographer failed to show up so there was no videotape. AVP Joe Hunter came to the rescue and created a photo montage video composed of myriad OCO photos shot by photographer Michael Maloney during the 15-16 academic year. Concert recording links: http://bit.ly/OCO_Dvorak9th (OCO plays Dvorak 9th, spring 2016)

The saga of the student Steinway A continued so I worked with CORE president Ian Hill and Olin's piano technician to put the Steinway A on a more sustainable maintenance schedule.

I also met with Wellesley music faculty and jazz artist Maria Schneider (Maria Schneider Orchestra) as part of 2016 BOW Innovation Grant supporting the Maria Schneider Orchestra visit and arranged for eight Olin students to attend the sold-out concert, courtesy of the Babson College Sorenson Center box office and music professor Sandy Graham. And finally, the April 2016 Ann Schaffner Concert featured the String Quartet of the Longwood Symphony (a doctors' orchestra) that embodies the twin passions shared by many of our students—music and engineering/science/math.

2016-17

Wired Ensemble continued to attend the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center in New York. This year we heard *Guillaume Tell* by Rossini, or at least most of it. During the fourth act, the mechanical ship malfunctioned and the audience was informed the opera would have to stop. As a result, the Met gave Wired Ensemble free tickets for the 2017 class to attend the *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* by Jacques Offenbach!



Figure 21. The 2016 Wired Ensemble class at the Met. This was the fourteenth Wired trip to New York.

The highlight of the Fall 2016 OCO was the concert Joe Hunter (Assistant Vice President and Director of Communication), External Relations, and Marcom (Marketing and Communications) sponsored in Dec. 2016 at Powers Hall, an excellent concert venue in Needham, also used for Handel & Haydn Society concerts. Joe wanted to give the OCO performance as a gift to the people of Needham. We featured solos and duos performed by OCO musicians during the first half of the concert. The students performed so well, and the audience responded in kind. On a wintry mix of a day, 250 people showed up for the evening concert. The orchestra performed Shostakovich, Mozart, and the first ten minutes of *An American in Paris*. I wrote an ending to *American* so the piece would sound conclusive. The audience loved OCO, giving the players a standing ovation. That took us all by surprise.

For Fall 2016, the OCO co-navigators, students, and I revised the rehearsal structure to include Rehearsal Groups (weekend rehearsal sessions to address targeted practice spots) and Rehearsal Leaders (each student signs up for 2 weekly rehearsals/semester, helps devise the week's rehearsal agenda, and then works with all to keep rehearsals on track with the plan). We also wanted to find opportunities for OCO to perform at professional venues outside of Olin, so P/DoF Vin Manno granted us the funds for a short OCO tour 2016-2017. I then found a venue (the Great Hall at Cooper Union where Lincoln once spoke), a New York hotel, and helped prepare the orchestra for concert logistics by working with Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney and Joe Hunter on media relations, reception, program, and travel arrangements.

Cooper Union donated the hall gratis. Because the performance occurred on a holiday weekend, the Great Hall was officially closed, yet the Director of Public Programs opened it for us, stayed throughout the concert, and afterwards said he'd like OCO to return next year or anytime. Playing in a New York concert hall, journeying there and back, eating meals together gave all of us an uplifting musical and bonding experience.

Yet it was down to the wire in many unexpected ways. For starters, our instrumentation changed from Fall 2016. The changes posed challenges for the big 20-minute piece on the program: *An American in Paris*, originally scored for 24 wind and brass instruments, with full string and percussion sections. The wind and brass are critical for Gershwin's jazz writing, especially the clarinets, oboes, trumpets, and horns. OCO had 1 oboe and a pocket trumpet. But we did have 3 flutes (one doubling on piccolo), 2 bass clarinets and 2 trombones—for a total of 9 wind/brass. There were a lot of constraints with these instruments; I wasn't even sure a good arrangement was possible with what we had, the range limitations, and technical concerns. In short, creating the re-orchestration (arrangement) felt like navigating an obstacle course, albeit an artistic one. It challenged me.

Though the students had selected *American*, they were often torn between the practice time needed for such an ambitious piece and a semester that was already stressing them out. OCO meets only one night a week, so every rehearsal is important. But February weather caused problems. For instance, we called an extra rehearsal for Sunday, Feb 9. I drove out to Olin, but on the way home, the storm intensified, and at that point I noticed my car was the only one on Route 2 for the entire commute.

Up until the Great Hall performance, I was re-writing parts to make things easier/better for the instrumentalists, based on what I heard in OCO's playing at each succeeding rehearsal. Some parts would probably make it, but others caused concern. Thinking this process would continue, I brought music paper, scissors, and scotch tape to my hotel room and made additional parts for a few players to help boost the playing/confidence of others. It was incredible that the players with the extra parts stayed cool and calm throughout.

About 250-300 people attended OCO's New York concert. (We ran out of programs.) OCO received a standing ovation for its Great Hall concert, something none of us expected. Though the performance had flaws, the orchestra managed to connect with a New York audience on an emotional, gut level. There weren't many Olin people there, and the response to the group was enthusiastic. I actually cried. There had been so many hurdles and everything had come out in the end, at least communicatively. On a personal note: during the standing ovation, a New York concert violinist came running down the aisle and took my hands, saying "What you did with those pieces was amazing. Those arrangements were brilliant."

