

MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

OCTOBER 1998

THE PIANO OF MY DREAMS

by Gail Starr



It wasn't just your run-of-the-mill adolescent puppy love. It wasn't a brief, torrid fascination. It was true love at first sight and sound.

The year was 1976. I was a 15-year-old

exchange student in Deauville, France. Even though I was attending a lycée far from home, I was keeping up with my piano lessons with Madame Devernay across the harbor in Trouville. At the end of the school year, she marched her entire piano troupe into the swanky concert hall at the Deauville Casino for her spring recital.

I remember trying out the piano before the concert. It had a tongue-twisty name that sounded vaguely professorial: *Bösendorfer*. Hmm . . . this certainly wasn't something we had at home in Kentucky.

I tentatively tried out a few measures of my Beethoven sonata (the one that starts off with the tricky thirds in the right hand). I sounded — gasp — GOOD! This piano almost played itself. The moment I got through that first line I knew this was the piano for me. It wouldn't do to simply own a nice, normal, American baby grand, like a superb quality Steinway or a rich-sounding Baldwin. I knew that someday I would simply have to have the buttery action and lush sonority of this instrument.

I returned to the States and decided I'd forget about this brief fling with my knight in ebony armor.

After college, I moved to New York City where my apartment was so small it was a toss-up between keeping my aging Steinway M, or having room for a sofa. The sofa won, and I was reduced to playing on a tiny 76-key electronic Kawai using earphones to appease my neighbors. But I dreamed of owning that Bösendorfer.

I became a real fan, collecting pictures of "my" piano, visiting their various showrooms in the U.S. and Europe, even checking out their web site. But, as a long-time New York City apartment dweller, I had no hope of ever having room for my coveted possession. Then it happened. Right around Christmas. My husband came home one day and announced that he had a very promising interview in Boston and what did I think of moving there? Well, after a brief mental debate over the difficulties of leaving family, friends, career and the rich concert life of New York it occurred to me that

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THE TIP JAR by Wendy Ellen Ledger

I can hold it in both hands and hoist it above my head. Watching, moving carefully, being sure to breathe, as it is delicate, made of glass, easily breakable. Yet the glass looks thick. I could stick both fists in its bowl. Round and graceful, womanly, swanlike, terrifying. A gift that one of my best friends gave me. A brandy snifter that I use as a tip jar.

I play piano at the cafe down the street from where I live. I play at odd hours — Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 11, Tuesday mornings from 8:30 to 11:30. I play for lunch — a vegetable sandwich called the Harry Houdini, as in "Where did the meat disappear?" Instead you get whole grain bread, mayonnaise and mustard, sprouts, avocado, tomato, onions, cucumber. Chips on the side. A pickle. Two jalapeño peppers. Occasionally the owner of the cafe slips me some money. And now I play for tips.

My music teacher told me I had to start doing it. "Put a five in there and a couple of ones and some change,"

continued on page 10

A LIVING MUSEUM OF MUSIC

by Kelly Ferjutz



Perched on a slight rise at the end of a mile-long pathway from the main road in Goudhurst, Kent, England, *Finchcocks Historical Keyboard Instrument Collection* sits in bucolic splendor, a world unto itself.

It's called a Living Museum of Music, but you'll think it's nirvana. As a musician, you'll revel in the

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THE IN BOX

NEW DUET FOR WOODWINDS

A''' for Effort, the lovely duet on pages 6-7, is by Nancy Shapiro, a composer, oboist and clinical psychologist who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The piece was written to explore the possibilities of the sweet, seldom-used third register of the oboe, although you can play it (and reach A''' with considerably less effort) on flutes, clarinets or recorders. On oboe, try a light, thin-tipped reed that closes easily without biting. To help tune the intervals, listen for the difference tones, which can sound like a phantom bass. Copies are \$5.00 from *Forrests Music* (ad opposite).

EARLY SPACE MUSIC

I always enjoy your fine newsletter even though I sometimes have an argument with something or other. This one may interest you.

In the article "Cosmic Tunes" (August 1998) Bert Vis wrote: "As far as is known, the first to carry a musical instrument into space was Ron McNair" (in 1984). I happen to know that Ed Mitchell carried one on Apollo 14 in 1971, thirteen years earlier.

