

# MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

JUNE 1998



Liz Varnhagen and Helen Dole  
Chico Chamber Music Workshop, 1997

## THE RELUCTANT PERFORMER

by Sydney Rott

*Editor's note: on May 3, 1998, Sydney Rott performed in public for the 30th time since September, 1997.*

For some time now, I have been corresponding by e-mail with a professional oboist. Time after time he mentions his love for performing—not playing in general, although I suspect he loves that too, but, specifically, performing. He can't grasp the idea that I look forward to a performance with emotions that range from mild trepidation to outright terror. "You know you enjoy it," he'll say. "We all enjoy sharing our music through performance."

Wrong.

Before a community orchestra concert our conductor will tell us, "Have fun!" In my case at least, "Hang in there. It'll be over soon," would be a more appropriate wish.

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## TIME AND THE MUSICIAN

by Ted Rust

Music for the Love of It is often asked, "How long can I continue to play my instrument? What can I do to keep playing longer?" There is no one answer for everyone: our bodies and minds wear out in different ways, but we all eventually find we must accept our own biological limits as musicians.

What we don't have to accept is the notion that music is only worth making and sharing at a virtuoso level. Making music you care about exposes some of your deepest feelings, and making music for friends is sharing a part of your soul. Sharing music with friends, however simple, is no imposition, it is a gift.

Time is our world, we musicians. It is the single dimension our art inhabits. Painters organize their ideas in two dimensions, sculptors in three, dancers in four (the three dimensions of space, plus time) but we have time alone. We manipulate temporal relationships, from the tiny shifts of timbre and intonation that can make one sound bloom into resonance with another one, to the indefinable rightness of a pause which demands that the music continue, to the pacing of a concert program that engages an audience and leaves them satisfied.

Can our sophistication in negotiating time at the scale of microseconds to hours carry over to help us negotiate

the time of our lives, at the scale of years and decades, with a little more grace than we might otherwise? I believe so. It did for Maisie Kohnstamm (see page 2). She didn't ask, "How can I hold onto my chair in the violin section?" She said, "The Town Band looks like great fun. What can I do to be part of it?" And so she took up the mellophone.

Musicianship is a determination to imagine and make more beautiful sounds than the sounds we hear in ordinary life, and use them to express things we care about. It is the desire to share an extraordinary experience. The means one uses are not as important as the determination to imagine, make and share music.

Time builds parts of us up, while it wears other parts of us down. As an older musician, one knows more repertoire and style and theory than one used to, but then it gets harder to put one's finger on it at the right time. It takes more and more effort to learn new tricks. The stamina and muscles and joints and emotional reserves all experience wear and tear.

Time will eventually wear down our musicianship. But musicianship is influencing the course of our aging entirely for the better.

# THE IN BOX

## SEVENTY IS NOT TOO LATE EITHER

Editor:

I can heartily agree with Dr. McCaffrey ("Fifty is Not Too Late" in the April, 1998 issue), but I wish to up the ante. At 70+ I succumbed to my desire to play brass. It happened thus:

As we were filing out of an orchestra rehearsal one evening I asked a retired doctor whom I knew to play violin AND tuba, how one gained access to the Town Band which I so much admire.

He replied, "Will you play the mellophone?"

I said, "The what?"

In due course I was loaned an extremely mildewed and bizarre-looking instrument which had been donated to our town in 1928. To my utter astonishment, I was successful in eliciting a rumble and a blast from it.

Now, two years later, I am strutting the streets in firemen's parades and tooting away at ice cream socials. My golden years are enhanced by my silver horn.

Maisie Kohnstamm

New Canaan, Connecticut

## ALARIA, TONAL REFRACTION UPDATES

Dear Ted,

Thanks for all the work you do for the cause of chamber music. There has been a change in the summer plans: Music Mountain is now affiliated with the Mannes College of Music, so Alaria is doing two weekends there, Fourth of July, and again July 30-Aug 2. It is late, and short notice, but we hope to rouse sufficient interest to make a go of it, particularly among people who have worked with us before.