After a spirited reception, we all checked into a midtown New York hotel and met up at Angelo's pizza, occupying four big tables. I believe that dinner was the best pizza ever. Spirits were high, the antics uproarious. I've included photos below to capture some of the evening. The entire trip provided something this ensemble really appreciated—bonding. Also, the concert gave opportunities to spread Olin's message. For example, a young Wall Street businessman was so intrigued by what the orchestra represented that he said, "This was the best use of my time today." He wanted to hire Olin students. Another wanted to write a grant to bring the orchestra back next year.

Because parts of *American* required more rehearsal, we continued to work on it for the rest of the semester. I'm happy to say that the May 8 Expo performance of *American* was the best ever for OCO since inception. In the early years of OCO, I could only put about a minute or less of any given performance out for the public. Last spring, it was 10 minutes. In Spring 2017 it was 20 minutes: all of *An American in Paris*.



Figure 22. Dinner at Angelo's Pizza on 57th street in New York after the OCO concert at the Great Hall of the Cooper Union.

Throughout this year, our talented student musicians had performance opportunities (solo, duo, and ensemble) at Olin and in professional concert halls. At the same time, the Music Program continued to build relationships with external organizations, e.g., Needham Lions Club, Needham Rotary Club, Roger's Pianos (who donated the grand piano for OCO's Powers Hall concert), institutions (Wellesley, Babson, and New England Conservatory), and individuals (faculty at BOW, NEC, Boston Conservatory, and Berklee).

At this point, I'd like to thank Director of Marketing Michele Davis, AVP Joe Hunter, Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney, and Dean of Student Affairs Rae-Anne Butera for their help with the New York OCO tour. Michele helped find drivers for the vans which took a big concern off my plate. Joe drove one of the rental minivans to and from NYC (we were a caravan of five). His can-do spirit, media expertise, and calm personality were wonderful assets on this trip. He brought two video cameras and videotaped everything. He also coordinated the rental van pickups and drop-offs with the student drivers. This trip couldn't have happened without him.

Paul has an amazing ability to see the large picture and still manage the details. For example, he spotted 10 student bios where the information was no longer current and fixed them; he set up and managed the EventBrite, answering questions; he set up, managed, and updated all the rental vans, hotel rooms, and excel budget. There is no way we could have had this tour without his help.

2017-18

During Fall 2017, the Music Program expanded its ties with Babson and Wellesley by working with Isabel Fine (Concert Manager at Wellesley) and Leslie Chiu (General Manager of Babson's Sorenson Center) on a Babson, Olin, Wellesley (BOW) Presidential Innovation Grant to help fund a Bandaloop residency at Wellesley. Bandaloop is a dance troop that performs vertically, mixing climbing with movement. Isabel created and managed a vibrant array of performances to celebrate the opening of Pendleton Hall, a new addition to the Music Department.

The results of a BOW Presidential Innovation grant (Mix and Stir: musicians, composers, and poets in concert) that I wrote in 2014 also occurred in 2017 as well. The purpose of Mix and Stir was to introduce the BOW community, and its neighbors, to a new concert venue and a new concert series at Olin, through two cross-disciplinary events. In doing so, Mix and Stir provided access, opportunity, and creative channels for those who work, teach, and learn at Babson, Olin, and Wellesley.

The first concert took place in April 2017 and featured Performers Gabriela Diaz (violin), David Russell (cello), and Lois Shapiro (piano) performing four trios: Ravel's *Piano Trio in A Minor* (1914), Jenny Olivia Johnson's *Asleep All Day* (2017) and Diana Dabby's *Who was Wissam Eid?* (2017). Johnson's work was based on a poem by Mary Pinard ("Grief, for a long time sound"), professor of English at Babson College. Ravel's trio took inspiration from a Malayan poetic form (the pantoum). A *New York Times Magazine* article, "The Hezbollah Connection" by Ronen Bergman, motivated my piece. We were able to get the word out to Olin's neighboring communities and attendance was excellent. AVP Joe Hunter was very helpful in attracting a larger audience, and Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney set up an EventBrite and designed the program and flyers. The full concert (part of the Ann Schaffner Concert Series) can be heard at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWwoi_lmHU8

The second concert took place December 5, 2017, and again brought a Wellesley College faculty trio (Gabriella Diaz, violin; David Russell, cello; and Lois Shapiro, piano) to Olin for a concert featuring the works of BOW students. Because Prof. Martin Brody's piece was unable to be performed at the 'faculty' concert held in April 2017, his work was moved to this concert as well. The whole concert can be heard at: <https://youtu.be/SjLNAKT0-qE>

The Fall 2017 Wired Ensemble consisted of many students with little musical background, yet I never had a class that started that far behind and went so far. There was also some drama, e.g., one of my students composed a beautiful melody for her Wired Ensemble Event piece but couldn't get beyond it, despite help. Nothing materialized so the night before the concert, I wrote the middle and last sections of the piece and performed it at Expo in addition to eight other pieces that involved a piano part.