I followed Commander Mitchell's astronautical career with particular interest because he and I graduated from the same high school and studied with the same violin teacher. I continued with music and became a professional musician. He went on to astrophysics and Apollo 9, 10 and 14. To celebrate his being the sixth man to walk on the moon I wrote him a letter asking if he'd also fiddled on the moon. He replied that there wasn't room in the rocket ship for a violin but he carried a harmonica in his pocket!

Incidentally, Mitchell was left-handed and insisted on playing the violin left-handed. Our violin teacher not only restrung his instrument but also rebuilt it.

Keep up the fascinating news!

Jo Margaret Farris
Huntington Station, NY

BAND INSTRUMENT DONATIONS NEEDED

While doing church mission work fixing houses in the Appalachian Mountains, I met a high school band director who teaches in Iaeger, WV. His students have very few instruments to play. My personal mission is to collect donated instruments, especially flutes and clarinets in playable condition, to bring him next July (1999). Please contact me if you are able to help.

Mary McClain Georgevich
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Alexandria, VA 22307
(703) 768-3908
<oboemmg@aol.com>

VACATION FOR STRINGS IN A SWISS CHALET

Alpeggio is organizing a week-long workshop/vacation for proficient string players and 1-2 pianists at the Hotel Suisse-Golden Tulip in Champéry, Switzerland, January 17-22, 1999. The program will include two daily professional coachings, free playing in the evenings, private lessons, a master class and a concert. Music and ensemble assignments will be made in advance. Afternoons are free for skiing, swimming, curling and skating. Price is SFr 950 for players, SFr 700 for non-players. Registration deadline is November 1, 1998. Contact Floryse Bel Bennett, Ruelle de l'Eglise, CH-1143 APPLES, Switzerland, tel/fax 41 21 800 55 22.

WEEKEND WORKSHOPS

Princeton Chamber Music Playweek announces the following string workshops: *DaPonte Workshops* with the DaPonte String Quartet: Windham, NY, October 14 - 16, 1998; Orlando, FL, January 29 - 31, 1999; Suburban DC, Apr 30- May 2, 1999; Upstate, NY, May 14 - 16, 1999. Also, *Ocean Grove - Princeton Weekend Workshops*, all at Ocean Grove, NJ: November 13-15, 1998, January 22-24, 1999, March 19- 21, 1999. For further information, contact Jerry Bank at 800/414-6354.

The *Diller-Quaile School of Music* will conduct a chamber music workshop for adults at 24 East 95th Street, New York City, on three Sundays in October and November. Classical to contemporary music will be performed. The workshops are open to novice to advanced amateurs, on strings, winds or piano. Novices will be given the practical knowledge to begin enjoyable playing from the earliest stages. More advanced players and established groups will benefit from the extensive experience of the coaches. Call Valerie Anderson, 212/369-1484, or write Diller-Quaile School of Music, 24 East 95th Street New York, NY 10128.

NEW DUTCH WORKSHOP

Active Art in Amsterdam offers "a fine arts and music holiday-week in combination with excursions to all the famous old Dutch cities and culture" in May, July and August, 1999. Accommodations are in a 17th-century castle. Programs will specialize in various choices such as chamber music, choir, early music, chamber

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orchestra, piano master class and art. Write for a brochure to Olga van der Hoeden, Tulip Art Connection, PO Box 9649, 1006 GC Amsterdam, The Netherlands, fax 31-20-613483, <tulipart@euronet.nl>.

ELDERHOSTEL PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS

The contact for all Elderhostel programs and printed catalogs is Elderhostel, 75 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110-1941, 877/426-8056. Their web site address is <www.elderhostel.org>.

Two band workshops will be offered at the State University of New York at Albany Music Department in Menands: **"Let it Swing": Big Band Nostalgia Performed Along the Hudson in Upstate New York** February 14-20, 1999, Program #32874-0214-(instrument code). For saxes, trumpet, trombone, bass, guitar, piano and drum set. **Performing the Traditional Literature of the British Brass Band** February 28-March 6, 1999, Program # 32874-0228-(instrument code). For cornets, flugelhorn, alto horn, Bb small bore British baritone, euphonium, trombone, tubas and percussion.

