

Duo LiveOak Residency Proposal for High School Students

To See the World: The Arts as a Window on Humanity

NOTE: The outline below is a draft proposal; both workshop and concert can be tailored to individual school needs.

Concert and Workshop

*The **workshop** will be a one-time hour and a half session or a series of workshops over time, leading up to the concert. The focus of the workshop(s) will be how to enrich one's life with the sensibility (sensitivity) and personal discipline of an artist. It should be of interest to all students, as it touches on music, history, poetry, visual arts, languages and the important relationships between them.*

*The **concert** will reflect the material covered in the workshop—opening with spiritual songs of the Middle Ages, followed by renaissance love songs. The second half will be devoted to Frank Wallace's own compositions for guitar, lute and voices: song cycles set to the poetry of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Theodore Roethke as well as a variety of other poets, including Nancy Knowles.*

*We offer **master classes** and **private lessons** in voice (for singers and for actors, poets, public speakers) and guitar.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit www.duoliveoak.com or call Nancy Knowles at (603) 588-6121, email nancy@duoliveoak.com



Duo LiveOak

Multi-faceted artists Nancy Knowles, soprano, poet, photographer, and Frank Wallace, guitarist, lutenist, baritone, composer are well known for their performances and recordings of medieval and renaissance music. In recent years, they have collaborated to produce their own body of song for guitar, lute and voices. Throughout their lives they have embodied the renaissance humanistic ideals of the importance of art in life, the importance of being “multiple” (especially in this overly specialized age), the importance of learning from the wisdom of the past, and the importance of the individual. Aside from their musical and performing skills, both Knowles and Wallace have a loyal following for their teaching: both have taught for over thirty years and are known for their easygoing, interactive style. Theodore Roethke, whose poetry Frank Wallace has often set to music, wrote in one of his notebooks “*Teaching is an act of love...one of the few sacred relationships left in a crass secular world... Our lives are instruments: a teacher, I exist to save the young time.*” The idea of the workshop is to share in the first person the premise that if you play your life with the discipline and devotion that you give to playing an instrument, an overarching vision will emerge to guide you.



February

photograph by Nancy Knowles, 2004

This photograph speaks volumes about how Knowles and Wallace use art in their daily life to harmonize their world. It is not just choosing one's environment, but one's perception of that environment and how one relates to it, moves within it, that makes for meaning in life. In this case, what to some might be annoying computer screen glare becomes a dreamy reflection of the windows of an old farmhouse. The shot is undoctored, just what appeared on Frank's computer screen one cold morning. Becoming tuned in to the softening effects of light and shadow on even the harshest environment is one way to experience the "humanizing" effects of art on a daily basis.

WORKSHOP

Life as a Work of Art—A Tale of Two Artists

Renaissance Humanism in the Age of Technology

In the Renaissance, the printing press allowed the growing middle class the chance to read books, long the exclusive province of the very wealthy or of the church, whose scribes laboriously copied works of all kinds. The new "humanism" celebrated the individual, through studying the wisdom of the ancients, and through developing oneself as a well-rounded person who sings, plays instruments, paints, reads, writes, studies history and astronomy... This was a great cultural revolution in reaction to the old ways of the Middle Ages when the Church dominated all life in Europe.

Our Challenge

As artists and teachers we are here to explore with you the idea (contrary to many popular myths) that finding, developing, sharing and enjoying your Art not only makes for a wonderful life, but is essential for helping the world to be a more peaceful, compassionate place. Ours is the love story of two people who came together out of passion for each other, each bringing with them a passion for their art. Our dance began with a question: how can two people so devoted to their art find the time and energy to indulge their passion for each other? Ironically enough, we posed this question at Nancy's abode on Sparks Street. At the time, Frank was living on Powderhouse Boulevard. The fireworks are still flying...

Today, and every day, as we have for three decades, we are still addressing that initial challenge. Our ongoing answer is to build our life as we would a work of art. In this workshop we will explore "playing" our lives as one plays an instrument. We will discuss creative as well as traditional, time-honored ways to keep art in your life, whether it is of your own making, or of others, or just a fresh way of perceiving.

Formative Experiences

Our life as artists after the good fortune of having been launched by fabulous teachers, has been transformed by two experiences:

- 1) Our 1979 trip on foot over the Pyrenees Mountains as a young trio specializing in medieval music—with medieval instruments on our backs. We followed the ancient medieval pilgrimage routes, singing in castles and resonant Romanesque churches, singing for our supper, and for full houses “*throng*s of well-wishers...*LiveOak is on the move.*” (The International Herald Tribune)
- 2) Living in the country for the last two decades in a 1789 farmhouse surrounded by fields and woods, raising our children and doing our art and our business: performing, recording, composing (and composting!), writing poetry, photographing, teaching.

Both places are steeped in history. Every day we are learning lessons from those who have gone before. We will draw on these lessons as we look at the habits of an artist that help one to build a skill and a flexible way of perceiving.

Developing Skill, Perception

- What are the essential elements in learning a musical skill? [*Here the students help create a list*]
- Routines
- Ensemble
- Play
- The body (breath, alignment, exercise, nutrition)
- Context: playing environment—people, place
- Teachers
- What are the essential elements in playing with grace, with art? How can we really communicate through music, really move people’s hearts?
- Presence
- Confidence
- Attitude: empathy, humor

Examples

We will now encourage a show-and-tell moment from the students—stories of times when creative thinking or routines have helped humanize or harmonize, times when rigid thinking and rote behavior have made for lost opportunities, frustration, conflict.

Conclusion

The workshop will conclude with a few words about our times, the dangers of overspecialization, of losing one’s individuality in this mass-produced world. We will review again the lessons learned in our lives from our intimate contact with the spirituality of the Middle Ages, the humanism of the Renaissance, life in the days of the American Revolution (our 1789 homestead), and life as artists in the 21st century.