



ENQUIRY

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College Journalism

By SAM BENEVELLI
STAFF WRITER

I am writing this piece in reaction to recent failures of *The Spectator* concerning the Kim Strassel event held on January 25. This is not about the opinion piece against Ms. Strassel's talk, published in *The Spectator*, because the poor quality of that piece spoke for itself. Instead, I am responding to the blatant lack of journalistic judgment that is suggested by its publishing this column without any evidence of thoughtful editing.

The failures of college journalism, however, do not originate with students. They cannot be blamed for what

The glaring problem with The Spectator is the lack of faculty input.

they do not know. The glaring problem with *The Spectator* is the lack of faculty input.

While some students do have great journalism experience from an internship or work shadow program, faculty or staff members with years of experience in writing for publication should teach students how to write well for readers.

From simple grammar edits to professional coverage of events, limited faculty oversight would ensure both a higher standard of quality in student pieces and the experience, for students, of working under a careful editor. When writing for *Enquiry*, I receive pages of edits on a 600-word piece (even when it is a good one). Over the past two years, these edits have improved my writing more than any writing-intensive class on campus has. This is the type of editing and writing experience students should seek out in college if they want to go into journalism – tear apart every line of your writing, if necessary, to improve its quality and therefore the overall quality of the product. You rarely, if ever, get the same experience if only your peers are looking over your work.

Students should also look to “old journalism” to learn how to write, more than taking cues from blogs and “new journalists.” Exemplified by *Vox* and *Huffington Post*, new journalism leads the way in fast and thoughtless writing. While this fast writing is very easy to read and accessible, it tends to be less meaningful. Writers for these outlets are under constant deadline pressure to publish multiple times a day, in order to “drive” more clicks. These posts usually lack details about the topic, the structure found in good writing, and any integrity of ownership associated with the post. Writers can simply edit such quick postings to reflect the current “facts,” whether they are confirmed or not. This too-automatic relay of information takes all responsibility out of the hands of the writer and editor.

In the wake of the 2016 election, there is a special need to hold journalists accountable for what they publish. Is it surprising that every major news outlet seemed to completely miss the signs indicating Trump might win when so much news coverage was fast and thoughtless? Had these journalists acknowledged the facts in front of them and the overall political picture in our country, the election

continued on back page

Messiaen's Quartet

By CLAIRE ANASTASIA KITZ
STAFF WRITER

About 300 prisoners—and several Nazi officers and guards—in prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII A, near the Polish border, were the first to hear one of the most beautiful and haunting musical works of the 20th century, on a winter's night in 1941. Before the event, a prisoner drew up an artistic poster with the imprint of a camp-sanctioned seal. On the evening of the performance, officers and guards seated themselves in the front row, placing prisoners behind them—half-frozen in an unheated barracks.

Stalag VIII A (or Prisoner-of-War Camp 8A) in Goerlitz, Germany was not unlike other camps of the Third Reich. Subject

This Week's News in 140 Characters

EDITORIAL REPORT



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 10h

The real story here is why are there so many illegal leaks coming out of Washington? Will these leaks be happening as I deal on N.Korea etc?

69K 19K 76K



Greta Van Susteren @greta · 4m

NFL would have been more fun this season if not get political (and of course if @packers won)

18 3 40



Buck Sexton @BuckSexton · 10h

Remember when the media pressured NSA Susan Rice into resigning because she blatantly lied about Benghazi to the American people? Good times

78 1.2K 1.5K



Richard Grenell @RichardGrenell · 52m

the media aren't going to help crack down on politically motivated intel leaks because they benefit from the leaks. Congress must act.

24 128 195



Laura Ingraham @IngrahamAngle · 1h

No doubt Obama Admin loyalists who were still working in new Trump gov't leaked report of this transcript.

532 1.1K 2.8K

QUARTET cont.

to brutal conditions, prisoners were often treated as less than human. This particular camp, however, was unique in three distinct ways. Inside, there inhabited: three gifted musicians, a sympathetic officer, and a renowned 31-year-old French composer named Olivier Messiaen. This famous composer, captured at the (World War II) Battle of Verdun in 1940 while his wife and two-year-old son were back in Paris, wrote and premiered one of his greatest masterpieces, the *Quartet for the End of Time*, in this German camp.

Messiaen wrote the whole *Quartet* for piano, cello, clarinet, and violin while imprisoned.

[The Quartet] recounted, in quiet and dramatic ways, the triumph of beauty and truth – what was eternal and outside of time. . .

Unquestionably, this complex and religiously inspired musical piece about the end of days in the Book of Revelation would never have come to fruition without a little serendipity. The combination

In Defense of School Choice

By MORGAN WALSH
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

The United States ranks third globally in expenditures on public education as a percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Furthermore, in 2012, the United States's spending on elementary and secondary education was \$11,700 per student, 31 percent higher than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's average of \$9,000. In 2012, American students ranked average: 28th in science, 36th in mathematics, and 24th in reading. Eighteen countries outranked the U.S. in all three subjects. This data suggests that increased education spending is not enough to improve our public schools.

Over the past few decades, debate has continued over how to fix America's underperforming public education system. The proposed solution of “school choice” has recently gained momentum, as more and more states implement such options in various forms. School choice gives students more educational opportunities, including access to charter schools, voucher programs,

result would not have been such a shock. Maybe better journalism could have changed the outcome.

