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Message from the President

I am now into the second month of the second year of my Chapter presidency, and I am happy to report that ASTA MD/DC has gotten very *big*. We have not only started significant programs and events, but also are planning very big ones for the next years. This is thanks to our large and distinguished Board, whose members are actively planning them. Please go to www.asta.net/officers to see who they are and read their bios.

We had a very successful Annual Membership Meeting at The Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring on May 17, 2009. It was all planned by President-elect, Cathy Stewart. A board meeting was followed by a sit-down dinner for 58 attendees. Afterwards, the program included a talk about Venezuela's "El sistema" by Maria Montañó, presentation of the Service to Strings award to Lorraine Combs, Teacher of the Year Award to Paul Scimonelli, and a performance by harpist Peggy Huang, finalist in the ASTA National Solo Competition in Atlanta this year. To see pictures from this event, please go to www.asta.net/gallery.

The Solo Strings Festival on May 24, 2009, and the ASTA CAP Exams on May 31, 2009, were very successful. Please read Jean Provine's report on the Festival on the next page. The Studio Teachers' Meetings, held every second Monday mostly at Cathy Stewart's house in Olney, wrapped up for the year. They will start up again on Monday, September 14, 2009, at 10:30 A.M. in the same location. Please check on the topic and get directions from the website: www.asta.net/calendar.

The biggest event that we are planning will be to bring electric rock violinist Mark Wood to do a two-day workshop the weekend of June 5–6, 2010. On the first day, there will be two workshops for middle and high school age string players of all instruments and levels, followed by a concert in the evening. On the second day, there will be a workshop for teachers who would like to learn how to include popular music, rock, and jazz in their teaching, followed by our Annual Membership Meeting and dinner. Again, please get all updates regarding this from www.asta.net/calendar.

In our quest to implement ASTA's mission of promoting excellence in string playing and teaching

in Maryland and Washington, D.C., we are currently working at establishing links in four areas: public schools, private schools, universities, and youth orchestras. In each of these areas, a committee has formed to create the liaisons to open communication and begin activities with all teachers and students concerned. Please, membership, contact me if you would like to be on any of these committees to help out. It would be so very much appreciated.

Have I mentioned that it would be good to visit our excellent website www.asta.net?! In addition to finding out about the things I have mentioned here, please know that our website can do so much for ASTA members. We can list you as a studio teacher and write about your event on our News page. Also, from the website, you can click on the Facebook link and go directly to our ASTA MD/DC Chapter Facebook group page, where you can join a discussion, use the Bulletin Board to post items for sale or exchange, jobs listings, and publicize your events. So I encourage you to get into the habit of checking the site and using this very valuable resource.

In closing, may I please encourage all of you to get involved with your ASTA MD/DC Chapter. Any participation at all will be highly appreciated. You can:

- Get others to join ASTA
- Write or find an article for *Stringendo*
- Call me if you'd like to help out or be on a committee for: Mark Wood, Solo Strings Festival, ASTACAP, Studio Teachers Meetings, Schools/Youth Orchestra Liaisons, Annual Membership Meeting planning, publicity, etc.

Do you see what I mean by "big"? It's all for you and your wonderful work so please get involved!

All the best to all of you,

Dorée Huneven

**Please visit our
MD/DC website!
www.asta.net**

Report on the MSMTA & ASTA MD/DC Solo Strings Festival May 24, 2009

by Jean Provine

The jointly sponsored MSMTA and ASTA MD/DC Solo Strings Festival took place Sunday, May 24, 2009, at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland. This has been an MSMTA event for many years, but this year was run jointly with ASTA MD/DC Chapter for the first time, allowing students of members of either organization to participate. Teachers entered 160 young string players from the greater Washington area, Baltimore, Maryland, and Virginia. Each performed a solo and received a certificate and critique sheet from a judge. Students were grouped by age, 6–8 in a session, where they and their families could listen to each other. If they chose to be competitive, which most did, First, Second, Third, and Honorable Mention ribbons were awarded at the end of the day. All went smoothly despite the sticky problem of scheduling accompanists, many of whom played for multiple

participants. Next year we are hoping to have even more applicants for this event. We also want to encourage more players of bass, guitar and harp to perform. If the event continues successfully, it could expand to include a master class or workshop.

Personally, I found my participating students worked even harder than they would for a normal recital. Some of the other players in their age group were very outstanding and gave them a perspective and motivation beyond what they see in my studio or at school. One teacher said she always uses this Festival instead of having an end of year student recital of her own! The date for the 2010 Festival, although not confirmed, will probably be the last Sunday in May and we are hoping ASTA members will take advantage of this new opportunity and show an even larger presence next year.



Note from the Editor

We are very pleased to bring you another issue of *Stringendo* filled with a wide range of articles by people of diverse experience. As always, I encourage the membership to give us feedback: what sort of articles would you like to see more of? Less of? We also invite your submissions. They can be sent to me at jslyman@aacc.edu. The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue is November 1, 2009.

Omission from the last issue: A footnote was inadvertently left out of the article by Alessandra Schneider in the Spring 2009 issue of *Stringendo*. The footnote should have read: "Contents from this paper come from my own teaching experience as well as from seminars with Suzuki Teacher Trainer Ronda Cole." Our apologies to Alessandra and to Ronda Cole. The omission has already been corrected in the issue on the website.

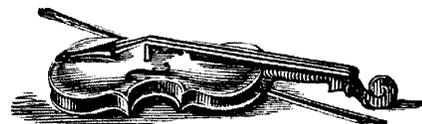
Jaque Lyman

Fiddle Day!

September 12, 2009

If the packed fiddle sessions for teachers at the ASTA Conference are any indication, there is a lot of desire among our ranks to exploit student interest in alternative styles, both in the classroom and the private studio.

Join us **Saturday, September 12, 2009**, at Anne Arundel Community College, for a day devoted to making classroom and studio teachers and future teachers more at home with teaching "fiddle." Visit our website www.asta.net/otherprograms for details and a registration form. Email Jaque Lyman (jslyman@aacc.edu) or Kim McCollum (kdmccollum@yahoo.com) for more information.



Report on the ASTACAP Exams

May 31 and June 7, 2009

by Lya Stern, ASTACAP Chair

The ASTACAP (Certificate Advancement Program) exams, now in their eleventh year, went off with success again, as in the past ten years. There were 102 students from the studios of 14 teachers taking the exam. The overwhelming majority of the students were well prepared and earned their Certificate of Achievement with high grades—the culmination of a year's worth of hard work on the part of the teachers and their students.

We introduced online applications this year. While a bit tedious for some teachers, it prevented errors on the submission forms and helped the scheduling process. No one complained and that is appreciated. Expect a faster and easier application process next year after recommendations that were made by Lorraine Combs, Mark Pfannschmidt, and myself will be implemented. The option to submit applications by mail will continue.

If you are new to the ASTACAP, you are invited to learn how the program can help you plot a systematic course for your students' technical and musical development. It motivates them to excel and satisfies parents eager to see their children progressing.

Visit the chapter website at www.asta.net/certificateprogram.php and follow the links to learn about suggested curriculum and exam requirements for each of the ten levels, musical and technical goals, standards, grading system, the evaluation form, and much more.

This short collection of data below might be helpful to teachers who have made use of ASTACAP exams for years but is intended especially for teachers who have not yet discovered the potential benefits of this program, and are interested in learning about it.

You can start by sending only one student—or your entire studio! As every previous year, some teachers sent only one student and some sent as many as eighteen. Testing the waters is OK!

Number of students participating in 2009 exams:

Violinists: 85
Violists: 16
Cellists: 1

Attention cello teachers: you are missing an excellent opportunity. Please check out that website! Attention bass teachers: where are you and your students? The bass program, added more recently, is on the website as well.

Number of students in various levels:

Foundation—Level 4: 68
Levels 5–7: 29
Levels 8–10: 5

Distribution of grades:

V (*Very Good*) (incl. V- and V+): 65 students.
S (*Satisfactory*) (incl. S- and S+): 30 students.
N (*Needs Improvement*) (examiner recommended retaking a portion of the exam): only 2 students.

Comments Only (ungraded evaluation, given when the student or teacher requested the comments of the examiner but no grade. Student may use music. In a graded exam, pieces must be memorized): 5 students.

The following teachers sent their students:

Klara Berkovich, Julianna Chitwood, Yunjung Choi, Chienmo Wu, Lorraine Combs, Margo Guillory, Dorée Huneven, Slavica Ilic, Larry Keiffer, Anne Marie Patterson, Judy Shapiro, Judy Silverman, Mark Pfannschmidt and Lya Stern.

