

CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS™

NEW YORK'S RISING STARS

2007
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COMPOSER FUSES MUSIC WITH BUSINESS

DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN, 34

MUSIC DIRECTOR, BILL T. JONES/ARNE ZANE DANCE COMPANY

SWEAT SPRANG FROM HIS BROW as he played the opening strains of *Hatikvah* on his violin. His mother watched in tears. Never mind the fact that the 5-year-old Haitian-American was performing Israel's national anthem in a Florida public school; the moment was career-defining.

"They selected the best violinist to play with the orchestra," says a still proud Daniel Bernard Roumain. "That set me on my way."

Mr. Roumain performs *Hatikvah* to this day, though his stages have evolved from the school cafeteria to Carnegie Hall. His music has evolved, too. Since stints with garage bands during high school, Mr. Roumain has become a serious composer who fuses hip-hop and jazz with classical music and collaborates with industry legends such as Philip Glass.

The Harlem resident cuts a striking figure, with waist-length dreads falling on slender shoulders. "Most classical musicians are not expecting a composer to look like I do," he says.

Most classical musicians don't run a business the way he does, either. Modeling his career after indie folk singer Ani DiFranco, who disdains major label affiliation, the University of Michigan Ph.D. sells his music

through his MySpace and YouTube fan sites and on iTunes. Mr. Roumain earns up to \$100,000 for an orchestral concerto or dance composition and up to \$30,000 for live performances.

"Daniel has the flexibility of imagination. He's a great improviser," says mentor and choreographer Bill T. Jones.

Mr. Roumain, who learned his work ethic from his immigrant parents, a nurse and a drugstore manager, says he wants to expand the world's view of the classical musician. "I am redefining, reappropriating and remixing what it means to be a composer," he says.

—VALERIE BLOCK

WHO
didn't learn to read until the 4th grade?
SEE PAGE F26

