

73rd Global Justice Seminar

7 June, 2024

Chamber Made: Music and Between Small Spaces

Professor Darryl Harper, Chair, Department of Music, John William Ward Professor of Music, Amherst College

On June 7, 2024 the Graduate School of Global Studies hosted Professor Darryl Harper of Amherst College for the seventy-third Global Justice Seminar.

Professor Harper began the seminar by performing live a piece of jazz on his clarinet. This set a mood of inquiry and sharing through music, and preceded a 45-minute presentation in which Professor Harper discussed his approach to bringing together classical music and jazz. Through a range of examples he played in both genres he demonstrated how musicians in what he called a “third stream” seek to bring together the classical repertoire and jazz. Professor Harper situated his own creative work in this impulse, and provided ways of thinking about how boundaries within music are overcome and reinforced.

Professor Harper’s presentation touched on themes of the complicated legacy of imperialism and racism within classical music more broadly, as well as his own position within the genres of jazz and classical music. Professor Harper reflected on both these broader trends as well as on his own life as an African American straddling various musical traditions. A series of questions stirred further discussion about race and music, as well as how to approach jazz as a beginner, and the influence of gender on music making.

Over the ninety minutes of the seminar, Professor Harper deftly and intelligently wove together both intellectual points with musical examples, and even involved the audience in music making as well. The presentation was an exciting evocation of how to think about boundaries in music and how to find common ground.