To update you on my visualization work (*Tonal Refraction, a technique for projecting a visual representation of a score while it is being performed — ed.*): I have been working with patients at The Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, achieving extraordinary results, and the Institute plans major research based on my technique. A paper on an educational application, "Thinking Resonance," was accepted for a refereed research conference by the Southeastern Music Education Symposium at the University of Georgia. Papers will be published also in *Transformations: The Journal of the Association for the Science of Education*, and in *Prism: A Learning Journal*, published in Paris, France. Also, the New School (of which Mannes is a division) just awarded me a grant to develop educational materials out of the work I am doing at the Institute. So things are busy and fruitful.

Thanks for all your help and encouragement.

Nancy Garniez

New York, NY

## ENSEMBLE RHYTHM

Dear Ted,

I loved your marvelous article in the April issue of Music For The Love of It! The portions of it that I already understood or had glimmers of and have begun to incorporate were expressed so well. And of what you wrote, there is so much that I will continue to think about, techniques you describe that embody crucial concepts, things that I've sometimes sensed, occasionally experienced, but not heard formulated before, or not nearly as well. The scope, clarity, and coherence of the article make it a classic. Thank you for your vision, and your ability to express it so well.

Joe Beck

Lafayette, California

## NEW EUROPEAN WORKSHOP LISTINGS

The 5th Annual Chamber Music Workshop Cruise will sail August 20 - 27, 1998. Dick Sheffel, a chamber music player and travel agent, is organizing and participating in this coached Chamber Music Workshop and cruise which will visit the ports of Stockholm, Copenhagen and St. Petersburg. There will be plenty of music making and sightseeing, including the Hermitage. Prices start at \$2,931 per person, double occupancy in an outside cabin. The price includes round trip air from most U.S. and Canadian cities and all gratuities. For reservations and information on future trips contact Richard Sheffel: 1-800-221-2786 or at <chetjk@concentric.net>.

Musical Passages has announced that it will hold three chamber music workshops in France: Sept. 4-10 in Paris, a coached workshop for strings with Arpeggione Quartet; Sept. 12-19 in Roujan (near Montpellier), chamber music for winds and strings in a vacation setting at a private home; Sept. 21-28, at Cratoule (in Ardeche), chamber music for strings, winds and piano in a vacation setting at a private home. For further information, please send mail address, instrument (s) played, telephone and fax numbers (optional) by June 15, 1998 to Jane M. Carhart/ Musical Passages, 25 Alden Terrace, Millbrook, NY 12545, USA, tel. (914) 677-5092, fax. (914) 677-3210, <Carhartjm@aol.com>.

There will be a woodwind/horn chamber music course in Harrogate, England, August 8-15, 1998. Contact J. Brown, 42 St. Mary's Park, Louth LN11 0EF, UK.

*MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT* Volume 11 No. 3, June 1998. Published six times a year at 67 Parkside Drive, Berkeley, California 94705, phone 510/654-9134, fax 510/654-4656, <www.music.holowww.com>. Edgar (Ted) Rust, editor/publisher. Janet Telford, associate editor. Subscriptions \$20/year in U.S., \$25/year outside U.S. Single issues \$5.00. ISSN 0898-8757. © 1998 Edgar Rust.

The dates for *Symphonie in Fels* (listed in December issue) have been changed to October 8-11, 1998. Contact Hubert Muller, 5 auf Preimert, L-6955 Rodenbourg, Luxembourg, tel. (352) 77 05 01.

Dates have now been set for *Spektrum 87*, a chamber music workshop for flute and piano players, which will be held July 31-August 9, 1998, at Diekirch in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Professional piano and string trio accompaniment are provided. Coaches are Carlo Jans, Marianne Henkel and Janos Balint, flute, and Daniel Blumenthal, piano. English, French and German will be spoken. Contact Carlo Jans, 87 route de Luxembourg, L-8440 Steinfort, Luxembourg, tel/fax (352) 39 73 46.

The *Benslow Music Trust*, Little Benslow Hills, Hithchin SG4 9RB, UK, holds a variety of three-day courses throughout the year.

