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President's Message

As I start my duties as your President I can see this will be a time of challenge and growth. My first duty is to help the Chapter become incorporated. The National Office, for our own protection, is requiring all of the state chapters to become incorporated. I have found a wonderful attorney who is helping us pro bono and the process is going well.

I am also organizing the Biennial Competition that will be held at McDonogh in October. Please read the information on the next page and consider entering your students. The winners in the state competition will send a recording to the National Office. Finalists will be selected from these recordings to perform at the National Conference.

The open studio visits will continue! Our Special Events Committee will provide a schedule from willing members. (Find contact information for Special Events Committee members on the Inside Front Cover.) This is a wonderful opportunity to learn successful teaching techniques from our esteemed colleagues. Please make an effort to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

I am very fortunate to have a wonderful board to work with and am looking forward to serving you for the next two years.

Cindy Swiss

New Editor's Message

Actually, I am really the **temporary** editor of *Stringendo*, as I must take over duties as Chapter President in 2008. Lorraine Combs has done a heroic job over the past twelve years as not only editor, but also as commander of layout and design. Lorraine has agreed to continue to do layout and design. Each issue was essentially a one-woman undertaking. Hopefully, the archives of her long and illustrious tenure will be online in the near future so all of us can stop re-inventing our teaching techniques and plunder the riches of past issues instead.

I hope that you enjoy the features in this issue, which include two memoirs, "Notes from a Drop Out," and "Da Capo," and two articles about learning viola with impaired hearing from the point of view of the teacher and student: "Cultivating a Musical Bionic Ear," and "Wendy's Musical Adventures." Also find some captivating reviews of viola music.

ASTA MD/DC is **your** chapter, and *Stringendo* is **your** publication. Please feel free to contribute! I'd love articles about your string program, your private studio, your special projects, interests, and passions. Your expertise and talents can be shared with all around the region, making us more enlightened and effective string teachers. I'm waiting to hear from you!

Dorée Huneven

ASTA MD/DC Chapter Certificate Program for Strings

The next CP Exams will be held in Baltimore at the
McDonogh School

Exam Date: Sunday, February 4, 2007
Application Deadline: January 4, 2007

Application Form is on page 7. Duplicate as needed.

2006 National Solo Competition

Every two years the American String Teachers Association sponsors a solo competition for the students of its members. The first step in the competition is to choose semi-finalists at the state level. There are two categories: Junior and Senior. The Junior Level is for students under the age of 19 as of March 10, 2007 and the Senior Level is for students between the ages of 19 and 25 as of March 10, 2007. You can find the repertoire list at www.astaweb.com and click on National Solo Competition. The state semi-finalists will send an application and a recording to the National Office. The winners will perform at the ASTA National Conference in Detroit March 7–10, 2007. Please contact Cynthia Swiss with any questions: cswiss@mcdonogh.org, or 410-889-8325.

State Solo Competition
October 8, 2006
Burke Center for the Arts
McDonogh School
8600 McDonogh Road, Owings Mills, MD 21117

State Level Prizes
First \$250 – sponsored by Weaver’s Violin Shop and Gailes’ Violin Shop
Second \$150 – sponsored by Music & Arts
Third \$75 – sponsored by Keiffer Violins and Stu’s Music

Please send completed application and a \$35 application fee to:
Cynthia Swiss
4403 Falls Road
Baltimore, MD 21211-1225

Student’s Name _____

Parent’s Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Age as of March 10, 2007 _____ Instrument _____

Teacher’s Name _____
(Must be a current member of ASTA)

Certificate Program for Strings

Report on the 2006 Exams

by Lya Stern

I am pleased to report that our chapter had another successful year of CPS exams. The energy and enthusiasm of the students and their parents on exam day is infectious and exciting to witness. It shows that the teachers have done their jobs in explaining the value and importance of preparing for and taking the CPS exams. The level of playing is improving from year to year—testimony to the hard work of the teachers and the motivational value of the exams.

Most of the students had received a V (Very good) which means they were well prepared for their level. There were many S+ (Satisfactory+), which is also a respectable grade, and there was a larger group of V+ and Honors this year than in the past.

Below is a report on the examinations that took place at three different locations in 2006.

The CPS Exams in Washington, D.C. June 11, 2006

We had a large turnout at our main exam site, the Catholic University School of Music: 150 students from twenty-three studios, the largest number of studios to date at one location.

The following teachers entered students:

Leonid Berkovich, Patricia Braunlich, Julianna Chitwood, Lynne Denig, Margo Guillory, Dorée Huneven, Slavica Ilic, Lawrence Keiffer, Marissa Murphy, Anne Marie Patterson, Mark Pfannschmidt, Jean Provine, Kathy Scarborough, Judy Shapiro, Judy Silverman, Diana Souder, Lya Stern, Matthew Tifford, Kela Veshi, Linping An Welsh, Kat Whitesides, Fred Wilcox, Eleanor Woods.

A majority of the teachers who sent their students are veterans of the program, but we were also happy to welcome new teachers and their students such as:

Leonid Berkovich, Margo Guillory,
Matt Tifford, Kat Whitesides.

The examiners were:

Lorraine Combs, Veronica Jackson,
Dr. Marianne Perkins, Linda Smith,
Cathy Stewart, Margy Wright.

Mark Pfannschmidt provided great help with the data entry and scheduling.

The following teachers went out of their way to bring lunch and snacks to the site:

Pat Braunlich, Dorée Huneven,
Marissa Murphy, Judy Shapiro,
Dianna Souder, Cindy Swiss.

The cost of the food is reimbursed by our chapter. This service is done by rotation, so please be prepared to help out next year if you are asked.

This year we were able to complete the exams in a single day since Catholic University made available to us the main level as well the basement of the music building. Running exams simultaneously in six rooms made things a bit more hectic for some of us in charge, but it reduced the number of hours teachers needed to volunteer, so we plan to do the same in future years.

The CPS Exams in Baltimore February 6, 2006

We had a small but enthusiastic group of nineteen students from five studios. It was the first time for some of these kids and the excitement of the parents and kids was palpable.

Participating teachers were:

Cindy Swiss, Julianna Chitwood, Jean Provine, Andrew Shaud, Klara Berkovich.
The examiner was Dr. Marianne Perkins.

We are grateful to the McDonogh School and the efforts of Cindy Swiss, current MD/DC Chapter President, and orchestra director and instrumental teacher there, for making the site available again this year. Please note that the location has been chosen to make it easier for teachers and students who live in the Baltimore area to participate. So far participation has been small. We invite teachers from the area to take advantage of this opportunity to challenge and motivate their students.

The CPS Exams in Frederick June 9, 2006

Phyllis Freeman, well known violin and viola teacher in the area, has taken it upon herself to offer the CPS exams in a public charter school. The school bears the distinction of being the first charter school established in the state of Maryland, and Phyllis runs it. Phyllis held a fund raising drive and the ASTA MD/DC board voted to support the effort through a \$300 subsidy.

Forty-eight elementary school age charter school students took the exam, on either violin, viola, or cello. The students in this program get two group classes of forty-five minutes each week and they can start in the first grade. There are about eight students per class. This is the fourth year of the program. Phyllis Freeman and Julie Heder teach the violin classes and Caroline Kang teaches cello. Some of these students also take private lessons.

