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Message from the President

It is time for **nominations for the next President-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer for our chapter.** Please consider these opportunities seriously. I can honestly say being in a leadership position in ASTA has been a pivotal experience in my life. I highly recommend it, and am grateful to have been able to serve. Please step forward to help keep the momentum and excitement going!

Be sure to send in your **nominations for Outstanding Service to Strings and Teacher of the Year!** Nomination forms are printed on pages 3 and 4 for your convenience. You may photocopy these pages, or fill out the information on a separate sheet of paper, or send Dorée Huneven an email with your nomination details.

Our 2011 “Teacher of the Year,” Mark Pfannschmidt, will be attending the National Conference and our chapter is paying his registration fee. Maybe next year it will be you!

Have you considered attending the **ASTA National Conference in Atlanta, March 21–24, 2012?** The ASTA conferences are terrific opportunities for continued learning, networking, staying current, thinking outside the box, viewing new products, and growing personally and professionally. I have gotten so much out of the conferences; I wouldn’t consider missing one now. Attend one, and you will be hooked too!

ASTACAP exams are coming up. Information is on our chapter’s web site: www.asta.net/certificateprogram. The exams are a wonderful way for teachers and students to get involved in our musical community.

Please attend our **Annual Membership Meeting, April 15, 2012.** We will be calling to invite you. Information is on the web site: www.asta.net/calendar. This promises to be a very special event, and I’m looking forward to seeing you all there.

Cathy Stewart



ASTA MD/DC Chapter Scholarship Fund for Private Lessons

ASTA MD/DC Chapter is pleased to announce that it has developed a scholarship fund to provide assistance to string students and their families. This fund is designed to provide a short-term financial award to defray the expense of private lessons and enable students with financial need to continue their studies.

The award amount will be determined by the scholarship committee, which will meet twice a year (fall and spring) to determine scholarship awards. This is a partial scholarship, paid to the private teacher for the purpose of subsidizing private lessons. This scholarship is designed to assist any student, regardless of age, ability level, or years of experience.

The scholarship is open to students whose private teacher is a member of ASTA MD/DC Chapter. An information sheet, along with guidelines and application form is available on our website. <http://www.asta.net/news.php?id=191>

This scholarship has been made possible through the sponsorship of our chapter as well as individual contributions from MD/DC Chapter board members and others. We hope that this scholarship can be offered for many years to come, and with this in mind, we ask you to consider making a contribution to the ASTA MD/DC Chapter scholarship fund. For more details, please contact President-Elect Daniel Levitov.

Email: dan.levitov@gmail.com

ASTA MD/DC Chapter 2012 Nomination Form for New Officers

Election time has rolled around again. Current President-Elect Daniel Levitov will take over as President in May 2012. We have a very active and vital chapter. Let's keep the momentum alive! Nominate your capable colleagues (or even yourself) for the following officer positions, 2012–2014 term. You may submit a nomination for one position, or submit two nominations for the two positions.

- 1. President-Elect, ASTA MD/DC Chapter**
- 2. Secretary/Treasurer, ASTA MD/DC Chapter**

Contact President Cathy Stewart cstewart91919@msn.com for duties required for each office. Please check with your nominee first to be sure he or she is interested. Send your nomination(s) either via email or postal mail to:

Dorée Huneven
1609 Ladd Street
Silver Spring, MD 20902
dhuneven@verizon.net

Deadline for nominations is January 30, 2012.

Elections will follow.

Winners will be announced at the Annual Membership Meeting on April 15, 2012.

President-Elect, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Nominee _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please submit a statement detailing why you think this person should be nominated for this position. You may write on the back of this form, or send an email to Dorée.

Secretary/Treasurer, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Nominee _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please submit a statement detailing why you think this person should be nominated for this position. You may write on the back of this form, or send an email to Dorée.

Your signature _____

ASTA MD/DC Chapter 2012 Nomination Form for Annual Awards

At the Annual Membership Meeting on April 15, 2012, ASTA MD/DC Chapter will present two awards: **Teacher of the Year** and **Outstanding Service to Strings**. Do you know a string teacher who deserves recognition? Nominate that person for the Teacher of the Year Award! Do you know a person or business that has provided excellent services or support to string teachers and students? Nominate this person or business for the Outstanding Service to Strings Award! Send your nomination(s) to:

Dorée Huneven
1609 Ladd Street
Silver Spring, MD 20902
dhuneven@verizon.net

Deadline for nominations is January 30, 2012.

Winners will be announced at the Annual Membership Meeting, April 15, 2012.

Teacher of the Year, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Nominee _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please submit a statement detailing why you think this person should receive this award. You may write on the back of this form, or send an email to Dorée.

Outstanding Service to Strings, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Nominee _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please submit a statement detailing why you think this person should receive this award. You may write on the back of this form, or send an email to Dorée.

Your signature _____

Memories of Private Teachers

by Julianna Chitwood

When I was a little girl, there was an adult who always patiently explained things to me and spent time noticing every detail about what I did. She told me regularly when she thought I had done a good job or when I needed to do more work, and then would work with me. She was my violin teacher, Betty Newell. While I usually enjoyed playing the violin, I didn't always enjoy practicing the violin. One day I told my mother that I didn't want to practice and she couldn't make me. My mother agreed that she couldn't make me. She then explained that since I didn't want to do the necessary work for my next lesson, my teacher would not need to do her work for the lesson and said, "My dear, you have to call Mrs. Newell and tell her why you are not coming to your lesson." My response was, "But I can't do that—she'll be too disappointed!"

by Lorraine Combs

I have often wondered what sort of violinist/violist I would be if I had not had Eugene Andrie as my teacher during my four years of college in Montana. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be his students used to say amongst ourselves: "Mr. Andrie can teach *anyone* to play the violin!" He presented a faculty recital on violin once a year at the university, accompanied by his wife. He was also the first violinist of the university string quartet and the conductor of the symphony. He insisted that all of his students attend all the recitals of all the guest artists that came through our university town. If any of us missed a recital, we'd better have a good reason! When I was in my senior year, he treated all of his students to hear Joseph Szigeti on his farewell U.S. tour. Years later, shortly after I joined the Annapolis Symphony in 1983, I was talking during one of our breaks with an older man who was subbing in the viola section for one concert. He asked me where I was from, and I told him Montana. He asked me if I had studied with Gene Andrie and I said yes. This older violist told me that as a young man, he had a big band in Michigan. He showed me an old 8 x 10 photo of the band. Gene played violin in the band! There he was, amongst all the horn players, sitting with his violin in the front

row right beside the rhythm section. Even way back then, Gene must have already developed his knack for teaching—the violist told me: "Gene could teach *anyone* to play the violin!"

by Dorée Huneven

My very first private teacher was Elizabeth Mills (she passed away in the early 90's) and to her I am very grateful for two enormous contributions to my life. The first was that, when I was a high school senior casting around for a possible career choice, she thought I would make a good teacher. She arranged for me to go to Japan to study with Shinichi Suzuki, helped to obtain my visa, and supported my studies during my two years in Matsumoto, Japan. I am extremely grateful to her every single day. The second "contribution" was that, for 95 percent of the six years I studied privately with her, she did not hear me play my violin. She talked to me about many intellectual and musical topics, and for great amounts of time she left the room to talk on the phone, but I did not play for her, and she did not play for me. As a result, I always listen to my students play, I always instruct them to the best of my ability, and I always play for them. Whenever I need to study with someone, I look for teachers who are similarly active. Sometimes "negative teaching," properly used and understood, can be very helpful.

by Alessandra Schneider

I was one of the fortunate few that had the same teacher from when I began violin until I went to college for violin performance. My fondest memory of my teacher, Margaret "Peg" Banks, is when she brought me along to one of her orchestra performances. She drove me, gave me a comp ticket, brought me back stage, and made sure I had a good seat in the balcony. This made me really feel important and special, and I believe gave me more of a connection to the music she was playing. She took the time to ensure that I had a personal connection both with her and music. I believe this made all the difference. I remember those excursions fondly, and will always have a deep respect and appreciation for all she did for me.