And at the George Williams/Lake Geneva Campus of Aurora University, not far from Milwaukee, WI: **Vaudeville Chorus: A "Voices-On" Cultural Tour Into Musical History.** No formal singing experience is necessary. February 7-12, 1999, Program #49085-0207.

MINSTRELS AND ANGELS

If you want to know what medieval instruments looked like and see how they were played, order *Minstrels & Angels: Carvings in Medieval English Churches*, by Jeremy and Gwen Montagu, from Fallen Leaf Press, P.O. Box 10034, Berkeley, CA 94709-5034, or visit their web site at <www.fallenleafpress.com>.

HEAVEN IN NORTH CAROLINA

Long-time subscriber Ann Merwin of St. Mary's, Georgia, wrote us from *Wildacres Retreat* in Little Switzerland, NC, where she was attending the 1998 Flute Choir Symposium:

"Wildacres is on top of a mountain. It is a place for renewal. . . I have been awake since 6 am. The birds are singing. I look out the window and for the first time in my life I feel like a bird — I see the tops of the trees. The air is cool and so breathable. I really am in heaven!! . . .

"Every day is filled with flute — and saxophone music! William Bennett, principal of the London Symphony, is a marvelous teacher and I really like his style — he finds such delight in flute music. . . There is a friendly rivalry between the sax and flute players. . . Today is the last day and we plan on having a huge jam session with the saxophones and all the flutes. We are playing 'Little Red Monkey'. . . Tomorrow we all go home. Incredible that a whole week has passed — I need to take a deep breath

to get back to reality, but not yet — I still have one more day of immersion in flute playing and fun. . . Thank you for making the amateur musician feel good about filling the world with beautiful music. . ."

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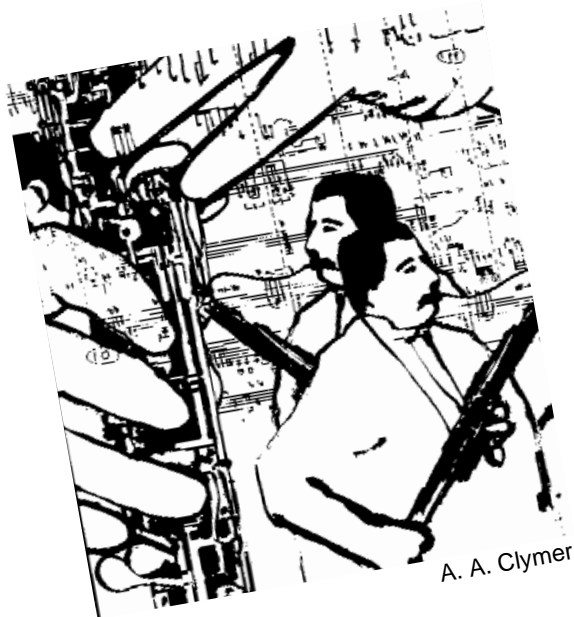
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Cazalla de la Sierra, Spain	Feb. 12-20, 1999
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FROM THE HEART *by Helen Spielman*
THE FAST TEMPO OF LIFE

Jill amazes me in the way she has steadily improved as a flutist and musician over the six years she's studied with me. Jill, 45, has done so in addition to having a full-time job as a physician, being a mother to her two adolescents, and being a wife, a runner and an avid reader.

I recently asked Jill how she fits music-making into her hectic life. We were at our neighborhood coffee shop on a Sunday morning.

"I started flute lessons in third grade and two years later began private lessons. I was a spotty practicer, though, and did as little as I could get by with. I spent a good part of my lessons 'yapping.'

"I played through high school and college, but during medical school, music went by the wayside. In my fourth year, I bought my first silver flute, but I didn't touch it during my internship. Three years later, I picked it up again, taking my last lesson on the night I went into labor with my daughter. After that, I didn't touch the flute for six more years; then I started playing duets with a friend. Three years after that I called you, Helen, and discovered that you lived two blocks from me. I've been traversing those two blocks ever since."