The examiners were:

Emily Campbell, Lorraine Combs, Rachel Noyes, Sarah Wise, Eleanor Woods, and Margaret Wright.

Teachers served as monitors or signing in students.

Please remember this is a requirement for participation; otherwise we cannot run the exams!

Every year several board members assist at the exams. This year Alessandra Schneider and Laurien Laufman helped out, in addition to the board members who had also entered their students in the exams. Volunteer monitors or observers are welcome at the exams. Teachers who first assisted at the exams became convinced of its positive value and subsequently enrolled their students.

Mark Pfannschmidt did data entry and scheduling, and as always was invaluable help.

All the teachers, plus other volunteers and examiners, enjoyed delicious sandwiches, fruit, and snacks that were underwritten by our chapter. The moments of teacher camaraderie and welcome shop talk was a bonus.

We are pleased to offer the ASTACAP to our fellow teachers and their students.



Report on Modern Early Music Institute June 22–24, 2009

by Kay Budner

On June 22–24, 2009, eight violinists, three violists, and two cellists from around the country attended the first Modern Early Music Institute. It was held at The Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, Maryland. For eleven hours each day, we immersed ourselves in the “gestures” that make 17th- and 18th-century music sound Baroque, finding that our modern instruments actually can reproduce the vocal sounds of the style.

Our exploration of style was guided by Elizabeth Field, violin, and Stephanie Vial, cello. Both women received their DMAs in Historical Performance Practice from Cornell University and have collaborated in performance many times. Some of the issues we looked at included the grouping of long strings of eighth notes, how legato or smooth playing compares to or differs from a slur, and the precision of rhythmic notation including dotted rhythms. Of course, the question of when to vibrate was raised. We found that the bow, in baroque style, is extremely expressive, and vibrato becomes a left hand ornament rather than the *modus operandi* of playing that it is today.

The music we studied was orchestral. Included were works of Handel, W.F. Bach, J.C.F. Bach, Charpentier, Purcell, and Vivaldi. We performed them in a public concert on the final evening of the institute.

Liz and Stephanie also gave a recital, with John O’Brien accompanying on harpsichord. Works of Stradella, Corelli, Telemann and Vivaldi were

performed. The entire recital was first done on period instruments at A=415 and then on modern violin and cello at A=440. The difference in sound between the modern and the period instruments was striking. They were both wonderful performances but very different sounds.

On Tuesday night we put on our dancing shoes and found why the musical rhythms and phrasings are the way they are: they correspond to the holds and lifts and steps of the specific dances. The class was taught by Rachel List from the New York Baroque Dance Company. A soloist, choreographer and teacher, she was excellent at adjusting the steps so that we who are usually stuck in the pit could experience the movement of the dance.

As an orchestral player I felt really in touch with the changing perception and knowledge of the expressiveness of music of the baroque period. The music truly came alive for me when played with the gestures of the period. With this new insight about old times, I find that I don’t want to “look back” to the twentieth century way of playing this music.

Liz and Stephanie breathed life into the baroque style for me. As a teacher, that is what I would like to do for my students. I’m looking forward to next year for the second MEMI to deepen my knowledge.



ASTA member Kay Budner is a violinist with National Philharmonic (for the past 20 years), studio teacher, and former Air Force Strolling Strings member.

Classified Ads

Do you have something for sale?
Take out a classified ad in *Stringendo*.

\$10 per ad
Maximum 30 words

Report on the ASTA National Conference in Atlanta, March 2009

by Dorée Huneven, MD/DC Chapter President

The 2009 National Conference in Atlanta was my third, and it greatly helped me to increase my knowledge of what ASTA can do on the state level to further its mission of promoting excellence in string teaching and playing. Unlike previous conferences when I concentrated on improving my personal knowledge, this time I expanded my concentration to garnering knowledge to help my state presidency.

This started with the State Leadership Workshop the Wednesday before the official conference opening. This is a 5-hour-long networking and information session for state chapter presidents, presidents-elect, and other interested officers. There, I learned first-hand from other state leaders how to run the chapter better, how to attract and keep new members, how to provide insurance coverage for ASTA-run events, and how to institute programs that work.

The keynote speaker of the Conference was Miles Hoffman, whose theme for us as teachers and musicians was to keep learning and to have something to say. This led into four solid days of intense conference sessions and inter-session talking to other teachers and industry representatives. Here are short descriptions of the sessions I attended:

- *ASTACAP Panel*: I participated on this panel to help introduce ASTACAP Exams to interested teachers. The news is that a theory list will be out soon!
- *Pre-College Student Cello Master Class with Robert Jesselson*: In the Winter 2008-9 *Stringendo*, I reprinted Dr. Jesselson's "Studio Teachers' Self-Examination Checklist." In this session, I could see his cheery and energetic way of engaging his students.
- *Viola Master Class with William Preucil*: In his quietly humorous way, Mr. Preucil père led students through the Vieuxtemps "Elégie," and the Bach Loure from Partita No. 3.
- *Goal-Oriented Progressive Repertoire Using the ASTA String Syllabus*: Martha Walvoord showed us how to generate an individualized technique list for a student and then match the

repertoire to progressively accomplish that list and teach pieces the student wanted to learn. A great idea—but very complex!

- *How to Introduce Advanced Violin Techniques to Young Children Early On*: This was a push by Bärenreiter publishers to explain the Sassmannshaus Tradition to American users. Mr. Sassmannshaus (son) was present to do this.
- *Ševčík Seminar*: Endre Granat, a violinist and teacher from Northridge, California, whom I have long admired, said, "Ševčík's complete works are like the New York phone directory: very useful, but you have to know what you're looking for." This session was helpful for presenting highlights.
- *Garage Orchestra—Promoting Lifelong Learning and Fun with Strings*: Enthusiastically presented by Susan Davis of New York University, it provided a fun approach to helping students create their own bands—without giving up their instruments!
- *Turning Notes into Music*: The legendary Phyllis Young and eight of her former cello students presented her pet techniques for encouraging musicality.
- *Financial Planning 2009 for Self-Employed Musicians*: I heard a lot of what I already know but learned the stunning fact that for every \$1000 per month I might want in retirement, I would need \$250,000 in savings. So I'd need to have over a million saved; hmmm, I don't think so!
- *Violin Pre-College Master Class*: Helen Kwalwasser led this; students performed from a Bach Partita and Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*.
- *Violin Collegiate Master Class*: Brian Lewis was stupendous! He is a very dynamic communicator, and knows every note, bowing, and fingering of everything written. He quickly and effectively improved the students' performances and understanding of what they were doing in quantum leaps.
- *Violin Technique—A Lecture Demonstrating*

Galamian Principles: Charles Avsharian, head of Shar Music and a wonderful violinist, went through Galamian principles comprehensively, in only an hour!

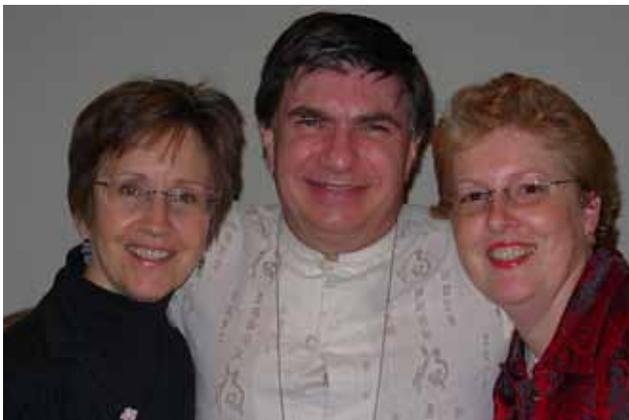
- *Incorporation Rock and Roll in a Classical Setting*: I wanted to get an idea of what might happen when our chapter brings Mark Wood on to the scene...

So, I was extremely energetic in my lecture attendance, but there were other highlights.

- President-elect Cathy Stewart and I combed the Exhibition Halls for potential advertisers as well as contacts for making our chapter more vital.
- Nearly all the MD/DC attendees got together for a brainstorming toward the end of the conference.
- Cathy and I had a wonderful social time one evening with National President and cellist Jeffrey Solow. He had just finished his practice and was looking for entertainment!
- The Silent Auction this year was memorable for me in that I actually won a few things,



Mark Pfannschmidt, Cathy Stewart, Dorée Huneven, Jaque Lyman, and Kim McCollum at the 2009 ASTA Conference in Atlanta.



Dorée Huneven, ASTA National President Jeffrey Solow, and Cathy Stewart

including a week's stay in a Colorado ASTA member's vacation home in the Rocky Mountains and a place at the Mark O'Connor Fiddle Camp in NYC in July.