by Lya Stern

Among the four artist teachers to whom I owe my career, I remember Mr. Bronstein, my teacher at Manhattan School of Music with the most affection and gratitude. Whether I was well prepared or not, I walked out of each lesson brimming over with new ideas, solutions, and understanding of technical and musical problems. During one lesson of concentrated effort and success, I blurted out with great enthusiasm: “Mr. Bronstein, I play better when I think!” Mr. Bronstein put on a mockingly incredulous smile. “Really,” he said. “You don’t say...” For months after that he related to me that one of his pupils had told him, “She plays better when she thinks!” Fancy that! I never figured out if he was gently mocking me or had truly forgotten I was the one who made the great discovery.

by Cathy Stewart

My most memorable teacher was Robert Gerle. I was fortunate enough to study with him for four years. Mr. Gerle had a remarkable ability to bring out the best in his students. No matter what my preparation level, I always came out of a lesson playing better than when I went in. I studied with him when I was in my late twenties and working. One week I hadn’t been able to practice due to a crazy work schedule. I was terrified he would be upset with me, so I admitted my lack of practice right up front. He said something to me I have never forgotten. He looked at me kindly and said, “You can remember. You remember what you had for dinner last night and you remember what we did in your lesson last week. Relax, you can remember how to play the piece even if you haven’t practiced it in a week.” He was right, and I came out of that lesson playing better, too.



Celebrating 40 Years of Music, Excellence, and Friendship

*Adapted from her article in the SAA Journal
by Marissa Murphy*

How do you celebrate a forty-year tradition? You live it. That's what happened the weekend of October 16–18, 2009, in Buffalo, NY, when students from the past forty years came from all parts of the country to join over three hundred current students at the Buffalo Suzuki Strings Musical Arts Center.

What specifically did we do that weekend? We did what we always did growing up. We made music with people we loved.

BSS alumni participated in group classes, a Dr. Suzuki Birthday Party Play-In, a parent lecture, an informal alumni dinner, a Vivaldi Concerto Play-Together, an Alumni Professional Gala Concert and a formal banquet. This was a weekend filled with laughter, love, and renewing of old friendships.

We caught up with each others' lives while playing Twinkles, Folk Songs, Minuets, Gavottes, and Seitz, Vivaldi, and Bach Concerti. We joined the current Advanced Class students in playing many of our favorite two-, three-, and four-part concerti that were the staple of our repertoire on the many tours we took to different parts of the world. We talked about our careers, children, spouses, and parents while reminiscing about what it was like to play gypsy music in the former Soviet Union with Russian children, and about our performances at the Suzuki World Convention, where we played our common Suzuki repertoire with students from all over the world.

Some of us guest-taught the Saturday morning group classes and realized that aspiring to play with a beautiful tone is something that has only deepened over the past forty years. We shared with current students and parents what it had been like to actually meet Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki, and how special it made us all feel to be some of the guinea pigs for this worldwide movement. We showed the current students that practicing 10,000 bow circles, Tonalization, playing with good posture, C-sharp vs.

C-natural, and all of the rest of it, does indeed have a purpose. Doctors, lawyers, symphony musicians, teachers, scientists, television producers, computer programmers, college students and many more, all came together to pour over old photos and talk about playing music with children from across the globe. For me, in particular, it was gratifying to show some of my own students what I have been aiming to create in my own program in Washington, D.C.

What brought alumni, spouses and children of alumni, and students of alumni to Buffalo? One very clear answer: Mary Cay Neal. We all came to celebrate an amazing woman who showed all of us how to live Dr. Suzuki's vision. Mrs. Neal was not only a pioneer in the Suzuki movement, she was also a standard bearer for women who believe that they can have it all. She showed us what is possible, as long as you are always guided by love, community, work, and dedication. We were all able to achieve individual and collective excellence by always adhering to the axiom that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." She believed in each of us individually and collectively, and continuously told us that there was nothing we couldn't accomplish. All we had to do was work hard, take chances, and always reach our hands both forward and backward. I can think of no greater tribute to this tiny woman with the heart and spirit of a lioness, than the gathering of her former and current students to celebrate forty years of music, love, and friendship.



Marissa Murphy is a native of Buffalo, New York, and is a graduate of Buffalo Suzuki Strings, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and the Peabody Conservatory. She serves as Principal Second Violin of the Maryland Symphony Orchestra and is Director of Washington Suzuki Strings. She makes her home in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with her husband and three-month-old son.

Fiddle Day 2011 Notes

by Alessandra Schneider

At the third Annual Fiddle Day on October 15, 2011, **Andrea Hoag** once again encouraged and inspired participants of all ages to try different styles of fiddling. Although sheet music was provided, many teachers and students chose to learn by ear in the traditional way. So many expressive details are learned in this ‘call and response’ approach that I do not think anyone missed the written notes! I really appreciated the history Ms. Hoag provided with each song, allowing everyone to get a real feel for the music. My favorite piece was “Skälleko.” This is a walking song, and Andrea engaged everyone by demonstrating various speeds and how that affected the music. I also enjoyed the way she taught a simple tune and then transformed it by adding a choice of drones, turns, trills, or speeds. This really personalized the music, freed up the player, and allowed for improvisation. I believe that improvising and branching out to different styles of playing help create well-balanced and happy musicians.

Alessandra Schneider is Membership Chair for ASTA MD/DC Chapter

by Dorée Huneven

It was a pleasure to see **Ellen Jacobs** back for Fiddle Day 2011, as she invited the attendees to sit circularly, lower the music stands, look away from the music as much as possible, and to not worry about any wrong notes! We then proceeded to learn “Le Saut du Lapin” (The Rabbit’s Jump) in 4-bar phrases, slowly, repetitively, comfortably. As a classically-trained musician, I appreciated the uncomplicated accessibility of the tune, which made it easy to memorize and technically easy to grasp immediately. The pleasures of playing these tunes come in learning their history and style, and in learning to embellish, harmonize, combine them with other tunes, share in performances with others. That can lead to playing for dances, weddings, jams and informal get-togethers! It’s not that I have done most of these things, but Ellen reminded me once more

that they exist. Playing traditional music has its own kind of work, but it is also a way of enjoying music outside the studio and practice room. It is important that students get that message so that it becomes another outlet for their musical proclivities once they leave their teachers and embark on their independent lives.

Dorée Huneven is Past-President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter

by Rachel Li

Saturday, October 15, 2011, was Fiddle Day at The Lutheran Church of Saint Andrew. This was my first time attending. The workshops didn’t start until nine o’clock, so I got to eat snacks and look around. The food was very tasty, but I would have liked it better if they had more choices. Gail’s Violin Shop was selling their products so I got to browse through all the violin/fiddle books and violin supplies.

The two instructors were Ms. Andrea Hoag and Ms. Ellen Jacobs. They taught us fiddling styles and techniques. I really liked Ms. Andrea’s workshop because of the songs taught. She got us singing along to “Ducks on the Millpond.” We were also stomping and clapping along to other tunes. For both workshops we stood up and focused on playing techniques other than the notes. Andrea taught us to add trills and extra notes to make it sound more advanced. I thought the songs were all pretty good, but my favorite one was “Skälleko.” It had a nice beat to it and it was very catchy.

The instructors were very helpful and patient with the students. I liked the room that we played in. It was very large, so we could really hear our music clearly, and it echoed back to us. The way we were seated made me feel like I was in an orchestra. I also liked Ms. Andrea’s and Ms. Ellen’s fiddle performances. I thought that they were very talented. Overall, I think Fiddle Day was a great experience. I learned a lot of new things, made new friends, and it was a lot of fun!

Rachel Li, a violin student of Alessandra Schneider, is a sixth grader at Robert Frost Middle School.

by Svea Johnson

My experience at Fiddle Day was very good. I liked all the fiddling but especially the Swedish fiddling because that is my heritage. I learned that a fiddle tune is not just a western-like bunch of double stops (No offense. I actually love those fiddle tunes.) A fiddle tune can be almost anything: double stops,

no double stops, high, low, fast, slow, etc. I also learned that fiddle tunes can come from all over the globe and not just the Wild West. I really liked this event and it was very well worth it.

