

"Last Night The DJ Saved My Life with a song"



by [erikaw1572](#) | Wed Apr 12, 2006 - 3:53pm.

I have never felt the "dance spirit" hit me while sitting in a classical concert hall, but the other night I did, as the rock club was brought to Northwestern's [Pick-Staiger Hall](#).

Vibrantly, fine, dreadlocked, African-American composer, performer and bandleader [Daniel Bernard Roumain](#) (DBR) wiped the stage with his blend of funk, rock, hip-hop and contemporary classical music in 24 Bits: Hip Hop Studies And Etudes, Book 1.

You have never heard a violin plucked quite like this one. He and his band, The Mission, blended strings, synthesizer, piano and drums, with vocal samplings, laptop and the beat boxing DJ Scientific to boot.

The concert, stimulating and exciting, felt almost physical, as the violin became a key player, a personified character in the musical storytelling. Each movement was another layer, as if eating a rich piece of cake, or something gritty and spicy, like biting into something juicy running down your chin into your lap.

The violin spoke, seemed to prod. The bow moaned, rified, sometimes sawed away, as if to make a point - spontaneously improvising and relating to the other instruments within time and space. DBR has added salt to the classical diet.

DBR's music message is new and sonic, with a backdrop of old school hip-hop and nostalgic memories of jazz along with his electrifyingly classical expertise. Wearing blue jeans and matching yellow Adidas with jacket, DBR cruised on the violin.

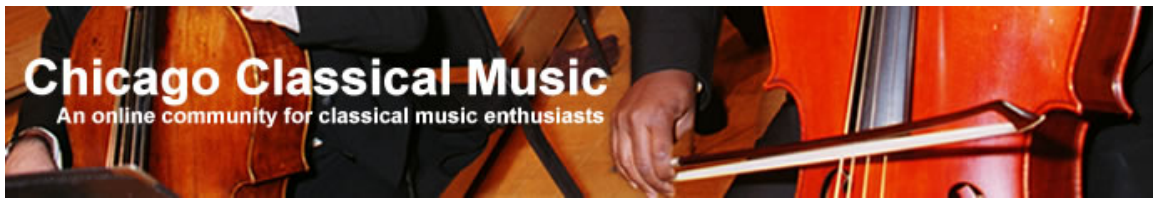
A highlight of the evening was Bring Them Down, a piece in which he repetitively sang those words like a mantra. The audience, stunned and enthralled, sang along with the La La song, participating in the party. He playfully danced, turning upstage, bringing the focus on his dreads and swaying tush. DBR is a rock star!

At one moment he stopped the music, as if turning the lights up at the end of a good party. Connecting with the audience, he said, "Well, I guess we are family now." He shared his excitement of being back home in the Midwest. He stood classically upright as a mature musician in contrast to the other leaning, head banging string players around him.

[The Mission](#), an urban and beautifully ethnically diverse group, obviously love playing together. 24 Bits: Hip Hop Studies And Etudes, Book 1 is a fast moving, burning-the-candle-at-both-ends piece of rhythm. This is not your father's orchestra. The audience, a mix of races and ages, bobbed heads together. You couldn't help tapping your feet -- the music was alive.

DBR expressed contemporary classical music, not from dead composers (though he honors them), but from a living, vital minority's point of view. He is getting noticed and knocking down the closed doors of exclusivity, unifying classical music lovers of all ages. It is classical music with curves, reminiscent of the amazing melting pot called America.

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DBR is A-OK

by [Jim Hirsch](#) | Wed Apr 12, 2006 - 11:57am.

Last week a few of us went to hear [Daniel Bernard Roumain](#) (DBR) and his group, The Mission, at Northwestern University's "[Harmonic Convergence](#)" series. By the way, kudos to Richard Van Kleeck and his staff for this wonderful series! For those of you unfamiliar with DBR, he is a young, African-American violinist, pianist, and composer of Haitian descent who will be performing his [Voodoo Concerto](#) with the [Sinfonietta](#) on [May 14th and 15th](#).

DBR combines urban and [hip-hop](#) influences with classical music to create unique and exhilarating textures of sound. The New York Times said of DBR, "The dreadlocked, hip-hop-embracing composer is creating a miracle." I'm not a huge hip-hop fan myself, though I do like some [Eminem](#) songs. If what DBR does is defined as hip-hop, then count me in.

I enjoyed pretty much everything about his performance. It felt like being at a small rock concert, only with violins, a viola, cello, piano, and [turntable](#) on stage instead of the usual electric guitars, etc. Great energy, wonderful rhythms, hypnotic melodic lines, and more! I'll leave the rest of the details for Sinfonietta staff member, Erika, to write about in the review she'll post this week. However, I have to mention that I haven't been to many classical music concerts where the featured artist came out in a bright yellow jacket and matching [Adidas](#). I will be interested to see how our audience reacts to this charismatic young artist.

I believe that it is artists like DBR who will keep classical music vibrant, relevant, and growing. Who have you heard that fits this description?