During the past decade, OCO has consistently had a pianist in the orchestra but rehearsals occurred using an electronic piano. During January 2018, I searched for and found a new Yamaha B3 48" Upright Piano on sale. Thanks to the unsolicited generosity of contributors to the Music Fund, we were able to purchase it, as well as a Damp Chaser System to keep the soundboard humidified during winter.

The Fall 2017 OCO consisted of unbalanced string and brass sections as usual, but the killer was a decimated woodwind section: 3 flutes and a bass clarinet. How to arrange pieces like the Schumann First Symphony for an orchestra lacking oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and more? I decided to vary the flute-heavy timbre by adding bass and alto flutes. The flutists were up for switching instruments, so devising a few more acoustic 'sleight-of-hands', I managed to make re-orchestrations that produced a coherent group sound.

Though on leave during Spring 2018, I continued OCO as a project-based learning (PBL) class (guiding from the side, up front as needed), as well as re-orchestrating symphonic works selected by the orchestra. In early March, OCO performed at the Mount Pleasant Rest Home and received the following letter from a resident who knew one of our students.

March 6, 2018

Dear Diana,

I have never experienced such a remarkable afternoon than that of March 1st. Earlier when Emma inquired about having the Olin Orchestra play at Mount Pleasant, I was most interest[ed]. However, it wasn't until that splendid musical event was nearly over that I realized what a privilege the whole opportunity had been. After all, your musicians are unique – all engineers playing in a conductorless

orchestra! Then to learn that Olin had performed at the Great Hall last year, made me understand just how special this was!

I have shared the story of this wonderful afternoon and can only hope Olin's talented young people are recognized in greater ways. They represent such a positive story of young people and their accomplishments.

It was indeed a pleasure! We would wholeheartedly welcome you back at any time.

With sincere gratitude,

Lynn Muller

617-522-7600 x133

muller@mountpleasanthome.org

2018-19

For several years now, Wired Ensemble composers have not been able to include timpani in their Final Project pieces (performed during the Wired Ensemble Event at Olin's Fall Expo) because we're unable to move the timpani from the Academic Center to the Milas Hall Mezzanine in time for the OCO Expo dress rehearsal and performance. So in conjunction with Joseph Lee '19, Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney, and Steve Weiss Music, we located and purchased 2 Ludwig timpani (26" and 29").

It has always been a joy to teach Wired students and interact with them. Their feedback continues to be helpful and strong. One metric particularly stands out in the Olin Learning Objectives (OLOs) cited by both the Fall 17 and Fall 18 Wired classes: "Develop and Apply Creativity." The course mean for students in Fall 17 was 3.9/4, and in Fall 18 it was a unanimous 4.0/4.

OCO started the year with our usual bonding activity over ice cream: Every fall I ask the incoming musicians their favorite ice cream flavor. Then I buy those flavors (and some perennial favorites) for our first rehearsal.



Figure 23. Who needs ice cream? OCO does!

I was hopeful that the Fall 2018 entering class would include at least a clarinet, anything other than a flute. But we ended up again having three flutes but now with an alto saxophone. Since our alto flute graduated with her owner, the Music Program purchased a black nickel Trevor James alto flute, which has a more incisive timbre than a silver alto flute, thus differentiating the alto flute from the two flute timbres (one of our graduating seniors wanted to play flute instead of bass or alto so two flutes were a

given). Since I again managed to produce a coherent group sound, I also started working with the organizers of the ASEE Zone I International Conference to include an OCO performance in their program.

It became a reality. Provost and Dean of the Faculty Vincent Manno gave us a matching funds challenge so we ran a Fundit campaign with DFAR (Development, Family, and Alumni Relations). Adi Sudakhar '22 made the Fundit video (<https://fundit.olin.edu/project/14470>), Kyle Emmi '21 worked out the trip logistics, Maggie Rosner '20 took care of getting the word out. Though the Fundit page shows us \$1000 short, we made our goal due to the generosity of an anonymous donor who will forever be blessed.

Prof. Shane Rogers of Clarkson University, co-chair of the conference, was a prime mover on the ASEE side for helping us find a good acoustic venue, date, and time for the concert. Since we didn't have enough room in the Olin van for our music stands, Shane assumed responsibility for locating stands. Amazingly, he went and bought 22 high quality, collapsible music stands, each of which could be packed in a player's suitcase or backpack. His words to us: "now you can play anywhere and not have to worry about transporting music stands." It was an incredible gift. Shane and all of the donors were credited in the ASEE OCO program, as well as in succeeding OCO programs, and thanked personally.

So we all boarded a Delta flight to Buffalo on April 12, arrived at the conference hotel, and checked in. While the students had free time to rest or explore, I went off to deliver a paper on "The Engineers' Orchestra: a conductorless orchestra for developing 21st century professional skills" at a 2pm session, as well as invite the session attendees to the 5pm concert.

