

Featured Fellow: Debra Nagy
Early Music
Baroque oboist, director of
Les Délices



2010 - Cleveland

Why have you chosen Cuyahoga County as a place to live and work?

Cuyahoga County has a long tradition of supporting the arts, and while there's a lot of talent here, I don't feel like it's a saturated market. In that way, lots of opportunities exist. In addition, nearly everyone (from the press, to venues, to business people, to other artists) is open, supportive, encouraging, and willing to find a way to help you achieve your goals. Cleveland is also a great place for artists to live, since it has the advantages of major cities (good airport, great food and culture), without the congestion and high cost of living. I can think of few other places where an artist could affordably own their own home; my quality of life is very high here – probably much higher than if I made my home in one of the other cities where I regularly perform as a guest artist.

What is your favorite place, event, or “hidden gem” in Cuyahoga County?

Sometimes I feel like Cuyahoga County has an awful lot of gems, and it's only a shame that they frequently remain somewhat hidden!! I've loved getting to know Cleveland's small art galleries in the past year – I think the gallery complexes are particularly cool – like W. 78th St Studios, or the live-work spaces like Loftworks on E. 40th St. I also think our art film theaters are great, and I wish more people could take advantage of the amazing offerings of the Cleveland Cinematheque! I also love getting around Cleveland by bike, which I feel has allowed me to feel connected to the city in a totally different way.

Who or what has influenced you locally and elsewhere?

I completed my undergraduate and masters degrees just down the road at the Oberlin Conservatory. The culture and people (professors, students) of that place have had a profound influence on me and my work. Intense creativity and intellectual rigor suffuse the environment there, and I've attempted to carry that through to the rest of my life and work. I'm also happy to collaborate very frequently with other Oberlin-trained musicians, which is such a joy.

How do you generate new ideas?

For me, generating new ideas or expanding the range of my work or skills is best accomplished through a combination of reading, research, and collaborations with other artists.

What is the hardest part about creating?

I think it ultimately comes down to not having enough of those two crucial elements: TIME & money.

What is the best moment you have had creating or presenting your work?

I feel very fortunate to be able to perform 70-80 concerts around the country per year, so it can be hard to single out the best moments; there were and are a lot of great moments for all different reasons. My recent work creating and presenting programs with my Cleveland-based ensemble, Les Délices has been particularly gratifying. If I think back across the past ten years, though, one of the most wonderful, exciting, and gratifying experiences I've had was busking in Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA. I was attending a summer workshop there for baroque music, and together with a few of my fellow students, we would perform on the street every night to earn our dinner money. We played trio sonatas, but when the wind blew too

hard to keep our music on the stands, we started to improvise variations over bass lines in period style. I loved it, and so did the crowd that had formed around us. One lady even stopped to ask us where and when our next club date was!

How has the Creative Workforce Fellowship affected your career as an artist or your art work?

I think the CWF is a great opportunity for me to focus on developing new programs during the fellowship year. I also hope that the recognition that the award affords will pay off both locally and nationally for some years to come.

For more information about Debra, please visit www.debranagy.com

For more information about the Creative Workforce Fellowship or the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, please visit www.cpacbiz.org or contact (216) 575-0331 or info@cpacbiz.org.

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