The two examiners, Rebecca Henry and Hilde Singer, wrote glowing reports about the level of preparedness and quality of playing they heard. The success of these students demonstrated that a public school program can produce students that can meet ASTA standards under the right leadership and emphasis. This has set an interesting and valuable precedent, which hopefully will be emulated in other schools.

An additional nine students, who study only privately, also took the exam successfully.

The Certificate Program Examination requires students to prepare several scales, an etude, one to three pieces, and sight-reading. These requirements increase in difficulty over eleven levels, starting with the very elementary and ending with major concertos. Students get a grade along with encouraging and helpful written comments. They also receive a Certificate of Achievement. It is up to the teachers to prepare their students to a standard that assures a successful experience. Out of over a thousand students who have taken the exam in MD/DC, there were only a handful who were invited to retake the portion of the exam that was not satisfactory, sometimes the scales, sometimes the pieces. An overwhelming majority find the experience a good challenge and a stepping stone towards better playing, and they come back every year.

The program is available for violin, viola, and

cello. The bass program is completed but not yet published. We expect it will be available for next year's exams.

All teachers are welcome and encouraged to enter their students. Preparing students for the CPS exams year after year is a great way to energize and guide teachers, who in turn will motivate and inspire students to greater progress and commitment to music.

For a complete description of the program please go to www.asta.net and click on "Certificate Program." Be sure to read "Frequently Asked Questions" as well. You are welcome to address additional questions to me.

Lya Stern, Chair
Certificate Program for Strings
ASTA MD/DC Chapter
lya@asta.net
301-320-2693





ASTA MD/DC Chapter Certificate Program for Strings Application Form

Sunday, February 4, 2007 McDonogh School
Postmark deadline for application: January 4, 2007

Name of student _____ Grade _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Instrument _____ Level _____ Check if appropriate: Level B Comments only Honors

Works to be performed:

1. Title _____ Mvt. _____ Composer _____

2. Title _____ Mvt. _____ Composer _____

3. Title _____ Mvt. _____ Composer _____

4. Etude _____ Composer _____

5. Scales and Arpeggios _____

Name of accompanist _____ (write "no accompanist" if none)

Name of teacher _____ Phone _____

(Note: teacher membership in ASTA is required)

Address _____ E-mail _____

Teacher's preferred time for helping as monitor _____

I understand and agree to abide by the rules governing this event.

Teacher's signature _____

Teachers please duplicate applications as needed, one per student.

Collect all fees and application forms.

Write one check to: ASTA MD/DC Chapter, and send to:

Lya Stern, Certificate Program Chair

7012 Hopewood St.

Bethesda, MD 20817

E-mail: Lya@asta.net

Report from the 2006 ASTA National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

by Cindy Swiss

With over 200 sessions to choose from it was hard to decide which ones to attend. When I did choose, I found I could write an entire article about each one. Therefore, I will just try to cover some highlights.

Easy Steps to Music Literacy

Presenter: Denise Willey
Salt Lake City, Utah

Can you imagine being serenaded by seven siblings ranging in age from three to sixteen? They came onto the stage wearing their best formal wear. The first selection was a Brahms *Hungarian Dance*. Then out came the sombreros for a Mariachi Band arrangement of *The Mexican Hat Dance*.

Finally the lights dimmed and the Phantom of the Opera appeared on the stage with a florescent mask. We were treated to a performance of the famous theme complete with choreography. After this enchanting performance we could not wait to hear their teacher, Denise Willey, speak.

Once her students learn to play all of the Suzuki *Twinkle Variations*, Mrs. Wiley spends part of each lesson on note reading. Note flash cards are used at the piano. Students have the flashcards and some kind of keyboard at home as well. The teacher seats the student at middle C and shows the groups of black keys in twos and threes. The first flash card is D above middle C. The surrounding black keys are the “dog house” and the white key is “doggie D”. The student then plays the D and the piano, plucks the open D string on the violin and sings the D.

As each note is learned at the piano and on the violin a new flash card is added. The students can choose special names for the notes such as friends or pets. For example, the B could be “Betty B”. Open strings are learned first, then first, third and second fingers. As the students practice at home they can start to sing the correct pitch just from the flash card, developing perfect pitch.

When the notes are learned the next set of flash cards is key signatures and finally intervals which

the students sing. Mrs. Willey then times how fast a student can name all the flashcards and gives a prize when they are all identified correctly.

We heard demonstrations of these techniques from her students. The first step to sight reading was to say the time and key signatures out loud. The rhythmic reading was especially impressive. Mrs. Willey recommended a drummer’s book called *The Logical Approach to Rhythmic Notation* by Phil Perkins. She also recommended *I Can Read Music* by Jo Ann Martin. In the demonstrations her arrangements of Wohlfahrt etudes for violin duet were played and I was impressed with them. The teacher and the student could trade parts for sight reading practice. Her arrangements are called *Sight Reading for Strings*. You can reach her at: sightreadingforstrings@yahoo.com

Swedish Fiddling

Presenters: Frida Rosen and
Cristina Seaborn
Central Minnesota Music School

With my interest in fiddle music I made sure to attend the session on Swedish Fiddling. Our first activity was to learn a “Polska” by ear. Frida showed us the basic tune and then we learned the ornaments. Swedish music is characterized by a shift of the strong beat in the measure. The tune may start on the downbeat but on its next appearance it will start on the second beat. The tunes are very catchy and easy to learn by ear, but we were all very happy to receive several copies of the music to take home. My students like to learn the tunes and memorize them easily.

Conference Auction

Out of curiosity I signed up to attend the Conference Auction. It was a fun time to eat dinner and chat some more with colleagues from other states. But I was also very interested to see the auction items. Fabulous trips and beautiful instruments were offered but I was attracted to the various teaching materials

on display. I ended up buying a collection of original pieces for beginning string orchestra called *Wings* by Cathie Lowmiller. Each book includes a CD of charming accompaniments to inspire the student's home practice. All of the selections are played in unison so they also work for private lessons. The first piece, called "Morning Bells," has a part for beginners with open strings only and a part for the more advanced students. The pieces move step by step to teach techniques such as string crossings and slurs. The accompaniments encourage good rhythm and intonation. The pieces are so appealing that my students always ask to play them. If you would like to try the series, the books may be ordered at: www.stringsmusicandmore.com.

when I am beginning to run out of steam. I was so inspired by the ideas I brought home with me that I felt ready to tackle the rest of the school year. If your teaching needs a shot of inspiration, or if you just like to meet new people, do not hesitate to attend the conference next February in Detroit. In 2008 it will be in Albuquerque. Don't miss it!



The ASTA Conferences come at the time of year

**Friday Morning Music Club
High School Competition for
Strings
(in memory of Gus Johansen)**

will be held
Saturday, November 4, 2006
at the Sumner School and Museum
1201 17th Street
Washington, DC.
Prize awards are
\$500, \$300 and \$200.
First prizewinner will participate
in a recital
at Strathmore Hall on
Friday, November 24, 2006.
Other prizewinners will have an
opportunity to perform in FMMC
events throughout the year.
Deadline for applications is
October 18, 2006.
For information please call
Suzanne Richardson
202-232-4355
or email:
torichardson@verizon.net.



