

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Regina Carter spends first week in residence

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Quite a bit has changed since Regina Carter, CAS '85, last spent time in the classrooms of Varner Hall. For one, she isn't a student this time. A Grammy nominated and internationally acclaimed jazz violinist, Carter is on campus through Jan. 18 as an artist-in-residence. This week is one of two weeks she will spend on campus this academic year, teaching master classes and working with students, faculty and ensembles. On Monday, Jan. 14, Carter participated in MTD's Arts at Noon program and gave the campus community a chance to learn about her past, hear her play and ask questions.

"I didn't want to go to college, but my mother said I had to," Carter said. So she started out at the New England Conservatory of Music before transferring to Oakland University to study jazz on the violin, a traditionally classical instrument.

"I decided to come to Oakland because it was close enough to Detroit that I could drive down there and sit in on jam sessions," Carter said. "Plus, no one here cared that I played violin. They just cared that I wanted to play jazz."

At OU, Carter studied under jazz professor Marvin "Doc" Holladay. He gave Carter the opportunity to become the first student to play violin in the jazz band. Although Carter did not play a traditional jazz instrument, Holladay welcomed her into the program and ensembles.

"He (Holladay) told me to stop listening to violin players because there were so few of us, I'd end up copying them," Carter said. He told her to sit with the saxophone section and breathe when they did.

Carter said the class was more than just a class. It didn't end at 5 p.m. Holladay went the extra mile to immerse his students in the music by exposing them to the culture through music, food and conversation.

"Oakland University's professors invited you to go outside of the structure of the classroom," Carter said.

Carter encouraged students to find their strength and work from that. She said she had to learn to overcome her inability to read a chord change, but she learned she could hear it and then play it. Carter told students not to get hung up on what they know and don't know, or what other people have, but instead to focus on their talents.

"You just worry about what you want. Don't worry about what anyone else has because then you are taking time away from focusing on what you want," Carter said.

Carter faced many challenges once she left OU. As a violinist, her music was often overlooked. She said radio stations wouldn't play her music because they said people didn't like the violin. Carter had to convince many people that her music was different — and she did.

Carter had aspirations of playing with recording artist Sting. She was not given the opportunity and at first she was upset about it. However, Carter got her own band and began recording herself. It led to a successful career.

Carter has released seven albums and was nominated for a Grammy for her work with pianist Kenny Barron on "Spirit Song."

In 2001, Carter became the first jazz musician and African-American to play "The Cannon," a 250-year-old Guarneri violin once owned by Niccolò Paganini, which is kept in Genoa, Italy, and only played once a year by an individual deemed worthy. In 2006, Carter received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

In addition to meeting with students and faculty during her first week in residence, Carter plans to begin preparing for her first formal concert at OU in October 2008.



Regina Carter met with students last year during a visit to campus. This year, she is an artist-in-residence.

SUMMARY

Quite a bit has changed since Regina Carter, CAS '85, last spent time in the classrooms of Varner Hall. For one, she isn't a student this time. A Grammy nominated and internationally acclaimed jazz violinist, Carter is on campus through Jan. 18 as an artist-in-residence. This week is one of two weeks she will spend on campus this academic year, teaching master classes and working with students, faculty and ensembles. On Monday, Jan. 14, Carter participated in MTD's Arts at Noon program and gave the campus community a chance to learn about her past, hear her play and ask questions.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, January 17, 2008
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, January 17, 2008
Article Start Date: Thursday, January 17, 2008