

Newsletter

Vancouver Cello Club



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February, 1984.

This issue of the Newsletter is graced by a new letterhead, designed by Beryl Hardstaff, recorder and gamba player, of West Vancouver, a long time friend of the Club.

Pride of place in this issue goes to a message from our President, Audrey Piggott -

Study Sessions.

The following is the result of a request from Judy Fraser who thought that some of my musical experiences might be of interest to you, particularly with regard to my student days in what is now a past era. So here goes:

England. I started cello lessons at the age of eight, first with a local teacher in Dartmouth, a smallish town in South Devon, and later with a very fine cellist who fortunately came to live a few miles away, and who had been a pupil of the then well-known German cellist, Hugo Becker.

I entered the Royal College of Music (London) at the age of eighteen and soon after competed for and won an Open Scholarship for three years which was granted two extensions, five years in all.

The Director at that time was Sir Hugh Allen, one of the great "Personalities" of that era. He was a big man in every way with a bull-dog chin belied by small twinkling eyes, beloved by his students, proverbially insulting to choirs, (who I am sure loved him for it) with his own Puckish sense of humour, of which, early on I became the butt, viz: the end of my scholarship exam.--Me, breathing again.- Sir Hugh, "And now play something elegiac in A. Flat minor". For some moments lugubrious moanings from me.--Sir Hugh, (with that tantalising twinkle) "Now play it again."

The College curriculum included a second study, various classes including aural training - so essential for string players - choral singing, chamber music and a weekly individual lesson of Harmony etc. (all of fifteen minutes). For this I studied with the composer, Armstrong Gibbs, who rushed me through the species of Counterpoint after which we settled down to composition - much more fun for both of us.

At that time no great stress was laid on Orchestral training. There were the First and Second orchestras, the former with one three hour rehearsal a week, giving two concerts per term, at which advanced students could let off their concertos. (I was lucky and got to play two - the Elgar and the Delius, both with Malcolm Sargent). On one occasion at rehearsal Ravel came to conduct us in his "Daphne and Chloe" Suite which we had been rehearsing, I think with Adrian Boult. I remember Ravel as a dapper little man - can't recall a thing about his conducting but have a lingering impression of a suit with a purplish tinge. There were also yearly opera performances, and I got to know really well Debussy's exquisite "Pelleas and Melisande" - unlike any other opera I know of. We also played "Parsifal" spread over two nights. There was a heat-wave on at the time, and the sequins on a cellist's dress melted and stuck to her cello, whilst the Flower Maidens wilted on stage and tottered off it. To cap it all, Parsifal shot his arrow into the orchestra pit!

For most of my time at the College I took piano as "extra first" study, and was

most fortunate in both my professors - not only gifted teachers but forming a perfect combination. En route, as it were, I took my A.R.C.M. in both instruments and won various welcome monetary awards. There were occasional outside "jobs" - poorly paid but much sought after, often for a pick-up orchestra with some choral group. These were handed out by a somewhat austere lady. It was reported that on one occasion a male student breezed into this lady's office with the query "Miss Bull, do you have any odd Passions floating around?" (anyway that was the gist of it!. The lady's answer is not on record). Directly after the scholarship exam, my cello professor, the genial Ivor James, started completely changing my bowing, and it was some time before I could perform again. He also changed my vibrato - a lateral movement instead of a "wobble". Part of "Jimmie's" wisdom lay in not being a dictator, e.g. given the "correct" bow hold plus certain other basics, he allowed a student to find his or her own forearm level.

Lessons in my day were ridiculously short, one or two a week making in all only forty minutes. I don't know how we covered as much as we did.

Gifted as Ivor James was as a cello teacher, he was, to me, unsurpassed as a chamber music coach. I still seem to visualize him perched at times on the back of a chair, looking for all the world like "Mr. Pickwick", and I still remember the wonderful phrasing and shape and "corners" of his conception of the Schubert two-cello quintet. Unconsciously we absorbed from him that invaluable but oft-elusive quality, a sense of style.