Cultivating a Musical Bionic Ear: Teaching Wendy Cheng

by Dorée Huneven

Wendy Cheng is an adult viola student who has been studying with me for a year and a half. During that time, she has taken the ASTA CP Viola Level 4 Exam twice, greatly advancing the second year. The first time, she performed Gabriel-Marie's *La Cinquantaine*, and the second time she performed the first and second movements of Telemann's Concerto in G, as well as all of the required scales, etudes and sight reading. She received a "V" (for "very good") in most categories including "overall impression" in both exams. Neither of her examiners, Jim Batts nor Linda Smith, realized that Wendy is 100% deaf.

From the age of two, she suffered profound hearing loss in the right ear, and moderate loss in the left ear as the result of having been administered an ototoxic drug to treat a high fever. This didn't stop her from taking up the violin in college, or from studying privately and playing in orchestras and chamber groups as an adult. In 1996, she wrote an article for *Stringendo* detailing her musical life as a hearing-impaired person. But one morning, shortly after submitting the article, she awoke and realized that the remaining hearing was muffled even when she had her hearing aid on. It soon became horrifyingly obvious that overnight the rest of her hearing had gone. As in her previous loss, she was suffering from a viral infection, and it caused all remaining hearing to be wiped out.

Total deafness came just before Wendy was about to go to a string quartet workshop. She decided to stop lessons for awhile to research options of what she could possibly do. She decided to get a cochlear implant, and by December 1996, the surgery was completed. Simply stated, this consists of two parts: an internal implant surgically placed near the skull bone behind the ear, and a speech processor. The internal implant has a tiny electrode array that is threaded into the snail-shaped cochlea of the ear, and artificially tries to substitute for the thousands of tiny hairs in the cochlea. It picks up the sound waves, magnifies them, and conducts them down to the sound processor, that is about the size of a text pager.

The sound processor can be programmed to meet the patient's specific needs. If the "sh" sound is too shrill, for example, it can be toned down; speech can be made very clear and intelligible when the audiologist tweaks the processor's program. The operation to insert the device in the ear is considered outpatient surgery. It is done under general anesthesia, and the cost is high: fifty to sixty thousand dollars. It takes three weeks for the incision to heal; then the patient goes to the hospital to get the sound processor. This is sometimes called the activation, or turn-on process. Although cochlear implant developers have become skilled at designing the internal electronic component to handle speech sounds, they are only beginning to look at designing them for serious music perception. In fact, in Wendy's words, recorded music sounded "like a garbage truck going by the house" for the first few weeks after the processor was activated.

Wendy arrives early for her lessons at The Academy of Music, Phil Hosford's school in Gaithersburg. She waits outside the studio until I put my head out to call, "Wendy, your turn." No response. I go out and stand directly in front of her: "Your turn, Wendy!" She smiles, greets me, comes in, unpacks her viola, and we chat a bit. I ask, "How was your week? How are the girls?" She has two daughters who both take music lessons. It's normal teacher-student friendly talk before the lesson gets under way. She can hear me fairly well if I look directly at her and speak clearly.

At her lesson, Wendy hands me her viola, which I take to tune. It's already in tune. She has obviously been practicing at home before her lesson. We do an open-string bowing warm-up, and then proceed to her three-octave scales. Our difficulties begin immediately, and they center on intonation. Wendy tuned her viola at home using an electronic tuning device that registers a green light when the string is in tune, but at the lesson, she is aurally drowning. Wendy has no pitch perception. I am pedagogically drowning. We must do whatever we can to get notes in tune and the shifts accurate and smooth.

I resort to primitive chicanery and put a tape on her viola. Why not? Doesn't a rock climber need footholds? We decide to place a tape for third finger in third position (F Ω on the A string) because Wendy assures me that it is the most helpful for her. This is mysterious to me. And why only *one* tape? We go through the scale, and I put little up-or-down arrows in the music over the out-of-tune notes. Wendy groans expressively, grabs a pencil and highlights them in bright orange. I talk her through the pitch, note by note, and the scale is played three, four, five times. The real work Wendy does at home: note by note, she plays with the tuner on, and uses muscle memory to learn her distances. Sympathetic vibrations are also somewhat helpful. The reason Wendy changed from violin to viola was because she could not discriminate violin pitches located in fifth position or higher. She went to Potter's Violin Shop and basically demanded the most resonant viola they had in her price range. She plays in a room without a carpet to detect ringing better. It's a grueling struggle to get intonation sorted out, and going through the tuner/sympathetic vibrations process at home takes many practice hours. She doesn't remind me, but I know that she has a full-time job, plus two daughters, a husband, and a house to care for.

We proceed to her etude, which is currently in Whistler's *Introducing the Positions, Volume One* for viola. She plays with fluency and flair, clearly the result of her home labors, and I compliment her. Although she still has problems with pitch, I quickly put in the little arrows, she gives her usual squeals of frustration, and I assign her a new etude. "I want to hear the old one again, but it's nearly there." How much nit-picking about pitch can a person stand? Wendy has had encouraging and supportive teachers all her life, for which she is extremely thankful, and I mean to keep the tradition going. I play the new etude for her, as I play any new material. She has told me that watching a performance gives her a better idea of where the notes are, particularly with unfamiliar music. It feels eerie to play for someone who can't discriminate pitch well, but her response is enthusiastic.

The cochlear implant researchers have put most of their efforts into making speech as natural as possible, and have largely neglected the area of pitch perception. According to Wendy, someone in Australia actually designed a program dealing with pitch perception, and it's being tested in only a few

locations. At any rate, she can't use the device: it's made by another company, and it's questionable whether or not it would work. Insurance companies are guaranteed to nix another \$50,000 re-implant just to try it out. Wendy says, "The problem is that the hearing health care profession tends to think that speech is essential to survival and music is not." She believes that attitudes can be changed, especially since there are more deaf musicians than one would imagine. Wendy runs a group called "Association of Adult Musicians with Hearing Loss, with almost eighty people on the mailing list. Only four are string players, and the rest are pianists or woodwind players. There are a couple of audiologists as well. Wendy does all she can to promote her cause, and she frequently performs her latest polished piece at audiology conferences. We are both hoping for technological breakthroughs. At present, she is looking at getting a second implant in her left ear.

Telemann's Concerto in G has been a big challenge for both of us, and we have spent many months on both the first and the second movements. There was learning the notes, the pitches, the shifts, the intonation, the rhythm. Then came dynamics, phrasing, tone production, tricky bowings—it was a case of the child's toy with the pegs and the hammer: when we pounded at one problem, another one popped up. And then another. It's not just that Wendy can't discriminate pitch. She also doesn't discriminate tone or dynamics very well. Before I describe how we deal with these problems, I have to say that Wendy is a fabulously musical person. Her sense of rhythm is sturdy, her stance and presentation are excellent and compelling, and she has great ability to shape phrases. She clearly feels music at a deep level.

But for dynamics, she must depend on bow pressure and length—concentrating especially on the visual aspects. "Paul [her husband] says I play loud all the time. He's probably right." It's really not true, because the visual does help, and we get in some dynamic contrasts.

However, tone production is harder. Even for those of us who hear normally, making a beautiful tone on our string instruments is the work of a lifetime. In my two years of study with Shinichi Suzuki in Japan, we worked almost exclusively on tone at every lesson. An original work of calligraphy by Suzuki hanging above where I practice reminds me in Japanese, "A tone has a living soul." When my

bow touches a string, it's the first thing I consider. So with Wendy, there is a truly musical existential problem to deal with: if she can't hear the living soul of music, then why bother? Why, indeed? We bother because Wendy *wants* to play, and the existential problem is mine alone.