#### AUSTRALIAN STRING WORKSHOPS

Brolga Creative Workshops is holding *Holiday for Strings*, two workshops in Melbourne, Australia, July 9-11, 1998, for violinists, violists and cellists. Children from age 6 to adults (age unlimited!) are most welcome. Dedicated, high calibre tutors and conductors will assist cellist Sue Trainor, Brolga's Music Director, at the workshop. The repertoire consists of chamber works suited to the different standards of the players who attend. Pieces range from Baroque concertos to popular items specially picked for the workshop from Sue Trainor's extensive library. There is always something different and unique! This is the ninth Brolga workshop in Melbourne, where the July workshop is becoming a regular feature in the music calendar. Last year 82 string players attended, all performing in a magnificent concert for friends at the conclusion of the workshop. The workshops are always great fun, and offer players the opportunity to experience wonderful music in large and small ensembles, ultimately performing at the conclusion of the workshop. Please e-mail [brolga@alphalink.com.au](mailto:brolga@alphalink.com.au) for information, or call Suzanne Coutanceau on 613 9338 8993.

#### BOSTON ELDERHOSTEL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The Boston Conservatory is planning an Elderhostel chamber orchestra program for July 19-26, 1998. Coached sectional or full orchestra rehearsals and lectures will be given daily by Conservatory faculty. The group will perform on the last day of the program. The Conservatory is of the Fenway in Boston, MA, within walking distance of Fenway Park, great museums and Symphony Hall. Housing and meals are in nearby college facilities. The cost is \$500. For course information contact Charles Rice at 617/536-3176; to register contact Elderhostel, 75 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110, 617/426-8056. Program numbers: 21175, 21176.

#### A SINGER'S PARADISE

CSU Summer Arts offers *The Small Vocal Ensemble: A Singer's Paradise*, a workshop at California State University, Long Beach, July 12-25, 1998. Coaching, lectures, master classes and performances by The Western Wind, Simon Carrington of the King's Singers, composer/conductor Dale Jergensen, and the vocal quartet Diva Complex. Contact Dr. William Belan, Course Coordinator, Office of the Chancellor, 400 Golden Shore, Long Beach, CA 90802-4275, 213/343-4067, <[wbelan@calstatela.edu](mailto:wbelan@calstatela.edu)>.

#### CONDUCTORS WORKSHOP OF AMERICA

The Conductors Workshop of America, a participatory workshop for orchestra conductors, will be held in Iowa City, Iowa, August 3-7, 1998. Daily activities will include classes on gestural techniques and score analysis, conducting sessions and time for individual consultation. The 1998 repertoire will be Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*, Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*. Contact Dr. William LaRue Jones, University of Iowa School of Music, Iowa City, IA 52242, 319/335-1628, <[william-jones@uiowa.edu](mailto:william-jones@uiowa.edu)>.

#### VACATION AT C CLEF

*C Clef* is a bed and breakfast inn for chamber musicians on the coast of Maine. Cellist host can join or assemble groups: Lynne Mattingly, Hwy 77 Box 3, Hancock, ME 04640, 207/422-8252.

#### INTERNET SERVICES FOR MUSICIANS

*Gearsearch*, a large data base of music retailers and their wares can be searched on the world wide web from Kashmir Mavariskana's site, <[www.gearsearch.com](http://www.gearsearch.com)>.

*Gigmasters* is an on-line directory of actively gigging musicians — a "Yellow Pages" of sorts, which is used by those needing to locate and hire music for their next event. Their free listings classify musicians by the functions, locations and types of venues they are interested in. Their URL is <[www.gigmasters.com](http://www.gigmasters.com)>. To register, click on the link "Add Group" at the bottom of the homepage and fill in the form.

#### VIOLINS CAN BE CARRY-ON BAGGAGE . . .

But the gate agents don't always know it. Delta Airlines regulations specifically allows violins and violas under G, display item 6313, baggage dept, odd shaped musical instruments, lines 32 -37. Other airlines may have different rules. Please check with them in advance.





"Heaven," Koinonia, Delaware River Valley, Pennsylvania  
© Leslie Bender, 1997



"Heaven," Koinonia  
© Leslie Bender, 1997

## THE ENSEMBLE

After seeing her drawings of chamber musicians so intensely engaged in their art together, it may come as a surprise Leslie Bender is not herself a chamber musician. Somehow she sees exactly what makes a chamber ensemble tick: the tension between individual personality and collective feeling, exquisitely mediated by a shared love of the music at hand, and she has the wit and skill to render it in pictures.

