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Communications

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Campus Rallied Around Colt Cooper ('16) After his Mother's Death

While receiving an education at Gardner-Webb University, Colt Cooper ('16) of Gaffney, S.C., discovered something far more valuable: the support of friends and mentors. On the day he auditioned for the Department of Music, his mother passed away.

“Gardner-Webb was very understanding during that time in my life, because it was one thing to go from high school to college, but it was a whole other thing to go from having the support of my wonderful mother to basically taking care of myself,” Cooper reflected. “Gardner-Webb was the best place I could have ended up after I lost my mother. I am blessed to have been part of such a wonderful and caring community.”

One of the people who looked after him was his best friend's mom, who also worked on campus. “The level of care and commitment she and her family showed me was really astounding,” Cooper shared. “I remember she took me to the Campus Shop and bought me a shirt and several other things so that I could show my school pride.”

With their words and actions, the faculty in the Department of Music also showed their concern. Dr. Patricia Sparti became his mentor. “She has been there for me through everything and also remembered my birthday,” he offered. “It means more to me than anybody could possibly imagine, and I couldn't have gotten through without her support.”

Cooper became interested in music in middle school and decided to major in music composition, because he was fascinated by the mechanics of sound. “I wanted to know why organized vibrations of air cause such a response in people,” he explained. “Why does music incite emotion when it is purely abstract?”

He wrote several pieces as a student at Gardner-Webb, and during his last semester at the University, the GWU Orchestra played his composition, “Sinfonietta in 3 Movements.” The word Sinfonietta means “simple” or “little” symphony and the piece features three movements: I. Allegretto. Allegro, II. Waltz, and III. Finale.

“When I was writing the ‘Sinfonietta’ I wanted to take some inspiration from some of my favorite composers, such as Prokofiev, Berlioz, and Bruckner,” Cooper described. “The three movements are absolute in their construction, which means they have no program or abstract idea behind them. It is simply music for the audience to take their own meaning from.”

He confides that hearing an original composition for the first time can be a nerve-racking experience. “I told someone one time that having my music performed is like having a painting on display, except that you are painting it on stage and everyone can see everything you are doing and every mistake you make,” he assessed. “My music was well received by the audience. I had several compliments, and I was very pleased with their reactions and the applause afterwards.”

Cooper is planning to go to graduate school and feels his education has given him the tools he needs to succeed. “I have learned how to be punctual, focused, motivated, and a critical thinker,” he related. “The level of responsibility that is placed on college students prepares us for anything life could possibly throw at us. Being a music major has given me the endurance and skills to accomplish anything I choose to do. We rehearse for hours, practice for hours, and study for hours—all for that one moment to give something back to our audience.”