So, in the Telemann, I face tone production in the same way I do everything else: try anything that seems to work. Visually, there is the contact point and keeping the bow parallel to the bridge. The feel of bow weight, speed and articulation are used constantly. Then there is feedback, feedback, feedback. I ask her to play the entire movement, and then we work phrase by phrase. Wendy is scheduled to perform at an Academy recital in May, followed by juries, and finally for the ASTA Certificate Performance Exam on June 11. The first practice performance I arrange is an impromptu play-through done during her lesson time. I go out into the hallway, and convince a delightful mother from India to come in to "make my student nervous." She sits through Wendy's performance, claps, gives compliments, and leaves. I escort her out, and can't help myself: "I have to tell you that Wendy is deaf. She can't hear the exact pitches of what she is playing." The mother is flabbergasted. "Unbelievable," she says repeatedly. It's become one of my surreptitious goals with Wendy: to keep any audience completely unaware of her hearing loss. Wendy brushes it off—it's not

her goal. She considers herself an ordinary person, and refuses any special treatment. However, she is famous at the Academy for her determination. At the recital, she is applauded enthusiastically and her jury comments are also extremely favorable. We go on to this year's ASTA exam, and she flies with her many "V's." Now we've got to get to Level 5 for next year!

I asked Wendy what her ultimate goals are. "I still want to get a music degree one day. I don't know why, but I think it's because I'm very big on music education." Music education for adults with and without disabilities would be her primary focus.

"The experience of playing a string instrument—I cherish every moment I can play. It's heavenly. Every time I can come close to a semblance of creating heavenly music, I'm very happy. It's a form of self-expression I'm completely at home with."



For further reading, check out the following web sites:

Wendy's journal of getting an implant: <http://www.geocities.com/pstauffer/wendy/silence.htm>

How cochlear implants work: http://www.bionicear.com/tour/how_implants_work.asp

Association of Adult Musicians with Hearing Loss: <http://www.aamhl.org>



Wendy's Musical Adventures at the 2006 HLAA Convention

by Wendy Cheng

Back in May 2006, Advanced Bionics (AB), the manufacturer of my cochlear implant, invited me to play viola at their exhibit during the Hearing Loss Association of America's (HLAA) convention in Orlando, Florida. I would be playing about half an hour each day and at the pre-banquet reception on the final evening of the convention. I had never done a solo gig like this before, but was intrigued enough to say yes to the invitation. John Redden, a fellow member of the AAMHL listserv (and a Clarion cochlear implant user as well) was also invited to perform at AB's booth.

Every spring I take a certificate exam for my viola studies that measures my skills at a particular level. Right after the exam was over on June 11, 2006, I started creating a repertoire list of music to play at the convention, which was set for June 28–July 1. One of my old music teachers suggested that I play Suzuki viola repertoire, but I wanted to do more than that. In the end I came up with a mixture of easy viola solos—some classical, some folk songs, a few hymns, fiddle tunes, a couple of patriotic pieces, and some music from Disney movies.

Advanced Bionics provided a pickup for my viola and also worked with the sound person at Disney to hook the pickup to a pre-amp/mini-amp. But I was determined to hear my viola regardless of how much echoing and noise was in the exhibit hall. And I remember how badly I played at the American Academy of Audiology convention in Washington, D.C. last year with just my CI and nothing else. So I packed my auxiliary microphone as well. I was scheduled to play in the early hours of 9:00–9:30 each morning.

I tried tuning up in the exhibit hall on the first day but it was too noisy in there and the normally trusty Seiko chromatic tuner I was using couldn't tell the difference between the extraneous noise and the viola. I actually turned the G string peg too far out of tune and had to adjust that. The following morning Mike Brownen, one of the audiologists at AB, suggested that I find a quieter place to tune, so that's what I ended up doing—taking my tuner and

viola, and tuning in a quiet side hallway next to the convention hall prior to playing. I plugged the aux mic into my body processor and switched to program 3 (which has my music program set for 100% auxiliary input) before playing.

And people actually stopped by to listen when I played! From the feedback I got I knew I was generally playing in tune. Dr. Mead Killion, president of Etymotic Research, is a famous researcher in the area of acoustics and hearing loss. His company (<http://www.etymotic.com>) makes ear plugs for musicians, among other things. He was surprised I could play in tune because he has always had the impression cochlear implants did not transmit musical frequencies very well.

I brought my family along to the convention and we visited Disney World on Thursday and Friday after I finished playing each morning. But I decided to stay at the convention all day on Saturday. For one thing, I wanted to hear John play. I had also volunteered to report on a workshop that discussed music appreciation with hearing aids and cochlear implants. And last but not least, I still had not received any details regarding my performance on Saturday night at the reception before the banquet.

John's playing is incredible. And not only can he play the guitar, he can sing. In tune, no less! His many years of experience as a professional musician shone through in his playing. A small loyal group of hearing aid and cochlear implant users swayed to the Beatles music and other pop tunes he was playing. Edie Gibson, an audiologist at Advanced Bionics and Gallaudet graduate, signed the lyrics for members of the audience who needed it.

I was floored by John's ability to sing in tune—and felt wistful. I thought: *This is what you shoot for if the CI processor can be programmed to provide accurate pitch information.* And, I added to myself, *I hope Advanced Bionics isn't expecting John and me to perform on the same stage tonight. I don't feel I should be on the same stage with a musician of his caliber.*

Saturday afternoon, I finally got the details about where and when I was to play at the reception. I would be sitting at a stool near a door leading into the banquet hall. I'd play for about fifteen minutes. And John would be on the stage in the banquet hall performing while people are walking into the banquet hall. I thought: *This will work! We would provide different musical flavors to add to the ambiance of the evening at different times before the banquet.*

During the reception, I was supposed to play for only fifteen minutes, but enough people lingered to listen while I was playing so I decided to play half an hour instead, while perched on a comfortable high chair. I ran through every memorized piece on my repertoire list and tried to remember to keep eye contact with members of the appreciative audience.

My last memory of the convention has to do with the male vocalist the Florida host committee invited to sing at the banquet. The convention organizers invited a high tenor who sang selections from *I Pagliacci* and *Phantom of the Opera*, plus "O Sole Mio." He even invited the audience to sing "O Sole Mio" with him! Deanna Baker, the caption writer, heroically wrote as much of the Italian lyrics as she knew on the video screen, but had to write "Singing

in Italian" about halfway through the song. Of all the pieces he sang, my favorite was the famous tenor solo from *I Pagliacci*: "Vesti la giubba e la faccia infarina..." (The male lead has to put on his clown's costume and be gay while his heart is breaking from his wife's infidelity.)

Although I could hear this tenor sing, I had a feeling of disquiet about the substantial number of banquet attendees who have high frequency hearing loss and in all likelihood could not fully appreciate this vocal music. A few days ago, I spoke with a young man who was monitoring incoming/outgoing traffic outside the exhibit hall door. He had heard me play viola in the exhibit hall but said it didn't always sound good (the cello sounded better to him) and he admitted to having a high frequency loss.

I'm glad I agreed to play at the convention. To me, hearing-accessible conventions like this one allows me to meet new people, and learn from others—musically and otherwise.



HLAA is one of the largest organizations for adults with hearing loss.

Their web site is at <http://www.hearingloss.org>.