Svea Johnson, age eight, is a student of Catherine Stewart.



SKÄLLEKO (BELL COW)

TRADITIONAL SWEDISH WALKING TUNE
HARMONY BY REBECCA WEISS

Chord symbols: G, D, G, C, G, D, D, G

Chord symbols: G, D, G, C, G, D, G, G

Chord symbols: G, D, C, D, G

Chord symbols: G, D, C, D, G

Kurt Sassmannshaus Workshop Report

September 10–11, 2011

by Mark Pfannschmidt

Kurt Sassmannshaus presented a workshop on the method *Early Start on the Violin*. The books were written by his father, and Kurt recently translated them from German. The workshop was held at the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, Maryland. Potter's Violins provided \$25 scholarships to each participating ASTA member. Jim Kelly was there from Potter's to supply materials for purchase for any teacher who needed them. Fourteen teachers participated. In addition to MD/DC Chapter members, teachers also came from Richmond and Leesburg in Virginia and one even came from Minneapolis, Minnesota. We had a great time making new friends and learning together.

In eight hours, Mr. Sassmannshaus took us through all four books; we saw how the method was designed. I was struck by several features of this method:

- The method is sequential, yet flexible enough to accommodate different teaching styles (beginning by rote or by reading, for example).
- To introduce each new finger pattern and later, each new position, the method makes use of old familiar tunes.
- The repertoire is grouped by finger pattern in Books 2 and 3, making this an ideal resource for reinforcing new patterns or working on particular problem patterns with remedial situations.
- The method is published by Bärenreiter, which means Mr. Sassmannshaus had a huge catalog of works to draw from, and the assistance of the editorial staff of one of the leading scholarly publishers ensuring the repertoire is edited well.

Volume 1: Aimed at 4- to 6-year-old beginners, this series has eye-catching multicolor illustrations with short songs that are enjoyable to sing. This book is designed to provide material for approximately one academic year. Because it's sequential, this material can be useful for older students, and even adults find the material engaging. There are two to six staves per page. Kurt told us that many Suzuki teachers like using this volume for Pre-Twinkle.

Concepts in Volume 1:

- Open strings: Presented individually with the same rhythmic patterns for each string for early success.
- Fingers are introduced in this order: 2nd, 4th, 1st, 3rd. Introducing fingers in this order ensures that the concept of making 4th finger comfortable and reaching back for 1st finger is established from the very beginning. (This idea was radical at the time.) Each new finger has five to ten songs to reinforce the new concept.
- Rhythms for notes: Half, quarter, whole, eighth. Rhythms for rests: Quarter, half.
- *Extremely* large print at beginning, reduced to *very* large print midway, once all four fingers have been introduced. Makes tracking easier for young eyes.
- Almost all tunes have lyrics.
- Bow: Middle at the start, later expanding toward tip and frog; bow distribution introduced.
- Bowing skills: Lift, staccato, hook, slur, portato.
- Open string scales (2-3 close is the only finger pattern) with the introduction of scales on broken thirds.
- Canons toward the end of the volume provide the first experience of chamber music.

Volume 2: This volume focuses on introducing all of the basic finger patterns (except for low 4), and then using them to explore the fingerboard with familiar tunes (playing the same finger pattern in a new position) and finger pattern games. Each new finger pattern uses a fingerboard illustration and presents old tunes, new tunes, scales, arpeggios and broken thirds in each pattern. The new pattern is then combined with the old pattern. Print size is *quite* large at first (but smaller than Volume 1), and is reduced to *still somewhat* large after about 20 pages. Five to twelve staves per page.

Concepts in Volume 2:

- Finger Patterns:

1-2 close (Tonic on 3rd finger)
high 2/low 2
3-4 close (Tonic on 1st finger)
high 3/low 3
low 1 (Tonic on 2nd finger)
low 1/high 1

- Rhythms: Dotted Quarter and eighth. Sixteenth. Meters include 3/8 and 2/2.
- Theory terms: Tonic, triad, arpeggio, accidental, major scale, melodic minor scale.
- Most tunes do not have lyrics (except old tunes used to introduce new concepts).
- Duets: First introduced on p. 20, this continues as a major feature of this method.
- Double Stops with preparatory exercises.
- Starting on **1st** finger: Two-octave major and minor scales with tonic and subdominant arpeggios to 4th position (or higher) starting on first finger (by ear). Parts of the book can be reviewed for reading in 3rd position and 2nd position.

Volume 3: This volume is a companion to Volume 2, providing more duet choices with greater difficulty. The duets are organized by finger patterns in the same order they were presented in the first two volumes, with a few additions. Style periods: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century. Print size is normal, which allows for six two-staff systems per page.

Concepts in Volume 3:

- New Finger Patterns: Low 4 (3-4 close with low 1); high 4/low 4.
- Ornaments: Trill (including 3-4), appoggiatura, mordent, pizz., LH pizz. (+)
- Rhythms: Triplet 8ths, triplet 16ths; pickups, syncopation, ties, mixed meters.
- Courtesy accidentals, dynamics.
- Minor keys, modal pieces.
- Articulation marks: Staccato, tenuto, wedge, accent.
- One-octave major scales in all keys.
- Starting on **2nd** finger: Two-octave major and minor scales with tonic and subdominant arpeggios through 4th position (or higher) by ear.

Volume 4: This volume focuses on playing in 2nd and 3rd position and shifting. Like the earlier volumes, this one also presents reading in positions with some familiar material from earlier volumes.

This volume can also act as a stand-alone volume for introducing positions and shifting. Like Volume 3, this volume has duets selected from baroque, classical, romantic, and twentieth-century composers.

Concepts in Volume 4:

- 3rd position; 2nd position; shifting exercises.
- Extended 4th finger.
- Triple stops with many bowing variations (24).
- “Climbing” up the fingerboard in modulating hand patterns (like Ševčík, but more fun). This concept was first introduced in Volume 2, but here the author explores the idea of mixing up the fingers. (1234, 1243, 1324, 1342, etc.)
- Harmonics: This is the best concise explanation I’ve ever seen of harmonics. Here again, tunes from Volume 1 make it easier to learn a new skill.
- Shifting: The exercises covered in these four pages cover the same concepts covered in Ševčík Op. 8, but in a manner that is friendly to young players.
- Ornaments: Mordents with accidentals; grace notes in 2-, 3-, and 4-note groups; appoggiaturas and single grace notes; turns.
- Bow strokes: Martelé, [up-bow] staccato, dotted hooks, spiccato.
- Two-octave major and minor scales, starting on 1st or 2nd finger, in all keys by pattern.
- Three-octave major and minor scales, with tonic and subdominant arpeggios starting on G, A and B \flat . These patterns can be moved to all other keys to play all major and minor scales in all keys.

The method has been transposed down a fifth for viola. All four viola books are in alto clef, and contain exactly the same material. I have been using both the violin and viola books with good success. There is also a series of four books for cello¹, with a different pedagogical sequence better suited to the needs of cellists. Kurt announced that books for bass are in the final stages of preparation.

Each participant received a certificate to document successful completion of the Sassmannshaus Tradition Teacher Training Seminar. It was great fun!



¹Ed. note: A review of the cello books appeared in the November 2010 issue of *American String Teacher* on page 72.

A Brief Cultural Introduction to the Folk Music of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan¹

by Jonathan McCollum

The culture and histories of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are intertwined and have been passed down through their traditionally nomadic people for thousands of years. The *Silk Road* provided a route from China to Europe during the Roman Empire. The Russian Empire eventually overtook the traders and settlers by moving south from Kazakhstan in search of trade into areas that would eventually become present-day Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In 1917, the Russian Empire fell and was replaced by the Soviet Union. For the first time, borders were drawn that dramatically affected Central Asian culture, particularly amongst the Kazak, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen nomads. Even today, the countries of Central Asia are defined as they were during Soviet times. As with other colonized areas of the world, the boundaries do not necessarily represent a true distinction between ethnic and linguistic groups.

