

DPAC SPOTLIGHT

DBR & The Mission pushes musical limits

Group displays eclectic, innovative sounds at DPAC



Photos by TIM SULLIVAN/The Observer

At left, DBR & The Mission's nine young musicians combine a string quartet, laptops, pianos, keyboards, turntables and dramas to achieve their unique sound. At right, group founder Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) plays violin, piano and laptop, and provides vocals. He founded DBR & The Mission in 2003 in New York City.

By ADAM BONOSKY
Staff Writer

This past Friday, a revolution was brought to the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. Led by Daniel Bernard Roumain, *The Mission* — a nine-piece band of potential and talent from New York City — tore down the dividers between genres of music in an awesome performance of fusion music.

The show opened with Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) unassumingly walking to center stage and lifting his violin off of his stand. His fellow band members then took the stage — Earl Manein on the electro/acoustic violin, Matt Szemela on his custom six-string violin, Jon Weber on the viola, Jessie Beagen on the cello, Jim Roberson on the bass guitar, Wynne Bennett on the keyboards/piano, DJ Scientific on the turntables, laptop and beat-boxing and Kenny Grohowski on the drums.

After a brief hello to the crowd, the group then proceeded to perform the edgy fusion of funk, rock, hip-hop and classical music that has earned

Roumain acclaim in the music scene around the United States and world.

On the stage, *The Mission* exuded energy and passion with every piece as the sound flowed off the stage to the audience. Each piece, while containing certain signature Roumain themes, still had wonderfully distinct modes, rhythms and moods that created an emotional ride through DBR's creative person. Adding to the experience was each band members' proficiency in the instrument, allowing for pleasant surprises and moments of interest in each piece.

Each piece, while containing certain signature Roumain themes still had wonderfully distinct modes, rhythms and moods that created an emotional ride through DBR's creative person.

Lining the night were truly amazing and moving solos from each member, creating a sense of awe with each performer. Mr. Grohowski's ability to provide the right compliments and incredible fills for the music transformed the drums into a true percussion instrument that found a natural place in the band. DJ Scientific along with Wynne Bennett

provided some modern instrumentation to the orchestra. Szemela's six-string violin was also an interesting addition to the band. The innovative instrument with a tuning of Szemela's design symbolized the revolutionary direction the group is taking.

The pieces put forth a well-blended combination of funk, hip-hop and classical music. Modern rhythms were worked into orchestrations that brought a current feel to the string band. Each piece offered a melody that challenged the audience to rethink its preconceptions of what music is and can be by providing such a fusion that pleasantly confused the mind and broke down the categories that have previously been impregnable.

Of the many memorable pieces, one of particular interest had the intent of invoking the feel of Harlem. A syncopated beat from the drums brought a fresh feel to the rhythm section that has been missing from bands for a long time. The song then moved into a catchy melody that transformed the stage into a scene from New York. As with each piece, the band members sewed their parts into a song that was in a genre of its own.

On top of the already moving pieces and technical proficiency that the members brought to the band was the energy that was brought to the stage.

"I have too much energy, too much energy for that song!" Roumain exclaimed after one piece.

Each member clearly felt the music they were playing and displayed it as well. In one performance, both Roumain and Szemela were so overtaken with the song that they began head-banging as they rocked out on their violins.

Roumain continued to work the audience, which seemed to be a little hesitant to move and accept the new sound at first. This didn't seem to phase *The Mission* at all, because it continued to perform its rousing songs and by the end of the night the crowd was on its feet and moving to the unique rhythms and melodies performed by the band. By the end of the set, the audience had definitely been sold on Roumain's musical message and shouted for an encore when he asked if they wanted more.

DBR & *The Mission's* show was nothing short of incredible and, at the end of the performance, as the band sat and signed autographs for the crowding audience, it was evident that *The Mission* is breaking new ground.

DBR & *The Mission's* show was nothing short of incredible and, at the end of the performance, as the band sat and signed autographs for the crowding audience, it was evident that *The Mission* is breaking new ground.

Contact Adam Bonosky at
abonosk@nd.edu

The pieces put forth a well-blended combination of funk, hip-hop and classical music. Modern rhythms were worked into orchestrations that brought a current feel to the string band.



Photos by TIM SULLIVAN/The Observer

At left, keyboardist Wynne Bennett serves as Music Director for DBR & The Mission. She is also a member of an underground urban band based in New York City. At right, violist Jon Weber, left, and violinist Earl Manein play in the string quartet component of the musical group. Both use their talents with other bands as well.