On the lighter side of College life there was the annual summer party. First there was solid food for the ear, then dessert for the tummy, ending with a generous portion of "soda-pop" in the shape of a sort of musical burlesque. I still remember a "scene" from "Orpheus" in which off-stage sounds never quite synchronised with the visible pluckings of the "lute", - Ivor James chasing a cadenza from the top of and around the piano to continue up from the bass, and the eminent Bach pianist, Harold Samuel, dressed as a prodigy complete with blue sash, playing Bach with his hands behind his back! (How about it, V.A.M.?)

During the last part of my time at the College I became a member of an "outside" quartet whose appearances included recitals in Holland at Amsterdam and The Hague. I left the quartet when the College offered me half a composition scholarship (there wasn't one for strings) for further study abroad. I went off to Paris to study with Diran Alexanian for a few months.

Paris. My Paris Entree was memorable. I boarded at first at a Pension, and just after arrival I asked someone there to telephone Alexanian, giving the number in my best French - as I thought correctly. A meeting was arranged - the address was different but I assumed that Alexanian must have lately moved. On arrival the door was opened and there stood before me a strange young man, with a second in the background, both, if I remember rightly, immaculately clad in riding outfits. The family was obviously away for I could see furniture draped in dust sheets. For a few moments I floundered about in French whilst an elderly cousin who had fortunately accompanied me stood in the background, laughing himself sick! Finally he came to my rescue. ---Profuse apologies--- one had misunderstood---one thought that Mam'selle, for some reason, really wished to see one---would Mam'selle not enter and telephone her Professor from there.

Unlike Ivor James, Alexanian was a dictator. At my first lesson after I had played a short piece he remarked "Mademoiselle is a good musician, but she has never studied bowing!". True, I did still have a few bowing problems, but minor compared with what was to come.

In addition to private lessons, I attended Master classes at the Ecole Normale de Musique. These, given in French and German, took place in a large, lovely and typically French salon. We sat around -- a cosmopolitan lot, and were pounced upon at any moment. At first I was praised, then berated (in that order) - "Mam'selle, your bowing -- Mam'selle, your left hand -- but Mam'selle, where is the music?". By the time I left, I was so tied in knots that I used to practise with my teeth clenched. My memory may be at fault, but I do not remember Alex. ever mentioning that all-important component - relaxation. (I've heard that even in fast pieces Casals had specified spots for momentary relaxation).

From early days Casals and Alexanian had been close friends and naturally Alex. had absorbed many of Casals' principles which, in a detailed but somewhat academic way, he passed on to his pupils. From him I learned that Casals "extension", now of course, widely used by cellists. Also an enlightening

VANCOUVER CELLO CLUB

NEWSLETTER
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President: Ian Hampton
Editor: Ernest Collins

December 1981
1407 Haywood Avenue
West Vancouver, B.C.
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ZARA NELSOVA WORKSHOP
Banff - February 11, 12, 13, 1982

So far, no less than 58 cellists from Victoria, Nanaimo, Vancouver, Prince George, Okanagan, Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa have registered! This includes a number of adult students. Information sheet has gone out to members listed. Don't forget to send in applications for bursaries.

ATTENTION - IMPORTANT - SEND \$56.00 for VIA RAIL to JUDITH FRASER NO LATER THAN 30 DECEMBER 1981. Cheques payable to Vancouver Cello Club. JUDITH'S ADDRESS - 17 - 1460 ESQUIMALT AVENUE, WEST VANCOUVER.

OTHER EVENTS

Adult Ensemble Classes at the VAM: (Rm. 22B at VAM)

8:15 p.m. - January 12, February 2 & 23,
March 23, April 6.

Last class this year - December 15 at 8:15

Irish coffee after class.

Cello Club Student Informal Recitals:

Fridays at 7:30 p.m. VAM Library - January 22,
February 19, March 19, April 30.

Note:

Cello Ensemble Classes from VAM plus UBC Cellists postponed from December 5 to February 6th at 1 p.m. UBC Music Bldg.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC - Calgary, Alberta

John Kadz sends the following note:

The Academy of Music at the Conservatory of Music and Speech Arts, Mount Royal College is well into its second year of operation. Thirty students have been accepted this year in the areas of violin, viola, cello and piano. These students, upon acceptance by audition into the program, receive a scholarship which is valued at \$1,000 or more.

