

# MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

AUGUST 2000

## 42nd SUMMER FOR HUMBOLDT CHAMBER MUSIC WORKSHOP

In 1958 the late Floyd Glende of the Humboldt State University Music Department pioneered a new summer workshop format, with the goal of promoting chamber music to the widest possible extent by exposing participants every day to new literature and new prospective ensemble partners. The "Humboldt" model consists of daily coached assignments — you are assigned a new piece and a new group every day, usually without advance knowledge — and daily performances of all assignments, followed by nightly freelancing. As its own workshops grew in popularity, Glende and his staff helped other Western colleges establish similar programs which now thrive at Chico, California, Ashland, Oregon and Bozeman, Montana. Among the original staff were Val and Gerre Phillips, who completed their 100th workshop with Week 3, July 2000. Val co-directed this year's sessions with Ken Ayooob, while Gerre ran the workshop library and administration. Here are some scenes of that week.

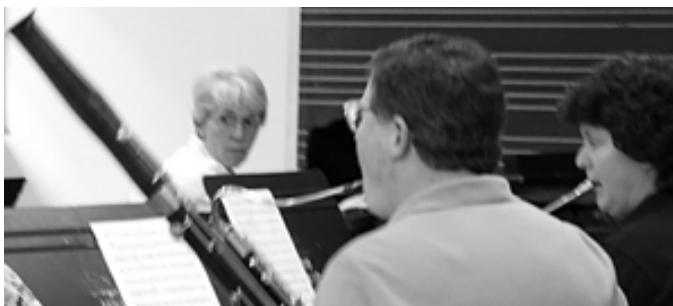
### CONTRASTS IN COACHING STYLES



Priscilla Taylor coaching Josh Cohen, Sonia Tubridy, Bette Solomon and Evelyn Albrecht



Ken Ayooob coaching Douglas McCracken, Sarah Young, Debbie King, and Barbara Logen



Marta Weinstein, Douglas McCracken and Debbie King catching a breath in unison



Nick Marlowe coaching Lori Ives, Anna Meyer and Barbara Mullens Geyer



Gerre Phillips with her 100th Humboldt Chamber Music Workshop Library



Jeff Dickey coaching Ramon Armenta, Linda Ashworth, Gilbert Carroll, Eleanor Niesen, Vic Corbett, Judy Knight, Richard Call, Jim Hermstad and Jonathan Irons



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## THE IN BOX

### WEEKEND PLAY-INS AND WORKSHOPS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Concord Community Music School String Ensemble** every Friday 1:00 p.m., mostly adults, any age welcome, elementary to intermediate level. Sometimes coached by professionals from the School at cost of about \$10 per session; otherwise uncoached and free. For current information contact Dick Cornelius, <dick.c@operamail.com>, 603 783 9348.

**Adult String Play-In** September 10, 2000.

**Adult String Chamber Music Festival** October 21, 2000, at Manchester, NH, sponsored by NH Chapter of American String Teachers Association (ASTA). Contact Candace Wharton, <mail@ibxmfg.com> 603-547-2530. **Mountains and Music** for all instruments, sponsored by Boston Chapter of Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) "Mountains and Music" committee. Uncoached chamber playing during days, conducted orchestral reading on Saturday evening. Group or on-your-own hikes or skiing. 3 nights housing/6 meals under \$200. Organized and run by group of dedicated volunteers: Ward & Ann Stoops, 603-924-6090; Amy Wallace 978-462-1395; Laura McDonald 978 952 2805; Karen Ross 978 649 8992; and others. Contact any of them for general information or ask to get on their mailing list (still only by street mail). They take turns coordinating specific weekends. **Fall Weekend**, October 14-16, 2000, Pinkham Notch, NH; **Winter Weekend**, February 17-20, 2001, Pinkham Notch; **Spring Weekend**, April 28-30, 2001, Camp Sargent, near Peterborough NH.

### CHEAP GEAR

I haunt hardware stores for musically helpful items. Here are three winners to check out.

1) Fluorescent storage/security lights for a music stand - \$6.00. These are small lights that come with Velcro that can be attached to your stand. They use 4 AA batteries. I use rechargeable batteries. I can fit European size music under the lights. An inventive person could make a stand extension so the Velcro isn't on the stand. They probably aren't as bright as the "Concert Light" but you can use two. No cord. I got mine at Target.

