

October 20, 2011

Elliott Cherry  
P.O. Box 6602  
Portland, ME 04103

Dear Elliott:

Thank you for sharing *A Finished Heart* with the University of Maine community last night. I was deeply touched by your ability to relay the most intimate moments you shared with your husband in his final weeks. It was such a gift. Between your words and poetry - and Martin on the piano - it was simply beautiful.

I have to admit that I found myself feeling a bit anxious as the lights dimmed, the music began, and you started to speak. Clearly, it reflected my own discomfort with death and dying. But my anxiety quickly subsided as you drew me and other audience members into your personal world - sharing not only the sorrow and pain, but also the peace and love. You were able to capture the tension between denial and acceptance, and the struggle faced by the dying person as well as the caregiver. Your performance was so real in the way you shared the dialogue between you and Chris. It was as if he were right there in the room with us. Chris lives through this performance.

Thank you so much for sharing such an intimate, personal experience and helping us to confront our own mortality. I was struck by the dichotomy. We are left to consider how we might want to create a meaningful death and at the same time we are asked what it means to live deliberately.

Your performance about death and dying had important lessons about love and living. For this I want to say thank you.

Sincerely,



Sandra L. Caron, Ph.D.  
Professor of Family Relations  
University of Maine