



MPBN's Robin Rilette *New Morning Classical Host*

Welcome!

You've only just started at MPBN, but what are a few surprising things you've learned so far about both Maine and MPBN?

I'm very impressed with the dedication of my new colleagues at MPBN and the many hours they put in each week. I'm sure that they sleep, but am just not certain when! I've also discovered that MPBN listeners are very welcoming, and I'm quite grateful to have been received with open arms by everyone I've encountered in my new journey.

One of the surprising things about Maine is that I'm never quite sure where I am. To be more specific, Mainers, where are the road signs?! Is this a deliberate conspiracy to confuse newcomers? All kidding aside, it's a beautiful place in which to wander about. When NWPR listeners heard that I was coming to Maine, I received a lot of e-mails from New England transplants warning me that New Englanders are not as friendly as Pacific Northwesterners. The surprise is that they usually followed that up by saying that Mainers were the exception to the rule. I've certainly found that to be true.

What ingredients do you feel make a show like Morning Classical successful?

Variety. Variety of periods, instruments, tempos, textures – you name it! It's also good to have a mix of familiar and beloved pieces with some fun surprises thrown in. Sometimes I like to give people a burst of energy at the start of the show, and on other days, it just seems like we could all use a nice, mellow start to a morning of music. Just as important to me is that I communicate effectively with listeners whether it's about a composer, the music itself, or what's going on in the world.

How do you go about planning a classical music program? Do you do it thematically? Plan well ahead of the show, or do you choose selections on how you are feeling at that moment?

In general, I pick out my music a day ahead, but I always leave room to respond to events of the day. I do like to sometimes program thematically. It's really fun picking a theme and then finding music to match from a variety of periods and instrumentations. I never know where the next theme is coming from, and sometimes one comes from a listener! I also think a lot about what people may be doing when they are listening. Are they in front of a computer, in their car, literally running or figuratively running errands or are they gardening, cooking or teaching? (I love hearing from teachers who play classical music in their classrooms.)

What is the most interesting comment you've ever received from a listener?

Hmmm...there have been many interesting comments, but some of my favorites are when people tell me in detail how the music I chose and the words I said helped them get through a really difficult or tragic time of life. Those kinds of comments really speak to the intimacy and power of both music and of this medium that we call radio. I would add that people also share specific ways in which the music brings joy into their lives. Either way, it's just amazing that people take the time to let me know how important the music is and how it adds to the quality of their lives.

Joining MPBN and taking over the role of music director aside, what are you looking forward to most about living here?

Exploring Maine! Maine is a state that has a particular cachet among people from the Pacific Northwest. I'm from the "other" Portland and so I have an affinity for places where Christmas trees grow on the coast. I'm also really looking forward to traveling around Maine and talking with listeners about the vision that we have for a separate classical music service, something that will deepen their experience with this amazing body of music that spans centuries.

We understand you have a background in singing. Are we likely to ever hear you on stage?

I doubt it! I sometimes sang in my former town, Palouse, Washington, at The Green Frog cafe and sang my last day in Palouse at the annual talent show. I also used to sing during pledge drives at NWPR with Dan Maher, the host of "Inland Folk," and we always had a lot of fun together. In fact, we sang together recently one last time for an NWPR farewell video.

And if yes, what piece of music would you most love to perform and why?

If I had the chops, I'd sing Leonard Bernstein's "Simple Song" because it's so thrilling. Also, I adore the music of the '30s and '40s and would love to sing with a big band.

Thanks Robin! ■