Leslie Bender is a professional painter in Kingston, New York. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Her work in recent years has included studio paintings, murals, installed works and theatrical scenic art, and she has also recently returned to portraiture. She has been selected to create the art work for a forthcoming feature film produced by Sony TriStar Studios and directed by Chris Columbus. Her work has been shown in a number of solo and group exhibitions.



Bel Canto String  
© Leslie Bender, 1997

# LESLIE BENDER

Much of Leslie Bender's painting addresses the relationships among people in groups such as party, circus and carnival scenes. It was not until the summer of 1997, however, that she began to depict chamber musicians. The occasion was a friend's invitation to visit a string quartet master class at a music camp in Kent, Connecticut.

She was pleasantly surprised to find the musicians not only tolerated but enjoyed her presence and bought many of her sketches. She has since attended other workshops and has developed studio paintings from some of her sketches of chamber ensembles. Now her burning ambition is to paint a mural of an entire symphony orchestra.

For an appointment to see Leslie Bender's work or be notified of future exhibitions, you may contact her at PO Box 2258, Kingston, NY 12402, 914/339-2645.

—TR



Vermont Music and Arts Center, Lyndon State College, Vermont  
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Montondale, New York  
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Kent Music, Kent, Connecticut  
© Leslie Bender, 1997

# PIANO REVERIE

I sit at the piano, staring at the long row of shiny black and white keys. I know how to find an "A", so I can tune my flute. Otherwise, the piano is a mystery to me.

How can anyone play two lines of music at once, each line written on a different clef, each hand playing different rhythms and multiple notes simultaneously? How can anyone coordinate all this, and press the foot pedals, and follow a solo instrument as well? Playing the piano surely must be magic.

Tonight is the last time I'll look at a piano with such unfathomable wonder. Tomorrow, at age 46, I will take my first piano lesson. Tomorrow, my concept of "piano" will be changed forever.

I don't want to become a pianist, though, strange as that may seem. I'm taking piano so that I can become a better flutist. I took a theory class at the university, but it didn't teach me what I want to learn: to be able to hear and understand harmony and structure and progression in a piece of music, so that I can play my flute more sensitively and effectively.

Last month I went to lunch with my good friend Greg McCallum, a concert artist and the finest piano teacher in this area. I had decided to ask him to be my teacher, in spite of the fact that he has a long waiting list and doesn't take beginners, and I was fully prepared to ask someone else if he said no. We talked, as we always do, about our musical lives, and shared our experiences and plans. I waited for a lull in the conversation to ask my question. I was surprised at the emotion that welled up in me, because when I asked him, "Greg, would you teach me to play the piano?" my voice came out in a whisper.

He looked stunned and then broke out in a huge grin. "You want to learn to play the piano?" he asked incredulously, laughing with sheer surprise and delight. "Yes," I answered, and told him why, and what I wanted to accomplish.

"That would be so much fun, Helen!" he exclaimed with a sparkle in his eyes. "I'd love to teach you, and I'll make an exception for you in my schedule." My heart



opened to this gift of love and respect. He then launched into a description of what books we could use and how he would help me find what I was seeking. We decided on a starting date a few weeks later: January 15. Tomorrow.

As I sit here dreaming, I smugly think practicing the piano will be easy, compared to the flute. I won't have to worry about taking big enough breaths. And how nice and comfortable it'll be to practice sitting down. No aching back and legs and feet. And just think, when I'm done for the day, all I'll have to do is flip down the lid. No swabbing the inside of the instrument, no meticulously polishing the outside.

My wise, experienced, realistic inner voice interrupts the dream. I know that learning any musical instrument is a multi-dimensional challenge, and the piano will be difficult and frustrating and perplexing. But I'm eager as a child to try something new.

A memory comes to mind. When my parents first told me that I could learn to play any instrument of my choosing, I answered, "I choose the piano." To which my parents answered, in the confusing way parents do, "No." A piano was too big for the tiny New York City apartment in which we lived. I would need to consider something smaller. And so I came to play the flute, a choice that I've never for an instant regretted. I wouldn't trade the orchestral experiences I had as a young person nor the countless other joys my flute has brought to my life, for all the piano skills in the world.