Now, after studying with me for six years, and with her children gaining independence, the amount of time Jill can devote to her music has increased. Her typical schedule includes taking a lesson every week and playing with others, either a pianist or a quartet, once every two or three weeks. She practices 45 minutes to an hour over the weekend, and considers it a good week when she gets in three additional 20-25 minute practice sessions.

"This has been enough to advance my skills and keep my muscle control. I go through periods of time when I just can't practice — when I have such busy days that by 8 pm I'm too physically tired. Last year my son had trouble in school and I had to supervise his homework more, and recently a friend had a breakdown, and I just didn't have enough emotional energy to practice.

"My children respect my Saturday lesson time. My son has on occasion asked me not to go to work, but he has never asked me not to go to my lesson.

I practice more and better than I used to, because I've defined my goals. I want to be able to play these pieces, and I understand how the technical exercises will help me play them. I've discovered that I really don't want to

play as a soloist; that's not for me. What I really like is making music with other people. It's taken me 35 years of playing to understand that. Looking back, that's clearly what I kept returning to."

For the last four years, Jill has used a week of her vacation time to attend the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop. She loves it so much that at the end of the week she experiences a deep feeling of loss. She continues to play throughout the year with some of the other participants, and has steadily increased the difficulty of her repertoire.

"What I really like is making music with other people. It's taken me 35 years of playing to understand that."

"When I think about how far I've come, I am surprised. I still suffer from a lack of faith that I can really reach that fast tempo or that depth of expression. I'm challenging myself to play harder music with better players. I often think that if I could practice and exercise (run) one hour a day I'd have a fulfilled life. Maybe then I could play these pieces fast — enough."

I asked Jill what she gains from her music. "I feel it inside — a different aspect of my brain is being utilized. Working on musical and technical aspects of a piece is different from solving medical problems or tackling parenting issues. Music is a non-verbal way to express the human condition, the wonders that I deal with at the hospital — life, death, tragedy, poverty, disappointment, love, harmony, disharmony, birth, anger, loss, depression, fear — all of it. Music is a way to interpret or organize all that, not an escape but a way to defuse its intensity."

When I asked Jill where she gets her inspiration, she explained that there was an "extracurricular" streak in her family: with her father it was fishing, with her sister, horses. "This is *my* passion. I had no musicians as role models. But my interest has become an obsession that's taking over my life."

"Music is a non-verbal way to express the human condition . . . life, death, tragedy, poverty, disappointment, love, harmony, disharmony, birth, anger, loss, depression, fear — all of it."

As we wound down our conversation and sipped the last drops of caffè latte, Jenifer, another of my students, entered the shop with her husband and two-year-old. They stopped by our table for a few minutes. Jenifer told us that in the fall her daughter would start preschool. She said she was looking forward to some free time, although it would only amount to an hour and a quarter between driving there and back, which she felt was not enough to accomplish much.

"You could practice," said Jill.

The author thanks Jill Brenner for permission to share her story.

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DREAM PIANO from page 1

apartments in Boston HAD to be bigger than in New York! So I said "Sure!"

We found an apartment with the perfect bay window for a new piano. I didn't do what most normal adults do. They shop for a sofa, some chairs, maybe a new table. But no! The first thing I did after unpacking was visit the local Bösendorfer dealer.

I played some Debussy: it sounded aquatic and tropical. I tried out some Granados: it sounded piquant and equatorial. Then I inquired about the price of the small model . . . and I was crushed. I envisioned waiting another 20 years for this treasure.

The sales manager, seeing my despair, motioned to me to join him in his upstairs office. He had returned just the day before from a visit to the factory in Vienna. He had secured first dibs on a lone, re-built instrument that had enjoyed a fiery youth in a local Austrian concert hall. The venue was now upgrading and wanted to replace their original instrument. If I could commit soon, this reincarnated piano could be mine. But I needed to be quick, because he had other clients all over the world — in Denmark, California and England — who would jump at this opportunity!

I literally ran home and dragged my good-natured husband back to the shop. Having heard me pine for this passion for over a decade, he quickly agreed and we put a deposit on the instrument.

Coincidentally, I had previously scheduled business and family visits for the very next week in Vienna where my new piano was being "groomed." Christian Hoferl, the Sales Director in Vienna, graciously invited me for a personal tour of the factory.