- The Alternative Styles Competition Winners' Concert was an eye-opener. The winners, all of whom appeared to have had classical training, were top-notch performers in categories of jazz, bluegrass, world music, etc.
- The evening concerts were wonderful, particularly the final gala concert of Zuill Bailey, cellist, performing with the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra. Stunning.

The location in Atlanta, the awesome Marriott in which the conference was held, the overall organization, and the extraordinary variety of offerings for us all made this 2009 ASTA National Conference the most inspiring and synergistic one I have attended.

I wish to sincerely thank the Chapter for sending me there and allowing me to be a participant in such an inspiring event.



A convention attendee admires the MD/DC State Basket at the Silent Auction.

Photos courtesy of Dorée Huneven.

ASTA Conference and Connections

March 2009

by Cathy Stewart, MD/DC Chapter President-elect

I would like to thank ASTA MD/DC Chapter for sending me to the National Conference in Atlanta from March 18–21, 2009. The conference was a terrific experience for me and I think a great investment for our chapter. Dorée and I attended the five-hour State Leadership Workshop on Wednesday before the conference opening. We networked with other state officers and were inspired by many new ideas. We have already implemented many of the ideas and information from this session in our chapter. I attended many classes. The highlights included:

The Bottom Line: Grant Writing and Fundraising for Your Program

For me and our chapter, this was the most important class I attended. I learned that “if there is a need, there is a way.” We have to make connections, use our connections, be persistent, be assertive, and go after everything because one thing leads to another. I think one of the most useful ideas I came away with was to “Give people an opportunity to help.”

Electrify Your Strings: Bridgid Bibbins

After watching Ms. Bibbins in action with a High School string group, I knew we had to have Mark Wood come Electrify Maryland! There was such enthusiasm from the kids playing, the moms that set up concerts, and from Mark Wood’s assistant, Bridgid Bibbins. *Electrify Your Strings* provides students with the opportunity to explore alternative styles of musical expression.

Big is Beautiful: Achieving and Teaching that “Solid” String Sound: Bobby Yang

Bobby Yang is a cutting edge rock/improvisation violinist, who was also a Paul Kantor student. He had great ideas about getting your kids to play with a big sound, such as finding a sweet spot for the sounding point and raising the violin to keep the strings parallel to the floor. I think the thing I enjoyed the most about him was his enthusiasm and passion for music, as well as being “hip.” He would definitely bring “cool” to violin. The kids (and everyone else) in the room loved him.

Turning Notes Into Music: Phyllis Young

I have always wanted to meet Phyllis Young. She is a complete delight. I enjoyed so much watching her work with her former students and to see the obvious affection they all have for each other. It is easy to see why she is such a revered teacher. Ms. Young’s goal is to try to get students’ souls to come out through their music. She used a variety of props, like beanie baby animals and flashlights for bowing work. For her, music is fun and teaching is fun. She wants to “unlock the door for people so they can express themselves.”

Whole Brain Scales: Jody Harmon

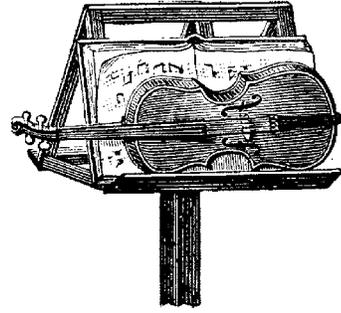
I’ve used Jody Harmon’s books, and it was fun for me to meet her and see her in action. She has great ideas for teaching scales and intonation using improvisation. She advocates using the left and right hemispheres of the brain for the best learning.

I attended many other classes, including the wonderful master classes of Helen Kwalwasser and Brian Lewis. The evening concerts were impressive—Darryl Anger’s *Republic of Strings* featuring Scott Nygaard, the Alternative Style Competition Winners’ Concert, and the Atlanta Youth Symphony with Zuill Bailey, cello soloist. It was total immersion in exceptional performances.

Dorée and I gave vendors at the Exhibition Hall the opportunity to help our chapter. Several of them have become advertisers either in *Stringendo* or on the web site. We just kept talking to people and making connections. We will both follow up on the connections at the convention next year.

At the Silent Auction, I was thrilled to see many people bidding on our chapter’s contributions. I was fortunate enough to win the bid on a trip to Alaska, which includes a fishing trip, an evening musical cruise on the Kenai River, and a stay at a B&B. In addition, I met the President of the Alaska Chapter, Ida Pearson. During my trip to Alaska, I will be performing for the Kenai Peninsula Orchestra Festival and teaching a workshop. We will also have a small ASTA teacher workshop.

I came away from the Conference energized and looking forward to next year. My only regret was that there were so many classes I wanted to attend happening at the same time, and I had to choose. I was struck with how much extraordinary teaching is happening all over the country, resulting in such wonderful performances and lectures. Thank you again for sending me, and I would encourage all members to take advantage of the opportunity to attend the ASTA Conference in February 2010 in Santa Clara, California.



Bow-Dacious String Band at the 2009 ASTA National Conference in Atlanta

by Cindy Swiss

How many of us have encountered a situation where we are asked to direct a string ensemble that includes students of different ages and/or a wide range of playing abilities? How can the less experienced players be included without boring the more advanced players? Since I have found myself in this situation more than once, I made time in my ASTA National Conference schedule to attend the presentation given by Robin Kearton titled “Ways to Accommodate Multiple Ages and Skill Levels in Your Alternative Styles String Group and Make Them Sound Great.” Her ensemble, the **Bow-Dacious String Band** from Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, was actually founded on the premise that everyone should be included. The band philosophy embraces every player and every part as an essential contributor to the whole. All band members support each other and “watch each others’ backs.” The advanced players are provided with teaching experience when they mentor the beginners. This may encourage some of them to consider a career as a music teacher.

As I walked into the conference room, I saw a group of about twenty students, age four to seventeen, and several parents lining up to perform. One parent played the bass, and one played the guitar. The violin-playing parents revealed to us that they were so jealous of all the fun their children were having that they had to learn violin in order to join in.

The repertoire for this ensemble includes folk music from around the world. We were treated to performances of French, Gypsy, Irish, and traditional American music. Each part is taught by rote.

Once a piece is learned, it is practiced and performed many times to encourage mastery. As the students become more advanced, they look forward to progressing from the backup part to the tune, and finally to the break.

Several sources for arrangements are available. Existing arrangements can be embellished or you can make your own. Transcribing from recordings is a way to include unpublished tunes and arrangements. One series I use is *Fiddlers’ Philharmonic* by Andrew Dabczynski and Bob Philips, from Alfred publishing. I have included an excerpt from this series, the “Kesh Jig,” which was used in the presentation. The earliest beginners play the open string backup parts. Kearton had a very amusing way of indicating when they should play the G or the D. For the G she pointed her right foot to the front and D was the right foot

KESH JIG

IRISH TRADITIONAL

The image displays a musical score for the Kesh Jig, an Irish traditional piece. The score is arranged in three systems, each with two staves. The top staff of each system is labeled 'VIOLIN I' and the bottom staff is labeled 'VIOLIN II'. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. The Violin I part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the Violin II part provides a harmonic accompaniment using chords and single notes. The score includes repeat signs and a final double bar line.

to the side. As the students progress in their lessons, they will add the double stops. The chord structure was incorporated into a theory lesson about chord progressions.

Next, several arrangement ideas for “Kesh Jig” were demonstrated. The first time through, just the tune and backup were played. Then the break was added by the advanced players. Kearton demonstrated how each part was important by having students leave out a part to show how this diminished the texture and fullness of the sound. Form analysis was taught by having one group play the A section and another play the B section. Medleys can also be used as an arrangement technique. There is another tune from Fiddlers’ Philharmonic called “Swallowtail Jig” that fits very well with “Kesh Jig.”

Another great arrangement idea was demonstrated with “Wabash Cannonball.” First, the original tune is played in G Major. To create a medley, the tune is transposed to G Minor and arranged as “Wabash Klezmerball.” Use your own creative ideas for the klezmer accompaniment!

From June 23 to July 1, 2009, I taught at the Baltimore String Orchestra Camp at Garrison Forrest School. My Suzuki class in the morning covered all of Book 2 with some students just starting and others almost finished with the book. The age range was from 6 to 12. The first volume of the *Fiddlers’ Philharmonic* series, *Basic Fiddlers’ Philharmonic*, is the ideal level for this group. I only had four classes with the small group of 6 students, so I first concentrated on teaching the tunes by rote. Then I showed them different techniques for embellishing the tune. They learned a slide from low second finger to high second finger and then from low first finger to high first finger. We practiced different places in the tune where these slides could be added. Then we added open drone string double stops, which they loved. Finally, they learned the “Shave and a Haircut” tag and how to transpose it from G Major to D Major by moving from D string to A string. With more time and practice these embellishment techniques can lead to improvising.