The republics of Central Asia share a common history and part of that is their practice of Hanafi Sunni Islam, as in Afghanistan and in the Indian subcontinent. Shiites of Iranian origin are descendants of Persian traders and currently live in Samarkand and Bukhara. Another group of Shiites consists of the Islamis of Pamir, who recognize seven imams, with the Aga Khan as their spiritual leader. Though commonly practiced, the role that Islam plays in each country is different. For the nomadic Kazaks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen, Islam has less of an influence when compared to the Tajik and Uzbek Muslims. Islam's role, politically speaking, has been minimal throughout the region except in Tajikistan (Roy 2000: 141).

Kyrgyzstan²



Kyrgyzstan is a country in Central Asia bounded by Uzbekistan to the west, Kazakhstan to the north, China to the east and Tajikistan to the south. The modern nation of Kyrgyzstan traces its history to a civilization based on nomadic tribes. Following a brief period of independence after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, it became part of the Soviet Union as the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic. It eventually became a full republic of the Soviet Union in 1936. Mikhail Gorbachev's sweeping changes in the 1980s combined with ethnic friction led to the fall of the Soviet Union, thrusting Kyrgyzstan into independence.³

Mountain Instrumental Music from Kyrgyzstan

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, musicians throughout Central Asia began their search for identity by looking to the past. During the Soviet Era, much of this music was lost. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Smithsonian Institution have recently released a set of CDs that hopes to recapture some of that music. The Kyrgyz Mountains provide a landscape where nomadism remains a way of life for many. Founded by Nurlanbek Nyshanov,

¹ Much of this article is an excerpt from: Jonathan McCollum, "Music of Central Asia and the Caucasus," in *OnMusic World Music* (Reston, Virginia: Connect For Education, Inc., 2007).

² A useful reference for general historic background is the Kyrgyzstan chapter of Martha Brill Olcott's *Central Asia's New States* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996). The government publication *Discovery of Kyrgyzstan* is also useful, but limited to society, culture, and customs.

³ For more, see William Fierman (ed.). *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991).

the group Tengir-Too “Celestial Mountains” takes its name from the mountain range that links Kyrgyzstan and China (“Tien Shan” in Chinese). Nyshanov spent his childhood in the mountainous region of northern Kyrgyzstan and graduated from Kyrgyzstan’s State Institute of Arts (now National Conservatory). The group performs on traditional instruments, performing *küü* (literally “mood”), which refers to music composed for a particular instrument.⁴

Kyrgyz musical instruments include the *komuz* (three-stringed lute), *kyl kayak* (two-stringed bowl fiddle), *choor* (end-blown flute made from reed or wood), *chopo choor* (clay ocarina with three to six holes found in southern Kyrgyzstan), *sybyzgy* (side-blown transverse flute traditionally played by shepherds), *jygach ooz komuz* and *temir komuz* (wooden and metal jew’s harp). *Küü(s)* traditionally rely on instrumental programmatic music that tells stories. The performers bring these stories alive by providing a verbal synopsis prior to performing, as well as making theatrical gestures while performing to bring the stories to life. This emotional component is commonplace in the performance of *küü(s)*.

Uzbekistan



Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan was the third most populous republic. Uzbekistan’s history has given rise to deeply rooted ethnic tensions as well as political challenges.⁵ As previously discussed, the concept of the “ethnic group” was used by the Soviets to justify territorial realignment of Central Asia. The first nomads who occupied Central Asia came from the northern grasslands of present day Uzbekistan. Settling in this region, they formed the cities

Samarkand and Bukhara and took advantage of the burgeoning commerce of China’s silk trade with the West. Russia completed the conquest of the Caucasus by 1850 and sent military forces into Central Asia, which led to the signing of a treaty making Russia a protectorate of Uzbekistan. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Russian Empire had complete control over Central Asia until the formation of the Soviet Union. In 1929, the Tajik and Uzbek republics formally separated. The attempted coup against Gorbachev in 1991 began a catalyst for independence movements and though Uzbekistan was hesitant, the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan declared the republic independent on August 31, 1991. Today, Uzbekistan is arguably the most powerful state in Central Asia and continues to show signs of economic growth.

Tajikistan



Tajikistan is the smallest area to gain independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. The people known as the “Tajiks” are of Persian descent. Until the late nineteenth century, the Tajik and Uzbek peoples, who have lived together for centuries, did not view themselves as distinct nationalities. Tajik’s early history corresponds to that of Uzbekistan, so that by the ninth century, Islam was the prevalent religion in the entire region. Central Asia was divided into the five major republics in the 1920s. After the establishment of communist rule, Tajikistan was created as autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Uzbekistan. In December 1991, Tajikistan gained independence but entered into a difficult period. That, combined with Tajikistan’s civil war (1992–1997), led Tajikistan into political shambles. Since that time, there has been increased stability within the government.

⁴ There is a similar tradition in Kazakhstan called the “kyui” with a similar meaning. See Asiya Muhambetova, “Philosophical Problems of Being in the Art of the Kazakh Kuyshi,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 22 (1990): 36–41.

⁵ There is a lucid discussion of Central Asian identities in Olivier Roy (ed.), “Ethnies et politique en Asie centrale” in *Des Ethnies aux nations en Asie centrale: Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* (Aix en Provence), January 1992.

The Shashmaqam: Classical Music of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan

“Maqam” is a term that has many interpretations. In this case, it is defined as suites or cycles of music organized by melodic mode and meter. *Shashmaqam* or (six maqam) is a genre of music that includes instrumental pieces, songs, poetry, and dance. The origins of the *shashmaqam* remain unknown, though it is thought to have emerged in Bukhara (see Kushnarev 1958). The six maqams, called ‘Buzruk,’ ‘Rast,’ ‘Nava,’ ‘Dugah,’ ‘Segah,’ and ‘Iraq’ take their names from classical Persian modes. According to Zeranska-Kominek et al, the six “cyclic” forms contain more than 250 instrumental and vocal-instrumental works (Zeranska-Kominek, Kostrubiec, and Wierzejewska 1982: 74). The *shashmaqam* is traditionally associated with aristocratic and elitist culture (Levine 1993: 56). Each suite is named after a particular mode and each mode is characterized by a particular melodic motif. Exaggerating the differences in rhythm and meter between each piece creates contrasts. The performers of *shashmaqam* follow a system known as *aruz*, a system of meters. Musicians must have a powerful voice with a large vocal range and be able to play the *tanbur*, a long-necked plucked lute. In addition, musicians must have a large repertoire of poetic texts and understand the theoretical principles for setting the text and music. *Shashmaqam* performers stylize the poetic texts, drawn from Sufi symbolic texts from classical Islamic poets, into rhythms that are short and long.



Tanbur, a long-necked plucked lute.

Conclusion

The countries of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan comprise a diversity of people unlike anywhere else in the world. The current political boundaries do not necessarily reflect the various ethnic differences found throughout the region. The various *soundscape*s provide contexts for different styles of music, both secular and sacred.



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Keeping Your “Happy Family” Happy! And Other Essential Vocabulary Words for Violinists

by Dr. Jeffrey S. Howard

We’ve all had the experience of going to a lesson and receiving numerous words of wisdom from our many excellent teachers, only to find out later that we have not remembered all the salient details. Everything from finger independence to vibrato to bow grips is explained exhaustively during these lessons. Yet despite our best efforts, frequently this information is difficult to retrieve after the lesson is completed. We must therefore make an effort to create long-term learning skills for future success (both as teachers and students).

There are many methods to choose from as we try to create a long-term “memory system” for successful teaching. The method that I would like to explore here is the use of a Violin Vocabulary List.

A Violin Vocabulary List is a list of catchphrases that refers to technical or musical ideas that we want the student to retain. These catchphrases provide the link between the concept we are presenting and the retention and use of this idea by the student. The wonderful thing about this is that you can create the catchphrases based on almost anything you find memorable. The better your imagination, the more you will help students latch on to ideas that really improve their playing. This is a method I first explored with Professor Stephen Clapp while I was a student at Oberlin Conservatory and one that I have been using with great success ever since.