2) "Space blanket" - \$6.00. It is a reflective Mylar emergency blanket that hikers etc. use when they are outdoors. It is very thin and packs easily. Great for anybody porting around instruments in their car. I wrap it around my cello case. The cello stays a lot cooler. It is hard to totally get an instrument out of the sun in a packed car.

3) Plumber's Gas Leak tape - 89 cents. I use this thin plastic tape to wrap around loose tenons, bocal

corks, leaking reeds. I've used it as emergency bumper material on my English horn until I could get the horn repaired.

Margaret Copeland  
Ashland, OR

### NEW E-MAIL DISCUSSION GROUPS

I have just returned from the chamber music workshop of the Raphael Trio at Adamant, Vermont. It was great: everyone should go next year. They have the best coaches and the best food. After that workshop, I felt there was a need for a mailing list for workshop participants, who want to discuss repertoire, form prearranged groups, and generally keep in touch after the workshop. I therefore created *Musicworkshops*. This unmoderated list is open to anyone. Those who wish to subscribe should go to the site <http://www.egroups.com/invite/musicworkshops> and click the "join" button.

yoel epstein  
moshav magshimim  
israel

I'm a professional cellist, American, living in Mallorca, Spain. I play in a group called the Serafino Piano Trio, "your local internet piano trio," as Jed Distler of [www.classicstoday.com](http://www.classicstoday.com) called us. We are very involved in bringing chamber music to the web, with an extensive website at <http://www.serafinotrio.com> that includes, among many other things, a Trio Notes journal and virtual master classes. We have our own little discussion group, for which there's a subscription box on our homepage.

David Runnion  
dbr@cafeinternet.es

### ZANSKAR HO

As a keen amateur cellist (and member of ACMP) I have decided to devote the summer to a project that involves intercultural musical exchange and a rather unusual travel companion! For 5 weeks, I will trek across the Zanskar Valley (in the Indian Himalayas) carrying a cello on my back and playing wherever we meet a willing Zanskari public. My friend Maya will be the final vital member of the party, in charge of recording and filming our musical exchanges and the music sung and played by the Zanskaris in monasteries and daily life. We hope to return with a documentary and unique recordings. Since Maya is currently doing a PhD on musical aspects of the interaction between babies and their mothers, she will also collect relevant recordings and will contribute to our trip the sharp observation skills of a scientist. My ear will be more attentive to seizing the chance to improvise with local musicians! Our project is being supported by a small grant from the French government, but we are still short of equipment

and some financial support. So, may we be so bold to call out to those of you who may be able to help, as private contributors or through corporate sponsorship? We would be extremely grateful for the gift of either :

- 1) Any amount, however small, of financial support
- 2) A beginner's cello (i.e not a Stradivarius. I will not be taking my own cello even though it isn't the former!)
- 3) A digital video camera
- 4) Information about the culture of Zanskar.

Ariane Wilson and Maya Gratier  
Paris, France  
gratier@psycho.univ-paris5.fr

### COPING WITH A HEARING PROBLEM?

Most people with hearing problems can still play, sing and enjoy music, because the clarity of musical sound makes it easier to distinguish than ordinary speech. Many professional musicians are able to perform competently in spite of moderate to severe hearing losses, although few are willing to admit publicly to their hearing problems, fearing that a reputation for deafness could damage their career. Amateur musicians are happily under no such economic pressure for secrecy, and yet they too are often reluctant to acknowledge hearing problems to their ensemble colleagues. The resulting code of silence fosters unfortunate confusion and misunderstanding.

In a forthcoming issue, *Music for the Love of It* will publish a compilation of letters from musicians who have hearing problems. Readers are encouraged to contribute. How does your hearing problem feel to you? How does it affect the way you sing or play? What personal coping strategies can you offer to others in your situation? What can other musicians do to help you continue to make and enjoy music within your own physiological limits? Please send letters, cards or e-mail to the editor. We will withhold names of any correspondents who wish to remain anonymous.