Fiddle tunes have been great motivators for my private students through the years. Kearton’s

workshop gave me new ideas for incorporating traditional music for fun and inspiration into ensembles that include all ages and abilities.

Cindy Swiss is the Past President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter. She has written articles on fiddling in previous issues of Stringendo. Read her bio on our website: www.asta.net/officers.php

WABASH CANNONBALL

AMERICAN TRADITIONAL



WABASH KLEZMERBALL

AMERICAN TRADITIONAL



How to Make Performance Anxiety Your Ally

by Dr. Noa Kageyama

Think back to your last big audition or performance. What do you remember feeling, moments (or sometimes days!) before you walked out on stage? Heart pounding in your chest? Cold, clammy hands? Difficulty concentrating? Racing thoughts? Feeling panicky? Dread?

Of course! This is the stress response, otherwise known as the “fight-or-flight” response. Anytime we are in a new or challenging situation, an alarm goes off in our body that sets into motion a complex chain reaction of stress hormones, resulting in virtually instantaneous changes to our physical, mental, and emotional state.

Often, we are led to believe that being “nervous” is a bad thing. I remember being asked even as a young Suzuki student if I got nervous. To be honest, I don’t know that I really thought about it much until people began asking me, at which point I started to get more nervous. Over the years, I tried everything I could to get rid of the unpleasant feelings associated with performance anxiety. I tried eating bananas, drinking chamomile tea, imagining the audience in their underwear, sleep deprivation, practicing more, taking various supplements, and even trying to convince myself that it didn’t matter how I played. None of this, of course, took the anxiety away or did much to help me perform any better.

When I was a Masters student at Juilliard, I took a performance enhancement class taught not by a world-famous concert artist but by an Olympic sport psychologist who had probably never picked up a violin in his life. What I learned that semester changed how I performed, how I *felt* about performing, and even how I practiced.

Above all, I learned that anxiety itself is not the problem. The problem is that most of us have never learned how to use adrenaline to our *advantage*. By telling ourselves and our students to “just relax,” we are actually doing each other a disservice by implicitly confirming that the anxiety we feel is bad and to be feared. I soon learned to welcome the rush of adrenaline, to use that energy to power my

performances, and to perform with more freedom, conviction, and confidence than I ever imagined possible.

The big question, of course, is how do you transform anxiety from a liability to an advantage? Before we talk about this, we first need to understand some basics about what happens to our mind under stress.

Left Brain vs. Right Brain

Our brains consist of many different structures but can be thought of as being comprised of two basic regions—the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere. Admittedly, it is an oversimplification of the immense complexity of our brain to imply that the left and right hemispheres are completely independent of one another, but this is a very effective model when it comes to understanding optimal mental states for performance.

Left brain thinking is associated with words, numbers, logic, analysis, criticism, rules, details, planning, and judgment. Conversely, right brain thinking is associated with sounds, images, patterns, kinesthetic or sensory input, emotions, the “big picture,” free association, and creativity.

Based on this information, which mode of thinking seems most conducive to effective practicing? Did you say left brain? Correct! Now, which seems most conducive to dynamic, inspired, and artistic performances? Right brain, exactly! Unfortunately, we often do the opposite. In the practice room, we have a tendency to practice somewhat mindlessly, merely repeating passages over and over until they sound better, making corrections, but doing so almost unconsciously. However, as soon as we walk on stage, we tend to get flooded by left brain over-analytical thinking, criticism, excessive planning, and so on, which only serves to lead to a pre-occupation with technical details and an inability to play as freely and as automatically as we are capable of doing. Are you familiar with the phrase “paralysis by analysis?” This is exactly what happens when we know that our every move and sound is under close

scrutiny by others. The opposite of this paralyzed state is often referred to as “flow” or “the zone,” where everything just seems to “click” into place and our playing is easy, free, and effortless.

How do we make the shift from left brain thinking to right brain thinking and get into “the zone?” One very powerful solution is called Centering.

Centering

Centering is what sport psychologists call a pre-performance routine. It was designed in the 1970’s by the renowned sport psychologist Dr. Robert Nideffer and adapted for performing artists by Olympic sport psychologist Dr. Don Greene. Centering is a highly effective means of (a) channeling your nerves productively and (b) directing your focus even in extreme situations. Once mastered, it is very quick and highly effective, and will ensure that you begin each performance with a bang (in a good way)!

There are seven steps, each specifically designed to move you progressively closer to right brain quiet, focus, and poise, and take you further away from left brain fears, doubts, and self-criticism.

Step 1: Pick Your Focal Point

Select a fixed point in the distance, somewhere that feels comfortable. This point could be on your stand, the ground in front of you, or on the back row of the hall, but wherever it is, ensure that your focal point is below eye level. Why below eye level?

Quick, multiply 36 x 19 in your head. Where did your eyes go? If you are like most, your eyes will have travelled upwards. This is an indicator that you are engaging in left brain thought. Don’t tempt your brain to engage in left brain thinking by looking up.

Also, if you allow your eyes to scan the room, you will have a tendency to take in too much task-irrelevant data (such as your mother’s facial expression, the bright green dress that the lady in row 15 is wearing, the number of empty seats, etc.) which jumpstart left brain thinking and analysis.

Step 2: Form Your Clear Intention

A clear intention is, in essence, a specific goal statement. What do you intend to do when you step out on stage? How exactly do you intend to sound? What, precisely, do you intend to communicate to the audience?

Use assertive, declarative language, such as “I am going to perform brilliantly, with pure tone and great dynamic variety,” as opposed to “I hope to play well.”

Do not use the word “don’t.” Doing so will only put the negative picture in your head and generate fears and doubt. For instance, when you say to yourself “Don’t miss the high note,” what’s the first image that pops into your mind? Missing the high note, right? What image pops into your mind when you tell yourself: “Nail the high note?” Learn to focus on what you want, not on what you don’t want.

Often, we get on stage and go into auto-pilot mode, without taking a moment to form a clear picture of how we intend to start the piece, what we intend to do with the music, and what we wish to convey to the listener. Years ago, I spent a few weeks receiving chamber music coachings from Isaac Stern, Leon Fleisher, and others, where we literally spent hours working on just the first couple lines of the Schubert B \flat Piano Trio. In three weeks of daily coachings, we only got through the first two movements—and not even the complete movements at that! The gist of what they continually asked us was “What are you trying to say?” Fleisher was insistent on our being able to explain our musical intentions with words. He said that if we couldn’t even articulate our musical vision through language, how could we ever hope to communicate our ideas to an audience through music? I believe he’s right. Make sure you have a clear vision of what you intend to do before doing it.

Step 3: Breathe Mindfully

One of the most powerful techniques for reversing the stress response involves learning how to breathe diaphragmatically. When stressed, our bodies have a tendency to revert to shallow, rapid, chest breathing. Doing so keeps us in fight or flight mode. Observe a baby breathing, and notice how their tummy expands outwards as they inhale, and sinks back in as they exhale. Watch an older child or adult breathe when they sleep, and you will observe the same phenomenon. Diaphragmatic breathing is the most biomechanically efficient way to breathe, and, furthermore, is conducive to activating what’s called the parasympathetic nervous system response, which is our body’s antidote for the fight-or-flight state. When stressed, your body will revert to chest breathing, but if you can switch over to

diaphragmatic breathing instead, you will be able to take that nasty “edge” off of your nerves.

As you inhale through your nose and exhale out your mouth, it is important to pay close attention to the process of breathing. In other words, what does your breathing sound like? What does the air feel like as it passes through your nose, and out your mouth—is it cold, warm, dry, humid? Turn your focus inward and see what you notice. The key here is to direct your attention inward.

Step 4: Scan and Release Excess Tension

One of the most detrimental consequences of performance stress is muscle tension. As our thinking becomes more negative, our muscles tend to get tighter and less facile. And not just any muscles but often the ones that we most need control over! These are your key muscles—for string players it is often the fingers and thumb, arms, and shoulders that become more rigid, leading to missed shifts, squeaks, shaky bow arm, and so on.

Scan your muscles from head to toe as you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, one muscle group at a time, releasing tension on the exhale. There is a short video clip on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRy5XrpuVcQ>) which illustrates an exercise that tests your ability to truly relax your muscles on command.