As an introduction, here are some examples of vocabulary I use in my own teaching:

• **12 o’clock – 6 o’clock.** Nearly all string players initially have great difficulty keeping the bow in a straight line. It is helpful, therefore, to have a reference point for the direction of the bow. I like students to imagine a large clock around their violins and decide that their bow needs to go from *12 o’clock (when you are at the frog and the tip is at its highest point) to 6 o’clock (when you are at the tip and the frog is at its lowest point)*. By using the clock analogy, you can direct a student quickly to make appropriate adjustments.

• **Happy Family.** Shifting always creates many challenges for students. This critical concept in

violin playing is fraught with many complexities. I refer to the motion of the hand as one that maintains your *Happy Family*. Your Happy Family is a shift where all fingers move together as a unit up and down the fingerboard. It is very important, therefore, that the thumb not be left behind; otherwise your Happy Family will not be so Happy! Students always respond well to this concept and immediately make sure that their whole hand moves together with the proper open and close gesture from the elbow (which I refer to as the *elbow hinge*, another vocabulary word!).

• **Thumb Sidewalk.** While the left hand is in the motion of shifting, the thumb travels along a long curving line that I describe as the *Thumb Sidewalk*. This motion is central to an excellent shift as it balances the hand, promotes excellent intonation and plays an important role in expressive vibrato. This visual analogy is very easy for students to comprehend. The easier it is, the more readily they retain the information. As a consequence, they use the concept more accurately at home.

• **Up Bow Whip.** When playing a firm and loud down bow, it is relatively easy to get a powerful and articulate sound (using the *lift-drop* motion of the bow). At the tip, however, it is not as easy. The solution at the tip is called an *Up Bow Whip*. With this motion, coming from above the string, students can get a dramatic sound with nearly as much power as they naturally use at the frog.

These are just a few of the many vocabulary words I have explored in my teaching. This is a flexible system, so the more you create, the better your list becomes. I find that creating catchphrases helps clearly articulate my expectations for the student and promotes a long-term memory system. The bottom line though is that as you create great vocabulary words, your students will improve ever more quickly. Their success will indeed be your reward!



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Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp

A Michigan Treasure

by Jeffrey Schoyen

My children can barely contain their excitement as we turn right at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp sign. “Yay, we’re here!” they shout. It’s a cool June afternoon, and we’ve driven two days to be here. I feel like one of those migrating cranes, returning to the same spot, year after year. Officially, I return to teach cello classes and to perform in various faculty ensembles, but over the years I’ve made great friendships, spent time with my family, and generally “recharged the batteries” after the regular university year. Every season, without fail, I am in awe of this magical place and what it does for young arts students. I’d like to share a bit about it with you.

Blue Lake received its inspiration from the Arens Art Colony of Wisconsin, which was created and run by Professor Ludolph Arens, the grandfather of Blue Lake founder, Fritz Stansell. The Arens Art Colony served as a place where gifted young arts students could go for the summer to concentrate on their work, without the interruptions of everyday life. This early summer arts camp served students from 1922 until 1948, one season after the death of Ludolph Arens.

The Arens Arts Colony idea remained alive in the mind of Ludolph’s daughter, Marguerite, who eventually married Gilbert Stansell, Fritz Stansell’s father. Gilbert was a high school band and orchestra director, and his and Marguerite’s son Fritz became a music educator as well, eventually settling in the Muskegon, Michigan area. Marguerite’s dream of restarting the summer camp found fruition when Fritz and his wife Gretchen, also a music educator, decided to buy Camp Hardy, an abandoned Episcopal Orphanage. (I should add that this was done after considerable thought and research on their part!) They had determined a need for another camp in Michigan, and the political climate also supported more rural camps. Parents were sometimes hesitant to send their children to college-based camps during the turmoil of the 1960s. In his recent book, *Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp: The Early Years*, Stansell writes, “Our decision to purchase Camp Hardy remains a turning point in my life and Gretchen’s. It was also

that critical point when there would no longer be any possibility of turning back. We knew it would also mean giving up successful careers as teachers and selling our beautiful home on Lake Michigan.” What I find so interesting about this story is that there was a dream, a need for a service, an opportunity, and a huge personal and financial risk taken. It’s even more exciting given the fact that during the first summer (1966), Blue Lake had a total of 326 campers studying music, art and dance. Presently, Blue Lake serves over 5400 students during the summer!

Blue Lake’s application process is first come, first served and relies on teacher recommendation. Stansell says, “The policy of accepting students on a first come, first served basis avoids the elitism rampant in much of the arts world. While competition in the arts may be a good idea at times, it can get badly out of hand if promoted by the faculty or by the institution itself. While every camper must be recommended by his or her local arts teacher, at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp students are accepted at their individual levels and encouraged to develop, learn and grow. Blue Lake’s goal is to send our campers home highly motivated with a new understanding and enthusiasm for their art.”

I believe that this philosophy carries through to my experience as a teacher at Blue Lake. This past summer I taught for two two-week sessions. As always, I had a great group of students. During the first session I was aware of a few students who wanted to become music majors in college. There was a good mix of intensities of interest in music. But my second session was memorable. The students in one of my classes were incredibly bright and very serious about music, yet, when I asked them all what they wanted to do in the future, not one wanted to be a musician! I was relieved for them in a way, knowing how difficult a career in music can be, but I was also encouraged and hopeful because they could all still be so interested in music and the cello. So what do I understand from this experience? It tells me again that Blue Lake is promoting a love of art for all of its campers, no matter what they may desire to be in the future.

A typical day at Blue Lake starts at about 6:45 a.m. by getting up for breakfast. After breakfast until noon there will be classes and rehearsals. After lunch students participate in their chosen minor, or have practice time or rest time. Afternoon classes and rehearsals continue and end shortly before 4 p.m. Students can participate in a variety of recreational activities before dinner. After dinner, students go to arts performances or have fun camp activities. At Blue Lake there is a very high rate of students returning for more than one summer. In fact, each season I expect to see some cello students there who have been coming for two or three years in a row.

So what do students like about Blue Lake? I asked one of my classes this summer that question, and many replied that they liked the freedom of going to various classes on their own. They have ten minutes to get to the next site, and they enjoy that time chatting with their friends. I found their mentioning “freedom” interesting because when I walk through camp, I see counselors everywhere. I will venture to guess that there is some fine balance between “freedom” and strictness, and Blue Lake, over the many years, has achieved that.

What do parents like about Blue Lake? Well, I’m the parent of a camper, and I like the fact that safety is such a priority at Blue Lake. Everyone on campus wears a uniform, and they are all the same light blue. So if someone is there without a uniform, they are easily spotted and questioned. Also, the camp is secluded with acres of land on all sides, so I feel this helps as well, providing a sort of cushion between the camp and the outer world. In addition, all employees undergo yearly criminal background checks. My children are probably safer there than in their own yard at home! Beyond the safety issue, I feel that my daughter has had great instruction during her two summers as a camper. I know that she is quite busy but also has great fun. Blue Lake activities are student-centered, and even the professional concerts are mainly for the students. The curriculum is one that stresses the interrelatedness of the various arts, so my daughter, who is an instrumentalist, has had the chance to see student art shows, opera, and theater.

Why do I like returning to Blue Lake? I would have to say it’s the family-centered aspect of the faculty village. Children are welcome to run around and play. Pets on leashes are part of the family as well. Some of my colleagues have taught at Blue Lake for twenty and thirty years. Their children went to camp there and in some cases went on to be Blue Lake counselors or instructors.

This past summer I asked Fritz Stansell how he felt when he saw so many kids participating in the arts at Blue Lake. He answered, “Very grateful. It has been an enriching experience.” I also asked what advice he had for educators who may want to start a camp. “Make sure that a good, solid counseling program is in place first,” he responded. Again, children having supervision and being safe are paramount. Although Blue Lake serves many students from the midwestern states, I’ve had many students from as far away as Arkansas, Virginia, or farther. These students fly to Grand Rapids, and Blue Lake makes arrangements to pick them up. Blue Lake 2012 tuition for a two-week session is about \$1200, depending on the student’s major. Information can be seen at Bluelake.org. And if you’re interested in starting your own camp, Fritz Stansell’s book, *Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp: The Early Years*, will be invaluable. It’s available at Amazon.com.

