

2012

October/November

BHCHP October 30

-After Autumn from the Vivaldi Four Seasons one listener asked, "Could you play something a bit more spunky?" "That was pretty spunky for classical music. What kind of music do you call spunky?" I asked him. "Blues."

-The BHCHP audience was very subdued. This concert was the day after the enormous storm, dubbed Super Storm Sandy. I had to wonder if some of our listeners had been out in it?

Pine Street Women's Inn October 31

- "I've never heard it so quiet in this lobby!" said a staff person between pieces on the concert at the Women's Inn. In fact, the women were extremely attentive, asked many questions between pieces, told stories of what they heard in the music, asked us to repeat the names of the composers and were thoroughly engaged in classical music in the lobby of the Women's Inn. Some women were in costume; it was Halloween after all.

-In the front row was a woman dressed in a fabulous black, off one shoulder full-length gown with a cascade of sparkles down the front. Between pieces and after the concert she revealed much of her life story...conflict with her father, who had plenty of money, the recent death of a family member important to her, loss of her job in July, of her home in September. Tonight she wondered how she would put it all back together? "Usually I listen to rock or dance music," she said

blushing, "but this classical music is so soothing. I feel relaxed, and sleepy. Don't take that the wrong way...it is really nice," she reassured me. Providing solace to her, with Vivaldi, Reger, O'Connor, and Piazzolla was an honor. As We packed up our instruments she asked, "How do you spell Piazzolla?"

Pine Street Inn Men's October 31

-We arrived in the Men's Inn twenty-five minutes after they were expecting us due to our commitment to finishing all of the conversations the music inspired in the Women's Inn. The room was agitated, loud, and chaotic. We launched into the Vivaldi; I could barely hear my colleagues. We soldiered on. In the second movement of Autumn I experimented by playing a passage as quietly as possible. Suddenly the men spread throughout the cavernous room were hushed, focused, attentive. For the rest of the concert we had a rapt and attentive audience.

-Afterwards one man asked, "How in the heck do you know where the notes are on that violin, no frets?" He and I had a conversation about the similarities and differences of the violin and the guitar. This man expects to get housing soon and he looks forward to getting his guitar out of a storage unit so he can sit and play music at the end of his day. After hearing classical music tonight he very politely expressed gratitude, and thanked us for previous concerts he has heard at Pine Street Inn. "What you play, it's just really beautiful," he said.

-No costumes in the Men's Inn. John, a Pine Street guest who heard us several months ago, said, "This music soothes after a bitter day."

-John's buddy was in a wheelchair. This man told us about a music teacher in middle school who made him listen to classical music for hours at a time. He was so happy tonight, amidst the chaos of the shelter, to be able to identify form and structure in the music, to refer to different composers. He said, "When I wake up at 2 or 3 in the morning, can't sleep...I listen to Mozart and Beethoven. Calms me, helps me get on with it." This man went on to state that tonight's concert made him smile in his soul.

2012

Dimock November 1

Written comments from Dimock guests:

- “Your music gave me chills on the third piece.” (O’Connor, Brave Wolfe)
- “The last song was GREAT. Thank you for your time. REALLY lifted my spirits.” (Piazzolla, Libertango)
- “You guys were amazing! Thanks so much for coming and playing for us—it livened up a monotonous day.” :)
- “Thank you for doing this for us. It means the world.” Jessica

Shattuck November 5

Written comments from Shattuck guests

- “I really enjoy string music and your show is great. Get me a CD, or a way to hear you online!”
- “Classical music is soothing. Keep up the good work! Tiffany
- “Personally, I prefer earlier composers (Bach, Mozart, Haydn, etc.) to the moderns. You always do a wonderful job. Thank YOU!”
- “Your music is wonderful.” (This comment from a lady who is over 70, and lives in the shelter with her two adult sons.)
- “Real music for a change. No microphone, no computers. Felt a whole lot better, forgot my problems.” Dan L.