If you develop a more acute awareness of muscle tension even in the practice room, and are able to control the degree of tension you experience in your playing, you will be able to retain much of this ability during a performance and will feel much more in control.

Step 5: Find Your Center

Are you familiar with the martial arts concept of *ki* or *chi*? In Eastern philosophy, *chi* is described as being one’s “life force” or energy. There is a specific location in our body where the energy tends to congregate, which is essentially our center of gravity. If you have ever observed the movements of a great martial arts master or even some athletes or dancers, you will notice a presence, grace, and balance about them regardless of their size or physical dimensions.

I was talking about Centering with the concertmaster of a major orchestra, who remarked that indeed, the

great artists and conductors of previous generations often did have a much more powerful and grounded on-stage presence that one doesn’t often see in more contemporary artists.

Here is how you can find your center.

- (a) Stand up, feet slightly wider than shoulders.
- (b) Imagine that there is an invisible hula hoop around your hips, and you are going to begin rotating your hips in a circle.
- (c) With each revolution of your hips, imagine that the hula hoop begins to shrink, so your hips begin rotating in correspondingly smaller and smaller circles.
- (d) At some point, the hula hoop becomes so small that it is inside of you, and at this point your hips are no longer rotating.
- (e) However, continue to feel the hula hoop spinning inside of you and shrinking ever smaller, until it gets down to the size of a pea.
- (f) Feel that point, and then drop it down a couple inches.
- (g) Congratulations! You just found your center. Take a few moments to stay connected to your center, and to imagine that there is a powerful magnetic connection between your center and the very core of the earth. Feel how that magnetic attraction almost pulls you into the ground, stabilizing you almost like the roots of a large tree.

Not only is the feeling of being centered a very calming and reassuring one but the mere act of searching for you center will quiet your left brain activity.

Step 6: Repeat Your Process Cue

There is a tendency when stressed to hyperfocus on minute details. This may be highly desirable in the practice room, but it can be paralyzing on-stage. The solution is to focus on a right-brain process cue, in essence, a reminder of what it sounds, feels, or looks like to produce the exact sounds you want.

There are two possible ways to do this. One, you could brainstorm and experiment with words that cue up the sound/feeling/images of producing the beautiful sound, clean articulation, or solid intonation that you wish to produce. Examples of such words are “smooth” bowing, “light” fingers, “even” shifts, “fluid,” “powerful,” “calm,” or “easy.” I found that

the word “lightness” was all I needed to remind myself what it felt like to have wonderfully light and free fingers that were capable of shifting and playing complex passages with ease, instead of reverting to my habit of clenching and pressing too hard with my left hand when under pressure. It’s not the word that is important but the resultant mental sound/feeling/image of performing exactly the way you want to that is key.

Thus, a second way to do Step 6 is to avoid using words altogether and merely hear, feel, or see yourself performing exactly as you wish.

Step 7: Direct Your Energy

By the time you have gotten to this step, you will have made the shift into a quieter and more focused mental state conducive to performing your best. You will have taken the edge off of your nerves, and in this last step, you will channel the remaining energy into a dynamic and inspired performance. This is how you use the energy instead of trying to get rid of it.

Do a quick internal search for all of the energy that you feel in your body and feel it gathering at your center. I often imagined my center and energy being somewhat like those plasma lamps that are sold at stores like The Sharper Image (Google “plasma lamp” if you don’t know what I’m referring to). Now, direct that energy upwards, through your torso and neck, into your head, and blast it out through your eyes or forehead like a laser beam at the focal point you identified in Step 1. Think of this beam as a conduit for your music and the energy that will convey your clear intention to the audience. I always had my focal point in the back row of the hall and imagined that I was projecting my sound on this energy beam all the way to the last row—even if I was playing pianissimo.

This may sound a little hokey to some, but the energy is real. Have you ever met someone incredibly intense, who perhaps invades your personal space a bit, and looks at you so intensely that you feel uncomfortable and almost feel that they can see into your head and read your thoughts? That’s the same sort of energy I am talking about. Instead of trying to get rid of the energy adrenaline provides by relaxing or taking beta blockers, you can learn to use it, channel it into your performance, and take your playing to a whole new level!

When you first try to Center, it may take several minutes to go through all of the steps. If you practice this for 10–15 minutes per day, however, and stick with it, you will begin to notice a difference within a week or two. Some notice a difference within days. The key, as with anything else, is consistency and persistence.

Many, if not all, of these elements can be shared with even the very youngest students, whether they get nervous before performances or not—not as a means to reduce anxiety but as a way to improve the focus and clarity of musical intentions. Many of Centering’s aspects can even be tremendously helpful in practice sessions to ensure that one remains focused on the task at hand.

With a little time and practice, I’m certain that Centering will change your approach to performing and practicing, just as it did for me and the many others who have learned this powerful process.



For more detailed information about Centering or tips and strategies for incorporating it into your teaching and performance/audition/competition preparation, email Dr. Kageyama at drkageyama@promindcoaching.com. Dr. Kageyama, a former violinist with a Masters from Juilliard, has a Ph.D. in psychology from Indiana University with a specialization in performance psychology.

(Ed. note: See a photo of Dr. Kageyama on the following page.)





*Photos top to bottom:
2009 Starling-DeLay Symposium on Violin Studies.*

*Brian Lewis and the Young Artists.
Noa Kageyama, Cathy Stewart, and Don Greene.*

Photo credits: Nan Melville

2009 Starling-DeLay Symposium on Violin Studies

by Cathy Stewart, President-elect, MD/DC Chapter

I was delighted and honored to attend the fifth bi-annual Starling-DeLay Symposium on Violin Studies, which was held May 26 -30, 2009, at the Juilliard School in New York. The Symposium celebrates the legacy of learning fostered by the late Dorothy DeLay and is committed to continuing Ms. DeLay's vision for thoughtful, inspired, and dedicated teaching. **Brian Lewis, Artistic Director**, is a former DeLay student and teaching assistant. **Rob Ross**, from the Juilliard School, is the **Administrative Director**.

This is the second Starling-DeLay Symposium I have attended, and I hope to attend many more. I think many people are intimidated to apply to attend the Starling-DeLay Symposium. I know I was in 2007. Not only do they require a résumé with the application (am I good enough to be accepted?), you need to take your violin! Did that mean we would play at Juilliard? Yikes! Plus, going to the Symposium would be expensive. Would it be worth it? I can answer that question with a resounding *yes!*

Because many people who play other instruments or who are not even teachers would like to attend the Symposium, it is necessary to submit a résumé with the application. The résumés are to insure that participants are professional violin teachers. Joseph W. Polisi, President of Juilliard, wrote in his greeting to the Starling-DeLay participants, "Participation in the Symposium will strengthen your own teaching and the quality of your students' educations for generations to come." I can definitely testify that this is true for me.

Two hundred violinists/violin teachers from 33 states and 17 countries were selected to attend the wonderful master classes, recitals, lectures, and pedagogy sessions. Spaces are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is important to get the application in early. Tuition to the program (\$400) is subsidized by the Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation. Housing is available in the Juilliard dorms, \$425 for six nights, which makes the five-day event affordable. The Juilliard cafeteria food is inexpensive, delicious, and convenient. The cafeteria is also a great place to talk about all the new ideas with friends, old and new.

Over 100 students applied and auditioned to be Young Artists at the symposium. Nine young violinists were selected. Their ages ranged from 12–23 and they came from Austria, Germany, Turkey, Korea, and the United States. The level of playing was incredibly high. Although most of us don't teach students at this level, we can all benefit from exploring ideas on how to work with and teach the exceptional young violinist. All the students performed in two master classes and an evening recital.

There were four master class teachers: **Paul Kantor**, who is the Eleanor H. Biggs Memorial Distinguished Professor of Violin at the Cleveland Institute of Music; **Joel Smirnoff**, President of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and first violinist of the Juilliard Quartet; **David Kim**, Concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra; and **Chee-Yun Kim**, Concert Artist and Artist-In-Residence and Professor of Violin at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

The master classes started with **Paul Kantor**, who considers each student a "future colleague" and affords them due respect. Mr. Kantor had each student explore the music artistically and technically. He never would tell students what to do; he always made them figure it out for themselves. "Always ask yourself *why* when something isn't working," he said. He called the practice room a "laboratory of discovery. We are there not to repeat, but to discover." He encouraged the students to make bad sounds, take risks, and make mistakes because "we have to experiment or we can't discover." I find myself thinking about the lessons I watched with Mr. Kantor when I am teaching, and I am experimenting more myself.

