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An interview with student author Simone Louie

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An interview with student author Simone Louie

Nicole Callahan

What did your involvement with GREAT day mean to you?

I think GREAT Day is, well, great because it's a chance for the people of Geneseo to know what other students are passionate about. It's a way for students to know the passions of other students and to be more aware of what other students are researching on or other important things that may be going on in other fields that we may not otherwise know about at all. It's a great way to learn more about the fields of knowledge and education that we normally would never learn about. It's also a great way for us to verbalize the things that we're passionate about and really care about, and I think in that process it's a reminder to ourselves as to why we are studying what we're studying or researching what we're researching.

What do you think GREAT Day adds to the Geneseo community as a whole?

I think some GREAT Day projects give opportunities to students to collaborate with one another. For my project, I had fifteen singers and a conductor. The fact that you either have to or you can collaborate with other students. You have a common goal and you work together towards achieving it.

What inspired you to write your piece?

The *Missa Brevis* started out as an assignment for class. We were listening to different masses written by well-known composers, like Mozart or Haydn. It gave me the idea of the conventions of the mass—what composers traditionally do in their masses—and it was interesting because in the techniques or patterns that they would use it has to do with the textual meaning of the mass. So by learning that and also with my prior knowledge of the biblical text, and merging them together, writing the mass was really enjoyable because it was mixing of this old, traditional, historical music of mass with my own personal experience and knowledge of the biblical text. I think with being someone who has gone to church since I was born and having thought about spiritual things pretty much my whole life it was very interesting to see it from an educational perspective and present it in a scholarly context and with historical context.

What were your goals in creating the *Missa Brevis*?

I think the goal, other than to just make something that sounded good, was also to

present the text in a way musically where I could feel like the music was truly and accurately conveying the meaning of the text in the original context, which was the Bible. So kind of bringing out the true meaning of the text and not dismissing that as just lyrics to the song, but following the historical context behind it. Also to compare and contrast the more joyful side of the text and the more somber and serious sides of the text.

Are you currently conducting anything similar to your piece for GREAT Day?

No, I actually... it's funny, in my free time I don't actually write a lot of gospel music. At Geneseo, it was my first time writing classical music. Right now, I'm just writing songs.

Do you think that your GREAT Day presentation was in some way helpful in preparing you for the demands of life after graduation or in graduate school? What do you think conducting this research taught you about your discipline?

I think the biggest help it gave was in making me realize what I could do, what my potential is and how much I enjoy doing that. So even though I really enjoyed writing the *Missa Brevis* and it was really great to know I could write something like that, but I think that after graduation taking everything into consideration I realized there are other things that I enjoy more too. So, I got to try it out enough to know how much I like it and know what costs I would be willing to make in order to pursue certain things.

In retrospect, do you think your GREAT Day project was an essential part of your experience at Geneseo?

I think that besides the composing process, getting people together to make this performance happen was very important in my senior year, and I think I was very humbled to have so many people be so willing to help me. Whether it was giving me a place to rehearse or just helping me sing or conduct or even just coming to my performance. The relationships that I had or formed really encouraged me, and we were able to have a collective experience where we felt like we achieved something together and people in the audience could enjoy it. It really encouraged me.

How did you feel when you presented your work at GREAT Day?

I felt excited. I normally hate public speaking, but I felt excited because I knew it was work that I was proud of, and the meaning of the text and the context of everything was something that I related to very deeply personal, so I was very eager to talk about it in a scholarly setting too.