### YOUR EDITORS AT PLAY



*Quorum Ventorum*: Editors Janet Telford and Ted Rust, with Cynthia Hanson, Alan Shonkoff and Merlyn Doleman

# FIRST INSTRUMENTS

compiled by Ted Rust

Sydney Rott, one of our frequent contributors, is an instrument repair technician in Fresno, California. She wrote us:

"I left work today feeling sad. A mother had come in with her daughter and her daughter's flute. The teacher had said the flute wouldn't play. I saw the shiny instrument and my heart sank. I recognized the brand, a Chinese instrument sold through store catalogs and on the Internet for about \$150. I looked at it, hoping it was something minor that was keeping it from working. No luck: there was a lot wrong with it.

"As gently as I could, I explained that the flute wasn't worth repairing. I didn't try to sell them a new flute, because I don't think a new flute was an option for them. They didn't ask.

"I still feel bad about the little girl and her shiny flute that won't play. If you're looking for an inexpensive wind instrument for your child or grandchild, an instrument isn't necessarily better just because it's new. A used, well-made instrument, in decent shape, can almost certainly be made to play.

"Before buying a beginner's instrument, please have a good player try it out, and find who can repair it before you buy it. Something as simple as a lost screw can be a major problem if no one has the right type of screw."

Sydney's heartfelt story of a little girl's flute that won't play reminded me painfully of my years of struggle with my own first instrument, a struggle which I never dreamed at the time was caused by the instrument and not my own inadequacies. I wondered about all the other people who must have had similar experiences. So I posted this query on the Internet CMP-List:

*"I'm working on an article encouraging adult beginners and the parents of young beginners to start off with equipment that will not actively frustrate their love of music or interfere with the learning process. Do you remember your first instrument? Remember your first GOOD instrument? How did their good or bad qualities affect your musical satisfaction, motivation and learning speed? What constitutes an acceptable beginner's instrument?"*

The responses were varied and colorful:

## CHILDREN'S INSTRUMENTS

My daughter played on anything she could get her hands on as soon as she was old enough to walk! We had all sorts of inexpensive instruments lying around the house such as bongo drums, a tambourine, castanets, xylophone, harmonica, and a toy accordion. She'd stride around the house playing on any one of

these instruments while accompanying herself by singing along nonchalantly as she went.

Linda Rand  
Tel-Aviv

## VIOLINS

Yes, my first violin was a German student instrument, with HOPF burned in to the back at the neck, but I am sure it really had no name. When I finally got a fairly good fiddle (Causin from Mirecourt) after ten years or more, I was surprised to find that it was *not* necessary to play every single note differently in order to make them sound the same. The improvement in satisfaction was enormous, not to speak of improvement in musical quality. I think every

beginner should have a Strad. The professionals can do well on any instrument.

Daniel Zelinsky  
Evanston, IL

I started violin when I was 4. Over a lifetime of playing, no one (not my family, my teachers, or I) recognized my lack of progress to be related to the limitations of my instruments. We just assumed that my level of playing was the best I could achieve. Finally, at 40 and again at 50 years old I got violins capable of supporting fine levels of playing. Instruments with sufficient power and beauty of tone to gave me the confidence to perform comfortably and really enjoy playing.

In contrast, my wife began studying the viola at age 44. After a year on a servicable viola she moved up to a fine instrument. She has made rapid progress and continues to improve steadily, always inspired by the lovely basic sound of her viola. So, I believe kids need instruments capable of producing sound good enough to reward their efforts, and if you're an adult in a rut with your playing, consider a new instrument.

Gil Carroll

My first instrument was the piano. I was in kindergarden, 1st, or 2nd grade. I didn't like it much: lots of emphasis on theory ( I had a theory book and a theory exercise every week) and counting, as I remember. I liked playing "Teaching Little Fingers to Play" duets with my mother. My teacher was pregnant and soon (as I remember it) stopped teaching to have a baby. My parents did not get me another teacher since I was not particularly interested.

After that, but before 3rd grade, our school class studied the "sweet wind." It was a plastic wind instrument you blow into. There were holes you covered to produce different pitches. It was easy and I liked doing it with the group. We could play songs I'd heard before. It was probably a good instrument for young children.