Well, my kids and I have packed up the van. It’s time to return to Maryland. They say their sad goodbyes to their friends, and gather email addresses and phone numbers. On the way out we drive by the green forest one last time. I look at the Blue Lake sign at the entrance and think again about what a marvelous place this is. And two minutes down the road my children are already talking about what they will do here next summer.



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Teaching Bag of Tricks

by Catherine Stewart, President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter

(Author's note: On October 26, 2011, I presented a class to the pedagogy students at Florida State University titled "Bag of Tricks." The following day I taught a master class so the pedagogy students could see me in action, using my bag of tricks. Thanks to Dr. Pamela Ryan, for inviting me.)

If a student is practicing, concentrating, and trying, but still does not understand a concept, what do you do? Do you get angry and yell at him because you think he is stupid? Do you throw him out of his lesson and tell him to come back when he can do whatever it is? Do you consider that perhaps you haven't explained the concept in a way he can understand it? Have you reached into your bag of tricks for a different way to explain the idea?

I don't learn well when I'm afraid, and being yelled at or embarrassed makes me afraid. I need to feel safe and respected in order to be able to be receptive to new information. In order to learn, I have to trust my teacher and feel safe that my vulnerabilities will not be exploited. I have to be free to make mistakes without embarrassment. Since that is the way I'm comfortable learning, I try to set my studio up so my students can learn that way, too.

So how do I do that? I think the first thing is that I give each student 100 percent of my attention when he is in a lesson. This shows him that I respect him and think his lessons are important and that he is important. I am fortunate to have a large studio, which I have made bright, cheerful, and welcoming. As soon as a student comes into the studio, I greet him. He know he is invited to watch the lesson before his, and sometimes I even include him, so the learning starts as soon as he walks in the door. I'm very clear about what acceptable behavior is, and I'm consistent. Predictable limits yield predictable behavior.

Another thing I do, I always ask how a student is feeling and what kind of day he had. If a student just had four exams, I will give him a different lesson than if he had the day off. An exhausted child frustrates easily and can't retain much. I'm always listening to him and watching his body language because I want to set him up to enjoy the lesson and learning.

I am always honest with every student. He knows if I say something was good, it was, and if I say it wasn't, it really wasn't. I tell him that something might be difficult, and preview it before sending him home. I tell him it is okay to make mistakes, and mistakes are expected. Making mistakes is part of the learning process. If you don't make mistakes, you either won't learn, or you don't need to be in a lesson.

So what is in my bag of tricks? If I have a new concept I am working on (or an old one, for that matter), I will present the material to a student in a variety of ways. I will tell him about it, I'll change the language I use if he didn't understand, I'll demonstrate, I might actually move his fingers or bow for him, and I will break it down into the smallest task possible. I will ask if he understands, and if he says yes, but it is one of those blank "I really don't get it but I don't want to be embarrassed" looks, I'll start again and find a new way to present the material until he is successful. I'll also ask him to explain it to me. It is usually very clear then what he didn't understand. Some children are visual learners, some are auditory learners, and everyone has some kind of learning glitch. So some children have to see it, some have to see it written down and some have to hear information three times before they can process it. Your job is to figure out what each one needs so he can learn.

I also literally have a "bag of tricks." Actually, at home it is a basket and a shelf. I find concrete items really help kids imagine. I love using puppets and toys, and so do the kids. I'll pull out the toys especially if the lesson is getting tense or frustrating. If you are creative, many toys can help with all sorts of lessons.

Crayons are useful in many ways. I have a giant box. When I want to know what color a student wants a passage to be, I have him pick out a crayon. He can make a color chart on a photocopy of his music for feelings (each feeling can be a different color), dynamics (each dynamic is assigned a color), and even fingerings (each position is assigned a color). I have feeling words on 3 x 5 cards to help add emotion to the music. The kids randomly choose a

card and have to add that emotion, to the passage. I have a dartboard that I use as an example of finding the center of a pitch. To play in tune, you have to aim for the center of the center of the pitch. I have a ball, kind of like a snow globe filled with glitter, that I use as an example of a vibrant note. We talk about throwing the note to the back of the concert hall.

My favorite puppet is “Bow Biter,” a sock puppet with blue feather hair and googly eyes. His job is to help a student get to the frog of the bow. With big kids, he bites them if they miss the frog. It usually only takes one or two bites for them to pay attention. With little kids, he gives kisses when they execute their tasks correctly. If he bites, they laugh so hysterically we might as well stop the lesson.

My example for vibrato is a little round stuffed cat with sand in the bottom. I want a student’s finger to drop on the string and roll. When he holds the toy, feels the sand, drops it, and sees it roll, he gets the idea. Stuffed animals can take on different voices in the music. Two of my frogs sang a duet in the Lalo Concerto and completely changed a student’s interpretation from etude-like to expressive.

My butterfly puppet floats over the string and drops silently; the mouse puppet checks to see if there is a space under the neck of the violin or if the left wrist is collapsed. The soft yellow chick snuggles in a bow hand and reminds a student to hold the bow lightly or he will squish the chick. A hummingbird puppet hovers over left hand fingers, reminding a player to keep his fingers close to the fingerboard. For beginners, I have small stuffed dogs with magnets in their paws. A dog can be attached to the bow to keep the child company while he practices.

I find humor is important in teaching. I try to laugh a lot. And if I am getting frustrated, I’ll tell the student. That breaks the mood and we go back to being productive. I think this is the most important thing I will tell you today: I have realized that if I’m not having fun, neither is the student. As you practice your own teaching, be as creative as possible, watch master teachers teach, use their ideas, and get your own big bag of tricks. Enjoy making music and learning fun.



Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother?

How Other Cultures Inform My Teaching

by Dorée Huneven

Amy Chua's controversial *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, a book about her Chinese-American parenting and her daughters' violin and piano lessons, roused bitter debate this year when it came out—mostly by people who only read *about* it. There were sensational talking points: Amy threatened to burn her child's stuffed animals if she didn't practice. She followed her nine-year-old's three-hour lesson with a one-hour practice block. She gave back a birthday card she'd received from her daughter because it wasn't good enough. Because I teach mostly Asian students, and because I speak two Asian languages, I was very eager to read what she had to say about helping her daughters to learn piano and violin, and, despite the negative hype, to see if she had any valuable ideas to add to my multicultural pool of teaching knowledge.

Ms. Chua chose a tongue-in-cheek-yet-serious writing style to describe her musical experiences—particularly with her younger daughter Louisa, “Lulu,” who always shone at her teacher's recitals, and was always asked if she was hoping to become a professional violinist. “They had no idea about the bloodbath practice sessions back home, where Lulu and I fought like jungle beasts,” Chua writes. “I felt that I was in a race against time. Children in China practice ten hours a day.... Every year some new seven-year-old from Latvia or Croatia wins an international competition.... Besides, I was already at a disadvantage because I had an American husband who believed that childhood should be fun.” And so begins a detailed saga of her older daughter Sofia's work with the piano and younger daughter Lulu's on the violin.

Despite the seeming harshness of her approach to home practicing, she had some very good ideas. She made it her business to know about violin and violin teaching through extensive reading of treatises about violin technique, and listening to CDs of Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman and Midori, “trying to figure out what they were doing to sound so good.” She writes, “What Chinese parents understand is that nothing is fun until you're good at it. To get good at anything you have to work, and children on their own never want to work, which is why it is crucial to override

their preferences.” She exhorts fortitude on the part of the parents to overcome children's resistance, encourages tenacious practice and lots of repetition. Despite the fact that she had a full-time position as a law professor at Yale, she always found time to practice hours a day with each child. Going beyond merely getting the girls to put in the time, she made it her business to understand what the teachers were getting at and to translate her lesson notes into original and effective practice routines. Reading through the notes she took at the lessons was like looking at my own notes I took as I transcribed my recorded violin lessons: they were detailed, astute, and as learned as if she herself were the student violinist.