At our 330pm rehearsal, we got set up with the new music stands purchased by our 'angel' sponsor Prof. Shane Rogers. And then our only cellist Rachel Won snapped her A string. What ensued was an all-hands effort to fix the problem, but in the end, Rachel was the heroine, re-learning her solos and other parts for a '3-stringed' cello. We all were most concerned about her opening solo for the last piece on the program (*Danzon No. 2* by Marquez). Just two weeks earlier, I had moved the latter part of the cello solo an octave lower to contrast a new string color (the D string) to the higher A string. But now she had to learn the first part of the solo on the D-string, playing it an octave lower. She totally pulled it off. This concert was the finest OCO performance from first piece to last in the orchestra's 17-year history. The orchestra received a standing ovation. We were all so excited afterwards, eating, talking, laughing, and looking forward to hearing a great recording. It was not to be. There was a snafu with the video recorder and nothing was recorded. It was a huge loss for all of us. But the group decided we'd repeat the concert on May 10, 2019, as part of the Ann Schaffner concert series, especially since OCO had promised a recording of the ASEE concert to our Fundit backers.



Figure 24. Admin. Asst. Paul Coveney's great idea for the reception cake featuring a photo of the 2019 OCO.

The 2019 Ann Schaffner concert can be heard at YouTube link https://youtu.be/G3dKQv_hf6A

2019-20

As in the past, the Fall 2019 Wired Ensemble was an engaging experience. Some students appreciated the push the course gave them while others felt their musical skills weren't enough of a prerequisite. Still, the range of abilities in Wired has always been wide. What I've tried to do is help each student reach their musical potential. For those who clearly want this development, I'll push them. For those that indicate it's not a priority for them, I try to meet them at their level and go from there. This is why Wired is structured around a lot of individual attention. I'm also able to give more advanced assignments to those who desire more challenge.

The strongest OLOs were Develop and Apply Knowledge, Skills, Approaches and Methods (3.6/4 mean), Develop and Apply Creativity (3.8/4 mean), Develop and Apply Self-Directed Learning Abilities (3.3/4 mean), followed by Communicate Effectively, Develop Personal/Professional Identity, and Design/Implement Processes to Achieve Desired Outcomes, each with 3.1/4 mean. As a first-year course, these OLO benchmarks appear reasonable. But Think Critically was not as high (2.8 mean) with Somewhat (4), Moderately (5), and Quite a bit (2). Curious how this compared with other first-year Arts, Humanities, and Social Science courses.

OCO functions as a project-based learning course (PBL) where students experientially practice leadership, teamwork, and communication skills week in and week out. Responses to Fall 19 Olin Learning Objectives (OLOs) show that OCO students believe they're on target with respect to "Communicate Effectively": the students ranged from 'Moderately (=2)' to 'Quite a bit (=9)', producing a course mean of 3.8/4. The same numbers held for the OLO "Collaborate Successfully." With respect to "Develop and Apply Creativity", the student responses ranged from 'Somewhat' (=3) and 'Moderately (=2)' to 'Quite a bit (=6)', producing a course mean of 3.3/4. As an orchestra, I'd like us to meet and discuss what creativity means for a conductorless orchestra, including all the ways it applies to OCO.

Responses to Spring 20 OLOs yielded course means from 3.2 to 4.0, except for "prioritize doing good in the world" (2.7).

Since Olin has started a new era with the appointment of Dr. Gilda Barabino as our second President, the time seems right—given the call for action amidst new beginnings—to say something that has been on my mind for the past 3 years: Admissions needs to actively seek out good engineer-musicians, particularly instrumentalists. During AY 2019-20, OCO students confided that the orchestra is not as good as in previous years. They're right. I noticed a drop in the caliber of musicians starting in Fall 17. Then we lost our concertmaster who graduated in 2018, followed by our 3 first violins when they graduated in 2019. That left the Fall 19 orchestra with 2nd violins functioning as first violins. Please keep in mind: you can never have enough good violins!

I've discussed the above with Susan Brisson who told me Admissions knows "there has to be music at Olin because otherwise students won't come." To try to increase the musician pool, I personally wrote every admitted student musician in April 2020 and answered their questions. Some of these emails required an hour or more to write due to questions/circumstances posed by the Admits.

On March 12, OCO held its last rehearsal due to the covid-19 pandemic. The College closed the next day, as did much of the world. When I think back on that March 12th night, I see us as a group expecting the best outcome, not the worst. I encouraged everyone to take their instruments home so they'd still be able to express themselves through music, yet held open the possibility that we'd all be back after

spring break. How innocent our thinking. After spring break, OCO went virtual. Students signed on to doing PIPs (personal instrument projects) where each selected a piece to work on. Each week they submitted mp3's of their progress for peer and professor feedback. Most students seemed to appreciate these projects.

Take a moment and imagine an Olin without these OCO musicians; scores of faces are now passing through my mind— students who made indelible imprints on the College through their smarts and humanity, not just through their music. For the past 3 years, we've been dealt an increasingly difficult hand—a dearth of good musicians among admitted students; it's been a slippery slope. I've had to step in more during rehearsals. Also, as an orchestrator I've been increasingly asked to do what other professionals consider almost impossible: how did she do that? Well, I like a good challenge, and I think people count on that; but then I wonder: does it have to be this way? My dedication to OCO and its students stays strong; I've managed to create a stirring group sound for the students, despite a crazy assortment of instruments. If the students don't hear a coherent group sound, it's harder to be inspired by what they're playing (and rightly so). We have some excellent musicians in OCO, but the number is dwindling. We especially need good string players, particularly violins. In short, OCO and other musical groups on campus need more support. Sadly, for several years now, they've too have noticed the lack of musicians among admitted students.

