Edward “Rick” Rozie ’76, artist teacher in jazz, strolls the crowded halls of The Hartt School’s Alfred C. Fuller Music Center radiating a warm vibe that instinctively finds the student in need of attention at the moment.

Just outside his office he stops long enough to hear a student’s rambling excuse for missing class. At the bottom of a stairwell he helps another student struggling with awkwardly large theater props. After a few more steps, still another student, obviously anxious about a looming senior recital, approaches him. He straightens the student’s collar and promises that they will go over a tape of the performance. The student’s anxiety disappears.
“We don’t teach to churn out student after student. . . . We mentor them all to make sure that they succeed.”

Rozie, who is just as distinguished in a red shirt and black slacks as he is in the white tie and tails he wears as a principal bassist with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, began teaching jazz at Hartt in 1982 with renowned bass player Nat Reeves. "Because of Rick’s knowledge of classical music and jazz,” Reeves says, "he brings a lot to the school. Rick grew up around Jackie McLean, so he comes from the same method of teaching. He gives a lot of himself to the students.”

Reflecting on what inspires him, Rozie reveals a passion for the school. “What I am really proud of is our department. The Jackie McLean Institute is by nature always changing, the way jazz changes with each performer’s interpretation.

“We don’t teach to churn out student after student,” Rozie explains. “We mentor them all to make sure that they succeed. We teach in the oral tradition, in the way that griots do. The students here learn through example and from a historical perspective.”

A historical perspective seems especially appropriate in Rozie’s case. The adjunct professor was well into his own musical career when he learned of his ancestor, Joseph Antonio Emidy, who was the first black classical music composer in Great Britain to emerge from the African diaspora.

As recounted in the autobiography of 19th-century journalist James Silk Buckingham, Emidy was born in West Africa circa 1775 and enslaved by Portuguese traders as a child. With an apparent natural gift and an owner with foresight, he would take violin lessons and earn a spot in the Lisbon Opera orchestra by the time he was 20, only to be kidnapped to serve as a fiddler in the British Royal Navy. Emidy finally became a free man in 1799, settling in Cornwall, England, where he earned a living as a celebrated virtuoso violinist, composer, and teacher until his death in 1835.

Rozie explains further that the grandson of the original Emidy, also named Joseph, was the bandmaster with Howes’ Great London Circus and Sanger’s English Menagerie, which became Cooper and Bailey Circus. The P. T. Barnum and Cooper and Bailey shows later merged to become Barnum & Bailey Circus.” Joseph remained bandmaster throughout all of the circus mergers.

Rozie’s ancestors arrived in the United States in the latter part of the 19th century. “I knew my great grandmother Julia [Emidy] when I was a child,” Rozie recalls.”Julia said she traveled with the circus as a child. She came to America with her uncle, James Emidy, another musician.”

If Rozie’s musical gene pool runs deep, opportunity has also served him well. He taught himself to play the piano at age 5 because, he says, “my mother played and the piano was there.” He also played the drums, but his career really began to take shape at East Hartford High School in Connecticut. "When the band director said he really needed a bass player, I figured, why not,” Rozie explains.

The director also played in a jazz group that he asked Rozie to join “probably because he didn’t have to pay me that much,” Rozie jokes. “I always listened to both jazz and classical music as a child because my family had a diverse record collection. My two favorite records—78s [rpm], of course—were “Cool Blues” by Charlie Parker and the “Sabre Dance” by Aram Khachaturian. Strangely enough, I played with him near the end of his life.” Rozie studied double bass with Bertram Turetzky ’56, M’65; William Rhein; and Orin O’Brien.

Not unlike Joseph Emidy, Rozie has blazed his own trail in the classical music arena. The former member of the Kansas City Philharmonic and the Philharmonica de las Americas in Mexico recalls that “in 1968, when I was hired to play in the orchestra in Kansas City, I was the first musician of color to be hired. At that time there were almost no minorities and very few women in the major orchestras in the United States. I wasn’t the first person of color to play in the Hartford Symphony, but I was the first to become a principal player.”

After years of performing at premier jazz festivals from Montreux in Switzerland to St. Lucia in the Caribbean, Rozie says he now mainly plays orchestral works. “I gave up a lot of the touring when I decided time with my family was more important.” His wife, Carolyn Pelkey, is head of the art department at Watkinson School in West Hartford, Conn. His son, who plays the cello and saxophone, is pursuing a degree in biology and environmental science.

Finding his history has been especially empowering for Rozie. He says knowing all that his African ancestor accomplished has made a difference in his own life. “It proved that no matter how great the obstacles you face, if you have the will, you can prevail over anything.”
I’m giving everything I have—all that I have left of Water Works of Pueblo, Colo. to stay on top of issues. I receive eight online briefings a day, like the one here on energy efficiency. I talk with Paul Fanning, a legislation administrator with the Board of Water Works of Pueblo, Colo. Pence stands in the rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building. The marble pillars are a frequent backdrop for newscasters reporting from Capitol Hill. During a quiet moment between meetings, Pence checks her schedule on her ubiquitous BlackBerry. It took a few weeks for Pence to learn her way around Capitol Hill and the Russell Senate Office Building, with its stunning architecture. She is the office resource on energy, environment, forestry, water, and cybersecurity issues.

Whether it’s stepping up to her role as Bennet’s lead staffer on the Water Resources Development Act, or helping craft background descriptions for dozens of amendments during the Senate budget ‘vote-o-rama,’ Laura has been a tremendous asset to the office,” Babington says.

Bennet “has the broad brush. I have the details,” Pence explains. “I have to figure out what is important about an issue, who the special interests are, who is for an issue, why some are against it. I have to condense all of it into one page so he knows the talking points before he goes in for a vote.”

March is the busiest month on Capitol Hill, Pence says. Indeed, on the two days in March that the Observer spent with Pence, her calendar was filled with hearings on endangered species, briefings on renewable fuel, and meetings with constituents concerned about the environment and energy efficiency.

Bennet’s weekly Colorado Coffee, for instance, was moved from a cozy conference room to a larger, marble-and-gilt-trimmed hearing room to accommodate the 50 or so Coloradans looking to meet their senator. Most weeks, about a dozen constituents are on the guest list. Pence attributes the uptick in activity to the number of conferences held in D.C. in March. Visits to the Hill are inevitably on the agenda.

Adding to the hectic pace the week before recess were votes on the budget and a continuing resolution that would prevent the federal government from shutting down at the end of the month. Televisions in offices across the country may have been tuned to college basketball, but in the suites of the Russell Senate Office Building, all TVs—and they are everywhere—were monitoring the Senate floor on C-Span.

**THE TAKEAWAY**

Pence’s great adventure ends in August. She is sure her time on Capitol Hill will have an impact on both how and what she teaches when she returns to campus.

“Some of my students would give me pushback about writing,” explains Pence, who is admired by her University colleagues and students for rigorous teaching standards and wise mentoring. “Now, I’m not just saying writing skills are important. I know they’re important. I’ve lived it. You have to be able to write well. You have to be able to assimilate information.

“As far as the environmental chemistry class, I know what’s current,” she says. “Topics covering renewable fuel, especially, will be added. I teach using examples, and now I have a lot more examples to tie back to the real world.”

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**Editor’s note:** A particularly engaging aspect of Pence’s fellowship is the blog she writes at drpence.wordpress.com, in which she covers the nuances of her work on the Hill. She also takes readers on her weekend explorations of the extensive culture and history in the D.C. area.