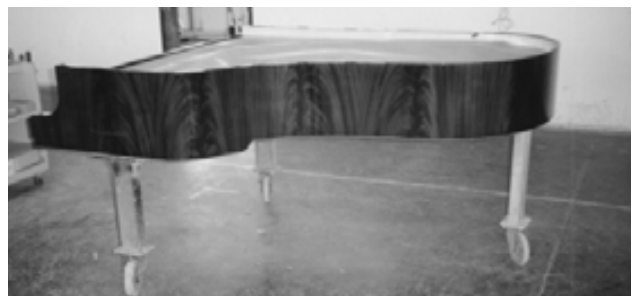
The first thing you hear (not see) when you enter the Bösendorfer factory sounds like a muted rendition of the final chords of an atonal 21st-

century sonata: a high crash, a low crash, then some repeated note clusters, another high bang. At first I thought some new pianistic superstar was trying to select an instrument for his next concert, but the closer I got the WORSE it sounded. Christian assured me this was normal, and was in fact the culmination of one of the many unique processes in crafting these instruments. We approached the door where this god-awful banging was occurring and entered a darkened room with padded walls. This was no young lion playing a crazy concerto, but a machine banging the life out of a newly constructed, very expensive instrument. As I stared in amazement, Christian explained that this happens to every new Bösendorfer three times before it is allowed out of the factory. After every assault, the piano is taken apart and reassembled by hand!

He spent several hours describing the 7-year-long process of selecting spruce trees from Italian dolomite forests (the same wood that Stradivarius used in his incomparable violins). We toured the giant yard where they age the wood and passed by the furnace where they burn the excess cuttings to generate heat for the building.

We don't think every day about the craftsmanship and multi-steps that go into providing the instruments that allow us to express ourselves. I saw every one of the entirely handcrafted steps needed to create these ebony masterpieces, and I cherished the fine dusting of spruce sawdust that covered my blue raincoat. It was worth waiting 22 years.

Gail Starr is a management consultant in Boston, Massachusetts.



A''' FOR EFFORT

a duet for oboes or other woodwinds

Nancy E. K. Shapiro
Apple Hill. 7/4-5/98

Andante

The 'Andante' section consists of six systems of two staves each. The first system begins with a 3/4 time signature. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, and *mf*. The second system includes *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *mf*. The third system includes *mp*. The fourth system includes *mf*, *mp*, and *mf*. The fifth system includes *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The sixth system includes *pp* and *p*. The section concludes with a 4/4 time signature and a *p* dynamic.

Allegro

The 'Allegro' section consists of one system of two staves in 4/4 time. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*. A triplet is indicated in the second staff.

* to avoid unusually high notes in upper part, both players use the diamond-shaped notes from this point on

WORKSHOPS COMPARED *by Ted Rust* APPLE HILL AND CHICO

I have attended the Chico Chamber Music Workshop annually for eleven years. This July I went to the Apple Hill Summer Chamber Music School for the first time.

Apple Hill and Chico are summer chamber music workshops open to adult amateurs. Both had about 55 players and 9 coaches for the sessions I attended. Both are directed and coached by truly inspiring musicians. They both foster a friendly, supportive atmosphere, and yet fill their participants' days with what might seem to outsiders a maniacally intensive regime of music study and performance; music is constantly in the air. At both workshops, the participants' ages range from the mid-teens to the mid-eighties, their musical training from conservatory to self-taught. The participants are extremely loyal, and large proportions of them are returning players. Still, my two workshop experiences could hardly have been more different.

The Apple Hill Chamber Players are a performing group dedicated to bringing musicians together in troubled parts of the world. Their concern for world peace pervades the makeup and spirit of the Summer School. It is reflected in the cultural diversity of the staff and participants and in the superb, mostly-vegetarian food.

The Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music is the Players' home base, a converted 18th-century apple farm on a high ridge ten miles northeast of Keene, New Hampshire. Its two large barns now contain rehearsal rooms and a concert/dining hall. There are a dozen or so small sheds in the surrounding woods and fields for sleeping and practicing. The sheds have comfortable cots, but the only plumbing is two or three hundred steep, rough and sometimes slippery yards up the hill in the concert barn.