Da Capo

by Dorothy Barth

Her exact words are hidden in the bowels of an old computer that now sleeps in our garage. We replaced it while temporarily living on a strange vineyard in Napa. But I clearly remember the encouraging spirit in which they were offered:

*Yes, you **can** take violin lessons again, even at age 49. Nowadays for adults they call it coaching. As a violin teacher and as your friend, I abhor the teacher of your teenaged years who encouraged you to major in something other than music so that you might “make a contribution to society,” but that was, well, more than 30 years ago. Time to erase that experience and substitute a finer one!*

I had just moved from Southern to Central California and was taking a sabbatical from corporate life. A fortuitous time for a reunion with that most elusive of lost loves, my violin, last studied when I was indeed a music major in college. (I always did have a stubborn streak.)

Several outstanding violin teachers resided in my new hometown, but the tree-shaded campus of the university that was its centerpiece beckoned. I cautiously sent an email to the Professor of Violin.

I have shed my romantic illusions about what I can do with the violin but really wish to study again, perhaps to reclaim some lost technique, perhaps to learn some I never had. I’ve kept every etude book and repertory studied since I was twelve. (I thought the latter statement might emphasize my serious intent.)

A phone call followed, and I discovered my soon-to-be teacher was cautious too.

“It all depends on you—you could study for five years with me and not get any better if you don’t put forth the required effort.”

I assured him I understood and would make a commitment to practice at least three hours daily.

For our first meeting I play the opening movement of a Vivaldi Concerto in A Major that I hadn’t previously studied, explaining that I want him to hear me at my rawest and rustiest.

Somewhat apologetically, he hands me the Beethoven *Minuet in G*. “Please play the trio so that I can see how you play off the string.”

Thus began a period of mentorship and dialogue, somewhat over two years, when, as in my adolescence, the violin was central to my life. Yet the quality of my adult experience as a violin student far surpassed that of my youth, because this time the relationship with my teacher was not anxiety-based.

As a youth I was frozen by my teacher’s disapproval. As an adult I could respond to thorny technical dilemmas by saying, “I believe I understand (or as the case may be, don’t understand) the concept but cannot feel the action. Could we go over this again, or could we try a different approach?”

One of our earliest discussions concerned vibrato production. Believing only the wrist was a factor, I hand my teacher a tattered copy of *Violin Vibrato, Its Mastery and Artistic Uses*. I’d acquired it in high school hoping to diagnose and cure a rather nervous, angular vibrato.

My teacher peruses it intently, and then informs me that I have been misinformed. Or that at least my vibrato bible has not revealed all facets of beautiful left-hand tone production. It was an illuminating moment to discover that I could question what was previously gospel.

I vouched to gladly put in those three hours of daily practice and kept a yearly diary of my studies. Each new day presented its own table: **Time**, **Material**, **Observations**, and **Questions** to ask at lesson time.

The diaries chronicle my focus as well as my lack of focus:

4:00–5:00 *C. Flesch D and d scales, D thirds*
5:00–6:00 *Unstructured practice of cabaret violin gems (not assigned)*

Just as keeping a record of dreams might form part of one’s inner journey, so keeping a record of my practice mapped my musical journey. Even if some Irish jigs not on the itinerary might appear between the Sitt etude in fourth position and the (frequently assigned) Mozart A-Major Concerto.

Tuesdays were lesson days, when the **Questions** column of my diary became the **Lesson Suggestions** column. I did not write suggestions down during the lesson but instead visited my computer immediately

following each lesson. Music in hand, I would reflect on what I had just learned and then listed it in the **Suggestions** column. And as with dreams, where we may not transcribe what we dreamt exactly but our interpretations are still significant, so I believed it was with the lesson suggestions, the fruit of my musical endeavors as I understood them that Tuesday.

For each major work studied, at year's end I created a summary of all lesson suggestions:

June 5, 2001 – Mozart A-Major Concerto. No bubbles on the opening Adagio! Decrescendo the final A trill more gradually!

September 11, 2001 – It doesn't feel right to fiddle now. I am watching TV and frantically cleaning, something I do in times of crisis... Gaylene brought by the string quartet music for Sunday's wedding fair. I practiced about 45 minutes, with hesitation and with the TV on.

September 13, 2001 – Amidst continuous CNN coverage of the attack, I am practicing again. It is...my work.

A December 20, 2001 lesson suggestion still mentions the opening Mozart Adagio: *Treat as a vibrato exercise, gradually widening the vibrato. Don't start it too rapidly!* We took that concerto very seriously; my **Suggestions** synopsis extends to July 9, 2002 and traverses two volumes of the diaries.

The diaries' front pages list my repertory by quarter. **Currently Working (Scales, Etudes, and Repertory), On Hold, and Would Like to Study.** A Brahms Sonata was soon put on hold; I lacked the rhythmic stability and maturity. The Mozart B \flat -Major Sonata was left unfinished, since that *Minuet in G* had identified tightness in my spiccato not agreeable with fast passages of the Mozart. But *The Lark Ascending*, which enraptured me after I first heard it on my car radio, became part of my early 2001 repertory list, along with *La Folia*.

Steadily, music in my **Would Like to Study Column** migrated to the **Current Repertory** column: Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*; the Beethoven Concerto; and the Bach *Chaconne*, which we planned to study at a rate of eight measures per week.

As did numerous wonderful Kreisler pieces, not on my list because they had never been in my life thus far. I managed to survey many but not all selections my teacher had marked for me to study in order of difficulty.

"Don't slide into that note," he admonishes as I play a Kreisler arrangement of the Tchaikovsky *Andantino*.

"But Kreisler played it that way," I counter cheerfully. I'd just borrowed my teacher's Kreisler biography and had studied Kreisler's recorded performances of that *Andantino*, marking his shifts and portamentos on my own music.

My teacher looks amused, then smiles benevolently. "OK—but if ever you play that theme in the context of the Tchaikovsky D-Major String Quartet, you won't interpret it that way, will you?"

I'd been schooled on the ubiquitous yellow Schirmer editions of the 1960s, but my teacher introduced me to the beauty of Bärenreiter editions and invited me to ponder larger questions about what the composer intended. Always keen on asking what edition I would be using, he often encouraged me to compare several.

While telling him how much I had enjoyed studying the Mazas *Etudes Spéciales*, I also admitted how relieved I was that, except for the *Bowing Variations*, I did not have to unearth too many of my old Ševčík books.

"But you must appreciate those Ševčík books for what they accomplish," my teacher suggested. "They identify a technical problem and hold a microscope to it, magnifying it hundredfold."

My observation that I might just as well focus on the scales embedded in repertory rather than practice them outright met with more resistance. At least a half hour of daily scales it was, from one to eight to a bow. Five to a bow always threw me, and I often had to start over. I approached this scale work in a meditative rather than gymnastic way. In retrospect, I may have been too easy on myself, avoiding scales in thirds, fingered octaves, and diminished fifth arpeggios that sometimes appeared on the menu.

The diaries reveal a small secret I'd kept from my teacher. Though I had shed the unrealistic dreams of my youth, I had replaced them with more modest performance aspirations: that occasional gig, whether for a benefit or for a wedding. Only much later did I tell my teacher about the fanciful website I'd created and nurtured and about my ever-growing library of performance binders for all occasions containing lovely but much less demanding music than what I was now studying. When he found out one holiday season, he encouraged me to include some

unaccompanied Bach in my venues and introduced me to some great transcriptions of the Cello Suites.