Joel Smirnoff was a history major at college. He brought that perspective to his master class, always providing some anecdote or tidbit about the composer. He also shared stories about performers such as David Oistrakh, and directed the performers to recordings he enjoys. He emphasized expressive playing, as well as always knowing a piece and its orchestration harmonically.

The master class by **David Kim** was extraordinary. All nine of the Young Artists played an orchestral excerpt for Mr. Kim, who has incredibly high standards, knows exactly what he wants to hear, and was very demanding of the students. He is an exceptionally warm and kind teacher, and every player sounded much better at the end of his or her lesson. Mr. Kim shared with us all the “behind the screen” secrets of an orchestra audition. For example, be sure to not play sharp—the oboe player on the committee will veto you. Too much body motion or foot tapping will knock you out of the final round. Would orchestra members want to sit with you for the next 35 years, or would you drive them nuts? Some other hints he shared were to have a spark—you can win an audition on one excerpt. Show you are fearless when you play, and sound like you have played the pieces in orchestra before. You have to convince the committee that they need you and that you will fit in. I came away from his class with a better understanding of the audition process and how to prepare students for auditions.

Chee-Yun Kim focused on communication with the audience. She always asked the students what they were feeling in the music, and she inspired them to create pictures in their minds. She invited them to experiment with technique to make a line mysterious or dramatic and suggested they have a story. She also shared tips from her performances, such as playing softer at a dress rehearsal with an orchestra than she would in a performance, so the orchestra has to listen and pay attention and will not cover her in the performance.

Itzhak Perlman presented a studio class of six of his students. His topic was “Musical Choices.” He always wants his students to be thinking when they play and to be able to decide how they want to play a piece and not to be a prisoner of interpretation. So he played an audience participation game. His student would perform a piece, and then the audience would yell out ways to play it differently. Some examples for the Beethoven Concerto were “angry,” and “old and tired.” The students rose to the challenge no matter how ridiculous the directions sometimes were. They also had to tell Mr. Perlman what they would have to do technically to create the change, whether it be slower vibrato, faster vibrato, faster bow speed, more bow, etc.

In the question-and-answer time after the class, Mr. Perlman gave suggestions for studio teachers and

their students. He recommends practicing one hour of scales daily if a student is practicing three to four hours. Other advice included: Decide on fingerings and bowings for concertos and do not change them; always think about everything you are playing, and have a point of view; make beautiful sounds; be careful to have students study pieces that aren’t too difficult and that they can learn quickly. These are suggestions teachers can use at all levels, and that I have taken back to my studio.

In the Baroque Performance Practice class, given by **Monica Huggett**, artistic director of The Juilliard School’s Historical Performance Program, we played two movements of J.S. Bach’s Partita in E Major for Unaccompanied Violin. The first movement was recycled in Cantata No. 120, in D Major, and anyone who chose to play the accompaniment parts had to transpose the part down a step. The resulting cacophony seemed to make everyone relax about playing in a room with 100 other violinists. Especially enjoyable was working on J.S. Bach’s Loure, which came alive under Ms. Huggett’s instruction.

Brian Lewis, Starling-DeLay Artistic Director and Holder of the David and Mary Winton Green Chair in String Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Texas at Austin, shared his insights on the Barber Violin Concerto with us. He provided historical background on Samuel Barber, as well as the circumstances that inspired him to write the concerto and its first performance. He also shared many memories of his studies with Dorothy DeLay. Through Mr. Lewis even those of us that were not fortunate enough to experience Miss DeLay ourselves are part of the DeLay tradition. Mr. Lewis previewed the concerto, showing us where tricky rhythmic or technical parts might need attention. We played through the concerto with piano accompaniment, convinced that even the last movement could be easily conquered. I came away from Mr. Lewis’ class inspired by his positive attitude and radiant personality.

The lecture sessions featured **Robert Duke**, Director of the Center for Music Learning at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Duke’s topic was the Cognitive Neuroscience of Learning. He is an experienced teacher who has taught in middle schools and understands “real learning is a mess,” that “learning means change.” The main point of his lecture was to identify and come up with a solution

for why people don't want to practice. "They don't see accomplishment for the time they invest," he explained. He advocates that every day students need to play something beautifully, and learners need to have a sense of what they are trying to do. He also feels too much time is spent not getting to "the good stuff," the playing of music beautifully. Like Mr. Perlman, Dr. Duke recommends having students play music they can play beautifully. Teachers should select repertoire at all levels that can be learned quickly and performed musically, with students being involved in the music-making decisions. In Dr. Duke's lectures, I felt challenged to find the outstanding teacher I am capable of being.

Dr. Don Greene and **Dr. Noa Kageyama** presented a lecture called "Performing Your Best When It Really Counts." Dr. Greene works with Police SWAT Officers, Olympic and professional athletes, and musicians. Dr. Kageyama, a former violinist with a Masters from Juilliard, has a Ph.D. in psychology from Indiana University with a specialization in performance psychology. We all tried their method of reducing performance anxiety and were thrilled with the results. Dr. Kageyama has graciously written an article for *Stringendo* that details their methods. It appears on page 12 in this issue.

The faculty recitals were held in Paul Hall, a small recital hall at Juilliard. What a wonderful venue to hear such stellar artists! **Joel Smirnoff** and **Joan Kwuon** presented a joint recital that featured works by Mozart, Enesco, and Schubert, as well as charming duets by Telemann and Moszkowski. Remember at the beginning of the article that I said people want to come to the Symposium that aren't violinists? Apparently, jazz legend **Tony Bennett**, who is a friend of Joel Smirnoff, wanted to come to the Symposium. In order to attend, he had to "sing for his supper," and he joined Ms. Kwuon and Mr. Smirnoff in a surprise encore of "Sophisticated Lady." When Tony Bennett sang in such an intimate setting, we all became part of the song. That was a rare, perfect moment that I will always remember.

Chee-Yun Kim closed the performances with an ambitious recital that included the Bach Chaconne and Saint-Saens' "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso." With her flawless intonation, beautiful sound and interesting musical ideas, she exemplified Miss DeLay's legacy.

From the opening tea to the closing reception, I was inspired by all the great music, teaching, and new ideas at the Starling-DeLay Violin Symposium. I saw old friends, made many new friends, and opened my mind. My students are benefiting from my refreshed outlook and new knowledge. I am grateful to have been included in the symposium and look forward to participating in 2011. I hope more people from ASTA MD/DC Chapter will participate in this inspiring event. And remember, it is a tax deduction!



Friday Morning Music Club High School Competition for Strings

In memory of Gus Johansen

Monday, (school holiday) November, 2, 2009

11:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Awards:

First Prize \$700

Second Prize \$500

Third Prize \$300

The first-prize winner will perform in a concert on Friday, November 27, 2009, at 2 P.M. in Strathmore Mansion Hall. Other prizewinners will perform at FMMC concerts later in the year. Winners will receive a one-year membership in the Student Division of the Friday Morning Music Club.

Eligibility:

Students currently enrolled in Grades 9–12 who play violin, viola, cello, or bass.

Application deadline: Postmarked on or before Wednesday, October 14, 2009.

Application fee: \$30.

All information is online at: www.fmmc.org (Local Student Competitions)

Or contact Suzanne Richardson: highschoolstrings@fmmc.org

Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne* Unmasked

by Sachiko Murasugi

In 1919, Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes commissioned Stravinsky to write the music for a ballet based on a Commedia Dell'Arte theme. The ballet centered on a masked comic character, Pulcinella, whose name literally means "little chicken." He was a mischievous and often cruel figure who donned disguises, picked fights, and played pranks on unwitting people. A closer look at the music, however, reveals that Pulcinella is not the only one playing tricks in this work.

The ballet is based on a story called *The Four Pulcinellas* that was taken from a Neapolitan manuscript dating from 1700. It is aptly named because at one point in the story, four Pulcinellas appear on stage: three men disguised as the main character, as well as the real one himself. Much confusion ensues, but in the end true identities are disclosed, estranged couples are reunited, and all ends happily as the roguish Pulcinella sets things right.

When Diaghilev commissioned Stravinsky to write the music, he gave him 34 manuscripts of various chamber music, keyboard, and vocal works, all of which were believed to be written by Giovanni B. Pergolesi. However, since that time research has shown that the music was actually written by five different composers.¹ Besides Pergolesi, they are Domenico Gallo, Count Van Wassenaar, Alessandro Parisotti, and Carlo Monza. In fact, of the 34 manuscripts that Diaghilev gave Stravinsky, only 10 pieces are authentic. This is not surprising, considering that publishers of that time often credited music by lesser known composers to more well known composers in an attempt to increase sales. This was especially true for Pergolesi, who died when he was only 26 but who received much posthumous popularity and fame.