Yet, poignantly, she reveals that “The truth is I'm not good at enjoying life. It's not one of my strengths. I keep a lot of to-do lists and hate massages and Caribbean vacations.” A few pages further on, she reveals, “Happiness is not a concept I tend to dwell on. Chinese parenting does not address happiness. This has always worried me.”

As a teacher, this worries me as well. Although Amy Chua's purpose in pushing her daughters so relentlessly was to prepare them well for the future in academics and in music, how well did she prepare them for cultivating their future happiness? What else could she have done? What can I do?

I am always scouting around for ideas from different cultures that address how the process of studying something difficult can be absorbing and interesting as it is being learned *and* be a source of pleasure in one's future life. These subjects can range from academics in school to involved leisure time learning activities, such as foreign language learning. To begin with, all families have their own “culture,” and in my family, my parents' attitude was that *experiences* are the most valuable and lasting gifts parents can give their children. So we went off for three-month summer camping trips to Alaska and Guatemala, and also took trans-America and trans-Canada marathon camping trips. (Both of my parents were schoolteachers.) They spent lavishly to fly over earthquake-devastated Juneau, Alaska, and past cliff dwellings in Canyon de Chelly. It isn't easy to

be a traveler, given long car trips, jet lag, foreign languages, steep costs, loneliness if one travels alone, and accommodation to others if one travels in a group, yet the peculiar discipline of travelling is an educational tradition I continue to this day. There were other kinds of family experiences: living in a continually integrating neighborhood, giving hospitality to exchange teachers from other countries, hiking frequently, going to many cultural events even if they were difficult for a child to understand, and above all, reading. These were all experiences that sometimes seemed arduous to me as a child, yet taught me how to continue disciplined learning as an adult. Untold pleasure has come from these studies. Of course, I try to pass the knowledge and value of this be-disciplined-to-have-fun learning to my students—particularly regarding their practice and what it can bring to them in the future.

From my experiences living in Japan for two years and from teaching Japanese children there and in the States, I have learned to deeply respect my teachers and to respect learning. I also—mostly unsuccessfully—try to eschew any temptation to be sloppy. (I never did find an example of sloppiness in any aspect of Japanese life during my stay.) I also learned to be patient in a foreign country to learn to understand what people were saying to me: Japanese started out being totally incomprehensible and then gradually “came into focus.” This helps with teaching to translate the difficulties of beginning a new piece to careful step-by-step work, so that it eventually becomes easily playable. I admire the attitude of consensus in Japanese society and how children learn to work together. These cultural attitudes greatly inform so much of my teaching, from imparting the idea of careful mindfulness, to teaching children how to work together in group playing—unison and chamber music. I also cannot help rejoicing when I see some of the same kind of respectfulness shown to me as I saw shown to Japanese teachers. My students and I still bow to each other at the beginnings and ends of private and group lessons, and a subtle thread of “Japaneseness” works its way into many parts of many lessons. (I don’t include the Suzuki Philosophy in this discussion, as its tenets are universal. Still, studying with Dr. Suzuki in Japan for two years tied it to the country: a topic for another essay!)

I lived in London, England for eight and a half years. When I was there, I was fascinated by the proximity of other countries and cultures. I studied French,

Spanish, Italian, German, and Arabic. I also travelled extensively. But living in London and teaching British children in the London Suzuki Group gave me cultural lessons that would have been impossible to receive otherwise. The most valuable attitude I picked up was at first difficult for me, an American college graduate in her twenties, and I am sure that it would have been an anathema to Amy Chua. It was take lots and lots of time to cultivate your interests now. Do not wait for retirement or for anything. Do it now! Here in the States, we call such interests “hobbies,” and we do them in our spare time. In England, these interests define who people are. I saw that when children began to learn violin, they were encouraged to deepen their studies with many additional activities, such as weekend or longer residential orchestra and chamber music courses with specialist teachers (there were local orchestras as well) attendance of concerts, meeting with other children to play, etc. My myriad language learning was encouraged, and I was called a “linguist” rather than a “hobbyist.” After I got over the shock of seeing people not worry as much about making a living as they did about signing up in time for their French literature and culture adult evening class, I absorbed this attitude fully. Why else these days would I study Chinese two to four hours a day, or make a special trip to St. Louis for a weekend of chamber music with an old friend, or grow most of my own food?

On a more subtle level, this attitude permeates my teaching. I actually teach violin and viola to enrich my own life! Learning the skills of teaching, continually searching for and learning new repertoire, facing challenges with students’ learning styles, and involving myself in countless other aspects of teaching are all *interesting* and are core components of my life. Added to this mix are the gifts of different personalities, cultures and languages among my students’ families. How lucky it is to be able to teach in Chinese, Japanese and Spanish! Of course, I can only hope that my students and their families can benefit from my personal cultural enrichment. My biggest hope for myself as a teacher is that any skills I give my students while they are with me will give them pleasure now and throughout their lives.



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A Book Review:

Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*

by *Christin Li*

I loved the book. When I saw it in Costco, I sat there reading. My mom bought it, and then I stayed up until 11 p.m. to finish it. Afterwards, I felt angry. I think it's cruel to not let your child have sleepovers, play dates, to not let them be in plays, to have there be no complaining, no grade less than an A, and no TV. I agree that kids should work hard and do what they are told, but this is overboard. Kids are supposed to enjoy some of childhood instead of thinking that you can't ski or skate or do acrobatics in fear of breaking your bones, you can't eat candy because it's a bad example, and so much more! When you become an adult, you are overwhelmed with taxes and bills and screaming children. How can you enjoy life when you are on vacation thinking, "Oh, when I get home I need to pay the dog sitter, pay the taxes, do my work, argue with my children, and pay my credit bills?"

I do agree somewhat about the way the mom teaches though. The mom is very pushy and helped her children achieve much. That's good, but her way of pushing is saying comments like "You're garbage!" and "You're so ungrateful! See these wrinkles? It's because of you that I got these!" Also, threats like "I'm going to burn all of your stuffed animals if you don't play this correctly," must've been very... useful? If my mom did that, I would be practicing my instrument all the time. But I think that must've hurt Lulu and Sophia a lot, though.

Speaking of Lulu, She is my *favorite* character. She plays violin, tennis, and piano, just like me. Another reason I like Lulu is because she rebelled. I'm not saying she should always rebel; I'm just saying that to a kid who is Chinese and isn't pushed like that, it's just heartbreaking (kind of) to hear of another

Chinese kid who is pushed to her limits. I pity her and I guess I almost think of Amy (the mom) as a villain. But I know the mom isn't the villain.

Amy truly does love her children and will even become the mom who is hated to have her children become successful. But I guess that way wasn't exactly perfect because in my opinion, maybe the girls also thought that they were hated by their mom because she always criticized and yelled. But even though this way was long and painful, it worked. Sort of.

But I believe the stereotype Amy put in her book wasn't correct. She said that all Chinese parents are the same as her and would explode if a B were on any report card. My parents and other parents wouldn't do this. All (basically) of my Asian/Chinese friends are first generation Americans. They are all ABC's (American Born Chinese). We all got A minuses, B pluses, it doesn't really matter. Our parents don't get angry; they just tell us to try to improve. Now if we get more than three B's, then... there would be a little burst of disappointment. So I think that stereotype isn't exact. Maybe a little, but not right exactly.

As a biography, this book is extremely good! I know it isn't an exact biography, but it was close, and it was *awesome!* I loved this book, and I hope Amy Chua makes another book as amazing as this one. I really enjoyed this book. Amy Chua is a good writer.



Christin Li is twelve years old, and a student of Dorée Huneven. She has studied violin for three and a half years, and goes to Robert Frost Middle School.

Youth Orchestra Days Remembered

by Paul Scimonelli

(Editor's note: This piece was inadvertently omitted from the last edition of Stringendo, where it should have appeared with other youth orchestra reminiscences. My apologies to Paul!)

