

Hitting the high notes

ACCORDING TO DAVID RIPLEY, a successful singer is a bit like a three-legged stool. "He or she must have technique, he or she must have musicianship, and he or she must have poetic imagination; take away any of those things, and a singer simply can't stand up as an artist," he says. "The seat of the stool—the essential element that holds the three legs together—is honesty and an honest perspective of the role of music in one's life."

Ripley's is the voice of experience. Nearly 15 years ago, the classical bass-baritone singer found himself at a crossroads, where he needed to look honestly at the role music would play in his own life and work.

Through his work as the conductor of the New Hampshire Youth Orchestra, Ripley had been collaborating with UNH faculty and students and he had begun teaching at the University part time while still performing around the globe. When a tenure position became available, Ripley had to make a critical decision: a life dedicated to teaching or a life dedicated to performing.

Thankfully for his students, he chose the path that led him to the UNH Department of Music, where today he teaches voice and directs the opera program. Ripley knows, 15 years after making that decision, that he really chose both.

"The University has given me an opportunity to live a more multidimensional life," Ripley says. "I still have solo performances and recording projects, but they are balanced with my work, with students, and with a chance to be involved in the University community. My career has become more real and fulfilling than I had ever imagined it could be." Ripley's most recent recordings include *Ne Point Passer* (To Never Pass Away), Centaur Records, Inc., 2006, and *We'll Meet Again: The Music of World War II*, Boston Musical Theater, 2005.

Ripley was born to a family of musicians. His grandmother studied at the New England Conservatory, and his father began his musical training traveling with his mother twice each month from Lebanon, N.H., to Boston to study with a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. "The lessons were originally intended for my uncle, but when the instructor heard my father play at age eight, he urged my grandmother to find the best teacher possible for him immediately," Ripley says. "At one point, when my father felt uncertain about his abilities, he asked his teacher, 'Can I do it?' and his teacher told him, 'You must.'" Ripley's father, Robert, had a lifelong career as a cellist, first with the Cleveland Orchestra, then the Glenn Miller

Air Force Orchestra during World War II and the early 1950s, and then 40 years with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

A dedicated and gifted teacher, today Ripley helps his own students approach their futures honestly. "Each student ultimately builds a mosaic that becomes his or her life," Ripley says. "The exciting thing for me is seeing how individual and varied, yet successful, the results have been."

As examples, Ripley cites two students who chose two very different, yet equally fulfilling, paths: one as a professional opera singer and the other as a music teacher. "The beauty of music is its universality in human life, regardless of the circumstances," he says. "As a teacher I try to stress this concept. Both students now have successful careers in music, and they're each immensely talented in their own right, which is exactly how it should be."

"I try not to 'tell' my students what to do," Ripley concludes. "I help them to see the choice being made inside of them and support them in their honesty and courage to act on it."

—Donna Eason



**OUTSTANDING ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR AWARD**

David Ripley

**Associate Professor of Music
College of Liberal Arts**

Favorite score of all time

Sibelius's 2nd Symphony is tied with Beethoven's 5th

Four books you would take to a deserted island

1. The Bible
2. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*
3. The works of Gary Larson (humor is always important)
4. The best book I could find on "how to survive alone on a deserted island"