

Music tells her story

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Gwen Thompkins shares her thoughts on the musical landscape of Louisiana during an installment of the Homecoming Speaker Series on Friday (Nov. 14). (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Using her voice and her iPod, Newcomb College alumna Gwen Thompkins gave her audience a message ? music is a story-telling device.

Thompkins, a New Orleans native, appeared as part of the [Homecoming](#) Speaker Series on Friday (Nov. 14) sponsored by the Newcomb Alumnae Association and the Division of Student Affairs. She shared her positive spirit and career journey with the

audience gathered in the Freeman Auditorium of the Woldenberg Art Center on the Tulane University uptown campus.

Thompkins framed her experiences through music as she discussed traveling abroad, writing stories for *The Times-Picayune*, working for National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition" and hosting the ["Music Inside Out"](#) program for WWNO-FM.

"Music is an excellent introduction between strangers anywhere, including right here on Earth," Thompkins said. "I suppose that's why after many years away I came back to New Orleans and I started the public radio show called "Music Inside Out," because the musicians of Louisiana could fill a dozen golden records."

After graduating from Newcomb College in 1987, Thompkins earned the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship and traveled to Belgrade, Yugoslavia. While abroad, she explored the Balkans and learned about theater, film, radio and television. As she spoke, Thompkins played songs by Elvis Presley, Soul II Soul and Maria Callas, all of which provided her with fond memories of her time overseas.

When she returned to the United States, Thompkins began working as a journalist for *The Times-Picayune* and then transitioned to NPR. Songs by JosÃ© Feliciano, Tony Bennett, Beethoven and Chuck Berry helped to tell about the lessons she learned during this period of her life.

"The news should not just be about people dying," she said. "It should be about people living and the joy of our lives day to day."

As the host of "Music Inside Out," Thompkins focuses on the uniquely diverse musical landscape of Louisiana.

Greg Thomson is a senior at Tulane University majoring in communication.

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