APPLE HILL, JULY 1998
Sarah Hopkins, Kevin Phillips;
Joel Cunningham, Sarah Bayles;
Agnieska Laskus, Erielle
Haddaway

"The four pillars of Apple Hill," said Session II Director Eric Stumacher, "are Great Music, Great People, Great Food, and Live in a Shack."

"Great Music" means not only great repertoire and superb coaching, but in-depth preparation. Apple Hill's sessions are ten days long. Participants are normally preassigned two pieces, which they are expected to learn before the session. They are assigned to a group for each piece that works together for the entire session.

The group has daily coached rehearsals and performs one movement of its assigned piece in a public concert at the end of the session. There are less formal mini-concerts after meals in which groups may perform other movements or unassigned pieces.

The typical program day has two coached sessions and two free periods, leaving plenty of free time for individual practicing.

There is some impromptu playing with freelance ensembles, though freelancing is limited for practical purposes to those who are free in the same periods, as evenings are often programmed with other activities.

"Great People" at Apple Hill means not only fine individuals, but a young (a majority are students), diverse and intensely interactive community. Participants are cheerfully badgered and bribed into learning each other's names.

Housekeeping chores are shared by all, and the work-study students' main job seems to be to get everybody involved in group hikes, parties, volleyball, campfires, ping-pong and the like. Sometimes it feels a little heavy-handed, but it works: a great many genuine and sociologically implausible friendships are formed across the diversity of ages and cultures that make up the Apple Hill community.

"Live in a Shack" at Apple Hill is not hyperbole. A few participants who prefer more comfortable quarters commute from

nearby bed-and-breakfast inns. But I, for one, slept peacefully in my shack, to the mingled sounds of distant music and the night woods.

The main function of the Chico Chamber Music Workshop is to extend the participants' chamber music repertoire and rehearsal skills. It is run by the Department of Music at Chico State University. Chico draws its coaches primarily from the music departments of the California State College system. Its participants come mainly from California and the Rocky Mountain region. It is an older group than at Apple Hill, with only a handful of high school and college students. The common denominator among Chico workshop people, participants and staff alike, is that they love making music together, as evidenced by the constant activity of freelance ensembles during unscheduled hours.

Chico's formal instruction program is a five-day course of study designed to expose each participant to a maximum variety of repertoire and ensemble configurations. Daily assignments generally are not known in advance. New assignments, typically a single movement of a piece, are rehearsed, coached and performed daily for an audience of participants, staff and visitors.

The daily ensemble and repertoire assignments are usually well enough matched with players' abilities so as to offer challenge, stimulation and musical rewards to every participant. Thanks to an attentive director and a painstaking assignment process, most groups not only get assignments they can handle in one day's work, but ones in which they can, if they choose, find new depth. A few surprisingly beautiful performances occurred on nearly every program this July.

Given the short rehearsal time and the pressure of an imminent performance, an occasional group is stretched too far, and its day necessarily becomes oriented more

towards survival than towards musical refinement. (Mere survival in such a situation, of course, can be most gratifying.) The rare performance crashes are always sympathetically received by the audience.

The schedule includes mid-day and evening breaks in which participants are free to relax, exercise, practice or play in freelance ensembles. A coach expedites the evening freelance matchmaking and coaches sometimes join in the playing. Chico's library contains a nearly comprehensive collection of classical to contemporary chamber music repertoire for all combinations, and is augmented every year with newly published works. The library and rehearsal rooms are open for freelance playing during mid-day breaks and until late evening.

Chico State is a pretty, century-old university campus in a quiet commercial city that serves the

northeast part of California's Central Valley. Dormitory rooms and cafeteria meals are provided; recreational and health facilities are also available. All facilities are within easy walking distance of each other and are wheelchair-accessible; shopping is nearby. Summer weather is dry and very hot, but the facilities are air-

conditioned, shade trees are ubiquitous, and one of the world's loveliest creekside parks, with dozens of swimming holes and picnic spots, runs through the campus from the nearby foothills.

The most significant differences between these workshops are both musical and social. Apple Hill offers the opportunity to work in greater depth on a small number of pieces, whereas Chico offers a greater variety of repertoire and the chance to build one's ensemble skills through rapid daily problem solving. Despite its more pressured program, Chico, with its mostly middle-aged population, has the more relaxed atmosphere, in contrast with Apple Hill's energetic youthfulness.