In 3rd grade, music teachers came to our classroom and illustrated orchestra and band instruments. I asked my parents' permission to play the violin. They looked at each other, smiled, and said OK. I got a 1/2 size school instrument and soon had a 3/4 size school instrument. I had talent and liked the attention I got. When I was in 5th grade I got a full size moderately good student instrument. I remember how much better the instrument sounded and looked than the school instruments we had been renting. The better instrument motivated me because it was more fun to play.

The next violin I got was one I bought several years ago (I'm in my 40's). Now as an advanced amateur, my musical needs are quite a bit more sophisticated. The difference this new (actually old, early 1800s) violin has made in my playing is remarkable. There is a resonance that tells me when it's in tune; there's an equal sound across strings and from low positions to high positions. Now I really listen to my sound as I can control it on many dimensions. For example, this fiddle produces a soft sound when I play near the fingerboard. The student model I had did not produce a good enough sound there to be used. Now I can play with the sound and the instrument responds. I feel like this violin is my voice, a part of me.

I wish I had known sooner the difference the "new" instrument would make.

(name withheld by request)

Hey I'll bite! I remember my teacher taking my violin, playing it a bit, and saying "You have a good instrument." That worked for me, made me feel happy and lucky to have that instrument for YEARS. (Hint, hint to all you teachers.)

Bill Ewing

## VIOLS AND CELLOS

My first instrument. That brings back memories!

The very first was a Kay cello courtesy of Elgin Junior High School in Elgin, Illinois. Those were the days when the schools had instruments and provided lessons. I was bloody awful but playing in the orchestra within four weeks. A teacher from Chicago encouraged me to buy

an instrument for about \$500 which my parents in 1949 found outrageous and were sure that she was getting a huge commission on sale. That instrument, a modern French one, was vetoed, but I ended up with a \$200 factory made Buthod and Grandini from France which was the instrument I played on until picking up a good restored instrument non-pedigreed in 1974. I still have the B & G, which has a good solid loud unrefined sound and is a good orchestra instrument.

To me the bow is as important if not more so than the instrument. The buying of an Emil Ouchard bow in 1968 was a real upgrade. And if only I had known how important setup was and how few dealers really know how to do it. Very important.

I think the most important thing is to have an instrument which is fairly even across the strings and with a bridge that does not discourage early advances down the cello into the high registers.

Did I mention Teacher? The most important ingredient.

Donald Spuehler  
Los Angeles, California

I bought a student model treble viola da gamba about 7 years ago. I still don't like it. About 5 years ago I bought a small student model tenor gamba. I've never been satisfied. Two years ago I bought a really good bass gamba. It took me a while to accommodate all of my body to its enormous size.

However, I now feel quite competent playing the bass in public, with almost any combination of other instruments. The treble and tenor sit around forlornly, seldom used. In my case, a superior instrument has brought out the best in me. It gives me better feedback; I try harder to put good movements into it. A nice relationship. Happiness is playing music.

Jim Forrest  
Senior Citizen

I sure do remember my first cello.

I've played piano ever since I was a child (I'm now 81). It was a very good Knabe. I had a very good teacher and just sailed along.

Shortly before I retired from teaching (not music) I took up the cello. I was on sabbatical leave, and one day my husband (who was a professional violinist, and a very good one at that) brought home a beat-up old cello, and drew a bow across the strings, pulling forth a lovely mellow tone. I said: "What would you say if I decided to learn to play the cello?" Not one to waste time, he got me a teacher the next day.

Well, unfortunately, the proportions of the cello were all wrong for me, and the teacher was even worse. For about 5 years, I struggled bravely but vainly to get the hang of making a decent sound. My fingering developed, but not my tone. After my husband's death, I got rid of the rotten cello, and also the rotten teacher, and got a lovely old Italian instrument, a good bow, and a marvelous teacher.

Starting with a poor teacher is much worse than starting from scratch. There is so much to unlearn. When you are no longer a child, you must also deal with the fact that your reactions and ability to acquire new physical skills diminishes. But it was a revelation to me to discover that a lot of what was making trouble for me was not my inadequacy but the instrument's. I persevered, and now I play chamber music at a decent level, and I also play in a community orchestra that is quite good.