Analogous to the storyline, Stravinsky displays a mischievous streak in the music. Initially, Diaghilev commissioned Stravinsky to arrange and orchestrate the music from the manuscripts that he gave him. However, Stravinsky's resulting work was very different from what Diaghilev had intended and expected. Although the first movement of the ballet is

much like a straightforward orchestration with a few subtle changes, as the piece continues, Stravinsky's influence over the "arrangement" becomes more evident. Indeed, in some places echoes of *Rite of Spring* and *L'Histoire du Soldat* are quite apparent. By the last movement of the ballet, the music displays much more of Stravinsky's style than that of the original composer whose music Stravinsky was initially engaged to arrange. The gradual disclosure of Stravinsky's hand in the music parallels the way disguises and true identities are divulged in the story.

From the ballet, Stravinsky extrapolated two transcriptions called *Suite Italienne*—a violin and piano version and a cello and piano version—in addition to an orchestral suite and a second violin and piano transcription. *Suite Italienne* is a charismatic and accessible addition to both the violin and cello repertoire. In the piece Stravinsky juxtaposes elements of twentieth century dissonance, syncopated rhythms, and irregular phrasing with harmonious melodies from the eighteenth century galant style, creating a piece that is at once charming and compelling. Hopefully, knowing the history and stories behind the piece will add an appealing dimension to the work and spark the interest of violinists and cellists to examine the work with fresh, unmasked eyes and ears.



¹ Brook, Barry S. "Stravinsky's Pulcinella: The 'Pergolesi' Sources." In *Musiques, Signes, Images*, edited by Joel-Marie Fauquet, 41–66. Genève: Editions Minkoff, 1988.

Sachi Murasugi is one of the Eastern Shore Representatives for ASTA MD/DC Chapter. Read her bio online at: www.asta.net/officers.php



The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Practical Examinations

by Jean Provine

I had just moved to England for what turned out to be the beginning of a 23-year stay, and was teaching my first violin pupil, a boy of 11 coming from a very good county school program. He seemed well set up for the most part and very musically knowledgeable. “I want to do my Grade 5 and need some help with the pieces,” he informed me. “Your what?” I replied. I had never heard of music exams or the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music¹, but I soon found their exams to be an indispensable part of teaching music in the U.K. The first question asked of any child studying an instrument is, “What grade are you?” The exams are also administered on a large scale in many other countries, particularly in Southeast Asia and to some extent in the United States. The examiners are rigorously trained, there are teacher courses to help prepare the current exam material, and there are many publications pertaining to the exams. A similar exam system is organized by the Trinity College of Music in London, but the ABRSM exams are the most extensively used in the U.K. and worldwide. There are several types of exams—Practical, Musicianship, Theory, Jazz, and Diploma—but I will concentrate here on the Practical Exam, which is similar to our own ASTACAP (Certificate Advancement Program) examination.

Overview of the ABRSM examination

The Practical Exam is offered three times a year and is open to players of most instruments and singers to assess their playing and musical knowledge. Normally, the teacher, who has a registration number, enters her pupils: specifying the grade, requesting the period and location, and paying the fees. The ABRSM then assigns the exam date, time, and place. There is a local representative who deals with absentees and problems of swapping times and places if need be.

The Practical Exams, Grades 1–8 consist of four sections:

1. Three pieces—the candidate chooses from each

list of three published for that year. (30 points each, 20 to pass)

2. Scales (21 points, 14 to pass)

3. Sight reading (21 points, 14 to pass)

4. Aural tests (18 points, 12 to pass)

Grading

Out of 150 possible points, a mark from 130 upwards is a “Distinction,” 120–129 is a “Merit,” and 100–119 is a “Pass.” All students receive a critique sheet with comments and a number corresponding to each of the above areas. A student can fail in individual areas but will pass as long as the total is 100 or more. Needless to say, exam scores are a great source of agony and ecstasy, pride, bragging, and disillusionment: all the good and bad associated with exams!

Examiners

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this system is the thoroughness and consistency of the training the examiners receive. They are expected to be familiar with the pieces for virtually every instrument and to be reasonably accomplished keyboard players to administer the aural tests. So precise is their training that I could, after hearing just a few sessions with entering pupils, accurately predict within a 5-point range the mark they would receive! Strangely, the fact that examiners are not necessarily string players is rarely a problem. They know when tone is faulty and what causes the problem, can see if the bow is straight, understand the basic posture, and are good musicians. Only occasionally did I think one may have graded a bit leniently or harshly due to not understanding the difficulty of a particular passage for the level.

Requirements in more detail

1. The required pieces are selected from lists that change every two years. There are three categories: Baroque, Classical/Romantic, and Contemporary with three pieces in each. One piece from each category must be selected. The third category also has an alternate choice, which is either another

piece or an Etude. Below Grade 3 there are a lot of selections from method books. Typical violin Grade 5 pieces are Bach/Gounod's "Ave Maria," Elgar's "Salut d'amour," Faure's "Sicilienne," and movements from Baroque sonatas. By Grade 7 there are movements from Beethoven and Mozart sonatas and some easier show pieces by Wieniawski. Typical Grade 8 selections might be a movement from the unaccompanied Bach Sonatas and Partitas, a movement of a romantic sonata such as Franck, a Mozart Concerto movement, Bloch's "Nigun," Monti's "Czardas," or Gershwin/Heifetz arrangements. The contemporary category tends to include a lot of pieces by English and eastern European composers, such as Martinu, and occasionally something resembling jazz. Memorization is not required. Major romantic concerto movements are conspicuously absent, perhaps because of their length. Over the years these lists introduced me to some real gems of overlooked music and composers!

2. Scales and Arpeggios: The prescribed rhythm up to Grade 5 is quarter note for the tonic, eighths for the others. Separate bow triplets are also required beginning with Grade 6. Slurs, length, and speed gradually increase with the level. The examiner can choose which bowing, separate or slurred, he would like to hear and typically changes them for each scale requested. The arpeggio for each scale is always required in triplet meter. In general students are asked to play in more advanced keys earlier in their development than I have seen here. Minor scales, chromatics, and even dominant 7ths (which the examiner requests either by asking for the starting note or by the key!) appear as early as Grade 3, diminished 7ths at Grade 5. Scales in 6ths, 8ves, and 3rds are introduced in Grades 6, 7, and 8 respectively. Scales requirements for each instrument are published by the ABRSM in very inexpensive books.

3. Sight reading: The sight reading for each grade can be in any of the keys examined in the scale portion of the exam. Compound time and counting in half notes is introduced in Grades 2/3. Some third position also starts at the Grade 3 level, dotted 8ths and ties about Grade 4. Grades 6 and upwards will have mixed positions up to fourth or fifth. To earn a high mark, tempo markings and dynamics should be observed as well. The sight reading is usually the

most dreaded part of the exam for pupils. Struggling to the bitter end without losing the beat is the goal for most! To help in this area, the ABRSM publishes a Speciman Sight Reading book and there are several other publications to help train this skill.²

4. Aural Tests: These are outlined in an ABRSM publication, and the one I possess may be a little out of date, but basically rhythm, pitch, general musicianship and knowledge of musical terms are tested. For example, in the early grades, to test feeling of pulse, students pick up the beat of a played example and determine the time signature. As a pitch test, they must sing back a short phrase, recognize and describe a melodic change when a phrase is repeated, and distinguish major from minor. Until the mid 1980s they also had to recognize and sing intervals, which I thought was particularly useful for string players. General knowledge is examined by asking students to identify and use Italian terms to describe tempo changes, dynamics, and style in a played example. In the upper grades they must be able to verbally "notate" a rhythm heard in an example, identify cadences as perfect, imperfect, or deceptive, and describe where the example has modulated after being given the home key, as well as identify the period of an example and give a probable composer! There is a great deal of general knowledge and theory required to do these tests well, and usually preparation requires lessons separate from the usual lesson time. Also worth mentioning is that Grade 6, 7, and 8 entries must be accompanied by proof that the student has passed the ABRSM grade 5 Theory Exam, which includes knowing treble and bass clefs well, understanding the C clef, knowing key signatures for all major and minor keys, writing major and minor chords and their inversions, writing I, IV, and V chords in a key, and defining a slew of Italian terms!

Comparison to the ASTACAP exam³ and conclusions

So how do the ABRSM exams compare with our own ASTACAP examinations? The ASTACAP exams were created in 1998 under the leadership of Lya Stern, then ASTA MD/DC Chapter President and current exam Chair. They are the American version of the ABRSM practical exams (which are only available here on a very limited basis) and other graded programs, and are only for string players.