Dimock Center

- At Dimock Center women are working to recover from addiction. During this month's concert at Dimock, one woman said "My mother never let me play Mozart on the piano...she said the passion of that music was more than she could take. If I played a piece by Mozart, even if it was assigned by my piano teacher, my mother would rush into the room and forbid me to play. I hear so much passion in the Mozart you just played...thank you." She also said, "In that Leclair Duo I heard many aspects of the human condition: sadness, joy, lack of energy, renewal."
- The weather during the week of early October 2012 SMB concerts has been thoroughly dreary. Rain all day every day and many of our audience members were unusually weary during the concerts. In fact, many were on the street all day, wet and cold. We feel their attention and appreciation during the music, but fewer are piping up with comments.

August

Shattuck, August 24:

-Big smiles from staff as we entered the building; they've come to count on us to create calm in the shelter. We had a number of questions about composition from the audience tonight, including: does one person write all the parts of a piece or is classical music like a rock band where people collaborate to create their own parts? This led to a very interesting discussion about how one classical composer has an idea that is illustrated by many instruments, and how someone can think up so many different sounds connected to one idea.

From other listeners:

- “During the concert, you found humor in the music. Wonderful. Thank you.”
- “I was in a bad mood, this took my mind away from my stress. I look forward to next visit. Thank you.”

2012

BHCHP:

-Tonight we met a woman who told us that after 27 years of abuse, and most recently broken ribs, cheekbones, and her nose she is figuring out how to leave her alcoholic partner. "It's really hard to figure out. This music soothed me and gave me some hope that I can figure out this complicated problem. I have to figure it out to stay alive." She had many questions about how we play our instruments, how we keep our muscles flexible, how we learn music. The music put something in her mind that fully occupied her thoughts and gave her a break from the distress of her present situation.

-A Puerto Rican man asked us, proudly, if we knew of his hero, Pablo Casals. This world-renowned cellist and humanitarian made his home in Puerto Rico until his death in 1973. The gentleman, who in addition to expressing gratitude for the SMB concert told us that he had ended up in a homeless shelter due to problems with his health and military discharge. While in that shelter, someone tried to kill him, which had landed him at BHCHP where he was receiving excellent medical care, and tonight, heard classical chamber music. "The concert meant more to me than you can know," he said when shaking our hands.

From other listeners:

- "I felt depressed, irritated before the concert. Relaxed after."

- "I found the music soothing and relaxing. Please keep coming."

Dimock :

-A number of the women in tonight's audience have heard us before. These women made a special effort to let us know how excited they became when, earlier in the day, they learned of tonight's concert. The anticipation helped them get through a day of difficult sessions addressing loss.

- "I was very sad when I first came cause of missing my family and problems in my program. I feel so much better now!! Thank you, God bless you guys!!

- "Thank you for coming back; it's a pleasure having you guys again. God Bless, ya work is amazing. I hope to see you again."

Pine Street:

-The first man to sit down before the concert asked if we could play Bach, so I launched into the first movement of the third Partita. "E major," he said, correctly identifying the key of the piece. He is a composer, with no access to a piano currently, so unable to do any writing. After the Mozart Duo he spoke of his love for the 23rd Piano Concerto, of Mozart, and described the second movement, "Poignant beyond making me cry."

From other listeners:

- "When I first walked in I was not feeling all that great. Just a few notes; and I was able to relax. Your music is excellent! You play lovely together. Thank you very much for your time."

- "I've never seen music performed in front of me. Truly, I was amazed and impressed with the performance."

2012

July

Pine Street 7/16:

- “My wish for you amazing musicians is that you never find yourselves homeless.
- Lots of questions about how we produce the music; do we hear lyrics when playing, how does it feel to have the instrument right up against your neck, Man: This music screams with life! Please tell us the names of the composers. The violin is the most elegant of instruments; the sax is sexy, drums have drive, but the violin is truly elegant. When was the violin invented, what is the material on the stick. (These questions followed by conversations about Amati, Stradivarius, technology of bow and sound production)
- Men’s Inn audience insisted on knowing when we would return; many adding the info to their iPhones!
- Numerous requests, as we so often get, for recordings of us playing the music we performed in this concert. I canvassed the audience to see if they would download SMB from iTunes and they are at the ready. First, we must make a recording!
- Wanted to know exactly when we would return, made note immediately in his iPhone.