My foray into the world of bass playing came at pretty much the normal age. I was eleven years old and just beginning to get tall enough to reach half position on a standard size Kay bass. My first teacher, Mr. Fred Sollner, a member of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini and the U. S. Navy Band, nurtured me through Simandl and Ševčík for several years until he told my father I was “ready.” Both Fred and my father (Dr. Frank Scimonelli, former Chairman of the Music Department, Prince George’s College, and trumpet and Post Horn soloist with the U. S. Navy Band) knew just about everyone musical in the metropolitan area. In 1963, they arranged for me to play with the Arlington Symphony, under the baton of maestro Karl Rucht.

The Arlington Symphony was a very close knit, “family” kind of orchestra at the time. It was populated by adult musicians with full time “day jobs,” area music teachers, high school students, and many freelance professional players from the service bands and the National Symphony. The music was a challenge for me at that age: Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Rimski-Korsakov, and more. Maestro Rucht, a former trumpeter with the Berlin Philharmonic, was fond of the late Romantics. Gruff and demonstrative with the adult musicians, Maestro Rucht, seemed to be more forgiving of me and other younger players. However, I did learn to sight read really fast!

Arlington Symphony was a fertile learning ground for me. It was a real “sink or swim” situation, and I actually enjoyed the challenge. My teacher helped me frequently with the difficult passages, and I loved the experience. There were no string programs in any of the high schools I attended (two years of Catholic school, two years public school), and my parents, both busy professional musicians, just couldn’t carve out the time to get me to the fledgling music programs of MCYO and AYP. By the time I was sixteen, I had a car and was allowed to drive myself

to the rehearsals. One could actually get around the Beltway in a short period of time back then!

In June of 1964, I spent a week with the Annapolis Youth Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Norman Dello Joio. An affable man, Dello Joio was quite precise with what he wanted, although I don’t think us youngster gave him what he wanted at the time. We had only a week to prepare a short overture and one of his own compositions, both of which I sadly do not remember. However, we did play Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture. The cannons were supplied by the Naval Academy’s shore battery. I remember a young cadet standing in the percussion section with a large walkie-talkie, being cued by the timpanist when to fire the cannons. Unfortunately, the cannons were so far down the river that one heard the boom several measures after the cue. The effect was still quite fun though!

My real youth orchestra experiences were in the summers of 1964 through 1969 when I attended the New England Music Camp in Sydney, Maine. It was an absolutely magical place to grow up and learn music—rehearsals every day, lessons twice a week, theory and ear training courses, concert on Sundays, and swimming each day in one of the most beautiful lakes in the world.

Once again, there was no scrimping on the music. We performed either the Kalmus or Breitkopf editions of major composers: Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mussorgsky, Ravel, Debussy, and many more. Choral works and operatic arias were also included. I studied with many tremendous musicians who imparted wisdom as well as music.

One summer, we had a particularly bombastic and charismatic guest conductor who felt he was the second incarnation of Leonard Bernstein. Wild-eyed and wild-gestured, he rehearsed the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as we struggled mightily to find a downbeat. We learned that he was celebrating a birthday that week, so the faculty spread the word at dress rehearsal that at the beginning of the Beethoven, we would play Happy Birthday instead of the downbeat. Full of pre-concert enthusiasm, he took the podium, implored us to pour

out our souls and “breathe new life into the music,” and brought the first measure crashing down... to complete silence. We thought he would have a heart attack right there until we began the birthday song. Amused and grateful, he began again, this time with a somewhat more controlled beat.

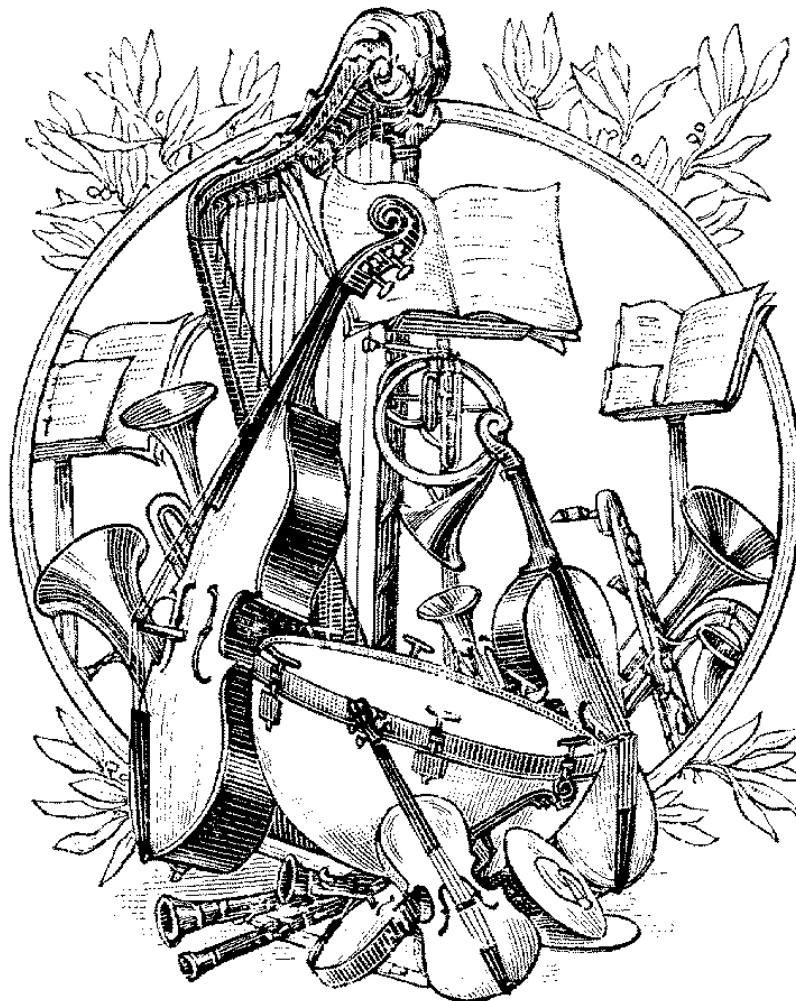
NEMC was such a more accelerated learning experience than any of the Youth Orchestras with which I have recently been associated. There were really only five days to learn an entire concert program (I played in the Symphonic Band and Orchestra, as well as the Concert Choir), and there was a significant camper turnover after the first four weeks. I’m sure this drove the ensemble directors crazy. Thankfully, the ensembles were anchored down by the faculty, all of whom were first-class symphony professionals and/or professors at major

colleges and university throughout the country. This mentoring was integral to the philosophy of the camp. Contrary to many of the camps in the area, symphonic solos were played by the campers, not the faculty.

I truly enjoyed growing up on the shores of Lake Messalonskee. I made many friends there, several of whom went on to have long and successful music careers in a variety of musical fields. The learning was fast-paced, exciting, and never ending. I was very fortunate to be exposed to so many caring faculty members, many of whom were integral in shaping my own teaching philosophies. What a great way to grow up!



Paul Scimonelli is Bass Forum Editor and Private School Representative for MD/DC Chapter.



The Lighter Side

APPOLOGGIATURA: A composition that you regret playing.

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

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

ALLREGRETTO: When you're well into the piece and realize you took too fast a tempo.

ANGUS DEI: To play with a divinely beefy tone.

APPROXIMATURA: Notes not intended by the composer, yet played with an "I mean that" attitude.

CACOPHANY: A composition incorporating many people with chest colds.

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

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 mosquitoes that bother musicians on outdoor gigs.

FRUGALHORN: A sensible and inexpensive brass instrument.

GAUL BLATTER: A French horn player.

GREGORIAN CHAMP: Title bestowed upon the monk who can hold a note the longest.

GROUND HOG: One who takes control of the bass line and won't let anyone else play it.

PLACEBO DOMINGO: A faux tenor.

SCHMALZANDO: Music from the Guy Lombardo band.

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

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

TEMPO TANTRUM: What a school orchestra has when it's not following the conductor.

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