2020-21

OCO was decimated in Fall 20 by covid, not only by students opting for LOAs or waiting for a return to in-person rehearsals and concerts, but also by covid-produced conflicting signals. For example, though Rae-Anne Butera (Olin's Dean of Students at the time) kindly okayed students practicing their instruments, including wind/brass instruments, in their individual dorm rooms, someone told incoming students not to bring their instruments.

So the Fall 20 OCO comprised just the 2 elected navigators—Caitlin Coffey '23 and Jack Mao '22—and myself. At first we researched and experimented with low latency synchronous software to enable rehearsals and performances. We stayed in touch with students and faculty at MIT and NEC, but ultimately abandoned these efforts when they had as little success with the software as we did.

I had resisted doing what many orchestras were doing: recording parts and mixing them together because I knew how much our students valued playing 'live' with one another. But then I realized that recording might provide a way to finally address the uneven levels of playing in the orchestra, something we have a chance to remedy in Spring 21. So I worked with Caitlin and Jack to further develop student performance and professional skills, regardless of whether students would be on- or off-campus due to the pandemic.

During Spring 21, we carried OCO forward, despite the pandemic and having only 6 instrumentalists (viola, cello, alto sax, trombone, and 2 pianists). I wrestled with how to do this effectively and finally realized that while OCO had always recorded itself as an orchestra, students would benefit from recording themselves in smaller groups, especially duets. Students liked this idea; in fact, feedback on course evals suggested that playing and recording duets would help bolster OCO. Caitlin and Jack tested each step of this process, and during our weekly meetings, we vetted and wrote the guidelines and recording instructions for the prospective Spring 21 OCO students. Covid

has unwittingly given us a chance to help each musician increase their musicianship and technical skills through recording. Or as the old saying goes: when life gives you lemons, make lemonade!

Perhaps because Jack and Caitlin had such agency during Fall 20 (we were designing the new OCO as a team), coupled with their commitment to the orchestra, their OLOs were high across the board. They're also strong players who want to build (and play in) an excellent orchestra. Consequently, they rated their Olin Learning Objectives (OLOs) for Think Critically, Develop and Apply Creativity, Develop/Apply Self-directed Learning Abilities, Collaborate Successfully, Design/Implement Processes to Achieve Desired Outcomes, Communicate Effectively highly; each of these OLOs had a mean of 4.0/4. (For completeness: Develop/Apply Knowledge, Skills, Approaches and Methods, Doing Good in the World, and Develop Personal/Professional Identity each had a mean of 3.5/4.)

The Wired Ensemble: I missed teaching Wired Ensemble during Fall 20. Instead, I taught Singular Voices, Dual Lives—Nabokov, Leonardo, Bach, Borodin.

July – September 2021: Rebuilding Music in a pandemic

Preparing for live music again at Olin turned out to be an odyssey. I met with Associate Energy Engineer Claire Rodgers on July 1, 2021; we walked the music rooms and discussed ventilation. She later sent me air flow information. On July 20, I met with Associate Dean of Student Life Seth Hodge to discuss best practices/protocol for music practice, rehearsals, and performances. He wrote to Olin's Director of Wellness Beth Grampetro that afternoon inquiring about best practices for moving forward with orchestra, including ppe for musicians and instruments, but didn't hear back.

Still, I thought we'd definitely hear something at the August 4 community meeting on covid preparations. When that didn't happen, I wrote Jeremy Goodman (Head of Campus Operations) directly the same day, explaining what would occur in Wired Ensemble and OCO during fall semester, as well as asking for guidance on rules and expectations for live music-making. He was about to go on vacation but referred my email to OlinAhead, Olin's covid team, scheduled to meet August 10.

In the meantime, I met with a colleague in the Tufts Music Dept on Aug 8 (the wonderful John McDonald!). He told me that the Tufts Music Dept worked closely with Tufts Medical School to acquire effective ppe for musicians. Tufts had already ordered and secured vocal masks, wind/brass instrument bags, wind/brass bell covers, and wind/brass face masks for players.

He referred me to the Tufts administrator who gave us the complete list of manufacturers and vendors so we could order these items as well. But she warned me that time was critical because of the sheer number of K5-12 and college/university music programs all ramping up for in-person teaching and playing. Thankfully, Admin Barb Luciano took charge, placed all the orders, and we received the special musicians ppe two days before OCO auditions. In fact, Barb personally delivered a missing ppe package to me in MAC 305, not only surprising me but eliminating any need to track it down. She has been wonderful to work with!

For the first time in five years, OCO had numerous students auditioning: 16, nine of whom ultimately passed. But all 16 needed places to practice for their auditions—places that were covid safe, especially since ppe hadn't arrived yet. So Dean of Student Life Alisha Sieminski and I worked out a solution to enable safe practicing over the long Labor Day weekend.