CHICO, JULY 1998
Linda Wilson, Bob Hodson;
Beverly Blount, Leonie Kramer,
Alan Shonkoff, Kim Scherba;
Janet Telford, Claude Friesen,
Harlowe Kittle (foreground:
Director Al Loeffler)

THE TIP JAR

continued from page 1

she told me. "I've learned that when I start with an empty glass, I end with an empty glass."

The first time I did it, Joe, the owner, wasn't there. I knew that if I didn't put it out immediately I never would. When he came in, he went immediately to the jar, picked it up off the piano, stuffed in a bill that I later found was a ten. He placed a table on the center of the stage — the piano and I are at the side, where I like to be, visible but slightly hidden. He placed the jar on the table, where it seemed to vibrate and glow.

The tip jar distracts me. The tip jar is necessary. The tip jar makes me feel greedy. The tip jar humbles me. The tip jar might buy me a pair of shoes or a paperback book, a latte or two, afternoon matinées, laundry. When I hit a wrong note, I think of the tip jar. When I nail something absolutely true, I imagine it overflowing.

One time, someone put a phony \$500 bill in the tip jar. I believe it was part of a promotion that came out of the Sunday paper. I'm not sure who stuck it in. I suspect a couple who sat by the window nearest the door. Between songs, the man called out, "Are you getting rich playing piano bars?" "I wish," I told him, and moved on. When I first saw the bill, oversized and extravagant in number, I smiled almost as if by reflex. When I looked at it more closely, taking the money out of the jar, I felt insulted, and threw the bill away as soon as I could when I got home. I can justify both interpretations. The tip jar is complicated.

There are times when I don't believe that I deserve the tip jar. Real musicians don't play "Edelweiss." Someone truly skilled and learned could pick up a piece of music and play it on the spot. They would have charts, not books. They could modulate on command.

To me, "Edelweiss" is like cocoa in the morning. "Moon River" soothes deep wounds in the soul. Burt Bacharach is a god. Simple music is the most beautiful. I don't know if they're marketable, but high notes and arpeggios that sound like a harp spell paradise to me. The songs I heard as a child speak the most to me, and they are what I want to play. Sometimes the tip jar is a siren song.

Since I've had the tip jar, I've become a tipper. Any live musician who crosses my path gets at least a dollar, no questions asked. The woman who makes my espresso gets my change. She uses a plastic foam cup that looks as if a child has discarded it. The border is colored with crayon and one side looks partially chewed. But there's a lovely Buddha statuette that stands next to it, who I believe blesses her world. In the morning, I throw some money into the cup, and add my own prayers.

© 1998 Wendy Ellen Ledger. This essay first appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

FINCHCOCKS

continued from page 1

abundance of sights and sounds provided by the owners, Katrina and Richard Burnett. An afternoon of demonstrations in the main hall will familiarize you with the majority of the collection, from the 1695 virginal to a late nineteenth-century grand piano, with myriad stops in between.

If you're lucky, there will be additional performers: Steven Devine, the young harpsichordist who, in his early 20s, has already won international competitions; John Kerr, a native of Tunbridge Wells, whose tenor voice is admirably suited to the Victorian songs he loves — and performs — so well. Alistair Laurence heads the keyboard course at *Musikk Instrument Akademiet* at Moss, Norway, when he isn't keeping the Queen's keyboard collection at Buckingham Palace functioning, in addition to similar duties at Finchcocks. He plays some truly wicked jazz on those period instruments!

You may find Jean and Pawel Nowak in their 1796 costumes, hosting the exhibition on the second floor, occasionally whirling into the figures of the dance. Jean researches and designs these costumes, which the couple also wear when appearing with the English Quadrille, a nationally-famous dance group devoted to period dance. Then again, perhaps you'll encounter Fanny Burney, as portrayed by the noted English actress, Karin Fernald. Her one-woman show, based on diaries of Burney and others, includes costumes and props, and is a delightful look at one woman's extraordinary life!