The journey has come full circle. I live in a big house now, and the only "No's" in my life are the ones I impose on myself. Who knows where this next musical adventure will lead me?

I've gotten amusing reactions from my adult flute students when I announced that I was starting piano. One of them immediately asked with a twinkle in her eye, "Are you going to practice?" Another's smug comment was, "Are you going to play in a recital? That will be a good show." She was lovingly and laughingly referring to all the many flute recitals she's played in as a beginner, where I got to watch her; now she wants to watch *me* play "Twinkle, Twinkle" or some such thing, sweat dripping down my forehead. (Little does she know that I'm *eager* to play in a recital.) Another dear adult student asked me, without blinking an eye, "Are you going to cut your fingernails?" I love my adults and they love me; I know they'll be my biggest supporters in this new quest.

My reverie over, I stare at the keys in front of me. Tentatively, I reach out my hand and use my right index finger to press "A". The note sounds. "A" represents the beginning. Tomorrow, I'll venture forth.

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# 11

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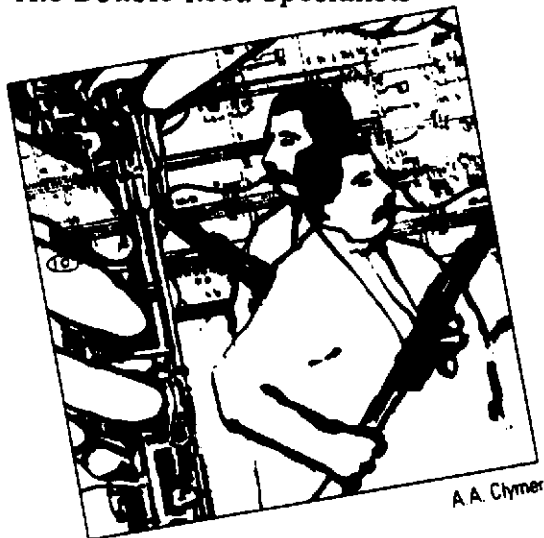
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## RELUCTANT

continued from page 1

I love playing music. I enjoy practicing alone, no matter what I'm working on, but I don't want to perform a solo anywhere.

I like the social aspects of music. An evening spent playing woodwind quintets with friends "sure beats playing cards," as our horn player once put it. When the rest of the group wants to perform somewhere I go along with it—but I'd rather not.

I particularly love playing in orchestras. The oboe has wonderful parts and it is delightful to fit them into the whole. Listening to a symphony from the middle of the orchestra is the ultimate in surround-sound. It's thrilling to be a part of the music—during rehearsal. The performance is the price I have to pay for belonging to the group.

Every time I perform, my correspondent has to read about how worried I am beforehand and how unhappy I was with my playing after it's over. He's generous with encouragement and advice. When I was particularly worried about one performance because I felt intimidated by someone who was going to be in the audience, he wrote, "... your playing should reflect the enjoyment and understanding of the music you are playing first and foremost. Never worry about how well you'll play. That should have been taken care of in your preparations. You go out there to 'share your soul' with the audience, NEVER to impress the audience." I wish I could follow his, undoubtedly excellent, advice, but I'm too nervous. He's actually attended several community orchestra concerts—and each time he's congratulated me and assured me that I've given a fine performance. I've never really believed him.

I was lucky enough to hear him perform the Bizet Symphony a short time ago. The second movement is mostly oboe solo, and he was looking forward to it. His playing was lovely—fluid, expressive, sensitive. There was a crescendo of applause from the audience when he stood for a bow at the end of the work. Then he went home, listened to the broadcast of the concert on the radio, and it was my turn to read how he felt that the dynamic contrast and tone color he'd tried so hard to project didn't come across and how unhappy he was with the performance.

Can it be that self doubt and dissatisfaction are a normal part of performing? Is this an aspect of music that is not restricted to nervous amateurs like me? Is learning to enjoy performing a matter of accepting that nothing will be as good as you want it to be and still enjoying it? How do you learn to have fun? Music for the love of it: of course. Performance for the love of it: I don't know.

*Sydney Rott, a woodwind technician in Fresno, California, contributes frequently to this periodical.*

MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

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