

Violist/Violinist Rob Diggins

in conversation with Elizabeth Blumenstock

Our fearless viola player, occasional violin and guitar player, and contractor for the Baroque Music Festival, Corona del Mar, will be familiar to many reading this. But that doesn't mean any of us knows all that much about what he gets up to during the rest of the year!

Knowing that he does a lot of traveling, I first asked him, "What is the most interesting place you have traveled to?"

RD A very difficult question! Why? I find each and every place I travel infinitely interesting!

However, if I confine myself to 2017, by far the most interesting place I went to was the Middle East. In July and August, I participated in the American Voices' YES [Youth Excellence on Stage] Academy in Erbil, Iraq, a two-week

program for talented young musicians under the guidance and instruction of an international faculty. The [YES Academy](#) took place at the Fine Arts Institute of Erbil, which is approximately 60 miles east of Mosul. Just to recall for a moment, the city of Mosul had been freed from the control of ISIS barely three days before the Academy began.

Along with students from southern Iraqi cities such as Baghdad and Basra, we also had Kurdish students from the northern Iraqi cities of Mosul, Tikrit, Sulaymaniyah, and of course Erbil. The [intermingling of these students](#), who were variously speaking Arabic, Kurdish, English, and Neo-Aramaic, among others, was quite exciting and challenging — not only for them, but for the whole faculty, and naturally presented many interpersonal dynamics related to students' regional values systems. Frequently, the topic of the power of music came up, along with its ability to bring disparate peoples together for a common goal. I enjoyed these conversations, and felt repeatedly inspired to acknowledge and celebrate, to work arduously on behalf of the power of music to soothe and bring unity through diversity.

EB *Many of the professional musicians I know, myself often included, find that they don't actually just listen to music all that often. So much of the time they are already playing in concerts — and when they are not working, they may prefer to avoid busman's holidays! When I asked Rob what music he chose to listen to at home, he responded...*



RD Music? What's that?! — Seriously, though, at home I listen to everything. Usually I am working on a musical project and so I will be focused with my listening. I rarely, if ever, put music on as “background” ambience. I find that I simply cannot ignore music.

Lately, especially after participating in the YES Academy programs, my appreciation for newly composed and newly created music has gone way up, so I find that I really notice soundtracks specifically created for movies, for example. I have become quite fascinated with the blending of sounds to create unusual and attractive aural fabric.

EB *And, bringing it home to the experience of the Rob we all see in concerts, I asked, “What do you like most about performing?” His poetically philosophical response...*

RD I love the interpersonal chemistry that is a natural part of live music performance — the somatic or body-mind aspect, wherein the musician brings forth the essence of music, an energetic potential, a *potencia*. This power, though channeled through a person, the musician, is not limited or in any way exclusively related to that musician. The essence of music is animating and moving the musician, not the other way around.

The reality that the essence of music has existed forever, does not have a beginning or an end, is the oldest known traveler of the universe, is incredibly inspiring. The fact that I have got to see it perpetually working its magic, each and every time even one note is initiated, endlessly blisses me out!



For the 2018 Festival, Rob Diggins performs on three occasions: in the opening concerto concert on Sunday, June 17, [Parisian Divertissements](#); in the chamber program [Stylus Phantasticus](#) on Wednesday, June 20; and in the Festival Finale, [Handel's Orlando](#), on Sunday, June 24.

For information about tickets and subscriptions to this year's Baroque Music Festival, Corona del Mar, visit the Festival [website](#).

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