Scheduling the auditions turned out to be more involved, i.e., reserving 5 rooms, then timing warmup and audition slots in coordination with Olin's air exchanges in the MAC so that enough time elapsed between wind/brass players and other players. It was like solving a giant puzzle! All told, the first 10 days of September were consumed with covid-related preparations for both OCO and Wired to the tune of 60+ hours, and the following week involved another 50. So many details to attend to. It felt like building a music program from scratch again. A ton of work, but ultimately worth it.

2021-22

Music@Olin website for prospective students, their families, and the Olin community

Olin's Integrated Project Fund (IPF) support made this project a reality. <https://music.olin.edu>

We set out to make a Music@Olin website, the first ever! Andrew Chang '24 designed and built the site. I reviewed its development daily by providing content, feedback, testing, and design suggestions. Jim Paradis helped us with the back end; his expertise was critical. Our audience comprises prospective students and their families, as well as all Olin students, alumni, staff, and faculty—past, present, and future. We made the site available to Admissions (Susan Brisson and Emily Roper-Doten for their fall season).

Resurrecting the Olin Conductorless Orchestra (OCO). PPE, Air Exchanges, how to ensure safe auditions, rehearsals, and performances. Then establishing a new organizational structure to support more productive music-making. Covid wreaked havoc on music performance worldwide and as difficult as it was, some benefits happened. OCO was able to establish new models of operation and commitment.

OCO performed its first concert since March 6, 2020, on Oct 29, 2021 for Olin's Family Day. R

Resurrecting the Wired Ensemble. In Wired Ensemble, we have wind, brass, and vocal ensembles rehearsing/performing throughout the semester in MAC 305 and MAC 304, in addition to string and percussion instruments. So considerations of PPE, Air Exchanges, and safe rehearsal/performance practices were omnipresent during Fall 21. Original compositions by Wired Ensemble students were performed live at the Wired Ensemble Event in Milas Hall Mezzanine for Olin's Fall Expo on Dec 17, 2021.

Replenishing OCO, moving Wired Ensemble forward, keeping everyone safe

During Fall 21, OCO came back! It once again functioned as an in-person, project-based learning course (PBL) where students experientially practice leadership, teamwork, and communication skills week-in and week-out. Students greatly appreciated being able to play together again. They spent anywhere from 3 – 8 hours/week outside of class practicing their parts, and anywhere from 2 – 20 hours/week outside of class when OCO's workload was heaviest. These numbers reveal much about the dedication of the players, yet they also suggest we may have to revisit the 1 AHSE credit given per semester. On the other hand, if a part was too difficult, students let me know, and I'd re-write the part so they could play it confidently.

As an example, in Fall 2021 OCO presented an unexpected challenge, due to a player's assurances over many weeks that their part was making progress. I'll let the student tell the story, as recounted in CourseEval comments:

Two weeks before our first performance, I emailed her explaining that I had learned only 10% of the piece we were supposed to perform and that there was no way I would be able to complete it on time. She asked me to meet with her, and in the meeting, while she was understandably disappointed that I hadn't let her know about this earlier, she did not berate me. Instead, she spent two hours rewriting my entire part and re-printing the score, so that it was easier for me and manageable to learn. I was able to learn my part well and perform it, and the experience made me feel very fulfilled and valued. In rehearsals, I feel that Diana plays a good balance between letting us lead the orchestra and providing feedback, and she is very patient with us. I appreciate the focus on constructive growth that Diana has shown towards me.

Wired Ensemble was last given in Fall 19. Due to covid, it could not run during Fall 2020. It came back in Fall 21! The Wired Ensemble Event featured memorable performances. At the last minute, 2 students didn't feel they could perform their solo piano compositions so I performed them instead. I also hosted a talk by multiplatinum producer Susan Rogers, "The Listener Profile: A New Model of Music Cognition", in Norden Auditorium, primarily for students in Wired Ensemble, but open to the entire Olin community. Students loved it; they wouldn't let her go!

Some students would have liked more theory, and others wanted more time to revise their compositions, including more time to rehearse with their performers. Regarding theory, I can always give more theory and do so in individual sessions, according to a student's desire for it. In general, there's a wide disparity in musical knowledge among Wired students. Still, the theory I do give suits most of them. Interestingly, when the faculty relaxed our syllabi campus-wide in November due to student burnout, I offered the Wired class the option for more theory, or less. They voted for less by a wide margin. But for those who wanted more, I continued with them privately. In short, I'm able to gear the course to the learning goals of most students, while offering those who desire additional knowledge the opportunity to probe further during our individual sessions.

In any case, Wired was great this year. Many stories linger about this fall semester but one in particular presented a time-sensitive challenge. Two days before the Wired Ensemble Event performance at Expo, a student asked for additional help on their composition. Sadly, they didn't like their piece and didn't know what to do about it. Furthermore, it was clear the student was tired and exhausted. There was no energy left. So starting fresh again with a new piece was out of the question. Somehow we had to take advantage of the current piece, despite great dissatisfaction with it. I kept thinking: How to take a dense, thickly-written piece and make it sound good? Perhaps more importantly, how to re-engage the student with a piece that was no longer liked? I felt some pressure, not having an immediate solution that would breathe life again into the process. Then suddenly the solution hit me: we could completely alter the texture, first starting with the prime melody, then gradually bringing in the other instruments one-by-one till the climax, after which the instruments could be decreased one-by-one to the end. I went through the piece, showing how it could be done. The student perked up, even got a little excited. Yes, that would work, and it did!

