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Marlow has music and journalism in his DNA

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr. *College Talk*

Not that many people are capable of excelling in two apparently different professions at the same time. Or at least that's the assumption in today's world, when it seems that specialization is the way to go if you want to succeed. Yet, from time to time, we encounter people who are exceptions to the rule.

One of those exceptions is Dr. Eugene Marlow. Even his academic background shows how versatile he can be. He holds a master's degree in music composition from Hunter College in New York and a doctorate in media studies from New York University.

He was born in London, England, but do not be fooled by that. He does not have a British accent. "I was born into a musical family: my father was a violinist and violist and even played mandolin for a time. He was a composer and arranger towards the end of his life. He was also in the string section of the Frank Sinatra orchestra. My mother studied opera, my grandfather on my father's side was a cellist, my grandfather on my mother's side was a cantor and sang opera. So, if you open up my veins, little quarter notes are gonna come out; music is absolutely in my DNA," he says.

Marlow also has deep roots in journalism. "It happened by accident. When I was twenty, my uncle from England invited me to come over and spend the summer of 1963 with him in England and in the south of France as well. At the time, there was a lot of talk around the world and in the United States about the 'ugly American.' I was sitting in a restaurant with my aunt in Cannes, and an American southerner had an attitude and demeanor towards a woman that made me think, 'This is the ugly American they're talking about.'"

When he came back to the U.S., he approached the local newspaper, The Riverdale Press, and wrote about this experience in what would become his first published article. "I've just continued writing since then. I've written several books, written a lot of articles. The music and the articles are not



Dr. Marlow at a recording session.

so much composition and journalism as they are different kinds of writing. The notes and the text really go hand in hand," says Marlow.

Marlow is today a professor in the Department of Journalism and the Writing Professions in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College of the City University of New York.

His writing experience includes stints as a military historian for the Air Force during the Vietnam era, a corporate communications specialist through the video production route, a news editor on trade publications on mass merchandising in New York City and then he ended up at Citibank coproducing a weekly news show using video technology. "That's how I really got into the video production and the radio production business as well, as it turns out. I ended up in the public relations department at

Citibank and then at Prudential Insurance and then at Union Carbide for about seven years. I set up their worldwide video communications network."

Despite this multifaceted life, he says that he has attempted to spend his life "trying to be authentic at being myself and exploring whatever I was born with, and fortunately I was born with several ways to go, and I attempted to integrate them. I have to say, since I've come to Baruch, I've been able to integrate all of those things, because I teach Journalism courses in music. At Baruch I'm involved in the Hinton Jazz series, so I'm really able to be myself here," says Marlow.

Among the things he teaches his students is how information delivery has moved into dangerous territory. "If you read something in the newspaper or in a magazine, there's much greater depth there.

The unfortunate thing is that we now live in the age of the tweet, where the limit is 140 characters, and everything is short and quick. I think part of the problem with journalism today is that the Internet is making it worse, that people are not getting the kind of in-depth analysis that is really required for a strong democratic process."

He is also concerned about the way this development is influencing the political process. "The populism that we're seeing in Europe with Brexit and in Germany and other parts of the world has now come home to roost in the United States. I'm calling it a retreat from the future, and it's gonna last a while."

For music he has also developed the capability to play everything from jazz to popular music to classical. "The notes are all the same. Middle C is still middle C, whether it's classical or jazz or Latin jazz. When you're writing jazz or you're writing classical, it's just a different kind of sensibility, a different kind of a feel. I've found myself doing some classical things in a big band piece, and I've found myself doing some jazz things in a classical piece," Marlow continued.

Further, he thinks that the lines between styles have blurred. "The 21st century is not about either classical or jazz or pop; it's really about world music, so all of these things are being put into the same mix."

He does not mind performing pieces that have been performed by dozens of other artists. "It's really about arranging possibilities. If a piece is in 4/4, can it be done in 3/4 time? If it's an up-tempo piece can it be done as a ballad? And so on. I discover that we can do something as a semi-swing in a blues style because I changed the chords. It's really just exploring the possibilities."

Aldemaro Romero Jr. is the Dean of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College of the City University of New York. The radio show on which this article is based can be watched at: <https://vimeo.com/197913372>

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