Initially offered exclusively in Maryland and the District, ASTACAP has now been introduced in several other states, and in 2007 was adopted by ASTA and established as a national level program. The exams are organized statewide at the initiation of members. For the most part ASTACAP exams are like the ABRSM exams: they require pieces, etudes, scales, and sight-reading, and students receive a critique sheet and certificate. Rather than using a number grading system, the student simply receives a marking of Very Good, Satisfactory, or Needs Work (V, S or N). A marking of V or S indicates a pass, but N indicates that area must be taken again to pass the grade. In keeping with American tradition and expectations, ASTACAP is a more flexible program: the repertoire is merely suggested, but not specified. The table below outlines the major differences between the two.

In general it could be said that the ASTACAP places more emphasis on instrumental mastery and less on theoretical and aural skills. At this point there is no formal examiner training for ASTACAP; examiners are chosen based on teaching experience and peer recognition and must be players and teachers of the instrument they examine. Training courses designed to help teachers prepare students are being discussed in Maryland. ASTA does not sell publications pertaining to the ASTACAP.

Conclusions

When I moved back to the U.S., I was very happy to discover the ASTACAP program and have enjoyed preparing my students for it. Whatever examination students take, it will give them and their teachers strong motivation and direction and a feeling of accomplishment when passed. For students who do not have a regular opportunity to perform or who don't like being in direct competition with others, an exam provides a less pressured venue for performance as well as a chance to get an outside opinion of their skills.

Exams also help to keep the learning processes of technique, theory, musicianship, and sight-reading on par so that one area is not neglected. Certainly, we all know how hard it is to interest students in theory or sight-reading, unless something like an exam requires that they learn it—and we know how valuable those skills are for their deeper understanding of music.

In the U.K., since the exams are ubiquitous, it is normal to ask for a student's grade level on application forms for orchestras, music camps, and any musical activity where level needs to be assessed. In some cases the organization may dispense entirely with a real audition, or it may use the exam level as a prerequisite for audition.

	ABRSM Preparatory test plus 8 levels	ASTACAP Foundation plus 10 levels
Pieces	Three. One from each list of three. Sonata movements common on upper grades. No major concerto movement. Memorization not required.	<i>One, two, or three. Pieces are suggested but any of similar level is accepted. Fast concerto movement required in upper grades, unaccompanied Bach in Level 9. Must be memorized.</i>
Etude	None. May be chosen as alternative to one piece.	<i>One in upper levels. Memorization not required.</i>
Scales	Major, both minors, tonic arpeggios. 3 8ve chromatics. Dominant and diminished 7ths, 6ths, 3rds, 8ves. Two bowings.	<i>Choice of Major, choice of minors; arpeggios of the tonic and subdominant chord. Flesch arpeggio series, 3rds and 8ves in highest levels. Two and three octave chromatic G. Choice of bowing.</i>
Sight-reading	Keys match the required scales. Attention to dynamics, tempo changes expected.	<i>Somewhat less difficult than the ABRSM for the given level. None at earlier levels.</i>
Theory	ABRSM Grade 5 required for Practical exams 6, 7, and 8.	<i>No requirement.</i>
Aural	Tests pitch, rhythm, and knowledge of musical terms, style, composers.	<i>None</i>

For teachers, the pieces in the exam books, which change every two years, are a marvelous source of teaching materials. Although certainly not the intent of the ABRSM, unfortunately, some teachers push their students from one exam to the next using nothing but these pieces, leaving their technical skills lacking.

It is certainly true that the level of general musicianship and theoretical knowledge required for the ABRSM exams, especially on the upper levels, is often difficult for a studio teacher to cover in a once-a-week lesson. For example, how many of us have time to teach our students to pinpoint the period of music and name a probable composer after hearing a short excerpt, or to identify cadences and name chords or keys when a piece modulates? Is all this knowledge necessary when students can enjoy music just by playing? My years of living in Europe have made me sure of one thing: in general, the population there is much more knowledgeable about and respectful toward classical music and the arts. While there are undoubtedly many reasons for this, I think that the sort of musical education embodied in these exams, which gives the student a broad background with some understanding of music history and compositional techniques, is more likely to produce,

if not a professional musician, then a musically well-rounded amateur player with excellent sight-reading skills, and a person who appreciates, attends and, yes, monetarily supports concerts. I would certainly be in favor of any sort of programs, in exam form or otherwise, that give students this broader background in the areas of music theory, history, and repertoire, and that encourage them to continue their association with and appreciation of music as adults.



- ¹ The Royal Academy of Music, The Royal College of Music, The Royal Northern College of Music, The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. To read more about the ABRSM and these exams, go to www.abrsm.org
- ² Doreen Smith. *Violin Sight-reading, Books 1 and 2*. Oxford University Press.
John Davies and Paul Harris. *Improve Your Sight-reading*. Faber Music.
- ³ My thanks to Lya Stern for her help writing about the ASTACAP examinations. To learn more about ASTACAP, go to <http://www.asta.net/certificateprogram.php>



Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras Trip to Europe

by Laura Epstein

From June 21 to June 28, 2009, 61 members of the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras (MCYO) traveled to Vienna and Prague to learn about music history, perform as an ensemble, and have fun! I can safely say that every single attendee had a truly incredible time. We started our trip in Vienna, where we visited the Schönbrunn Palace. We also walked around St. Stephen's Cathedral, and my group even climbed the spiral! Vienna is also rich with music history. We visited the Haus der Musik where we saw the world's largest drum and "virtually" conducted the Vienna Philharmonic. Though the technology to do that was not very accurate, we were able to attempt to conduct a piece that we were performing that night, the *Radetsky March*. We also toured the Mozart Figaro House and through an audio tour learned much about Mozart's life. We continued to Eisenstadt, Austria, where we toured the beautiful church where Haydn is buried. We also visited the Esterhazy Palace, where Haydn did much of his work. We had two performances

in Austria, both which went very well, though we did not have large audiences because of the rain.

On our way to Prague, we stopped in Český Krumlov, where we had a walking tour of the gorgeous city. The castle there is the second largest in the Czech Republic. Our time in Prague was spent touring the city, including the Jewish Quarter and a castle the size of a small city! We also had our final performance in Prague, at St. Savior Church. The acoustics were incredible: notes continued seconds after we stopped playing. Many Prague locals attended the concert as well. Our repertoire consisted of everything from Schubert to Gershwin. Overall, the trip was a great experience for everyone who attended to learn about and experience music history while also performing.



Laura Epstein, an ASTA member, plays violin with the Philharmonic Orchestra in the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras. This fall, she will be entering her senior year at Walter Johnson High School.



The Lighter Side

Wedding Gig Contract

Dear Client:

Thank you for engaging _____ (insert ensemble's name here).

Because we know better than you, please, don't tell us what to do, play, wear, or bring. Please, just simply pay us what we ask, and please forgo all the tedious nickel-and-diming you always try to get away with. (You know who you are!)

We want four (4) COMFORTABLE chairs; not folding metal chairs, not splintery ones, and not those cane chairs where the seat is about to fall through.

Preferably padded. No, MUST be padded.

We will not play outside, so don't ask.

We want to be fed. Fed well. The same food your 200 guests eat. What's four more meals, really?

We will not eat sandwiches. Especially not sandwiches on white bread.

And we want to eat at a table. Is that too much to ask? We are not "the help" so please do not treat us that poorly!

Before the engagement, please do not call us. Once we have been hired, that's it—you don't need to talk to us for any other reason.

Please do not call other bands trying to compare prices. We all cost the same. Incidentally, we all wear the same clothes, play the same arrangements, and hire the same people, so it really makes no difference.

Do not make requests for music we don't have. It's just way too much of a pain to cater to your tiny needs. Find a new favorite song. No Andrew Lloyd Webber! Period!!

No song will be transposed down a half-step so your cousin Jeannie can sing it during your candle lighting ceremony. She's not a very good singer anyway.

Forget about The Bride Cuts the Cake, The Hokey Pokey, Alley Cat, The Chicken Dance, etc. These are juvenile songs, we are artists, and we will not degrade ourselves. Furthermore, there is no reason for you to act stupid in front of us.

The garter and bouquet are OK, but do not allow children under 18 years of age to participate (or 12 years old in Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi).

Do not allow young children to make requests. The wretched little imps are not as cute as you think they are, and nobody else wants to hear their crummy tunes anyhow.

And finally the answer is no! You can't keep the demo tape. They aren't cheap, you know!

Thank you for using us, and DO call again!