Those years studying violin as an adult went by too fast, and never once did they contain echoes of that earlier experience which had haunted me for decades. Whether Corelli or Kreisler, invariably my teacher acknowledged that I had a good idea about the music, even while exhorting me not to pause while playing whenever it suits me—*the orchestra is not going to wait for you!*

I am also grateful that he didn't remind me of what I already knew too well—that I would never stand in front of any orchestra to play these masterpieces (though later I would play in some orchestras that accompanied concertos). Nor did he compare me with his other students, most more than three decades younger, and some, as I discovered while attending one of his impressive student recitals, approaching virtuosity.

I had to discontinue my lessons while revisiting the Bruch Concerto in the early spring of 2003. Central California had given me my violin back, but the Central Valley air was playing havoc with my lungs, so my husband took a transfer to Northern California. We managed to get through the *Chaconne* by accelerating the eight measures per week to sixteen measures.

In Northern California my wedding music engagements also accelerated. And the treasures shared with me about how to make the violin sing are still accessible. I hear my teacher's advice when I play, reminding me to relax that left thumb, advising me that rhythmic stability and slow practice are key to relaxation. My open diaries whisper hundreds more detailed revelations.

Placing a false diminuendo while slowing the bow near the tip seems to be a recurring problem in your playing. Do not put accents in the middle of the bow where they don't make musical sense. Secrets given me during my last lesson.

On parting, my teacher gave me three volumes of orchestral excerpts and various bowed and fingered copies of Bach *Sonatas and Partitas* to add to the wealth of annotated music I'd already acquired during my study.

My last diary entry reads: *Thus ends over two years of violin study in Fresno. Some young students came right after me, and lengthy farewells....were avoided...I promised to keep in touch about musical happenings. Nothing was said about what kind*

of a student I [had been]; I guess it is too late to determine whether I'm talented or not. I said I'd be sure to notify him of my Carnegie Hall Debut. I have the notes, some weeks more elaborate than others. I wonder if there is a story in it.

On the floor next to me sits a Laurel Burch canvas bag adorned with birds of rare and bright plumage. My home holds many places to store music: Three tall bookcases containing binders and magazine racks filled with music by genre and instrumentation animate the guest bedroom. A huge pirates' chest covered with suns and moons holds violin music gathered through the years.

But the Laurel Burch bag was my music study bag, and in the time passed since that last lesson, I've felt disinclined to examine its contents. It represents a sanctuary for the discoveries of my musical explorations, which for the past three years have been without a guide.

I open it now and there emerge those Bach *Partitas* given to me during the last lesson: an annotated Corelli sonata, along with a book of *Twelve Corelli Sonatas* (we'd barely begun to explore those), the Kreutzer *42 Studies*, the Kabalevsky Concerto we thought we'd get to but didn't, the Barber Concerto which I wasn't ready for (but nevertheless sneaked into the bag so that I could sometimes play the opening theme), the Mendelssohn Concerto that I adored as a teenager (I finally got to study the second movement), a Glière duo decorated with green cover bearing my teacher's 2002 holiday greeting, and several annotated copies of the Beethoven Concerto, along with the G. Henle edition of the same concerto. The Bruch Concerto was removed when I used it to audition for a community orchestra several years ago. The bag must have sustained water damage during our three moves after leaving Central California, and the Beethoven G. Henle edition took the brunt.

A sign, perhaps, that it is time for this wealth of music to emerge from the bright bag that accompanied me those memorable years when I rediscovered and made peace with my violin.



The muse who encouraged Dorothy Barth to study violin again is your ASTA Chapter President-elect, Dorée Huneven. Dorothy's teacher in Fresno was Dr. David Margetts, retired Professor of Music at California State University. Dorothy Barth has resumed work as a technical writer in Northern California while continuing to greatly enjoy her violin.

Viola Music Review

by Helen Fall

One of the greatest pleasures for me in going to conferences like *ASTA Strings Alive 2005!* was browsing the exhibit hall booths. I always attend these conferences with enough room in my suitcase to bring back lots of music, and I never disappoint myself! As a viola teacher, I am continually on the lookout for new and interesting music at the elementary, intermediate and early advanced levels. Many teachers complain that the solo viola literature at this level contains mostly elegies, meditations and nocturnes, and if you are looking for something more lively, you must resort to transcriptions from the violin or cello literature. I am happy to report that there is quite a bit of literature written especially for student **violists** that is tuneful, energetic and inspiring. All you have to do is dig around a bit!

Local music stores are great, and are always polite enough to look for the obscure music that I seek after reading reviews in the latest *American String Teacher* or *Journal of the American Viola Society*. But the booths at the conferences always contain a wealth of music, with many selections that I have never seen in area stores, or read about in reviews. It's also nice to be able to actually look the music over before making a purchase decision. A few of my favorites from my shopping spree in Reno are reviewed in this article. I put my suggested Grade level, based on the VBODA grading system, in brackets next to each selection. All of this music was purchased at the Stanton Music Co. booth. You can order any of it from Stanton's Sheet Music (<http://www.stantons.com>), or from your local music store.

Bertold Hummel: Sonatine No.1, op. 35b for Viola and Piano [Grade 5]

Publisher: Simrock

Written in 1971, Sonatine has a modern, twentieth-century sound. The fast movements are playful and rhythmic, the slow movements are lyrical with long lines and plenty of vibrato opportunities.

Claude-Henry Joubert: Quatre fables pour alto avec accompagnement de piano

1. **Le boeuf et les carottes** [Grade 2]
2. **Le chou et l'agneau** [Grade 3]
3. **Le canard et les navets** [Grade 4]
4. **L'altiste et les gammes** [Grade 4]

Publisher: Editions Combre

Playful little gems, sold separately. Each fable has the story (in French!) written in the music as you play it.

No. 1 in G Major, is about a tender and gentle cow in a meadow. The cow is very irritated by the carrots. The carrots make fun of the cow, but the carrots, in the end, are cooked. The music employs scale-wise motion, simple rhythms and accents.

No. 2 in G Major and G Minor, is about the cabbage and the lamb. The lamb bares its ferocious and shiny teeth. The story is told with major/minor modes, accents and double-stops.

No. 3 in G Major, is the story of the duck and the turnips. The duck swims in the water, the turnips swim in butter. This piece employs various bowing styles: short, accented, détaché, and lyrical slurring bows. There is a fair amount of shifting to third position.

No. 4, in G Major, is about the violist and scales, on the order of the pianists in "The Carnival of the Animals." It is a very humorous piece that includes an "exasperated" cadenza.

Pascal Proust: Un Chant, Une Danse pour alto et piano [Grade 3-4]

Publisher: Gérard Billaudot

This is a selection with two movements that flow from one to the other without pause. *Un Chant* is lyrical and slow, with lots of vibrato opportunities. *Une Danse* is quick and lively with playful spiccato bowing and accents. There is some shifting to third position, especially in *Un Chant*.

Pascal Proust: La Riviere blanche pour alto et piano [Grade 4-5]
Publisher: Éditions Combre

Similar to *Un Chant, Une Danse*, Proust employs a slow, lyrical opening section and links it with a faster section that has driving rhythms, accents and marcato bowing. There are key changes (B \flat Major to D Minor and back), and a little cadenza. Shifting is required, up to third position.