Shattuck

- Tammy got a job, Ron got housing, Vivaldi beats tango music, hands down! One longterm listener hummed something to us to see if we could remember which piece it was, so we could play it again, he really liked it. When I found out you were playing I squeaked with joy. I have come to look forward to your visits and am enthralled by your group and individual talents/intensity.
- Great as always!

BHCHP

- A serenade to the soul, music wrapped around my heart
- Man had goose bumps up and down his arms; we are enjoying this more than you can know, pointed to his arm, this is from you guys. Hard to connect with your true self, hearing your music brought out passion for life, can’t believe you bring this quality to us.
- They laughed at the end of Reger, which is funny!
- After the slow movement of Vivaldi a woman responded: “I couldn’t exhale until it was over, amazing music!”
- It’s amazing you take your time to bring this beauty to us.
- Before the concert: lonely. After the concert: alive again.
- Brightened my day.
- Very happy, calming.
- There was a piece called Fire Bird. Music was great; done in three versions.
- A woman asked about lessons for her son and that she heard the words of people speaking kindly to each other in the music

Dimock

- Recorded:
- “Something bad was going on for me when I came in here, but is all gone now...this music, oh this music”
- You and your music are so uplifting
- The concert was amazing and put me in a good mood
- I didn’t know what to expect; after the concert I was very relaxed and very happy
- I really appreciated the music. I never thought I would be interested but I am now. Thank you for coming.

2012

June

Dimock:

- Lots of questions about Clarke Viola Sonata, arpeggios, viola technique. Rebecca had told the women it was hard for her to play by herself; shared vulnerability which seemed to open the women up to quite a bit of talking, which they did all evening.
- Halom: a love story back and forth, requested it to be played again at end
- Excellent energy, interaction with women

May

Shattuck

- A young woman approached after the concert. She started to speak, stuttered, stumbled over words. Finally she said, "You have no idea how much it means that you came here to play this incredibly beautiful music. I can't even speak, it means so much to me." She has been in the shelter since 4/11, in MA for a year and a half, before that she was in Missouri. She has drawn a portrait of the parents of another shelter guest. A photograph of the parents was used as the model. "Can I show you the portrait?" She ran off, returned with a very nice, though crumpled, drawing. "It's difficult to keep things in good shape around here," she said as she smoothed the paper.
- "Thank you for coming to play here. Lots of people give up on homeless people. It's nice to know not everyone is like that," he said while showing me other photos in the album. The young woman piped up, "Most people treat the homeless as if they aren't even human. Thank you for the time you spent here giving us this amazing music."

BHCHP

- A woman, with tears in her eyes, said her life has been so difficult recently, so many bad things going on, and the music was a complete relief.
- A man told us he forgot about his painful, broken arm during the entire concert, and apologized for not being able to clap.
- Another man came up afterwards to say he was a blues musician, used to be professional, travelled around doing the concert circuit. He was so grateful for the beauty of our sound, for the way we played together so comfortably, for the happy energy of the music.
- "Nice, light effervescent feeling of creative calm and quiet introspection afterwards."

April

Rosie's Place

- At Rosie's the entire audience was smiling after each piece and reported feeling happier after the concert.
- One woman yelled out, "Uplifted," to the question: do you feel different after this concert?

2012

Pine Street Inn

-At Pine Street Inn one woman remembered the name of an obscure composer, Bruni, we played in last month's Pine Street concert. She said the Pleyel, on this month's concert, made her feel, "energetic and busy." Many women at Pine Street have little to do in the shelter, and the TV is always on in the room where we play, where these women can be during the day. -"Listening to this music gives them something productive to do and something interesting to think about. The concerts are an incredibly valuable addition to the day at Pine Street," said a staff member.

