

# Keeping Current



Roberto Díaz, in the Philadelphia studio of radio station WRTI, coaching a violist in Miami (2006)  
PHOTO: GARY HORN

A few years ago, I had my first taste of Internet2, the terrifically fast, high-capacity “second Internet” that has become indispensable for long-distance learning at many universities. The network transmits audio and video almost in real time, so its promise for musical training is significant. As I coached students in Miami from a studio here in Philadelphia, I was surprised by the quality of the transmission, and excited to try out a technology that has the potential to broaden Curtis’s global reach.

Soon afterward, we at Curtis started to plan seriously and strategically for the future. We were determined to retain the best of our teaching traditions, and to build the school’s future upon this strong historical foundation.

Technology issues, we soon realized, were impeding our ability to move forward. Our computer systems were outdated and didn’t adequately connect our staff with our students and faculty. Our databases didn’t “talk” to one another, requiring duplication of effort across departments. Technical support was inconsistent and insufficient. Wireless access was weak. E-commerce at our website was confusing and our online library resources were extremely limited.

All this made daily operations more ponderous than necessary. Worse, it sent the wrong message to our students—who were already miles ahead of us on the digital highway and wondering when their school was going to catch up. So we took some initial steps to correct the most urgent issues, and worked longer-term solutions into our strategic plan.

Two years later, we’ve made significant strides. Even better, we’re on the verge of exciting developments. State-of-the-art technology has been incorporated into the designs for Lenfest Hall, our new facility opening in August 2011. Under Locust Street, fiber-optic cable now connects Curtis’s current and future buildings to existing Internet hubs. High-definition robotic video cameras document Curtis recitals in Field Concert Hall. We are conducting tests of our own Internet2 capability and studying its various applications to determine the best use of this exciting learning tool in concert with Curtis’s mission. Perhaps most important, a full integration of our previously unconnected systems will soon power the most visible sign of Curtis’s quantum digital leap: the new Curtis.edu.

Our redesigned website makes its debut this spring. Keeping current with Curtis is about to become much easier and much more immediate, thanks to robust systems that power the site while also streamlining life behind the scenes at Curtis. We are proud of the new site’s beautiful, user-friendly design, and hope you will like it as much as we do!

As is so often the case, ease of use is backed up by a tremendous amount of planning and effort. Great teamwork has brought us to the point where we can evaluate new technological opportunities as they emerge, put the most promising ones to work for the benefit of our students, and in the process, create a global Curtis community. ♦

Roberto Díaz, President

As *Overtones* went to press, we learned the sad news of David Soyer’s passing on February 25. Look for a tribute to this magnificent cellist and distinguished Curtis faculty member in the Fall 2010 issue of *Overtones*. –R. D.