Graded Viola Pieces, arranged and edited by Peggy Radmall
Publisher: Masters Music Publications, Inc.
Vol. 1 (First Position) [Grade 2-3]
Vol. 2 (First to Third Position) [Grade 3-4]

Originally published by Chester Music, these books have been difficult to obtain. I had been searching for them (under Chester publication) for some time, with one book on order at a local music store for over a year! Quite by coincidence, I found **Vol. 1** at the Stanton's Sheet Music booth, published by Masters Music. The Stanton representative was happy to order **Vol. 2** for me, and it arrived, by mail, at my home several weeks later.

The solos in these collections are lively and enjoyable transcriptions for advanced beginner/early intermediate level violists. **Vol. 1** contains eight selections in first position; most selections are one page in length, some are shorter. Some selections are in more difficult keys for the beginning student, including G Minor, A Major, and D Major. The selections are simple tunes in baroque and classical style. **Vol. 2**, with eleven solo selections, continues in the baroque and classical style, requires shifting to third position, and employs ornaments typical for the two styles. Both of these books are little gems in the literature, and are a welcome addition to my studio library!



Helen Fall is the president of the Virginia chapter of the American String Teachers Association (VASTA). She teaches viola and violin, and coaches chamber music privately in her home studio in Fairfax, VA. As a freelance musician, Ms. Fall performs as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player on viola and violin in the D.C. metropolitan area. Ms. Fall is a member of the Alexandria and Fairfax Symphonies. As principal violist of the Arlington Symphony from 1984–2004, she also performed as a soloist with that orchestra in 1992.



Notes From a Drop Out

by Michelle Huneven

It was decided for me that I would play the viola. My older sister played the violin, so that was out of the question—no sibling rivalry at our house! I wanted to play the cello, but my mother said it was too big, too much trouble to lug to the bus stop every day. The viola was just as soulful as the cello, she promised, more portable and thus, a fraction of the nuisance.

My mother herself had been trained as a concert pianist. She'd gone to the Oberlin Conservatory at age fifteen. From the time she started playing at eight or nine years old she had been awakened every morning at four a.m. to practice for two hours while her father and brothers watered and fed the animals on their Delaware farm. If she did not come right down on those cold winter mornings, her father came upstairs to get her. At some point in all those dark, pre-dawn hours at the keyboard, she vowed that she would never nag or push her own children to play a musical instrument, or do their homework, ever. (Cleaning their rooms and taking the trash out would be another matter.) But when it came to practicing and school work, they would be on their own. They would only have to do what they were self-motivated to do. She herself had been pushed so mightily that, the moment she got out of college and was on her own without parents or teachers exhorting her to work, she stopped pursuing the piano. She gave a few lessons. She did a bit of accompanist work. But her life as a musician was essentially over.

This did not mean she did not want her children to have musical educations.

When I was five, following in my sister's footsteps, I took piano lessons from one of my mother's Oberlin colleagues—they taught each other's children. I showed neither talent nor inclination to play, and after summer vacation, the lessons were not renewed.

My sister, however, practiced. From the moment she met an instrument, she practiced. She did not love the piano, but she practiced it. Once she got a violin in her hands, and it became apparent that she had talent, she practiced all the more, and without the least bit of nagging.

A year after my sister discovered the violin, I took up the viola. I did not evince any particular

ability. Although I rather quickly produced good, clear, musical tones, I never became skilled or dextrous—because I practiced inconsistently and ineffectively. But never—well, almost never—was it suggested that I practice more. If assigned a piece of music that I loved, I'd practice in binges—the Bach Gavotte transposed from the cello suites, the Telemann Concerto—but never with the daily rigor of my sister. I made some progress during junior high school when I took private lessons (with individual and group instruction) and had orchestra as a daily class in school, with a built-in, fifteen-minute practice period. I was first viola in junior high school orchestra, and that was the apex of my musical achievement.

One problem with playing the viola at that time in history—and I understand that this has changed—is that the music I played in orchestra was all harmony and no melody. The first violins, with all their silvery high notes, sang away. Like the sopranos in a chorus, they always had the best parts while over in the viola section we were bringing all our creativity and emotion to bear on whole and half notes, measure after measure of them. We were so bored that quarter notes were exciting and eighth notes an event! A series of fast arpeggios, a grace note, a pizzicato passage inspired and indeed required a bit of practice.

I never had any sense of a viola's essentiality in an orchestra. Bar some of the percussionists who had only the occasional thumping and banging in the big show pieces, we were the dogs of the operation, the unheard, the unsung, the unsinging. Even bass players had more to do—they at least had to look important up there on their risers, and even I could hear how their deep notes anchored the whole ensemble. Meanwhile, stuffed in between the second violins and the cellos, crowded from behind by the brass, hidden from any audience by the conductor's podium, we violas were unnoticed, unneeded—and bored beyond belief. We envied the sonorous self-important cellos almost as much as we despised the diva first violins. We were even jealous of the second violins, who at least got to play the melody, albeit toned down and echoing the firsts.

Whenever I picked up my sister's violin, it felt like a toy, tiny and cute. Playing it was so much easier than my thick, fifteen-inch instrument. That slim easy-to-get-around-on little neck! That skinny, responsive E string! Those piercing high registers! So much more could be done with such a user-friendly object!

Violists may have had more soul, but violinists clearly had more fun.

Not only were we violas bored, we had nothing much to look forward to. *Harold in Italy*? Half the *Sinfonia Concertante*? Violins faced the whole library of Vivaldi, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Grieg, Brahms, Prokofiev, Bruch—many of which my sister already was assiduously listening to and attacking in the bedroom next door to mine. I still can't hear the opening double stops in Vivaldi's *Autumn* without remembering how she broke them down and practiced them, chord by chord, with a surgeon's precision and a ditch digger's doggedness, day after day, week after week, for her senior solo with the high school orchestra.

By the time I was in the tenth grade, my viola teacher was onto me. I was not a practicer, nor was I likely to become one. Because my parents never came into the lessons, there was no reason to pretend that I was a serious student, so she simply talked for most of the lesson. She talked about her other students, and ideas she had; she told stories and described books she was reading. Toward the end, she'd ask to hear what I was working on, I'd play a few bars and she would make a few comments. *Finis*. She was authoritative and intimidating enough, it did not once occur to me that she wasn't doing the job for which my parents paid her—she was coasting as much as I was.

As a junior in high school, I asked my parents if I could take a painting class at the local art museum. My mother countered with an ultimatum; art or viola lessons. This was clearly a bluff. But I shocked her—and myself—by choosing art.

I took up the viola again in college, briefly—and even more briefly, the bassoon. Meanwhile, my sister had gone professional.

I majored in neither art nor music in college, but in English and I went on to graduate school in creative writing. There, I decided to sell my viola to go to truck driving school, so I could accompany my boyfriend as he hauled sod and soybeans and steel

all over the midwest. My parents, appalled, gave me the tuition for truck driving school in exchange for my viola which they promptly turned over to my sister, who put it to use playing chamber music and in teaching. (Even she admits it was a too-big, tough-to-get-around-on thing).

Such might have been the end of my musical days, and all the string teachers and parents reading this might think: what a waste, what a spoiled, unsupervised, impulsive, ungrateful child. A perfect example of what the lack of parental involvement produces.

But there is yet another ending to the story.