College journalists should not emulate these “new journalists,” or those more mainstream journalists who are too much like them. College journalists need to learn how to write and compose a piece before they adopt an easygoing style. They need to master the fundamentals of journalism in college if they ever hope to have a meaningful career in the field. So I urge campus publications: Think meaningfully about what you publish. Your articles and columns are not only for your writers’ benefit, but could significantly affect student life on campus if you use your journalistic tools skillfully and thoughtfully.

QUARTET cont.

of a surprisingly civilized Nazi officer encouraging Messiaen to write and a few musically gifted prisoners spurred his composition. The Nazi officer fortunately loved classical music, and Messiaen’s mere presence at the camp thrilled him. He went out of his way to supply the composer with the necessary writing materials and instruments. There were three prisoners who were brilliant musicians — one could even say virtuosos. They were willing to learn Messiaen’s demanding and textured composition, with its eight movements, using inferior instruments under appalling circumstances. Étienne Pasquier was the cellist, Henri Akoka was the clarinetist, and Jean Le Boulaire was the violinist. Messiaen himself debuted as the pianist.

The reaction to the performance of these beleaguered, emaciated musicians and to the composer’s music on that January evening in 1941 was one of astonishment. Even the cynical, hardened Nazis at the camp and the demoralized prisoners were made speechless by its grace, exquisite construction, serenity, and passion. The cellist, Pasquier, described what he saw afterward: “These people ... sensed that this was something exceptional. They sat perfectly still, in awe. Not one person stirred.”

For Messiaen, the *Quartet for the End of Time* was not really about a dramatic and awful end, nor was it about the war, or prison life. Instead he saw it as a song without words, written to God. It recounted, in quiet and dramatic ways, the triumph of beauty and truth — what was eternal and outside of time — with the help of the ordinary, powerless prisoners trapped in a quagmire of extraordinarily terrible circumstances. The piece was not only difficult to play and impressive in scope; it was also thought-provoking and a compelling

spiritual response to the ugliness, destruction, and evil that pervaded the camp. It was a window into eternity, “the harmonious silence of heaven.” It was not a window into bitterness, anger, or resignation to the darkness.

The *Quartet* was an unexpected gift, a beautiful bird in flight. Given all that Messiaen suffered through and saw in the war and the camp, one senses from his music that he did not lament his lot in life, or ask God why he was stuck in such a desolate hellhole. He instead whispered to God: “At the end of all days, I want to be with you, you whom I love. I am not able to walk this difficult path alone.” Messiaen presented a wellspring of hope, faith, and love when he could have composed something utterly different. He created something so thoughtful, delicate, and lovely — almost the opposite of a response to catastrophe. After listening to the eight movements, one cannot help but shed tears. One can easily see how the piece left prisoners and guards at a loss for words.

January 15 is the anniversary of the *Quartet for the End of Time* performance in Stalag VIII A. For many years, to mark that event, Germans and Poles have descended into a museum and concert hall, next to the remains of the old prisoner-of-war camp, to quietly listen to a performance of this remarkable, moving piece of music by a deeply religious Catholic French composer and former prisoner of war, Olivier Messiaen. After his release from the camp, Messiaen returned to Paris. He died in 1992.

SCHOOL CHOICE cont.

and private school scholarships. Many people worry that school choice will divert dollars away from vulnerable school districts, causing students to suffer. While schools need a certain level of spending to cover necessary costs from teachers’ salaries to utilities, many districts have enough funding to cover these resources and could improve their performance without increasing expenditures. One indicator of this possibility is that private school students tend to outperform public school students, despite having budgets 34 percent lower than taxpayer-funded schools.

Opponents of school choice also worry that these policies burden already-struggling school districts. People fear that higher-achieving students will flee failing school districts, resulting in a further loss of funding and resources for these troubled schools.

However, 29 out of 30 major studies on this topic found that school choice improved struggling schools as well as outcomes for students (just one study found no significant effects). Schools most

affected by competition tend to perform slightly better after the implementation of school choice, meaning that both students who change schools and students who stay in struggling districts benefit.

Another common argument against school choice is the belief that it leaves disadvantaged students behind. But to the contrary: Most students participating in school choice programs come from low-income communities.

Over the past few decades, debate has continued over how to fix America’s underperforming public

Additionally, a study by the Brookings Institution and Harvard University found that private school voucher programs made African-American students 24 percent more likely to enroll in college.

The one downside of school choice, as I see it, is that not all students have the means of transportation to attend “choice schools.” Choice programs have been very successful at involving disadvantaged students in many of America’s cities, where a variety of schools are close to students and public transportation to them is available. But school choice has helped even rural communities. At least 33 states already have free public online education, which provides a form of school choice to students who may not be able to attend other schools due to transportation barriers. Furthermore, online education has a significantly lower overhead cost, saving school districts money without compromising

the quality of education. Though it would be unwise to slash public school funding, a myriad of studies show that despite increases in spending, American public schools in general continue to struggle. To combat these challenges, it is time that Americans reevaluate the effectiveness of education spending and invest more in alternative options, such as school choice. While opponents fear that school choice hurts disadvantaged students and struggling districts, the data suggests otherwise. School choice could be much of what America needs to improve its struggling schools.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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