There is no doubt in my mind that if I were a less determined person, I would have given up the cello after a few months.

My advice to anyone who wants to learn an instrument is to get the best one you can afford. The satisfaction that comes from making beautiful sounds is a very strong motivation to learn to do better. And conversely, trying hard and not getting anywhere can stop you cold in short order.

(name withheld by request)

**. . . it was a revelation to me to discover that a lot of what was making trouble for me was not my inadequacy but the instrument's.**

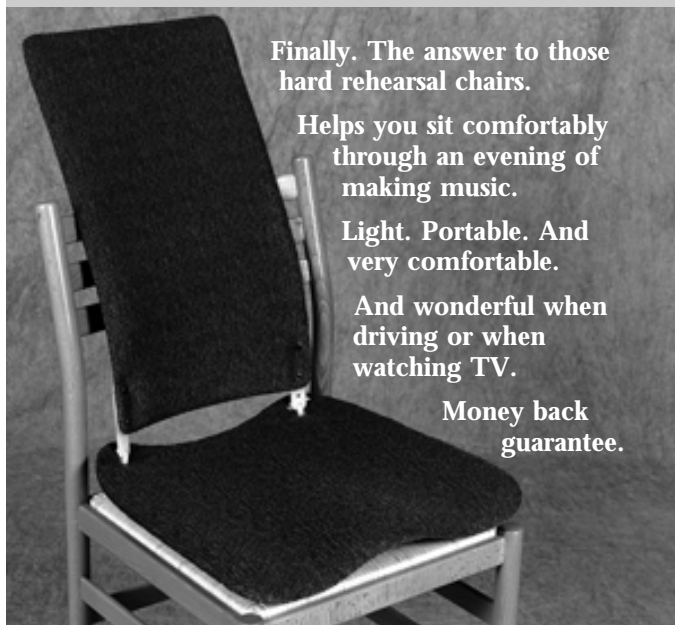
My first cello was a rented Kay plywood instrument. It was only \$3 per month, but was a real cigar box. I then purchased a German instrument for \$100, including bow, which I used for about seven or eight years. It wasn't bad and I eventually sold it for \$600.

In 1977 I got a cello made by Mendel Segal that was built in 1976. It doesn't look like much, but has a very nice tone and I am pleased with it. Of course, string players also have to get bows. That's an entirely different story, but equally important.

Music is the language of the Gods.

Jerry Bank  
Trenton, NJ

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## TENSION

continued from page 8

play easily and in a relaxed manner. In this atmosphere of ease, where we are completely capable of clean technical performance, we are able to release the deep beauties of our soul that make each musical experience unique. The communication of the musical idea between performer and listener is easiest when the performer has thoroughly prepared the music.

The development of technical competency will relieve tension in playing because technical ability will reduce or eliminate the 'challenges' of the piece. This is largely a matter of becoming deeply intimate with the instrument and the music. When addressing ease of performance, recording artist Chuck Ohman commented, "There is nothing difficult [in music], only the unfamiliar."

It is essential to care for the non-musical aspects of your performance well before the performance date. Take dresses and suits to the dry cleaners two weeks before the performance and pick them up well before you need them. If someone else is coordinating your performance, inquire about receptions, stagehands, recording, ushers, programs, and anything else that might create a distraction. (If they seem miffed, ask them to humor you in your paranoid pre-recital state of mind.) If you are taking care of logistics yourself, complete them well before the performance date. Regardless of what extra

## BOOKS ABOUT REDUCING TENSION IN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Madeline Bruser's *The Art of Practicing: A Guide to Making Music from the Heart* (New York: Bell Tower, 1997) is a tremendous resource for any musician. Bruser's presentation is enhanced by her application of stated principles to performers on several different instruments (trumpet, flute, violin, and others).

*With Winning in Mind: the Mental Management System* by Lanny Bassham (Wilsonville, Oregon: Book Partners, Inc., 1995) details the mental management system that Bassham used in winning two Olympic medals and two world championships in target shooting. The principles are universal to any performance-related activity, and are especially valuable to the performing musician. The book is designed for quick application and practice of mental management techniques.