Shattuck

-Our Shattuck audience continues to astound me; we are acquiring rock star status there! From the moment we walk in the atmosphere changes. Our fans sit down quickly, faces start to light up with smiles, happiness filters into the shelter. After this month's concert, I had a long conversation with Ron. He has heard us perform in the Shattuck for about a year now. "You have NO idea how much it means to us that you come back, that you play this very inspiring, unique classical music for us. This is beauty we don't see much. Thank you!" I asked Ron if I could record (with audio equipment) his comments if he is in the shelter the next time we play. His response, "I would be honored."

BHCHP

-one woman in the audience said she was "stressed before and transformed after the music."
-As we started to play I noticed a sleepy man sitting to the side, with his back to the musicians. During the first piece he struggled to get up, hobbled to a nearby seat to face the musicians, leaving his walker behind. He was rapt during the Villa Lobos. During the O'Connor Jig he started to smile and bounce his legs. For the tango, he got up and danced with his walker! He told me the concert made him so happy he had to dance.

March

Rosie's Place

-At Rosie's an audience member told us that her daughter used to play the violin, but had to quit when she moved up to middle school, as there was no longer a free music program offered. We sent her off with a list of Boston programs which can provide an instrument and free lessons.

Pine Street Inn

-At Pine Street Inn an Italian woman asked how she could take violin lessons, "as I have a lot of time on my hands these days," she said, after appreciating our performance of the Bruni, a trio by an 18thc. Italian composer. We sent her off with the same list. Another woman requested Meditation from Thais, by Massenet, for our next concert. This woman heard one of our first concerts at the Shattuck Shelter, in 2010, and made the same request. We haven't seen her since, until this month; she didn't hear us play it at the Shattuck, in 2010, when we programmed it to fulfill her request. Did this mean she had a home between then and now? We will program it for our May concerts and will be pleased to play it in her honor especially if she has a home and does not show up at Pine Street that day.

2012

Shattuck

-At the Shattuck a gentleman said, "Your performance was of great quality and beauty. We don't get much of quality in here. This high quality made me feel better and happy and gave me energy. Thank you! I attended concerts at Carnegie Hall, as a youth, so I know quality when I hear it. You really made a difference in here tonight. My granddaughter, in Everett, has just started to learn the violin. I was able to come up with the \$50 to rent her a violin for the year."

-We received a boisterous, vivacious standing ovation in the Shattuck. We played two encores. The room was FULL of smiles, cheerful conversation, and happiness. Several men wanted to know if we have a CD, "to listen to this music over and over," they said. As well, one gentleman spoke about watching the music bounce back and forth, "like a laughing conversation," as he recounted, in great detail, our interaction during the performance.

February

Rosie's Place, February 7, 2012

At Rosie's Place, a woman told me that the music we played reminded her "you have to dream big or your dreams don't come true." She added that she had attended some of the free events offered during the 100th Birthday Festivities of Boston Symphony Hall (events which occurred 12 years ago!) and she was glad to see what she had been missing. She loved the huge sound of the orchestra, the splendor of the hall. Our duo reminded her of that splendor, which she does not get to experience often. One woman told us, "I played bass clarinet in the band in High School. I never learned to read music, just did the whole thing by year, yes ma'am!" Another shyly offered, "I purchased classical music cassettes when I was working, but can't do that now. I miss it!" Quietly she asked if we play in groups, if we studied music in school, and she was happy to hear that we are professionals make a living playing music. She smiled throughout the performance.

Shattuck, February 8, 2012

- "That's music for the soul", from someone new to the Shattuck shelter, after the first movement of the Villa Lobos duo, which was first up on this evening's concert.

- "Bravo, bravo, bravo, this makes me happy!" after the Stamitz duo.

- One of our regular audience members, who often comments about the passion in our performances, asked "How old was the composer when he wrote this piece?" following the Moretti La Notte del la Shoà. I asked what prompted that question, his response: "That music sounded like it was trying to evoke something large, something very intense." In fact, it is Moretti's musical homage to the Holocaust. Rebecca had a conversation with this man after the performance, about the Holocaust, about how such an epic topic could be synthesized into one two and a half minute piece, and about how much emotion this man felt in the music. He has made perceptive comments about many pieces he has heard us play over the past year.

