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For Crying Out Loud: Kivy Launches Lecture Series

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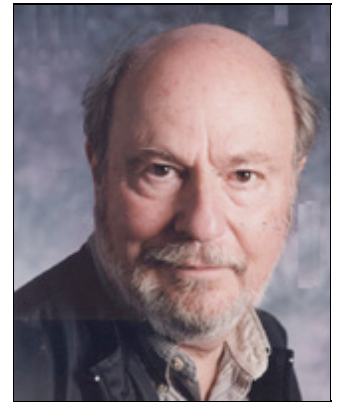
You don't need to leave Appian Way to hear provocative lectures from renowned arts scholars or behold professional-quality performances by fellow students.

Arts in Education students, as well as other interested members of the community, will assemble six times this semester for the John Landrum Bryant Lecture and Performance Series, enjoying regular doses of arts "medication": from music and dance to talks on qualitative research methodology.

The maiden lecture of the Series brought Rutgers University Professor Peter Kivy to the star-shaped lecture hall, Larsen G-08, December 9, to present his paper: For Crying Out Loud: Art Tears, Real Tears, and the Problem of Absolute Music.

"Absolute music" is an art form for which beauty and comprehension is dependent on its structure alone, rather than on lyrics, attempts to imitate nature, or references to historical or fictional events.

Kivy is a champion of this art form, and his lecture challenged the ideas of his contemporary, Yale Professor Nicholas Wolterstorff, who has recently cast skepticism on whether such music can elicit the emotional reaction of "real tears," rather than simply "art tears."



The Vietnam Memorial Wall and a memorial concert for the victims of the September 11th tragedy elicited "real tears," Wolterstorff asserts, because of the emotional response to the memory of lost loved ones.

Visitors to the Vietnam Memorial Wall were not simply responding to art for art's sake during the visit; instead, they physically touched and kissed the wall where the names of family and friends were inscribed. Those actions removed the wall from the category of "mere" art, Wolterstorff argued.

Wolterstorff believes - and here's where Kivy gets ruffled - that the best that "absolute music" can elicit is "mere" art tears, never "real" tears, because there is no reference, no title, no lyrics, no plot - nothing to engage the audience on any level other than the "mere" sound of the music for its own sake.

Kivy went on to dispute the dichotomy of emotional and intellectual responses to music, saying that he does not see them necessarily at "cross-purposes."

Kivy also rejected the argument that there is an easy distinction between the kinds of tears shed during a performance, preferring instead to view the music's power to enthrall us as a mystery, regardless of which strings it tugs within us.

Traditionally, at the conclusion of each lecture in the Landrum Series, masters students create, dedicate, and present original works in response to, and in appreciation of, the guest lecturer.

Two students in the Arts in Education program, Tonja King and Randy Wong, offered a

performance piece consisting of an original vocal and musical arrangement.

Wong played the oboe in accompaniment to King's spoken and musical rendition.

She recited a poem entitled *Chaos in my Coffee*, originally written by her several years ago, to which she added several lines pertinent to the Lecturer's presentation ("Was Mozart touched by Heaven's hand?" "Can Eroica inspire the common man?").

She broke the words of the poem by interjecting a verse from Schiller's *Ode to Joy* that also forms the lyrics in *Beethoven's Symphony # 9*. This she sang in German in her gorgeous soprano voice.

Randy played to Tonja's vocal renditions with a mixture of jazz-influenced improvisations and several classical musical references (excerpts), including *Mozart's Symphony #39*, the *Eroica* from *Beethoven's Symphony #3*; and the 4th Movement from **Beethoven's 9th** (with the Schiller recitative).

At the conclusion of Tonja and Randy's performance, the audience responded with both "arts applause" and "real applause."

Since Kivy's lecture, the Landrum Series has hosted two more guests: Matthew Pearl, author of the best-selling historical mystery, *The Dante Club*, and Anna Kindler, dean of the School of Creative Arts, Sciences and Technology at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Upcoming speakers include George Geahigan, coordinator of the Art Education Program at Purdue University (Nov. 4), Elizabeth Garber, who will speak on the intersections of social justice and art education (Nov. 25), and Elliot Eisner, professor of education and of art at Stanford, and author of the 2002 book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*.

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