For the aspiring recitalist, Carol Mont Parker's *Anatomy of a New York Debut Recital* is of inestimable value. It is a concise presentation of Parker's journal entries from her New York debut, from the initial preparation to the aftermath of her performance. The book is made more interesting by the fact that Parker performed her debut when nearing middle age, and she makes much reference to her family responsibilities throughout the text.

The book is out of print, but may be available through a library or book search service.

Another book that will be of value to the performer is Carl Vigeland's *In Concert: Onstage and Offstage with the Boston Symphony Orchestra* (1989, William Morrow and Company, New York). This book details the 1986-87 season of the Boston Symphony and gives tremendous insight into the life of the professional musician. It is essential to anyone considering a career as a professional orchestral musician.

Other excellent texts for the performing musician are *A Soprano on her Head: Right-Side-Up Reflections of Life and Other Performances* by Eloise Ristad and *The Inner Game of Music* by Barry Green and W. Timothy Gallwey.

tasks your performance requires of you, prepare these so that on the day of the performance you have one concern: to make music with the greatest of ease.

Another means of reducing tension is to be ready for the unusual and unexpected. Make a list of all of the things that could possibly go wrong – the recital hall becomes unavailable, your favorite piano bench breaks just before the performance, your accompanist suffers a death in the immediate family – and work out a contingency plan for each of these. This will eliminate most (if not all) of the “what if” worries, freeing you for more important concerns.

To stay physically relaxed while performing, consider employing one or more relaxation techniques. These will help free your mind from your body's natural tendency to be nervous.

One relaxation technique is the use of a mental reminder. First, choose an object that is always within sight. This can be any object that is within continuous peripheral vision. Next, in your mind's eye, attach to that point a one-word reminder to relax, such as, “Gently.” To begin, consciously remind yourself of your ‘sign’ by looking at it, looking away, then looking back. Remind yourself that your reminder is there, seen only in your mind (which, in this instance, can't tell the difference between the real and the imagined). With practice, this technique provides a subtle and constant mental reminder to relax the shoulders, hold good posture and breathe easily.

The most valuable approach to mental relaxation is simple visualization. This mental rehearsal of your performance is a proven method of reducing anxiety and making the most of your preparation. Professionals from neurosurgeons to weightlifters use visualization techniques as part of their performance preparation. This technique consists of mentally picturing every aspect of your performance, from arriving at the hall to greeting your audience after the performance. Lanny Bassham details the mental management system in his book, *With Winning in Mind*.

### **When visualizing your performance, think first of enjoying the music.**

When visualizing your performance, think first of enjoying the music. Be aware of what you are doing with your song. See your audience that wants to hear you play well. They have come to appreciate what you are doing and the music that you love. Create a relaxed atmosphere within your visualization. With practice, this will translate to a relaxed atmosphere in performance.

There are no quick fixes to the problem of tension in making music. Careful preparation of music and logistics, careful consideration of the unexpected, and a good mental approach need to be cultivated over a period of time. But once they become habitual, they will be of much help in reducing tension while making music.

*Ezra Allen Adams is the instructor of trumpet at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee, and is assistant to the editor of the International Trumpet Guild Journal. He may be reached at ezratrumpet@juno.com.*

# TENSION IN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

by Ezra Allen Adams

Musicians are tense people when it comes to performing.

We practice, we study, and we invest ourselves in our music and our musical endeavors. We care tremendously about the music, and about the part of ourselves that we share in our performance. Our emotional investment can lead to unhealthy level of tension in our practice and performance.

Madeline Bruser discusses this in *The Art of Practicing*. She comments,

One of the greatest challenges of making music is to maintain some cool in the heat of our passion and joy. It is easy to become impatient

when it takes us longer to learn a beautiful piece than we would like. We ache to get it in our finger, our voice, our body, to make physical contact with the music we love. This longing is our greatest asset. It is our communicative energy. It is the raw, throbbing energy of the heart.<sup>1</sup>

An experience so emotionally charged needs careful management. As we inwardly react to this overwhelming desire to share and experience our love of music, excess tension may hamper our musical communication and enjoyment. We must learn to moderate our level of tension in order to completely experience the passion and abandon of music.

Preparation is a major key to avoiding tension. When we are playing pieces that we know well, we are able to

**continues on page 6**

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