Spring 2022. OCO hasn't had a timpanist since Joseph Lee graduated in 2019. It was clear to me during Fall 2021 that a timpanist would be necessary for Spring 2022. Joseph worked for FormLabs in Somerville so was local. He kindly said yes to playing timpani in Spring 2022.

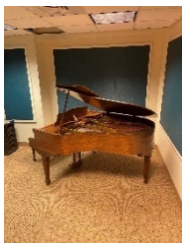
Other changes were necessary. Due to junior semester away, OCO was losing 2 good players, a violinist and a violist. So I reached out to Joseph's wife Mary who is a good violist, and she agreed to join on viola. The problem then was vaccination status due to health concerns. What ensued were multiple communications with Olin Ahead, including Olin's covid nurse practitioner Krista Chavez. According to her: "For the vaccinated individual that would mean 1 individual PCR test prior to being on campus and weekly testing after. For the unvaccinated individual, it would be the 1 individual test prior to coming to campus followed by twice a week testing." But this requirement was incompatible with Joseph's and Mary's schedules. Between schedule conflicts, testing requirements, and Olin Ahead requirements, it took almost 4 weeks to arrange everything.

Furthermore, our pianist from first semester wanted to do other activities and quit. We then tried to find other pianists in the Olin community. This took time as we uncovered every stone. At one point, a pianist emerged and was set to audition. Unfortunately, the student cancelled the audition a few hours before it was to take place. An instrumentalist in OCO volunteered to be pianist but we needed them to stay on their primary orchestral instrument. Finally, a pianist from Babson heard of our search; she passed the audition with flying colors.

Air exchange protocols still had to be followed during Spring 2022. This meant arranging rehearsal agendas so that the time winds spent in a rehearsal room allowed time for the air exchange schedule.

A new piano for East Hall

In May 2022, Chief Information Officer Rick Osterberg spoke to me about a possible donation of his mother's Chickering grand piano to Olin. Rick introduced us in June and a lively email exchange happened over the summer months involving the Office of Student Affairs and Resources, Olin's piano technician (for evaluation and eventual tunings), the Office of Advancement, Allston Piano Movers, as well as Linda Osterberg. I devoted about 40 hours to this project and was helped by Barb Luciano, Patrick Clarkson, Katie Rollauer, and Harry&David.



For a while now, there's been a need for another good piano in the East Hall practice rooms. Students love this piano!

2022-23

During Fall 22 semester, I taught OCO and the Wired Ensemble. End of term was crazy busy because of rehearsals and performances. Dec 13, 14, and 15 were 12-hour+ days, but the performances turned out well. At the last minute, two students didn't feel they could perform their solo piano compositions so I stepped in and played them for the Wired Ensemble Event. I thought we'd get some good recordings since I had consulted with the recording engineer for Tufts University. He gave me some excellent pointers which we put to good use for the Nov 12 Office of Admission Fall Open House performance. But the Dec 15 recordings weren't as good due to one student passing his recording duties to another who didn't have the experience.

During Spring 2023 the Olin Conductorless Orchestra had the most challenging array of instruments ever in its 22-year history. It required my creating orchestral arrangements of 5 selections from the Mussorgsky/Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*; these had to balance one violin (in a work requiring 38 violins) against 9 other wind/brass/piano/percussion instruments and generate the fullest group sound possible.

Orchestra can be complicated. Students think of it as their orchestra; after all, it's conductorless! In general, though, some students feel I don't say enough while others feel I say too much. I step in when I can offer something that'll help them, e.g., when there's a problem that needs to be remedied or to adjust a part that'll help the students playing it. I expect excellence or at least shoot for it. When I hear unfocused playing that's ignored by the orchestra, I call it out, suggesting ways to make it better, including how to practice it.

Still, there are always surprises. Spring '23 was a notable case in point.

I was nominally "on sabbatical" with a course reduction, but due to numerous concerts for external audiences during spring semester, e.g., 6 concerts for Candidate Weekends, I continued to offer the orchestra course and take care of the music program. We finally had a complete string section comprising 2 violins, viola, cello, and double bass. But the cellist was leaving for spring semester to study away in Vienna, and the other string players didn't want to play without a cello. Their departure left us with 10 players: 2 flutes, clarinet, alto sax, tenor sax, trumpet, 2 trombones, piano, and violin.

OCO students select the repertoire they want to play; I then re-orchestrate the pieces for whatever instruments we have for that semester.

The students selected pieces from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in the Ravel arrangement for large orchestra (think 38 violins, 14 violas, 12 cellos, and 8 double basses—and that's just the string section). The other instruments are: 2 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, 2 clarinets, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, and percussion.

Since Olin is a small school, we've never had standard instrumentation in the orchestra. I've made 147+ re-orchestrations (orchestral arrangements) for all combinations of instruments, trying to achieve the best group sound possible with unbalanced wind, string, and brass sections. But I've never tried to balance one violin with 8 wind-brass and a piano for a work that requires a big orchestral sound, as I would have to do for the Mussorgsky/Ravel. I wasn't even sure it could be done.