Ten years after I stopped playing the viola, I moved to the Southern Sierras. I was trying to write my first book, and to support myself in the process. I worked odd hours as a waitress. Somehow, I fell in with a bunch of musicians—bluegrass, jazz, old timey, and country western musicians. That whole corner of the state, from Bakersfield to Fresno, is teeming with amateur musicians—guitar, banjo, and mandolin players, bass fiddlers, drummers, and singers—a whole subculture for whom playing music was a form of family entertainment. My best friend Patty sang in bars every weekend. The local sheriff played banjo. The guy at the hardware store was a jazz guitarist. A carpenter played mandolin. Every Thursday night, some or all of them got together and then, on the weekend, they'd show up to play with Patty wherever her gig was. One Thursday night, someone brought a fiddle. I picked it up and played the opening of a transposed Bach suite, and that cute little gavotte, and then the tune of a song the group had just played. The next thing I knew, I was playing country fiddle. I discovered I had a good ear, and, thanks to those years of boring orchestra work, an ability to harmonize.

Over the next few months, a local accomplished fiddler gave me a few tips to bring me up to speed, and lent me some Bluegrass how-to books, and for the first time in my life, I practiced daily. I practiced to build up speed—bluegrass is fast—and to refamiliarize myself with keys and chords, and just to hear myself play. I was never virtuosic, but I had a whole lot of fun and all kinds of adventures playing in those funky tourist bars and for parties, and in the houses of all sorts of people. For the first time in my life, I got to play the melody. I got to play solos. Once in every song, it was my turn to belt it out.

The violin was easy to get around on. Much easier than that old thick-necked viola, though there were times when I missed the deeper registers, the buttery alto timbre, the way some of those clear low notes resonated with the eternal longing in my chest. Still, I had a ball with the fiddle.

Eventually, I returned the borrowed fiddle and moved back to civilization. In the twenty years since, when I've been tempted to fiddle in some jam session, my fingers are more recalcitrant than ever, and the road back to any kind of proficiency seems too long. To tell the truth, I don't really enjoy bluegrass and old timey and country music anymore. I like classical music, which I know and respond to because of my early exposure to it, because my parents dragged us girls to the philharmonic and to operas, and because I played a bit, and because I heard my sister learn piece after piece, measure by measure.

Just last week, I watched a movie by Jean Renoir called *The Golden Coach*. Made in the 1960s, it was Renoir's paean to Commedia dell'Arte and to Antonio Vivaldi. The film begins with a long stretch of blank blue screen, with a small, tight orchestra playing Vivaldi's *Autumn* with a kind of deliberate joy. The music is so glorious, so stately and triumphant, so restrained yet exciting. Each of those damnable double stops was as familiar to me as air, and my heart rose up, as to an old friend.



Michelle Huneven is a writer living in Altadena, California. She is the author of two novels, Round Rock and Jamesland; a work of non-fiction, The Tao Gals' Guide to Real Estate; and a great many pieces about books, food, and restaurants for many national newspapers and magazines. Her sister is of course Dorée Huneven, who must honestly state that she never ever practiced with a surgeon's precision or a ditch digger's doggedness.

The Friday Morning Music Club And Its Sponsored Competitions

by Eleanor Woods

The Friday Morning Music Club was founded in 1886 in Washington, D.C. and is one of the oldest organizations of its kind in the United States. Now, with more than 800 members, the club includes professional musicians, teachers, lovers of music and those who wish to further music in our area. There are weekly concerts on Fridays at noon at the Sumner School Museum in Washington as well as monthly concerts on other days and evenings at Strathmore Hall in North Bethesda, Dumbarton House in Georgetown, and the Ellipse Area Center in Arlington, VA. Its members perform as soloists and in chamber groups of various combinations. It boasts an orchestra, a chorale, master classes and a music outreach program which brings concerts to retirement centers and nursing homes. All events are presented without charge.

The **FMMC** also played an active role in the development of the National Symphony Orchestra and is a co-sponsor with the Washington Performing Arts Society of its Concerts in Schools Program, which brings music to school children in the Washington metropolitan area. Membership in the **FMMC** is open to any lover of music and to

those who wish to support the presence of music in our community. One can audition to become a performing member or join as a lover of music. The Club is supported by annual dues, special gifts from its members and friends, and by bequests to its Endowment Fund.

The Friday Morning Music Club Foundation sponsors the Washington International Competition and the Johansen International Competition for Young String Players, which was organized in 1946 to assist gifted young musicians in their studies and careers prior to obtaining professional management. Since 1950 with two exceptions, the Foundation has sponsored the Washington International Competition in a three year rotation for piano, strings. and voice. In 1976, a competition for composition of a string quartet began. This year the competition will include compositions for strings alone or with piano.

The Johansen Competition began in 1990 when Anna Johansen endowed a program for young string players, which was to be held every three years. These competitions offer hefty cash prizes and performance opportunities to the winners.



The Lighter Side

New Musical Definitions

In order to keep you abreast of the ever-developing world of musical terminology, we provide herewith the following addendum to the esteemed *Harvard Dictionary of Music*:

ALLREGRETTO—When you're sixteen measures into the piece and realize you took too fast a tempo.

ANGUS DEI—To play with a divinely beefy tone.

A PATELLA—Accompanied by knee-slapping.

APPROXIMATURA—A series of notes not intended by the composer, yet played with an "I meant to do that" attitude.

APPROXIMENTO—A musical entrance that is somewhere in the vicinity of the correct pitch.

CACOPHANY [aka **CACOUGHONY**]—A composition incorporating an audience replete with chest colds.

CLUCKERATURA—The annoying soprano whose highest tones bear an uncanny resemblance to a hen laying an egg.

CORAL SYMPHONY—A large, multi-movement work from Beethoven's Caribbean Period.

DILL PICCOLINI—An exceedingly small wind instrument that plays only sour notes.

ELIPTICO—That dark muddy sound made in a chorus when the Bases continue to sing while disguising their inability to find their pitches and rhythm when lost.

ELIPTICO TUTTI—The result when a SATB chorus attempts to perform modern classical *a capella* music (e.g., Berg, Webern, and many later works of Ives). See also *Eliptico*.

FERMANTRA—A note held over and over and over and over and...

FERMOOTA—A note of dubious value held for indefinite length.

FIDDLER CRABS—Grumpy string players.

FLUTE FLIES—Those tiny mosquitos that bother musicians on outdoor gigs.

FRUGALHORN—A sensible and inexpensive brass instrument.

GAUL BLATTER—A French horn player.

GREGORIAN CHAMP—The title bestowed upon the monk who can hold a note the longest.

GROUND HOG—Someone who takes control of the repeated bass line and won't let anyone else play it.

MALOCCHIO SUBITO—That "look" given by the conductor that is invariably directed to the soprano or soprani that did not observe a grand pause and made a fortissimo entrance one beat early.

MARKATO—The act of transcribing into one's music the directions of the conductor.

PLACEBO DOMINGO—A faux tenor.

SCHMALZANDO—A sudden burst of music from the Guy Lombardo band.

THE RIGHT OF STRINGS—Manifesto of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Violists.

SPRITZICATO—An indication to string instruments to produce a bright and bubbly sound.

TEMPO TANTRUM—What an elementary school orchestra (and any number of choruses) is having when not following the conductor.

TROUBLE CLEF—Any clef one can't read: e.g., alto clef for pianists.

VESUVIOSO—An indication to build up to a fiery conclusion.

VIBRATTO—Child prodigy son of the concertmaster.