- During Presto of the Telemann Fantasia for Solo Violin, every single listener was nodding their head to the buoyant beat. This concert was attended primarily by men (only two women in the audience) who were pin-drop silent during much of the performance. In fact, this was the most attentive and responsive audience we have had to date at the Shattuck, with many questions and comments from many individuals.

2012

-After the performance, Rebecca had a conversation, in Spanish, with a man who is new to the shelter.

-“The music lifted me up and made me feel close to God, and you musicians are close to God for playing like you do,” he told her. “The tangos were stupendous! I am very moved by this music in this shelter.”

January

Dimock:

- After instrumental performances of Corelli, Tchaikovsky, and Bach we invited our audience to sing holiday songs with us. At first one woman sang alone; finally her strong voice encouraged others. By

the fifth song many women were smiling, singing, and some were belting out Jingle Bells.

-“Thank you for the great concert, it made my day!”

-“Great, inspiring, uplifting. Love the Xmas music.”

-“I really liked hearing the pieces that I did NOT know as opposed to the Christmas carols. The carols are great, but it was wonderful to hear unknown music especially with your historical info. Thank you for coming.”

-“Before the concert: I felt lonely, in a sad mood. After the concert: It was beautiful! Thank you so

much! I feel so much happier. I was amazed.”

-“It was beautiful and calming.”

Shattuck:

- Joseph, who has attended all of our Shattuck concerts since May 2010 and is known to be schizophrenic, caught Rebecca’s eye and SMILED during the concert. Reaching this gesture of connection and trust took every single one of our Shattuck concerts to date. It was worth every note!

-Tammy joined us in the front of the room and sang “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” and “The Christmas Song” with us. Then she led all of the shelter guests in a sing along. Fran requested “Jingle Bells” and jumped up to join Tammy when we launched into that song. I told our listeners that I’ve just learned that Jingle Bells was written in Boston; nods of interest and approval from all around the room for this detail.

Comments from our Shattuck audience included this poignant statement:

-“I love each time the violinists return here. The music gives me a chance to cease thinking about the stress and chaos, the “pain,” as it were, and the struggle. Each note lures my mind into a calm, and all I see is the Path in front of me. The music reminds me that I am still human, and renews my ambition to resolve my circumstances. The “debris” of homelessness and the past traumas are, for a moment, inconsequential and nonexistent. And I am eternally grateful to these beautiful, talented woman for providing that release.”

-It is truly an honor for SMB musicians to provide this to a young woman working so hard to find her way.

2012

Pine Street Inn

- During the Women's Inn concert a woman seated right in front waved her hands in elaborate gestures above her head and in front of herself, as if to create a dance to the music. She sang avidly during all of the carols and proclaimed Silent Night her favorite song, as she loved the quiet lilt. Interestingly, during the Men's Inn concert a round-faced man wearing a baseball cap waved his arms above his head after every piece. Following the concert he came forward, waved his arms again, removed his hat and gestured with it towards each of us, then said the word, "God". It's hard to know exactly what he meant, but it was clear that English is not his first language and the word he used indicated his appreciation for the concert.

The Pine Street Men had so many comments tonight:

- "Shelter Music Boston plays an animated style. I really liked it." Joe

- "Before the concert I was feeling down. The concert was a spiritual pick me up! My name is Kenny and I really enjoy your music. Happy Holidays."

- "We love it, come back again. God blessed you. (thank you) x 1,000,000,00"

- "It was enlightening. Thanks very much...it made a boring night into a very good night. Made it more of (a) special Christmas 4 me. Thank you very much ladies. " Andrej

- "You did something so beautiful and awesome. We really appreciate it...this place needs a lot more of your music. (thank you) x 1,000,000"

- "It was very peaceful and relaxing. It help(ed) open my thoughts on Christmas. Thank you. God Bless." Scott

BHCHP

- "I could see the dancing while I listened to the Nutcracker. Thank you for bringing this beauty to us here. A lot of people don't feel too well around here; this really helps."