Though the prospect of balancing that one violin was daunting, in some strange way I felt challenged and wanted to see if it could be done. So I got to work on each of the 5 pieces selected by the students. I managed to balance the single violin with the other instruments, sometimes by writing parts that would allow the violin to soar above the other players, e.g., by using harmonics, or integrating its timbre into the mix, e.g., with tremolos.

While re-orchestrating their last selection (Baba Yaga's Hut), I found myself wishing we had a bass drum player and a timpanist, especially for its big beginning and subsequent recap. I was able to use every instrument in OCO to create a big group sound for the opening of Baba Yaga, except for the 2 flutes. In their low range (where I needed them), they wouldn't be heard. So why not have one flutist play timpani and the other play bass drum for the big beginning? I decided to turn them into percussionists

just for the opening, then give them a few measures to rush back to their seats, pick up their flutes, just in time for a descending flute passage with grace notes.

To achieve more color in Baba Yaga, I gave the pianist not only a piano part but also a part on the glockenspiel, which she would learn to play. I also gave a trombonist a short part on the xylophone. I then hired Sam Solomon, a gifted percussionist and teacher at Boston Conservatory, to give all of them a lesson on how to play their respective new instruments. The students took to their parts. After making this last re-orchestration, I felt we were in good shape for the final performances of the semester – Olin's Exposition Day to be held May 9. I could clearly see a path forward to the end of the semester which would require work but all would be doable. So what could possibly go wrong?

On April 20, at the end of our rehearsal, the navigators (leaders) of the orchestra were reminding students of the times for the Expo concerts. Suddenly the pianist said, "wait, wait, what date are these concerts?"

"May 9," replied the navigators. "I'll be in China." And with that, a difficult semester (a semester that was to be a partial sabbatical) became difficult in the extreme. Just one hour earlier during that same rehearsal, I had to strongly reprimand a player (something I'd never done in the 21 years of working with this orchestra) for randomly hitting the timpani as hard as possible, thus hurting the ears of surrounding musicians, and now I had to figure out an orchestration without using the piano, fully aware I had used that instrument as 'glue' in critical places for all of the Mussorgsky pieces selected by OCO.

So I talked with the pianist, a Babson student who had played with the orchestra for 1.5 years. Please, couldn't you talk with China Air and explain the situation. She said it wouldn't work because it took her a week of trying before she was able to book that flight. On top of it all, her grandmother was gravely ill, and she had to see her as soon as possible which meant getting home quickly.

I really didn't think we could do any of the Mussorgsky without the piano. Maybe the navigators would be able to find someone, but I wasn't sure that would be successful given the piano technique required to play all pieces, especially that required for the last piece (Baba Yaga's Hut) and given the time of year: end of semester finals. Also, the pianist would have to learn how to play the glockenspiel and move quickly between the two instruments, even playing one with the right hand (the piano), while playing the other with the left hand (glockenspiel).

The next week, at our OCO meeting, one of the navigators asked if I could do the piano parts. There was no other choice. So I learned all the piano and glockenspiel parts, and learned how to play the glockenspiel in the process. The following clip shows the Baba Yaga choreography with the flutists moving to timpani and bass drum and the trombonist moving from xylophone back to trombone (long link <https://youtu.be/7aBcnsstQkM>). It'll also show the 2 seconds I had to switch from piano to glockenspiel and then another 2 seconds to switch back to piano and place my hands 3 octaves apart to play a quick passage (quarter = 152). And it'll show the group sound I created with an eclectic combination of 10 instruments.

With hindsight, all's well that ends well, but frankly, the easiest solution would've been to simply cancel the Expo concert. But that option didn't occur to us; the OCO students wanted to perform!

2023-24

In the Wired Ensemble, I bent over backwards trying to schedule bi-weekly live performances of student compositions. It's valuable to budding composers to work with players on real acoustic instruments, as well as to hear their pieces performed live. That way, they hear more clearly what works and what doesn't. I checked each student's schedule with the Registrar and luckily found none were in class either before or after Wired Ensemble. This enabled moving the class between 15-30 minutes earlier or later, depending on the live performers' schedules (many of whom weren't in the class). I moved the schedule at least 4 times over an 8-week period. Despite the best of intentions, the re-scheduling was not well-received. In writing this, I now realize I should have explained why the purpose behind moving the class was valuable to them. I assumed they would know that. Big mistake!

During Fall 2023 the Olin Conductorless Orchestra again selected a huge piece (Dvorak's Ninth Symphony, last movement) to perform, yet the orchestra had the second most challenging array of instruments ever—the "second most" because we now had 2 violins! The Dvorak typically requires more than 30 violins, with Dvorak often sending them into the stratosphere on the E string. It's a big piece, but the engagement level for it was so high, I didn't even try to suggest another work. Again, I had to pull every imaginable idea out of my musical hat to make it work. As a testament to their commitment, every member of the Fall '23 orchestra returned for Spring '24, plus 2 more from the Spring '23 OCO.