Maureen Lyle, John Kerr's wife, is a contralto and writer, who, two years ago, adapted *The Beggar's Opera* of John Gay into a chamber work, appropriate for the small performance space at Finchcocks. This year (1998) the company will produce *Ring of Roses*, a ballad play by Katrina Hendrey (Burnett), based on diaries and other writings of women of the 17th century. Steven Devine will direct the period music.

Finchcocks is friendly toward writers, including the historical novelist Dinah Lampitt (Deryn Lake) who co-adapted *The Beggar's Opera* with Miss Lyle. These ladies have also collaborated on *Scenes from Marylebone*, which was one of the pleasure gardens of Georgian London.

The Master of Ceremonies is the owner and genial host, Richard Burnett. With wry humor and a sure touch for both the instruments and the music to be played, he brings his listeners into the world of Clementi, Schubert, Beethoven, Chopin and others. How better to understand their music than to hear it played on an instrument very like that for which it was composed? You'll learn what a musical evening "at home" really meant to the Georgian, Regency or Victorian family. If you are a musician, and ask nicely, the chances are very good you'll be allowed to join in on the instrument of

your choice. Children especially are very unselfconscious about doing so, and are encouraged to participate.

Be sure to save some time for the house itself. Built in 1726 for the barrister Edward Bathhurst, it was named for the family that resided on that particular plot of ground in the 1200s. This area of Kent is noted for its bricks, and the brickwork of Finchcocks is masterly. Lovely colors abound — plum, apricot, amber, rose. You must get up close to see them, which fortunately you can. There is a walled garden, restored now to as like the original as possible. The stable and yard are still there as well.

The house has had many owners through the years, yet it is very little changed since it was built, other than adding electricity, plumbing and heating. The walls are as they were, as are the wood paneling and other woodwork. The rooms lead one to another, just as when new, and while the kitchen boasts an AGA stove as well as a microwave and huge refrigerators and freezers, the work table in the middle will seat 16 without crowding.

The main performance area is a very long hallway 40 feet wide. Its acoustics are truly mind-boggling! It wasn't meant to be acoustically terrific, of course, but it most certainly is. Every syllable, whether spoken or sung, is clearly understood, regardless of where in the hall one is seated. The fireplace on the back wall would easily seat another twenty or so persons, if the glass cover were removed.

A wonderful wide stairway, with deep treads, winds to the second level from this hallway. It is mere feet away from the "back" stairs, and no better demonstration of class distinction ever existed. These are circular, tightly wound, with very narrow treads. Upon penalty of death, I could not imagine carrying anything up those stairs to milady's chamber!

Currently, the second level of the house hosts a wonderful exhibition of the Pleasure Gardens of London, such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh, primarily in the late 1700s, but with some carryover to Regency times.



There are maps, contemporary drawings, musical prints and pictures, and three costumed "boxes" (left). One features two musicians; one a picnic at Vauxhall; and one a masquerade at Marylebone. One of the several rooms opening off the foyer has not only instruments, but also four truly scrumptious gowns from the same period.

Not open to the public, the next floor up contains large, airy rooms. One room, which is now a bathroom, is larger than most studio apartments! Currently, these rooms are used for staff and the occasional guest performer.

Below the main floor is the area that formerly served as dairy and brewery for the house, now converted to a tea room/dining area. The house is a wonderful place for weddings and other parties.

This area of Kent abounds with historical sites. Scotney Castle is within easy walking distance (Two of the guests inadvertently did so while I was there.) Hever Castle and Penshurst Place are not more than 30 minutes away. Finchcocks is a bit off the beaten path, but visiting there is all the more lovely for it.

They have an excellent gift shop on site where you may purchase a booklet giving the history of the house and collection in picturesque detail, as well as cards, memorabilia and recordings featuring the house artists and instruments.

Finchcocks is open April through October on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays. Most other days are booked months ahead by groups. They'll fit you in if at all possible, but it is best to phone ahead. Call 011 44 1580 211702 for information and booking. Admission is £5.50. They do not accept credit cards.

Kelly Ferjutz wrote "Composing At Last" for the December 1997 issue. She lives in Cleveland Heights, OH, and writes a monthly column about classical music on the world-wide web. Its internet address is <www.suite101.com/topics/page.cfm/667>.

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