Components of the program include private lessons, weekly accompanying sessions, chamber music, orchestra, individual theory programs and master classes. This year's list of guest artists for workshops includes Gerald Stanick, Zara Nelsova, Steven Staryk, Alan Monk, Henri Temianka, Gyorgy Sebok and Gary Karr to name a few.

Students are expected to perform frequently for master classes and in local concerts. They spend, on the average, three afternoons a week at the Conservatory.

Funding for this program has been endorsed by a private foundation operational and endowment grant and supported by Mount Royal College. John Kadz is Coordinator of the Academy program and Dr. Norman Burgess is Director of the Conservatory of Music and Speech Arts at Mount Royal College.

CELLO CHITCHAT

We'd like to welcome several new members from out of B.C. - Tim McCoy from Ottawa, who will be meeting many of our B.C. members at the Zara Nelsova Workshop at Banff in February. Also John Kadz, cellist with One Third Ninth and Music Coordinator of the Academy of Music, Calgary (see note above). John will be bringing 10 young Calgary cellists to the Workshop. He also has a beautiful Betts Cello with Hill papers for sale [(403) 246-6561] .

Former Vancouver member Carol Jennermann, now resident in Medley, Alberta had a son, Cory, born October 10. She writes "I do miss the evenings with you and the group (adult ensemble class) and the knowledge of accomplishment while making music."

Lianna Walden has had several lessons with Ken'l chino Tonaga, principal cellist of the NHK orchestra in Tokyo. She still finds train travel difficult in Japan and it takes 1½ hours by train to attend a lesson. Lianna will be having lessons with Tsutsumi and she attended the 25th anniversary concert at the Tokyo Symphony on November 20th. She very much misses hearing western classical music.

Stan Markey, our member from Minneapolis, Minnesota, who retired in 1980 writes "for me, 1981 began early in January with a new program as an 'older' student at the U of M and I am now busier than ever, what with Music Theory, Ear Training, sight-singing, cello lessons, piano, University Symphony, plus quartets and two other orchestras." ...footnote to Ernest Collins' comments on "The Adult Player" (below).

Eric Wilson will be off to play a recital in Winnipeg, Dec. 16 to include Beethoven A major, Debussy and Shostakovich sonatas plus "Transformations", a work written for Eric by Max Lischitz.

Congratulations to Elinor Harshenin, who performed the Tschaikowsky Roccoco Variations so well with the Academy Orchestra of the VAM, November 29th in the Orpheum.

Our young member, Carina Reeves has not washed her face since being bussed by Rostropovich, November 26th, while being addressed as "my fellow colleague!" Sean Varah was one of many seeking autographs and came away beaming with the famous signature across his Beethoven sonatas. November 26th was a great meeting of B.C. cellists - we made up a large part of the sold-out house.

Iam Hampton and the PSQ are busy Monday and Friday noon hours at Robson Square performing the 6 Haydn Op. 76 series plus other works. Dates - November 30 to December 18. On January 24 at the VECC, the PSQ will premiere a new quartet by Frances Chan (Vancouver composer).

Cary Eley has been touring Germany with the Tibor Varga Kammerorchest this fall. She will be in Moscow in December.

The Vermillion Quartet (cellist: Rolf Gilstein) was recently in Vancouver performing at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse and the New Delta Conservatory of Music. On December 4th, they will perform the Schubert Quintet with Zara Nelsova at the Banff Centre.

Sue Dallyn is enjoying the Okanagan - conducting a string orchestra in Kelowna at the Music School as well as teaching four students and five in Kamloops, plus the O.S.O.

Welcome to Bobbie Rancie, cellist from Belgrade and South Africa, now with the O.S.O. Carol Feist is on sabbatical and recently attended a session of the Banff Winter Program with Zara Nelsova.

Eugene Osadchy, executive member of the VCC, successfully auditioned for the VSO in October and is now on full contract. Natasha Osadchy is busy with the VOA Orchestra and Symphonie Canadiana.