

Vancouver Cello Club



210 - 235 Keith Road, West Vancouver, B.C., V7T 1L5

May 1998

Editor: Judith Fraser

President:	Lee Duckles	994 Frederick Place, North Vancouver, BC V7K 2B5
Secretary:	Ernest Collins	1407 Haywood Avenue, West Vancouver, BC V7T 1V5
Treasurer:	Judith Fraser	210 - 235 Keith Road, West Vancouver, BC V7T 1L5
Past President:	Ian Hampton	939 loco Road, Port Moody, BC V3H 2W9
Past President Emeritus:	Audrey Piggott	
Executive:	Kristl Armstrong, Alex Dunfield, Catherine Carmack, Jean Ireland, Janet Steinberg	
American Cello Council Delegate:	Judith Fraser	
Internet:	romiller@interchange.ubc.ca	

Annual General Meeting

June 8 - 7:30 pm

Room 22B - Vancouver Academy of Music

- Agenda:**
- Paperwork
 - Bursaries and The First Colin Hampton Fund Scholarship
 - Video: JS Bach Suite No. 6 – Yo Yo Ma
 - Update on Yo Yo Ma VSO Concert & Masterclass
 - Wine & Cheese

Colin Hampton Scholarship Fundraiser Concert

A disappointingly small, but most enthusiastic audience had a wonderful evening of music provided by the Vancouver Symphony Cello Ensemble April 30th at the Vancouver Academy of Music. The occasion, a fundraiser kick-off for the new Colin Hampton Scholarship (for musicianship and development/promotion in the service of the cello with emphasis on the writing of new works for the cello and cello ensembles) raised \$750.00. The Executive would like to thank *Lee Duckles, Janet Steinburg, Eugene Osadchy, John Friesen, Natasha Boyko, Linda Bardutz, Margaret Tobola-Wong* and *Marlena Tureski-Blackman* for their contribution and especially to Eugene and Lee for some excellent arrangements and to John Friesen for "Magnifcar", a new work for cello solo and cello choir. It was a fun evening and hopefully the VCC library will soon be enriched!



Natasha Boyko, Margaret Tobola-Wong, Eugene Osadchy, Lee Duckles, Janet Steinburg, Linda Bardutz, John Friesen

American Cello Council, Inc. / Minutes of Meeting of February 28 1998

Present: Takayori Atsumi, President A.C.C. (Arizona Cello Society); Esther Prince, Executive Director/Treasurer A.C.C. (New York Violoncello Society); Ronald Costell, M.D., Secretary A.C.C. (Kindler Cello Society); George Moquin, Consultant to ACC; Larry Block (Chicago Cello Society); Lee Fairley (Kindler Cello Society, Observer); Ann Franke (Kindler Cello Society, Observer); Glenn Garlick (Kindler Cello Society); Willard Larkin (Kindler Cello Society).

The Meeting was called to order by Prof. Atsumi at 12:30 P.M. at the Double Tree Guest Quarters Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The Minutes of the meeting, February 5, 1994, as prepared by Ronald Costell, were read and approved.

A Financial Report as of February 28, 1998, was distributed by Esther Prince and reported a current balance of \$3,251.60. Two consistent societies have not yet paid current dues, and will be contacted.

The primary agenda was the discussion of potential sites and organizers for a 1999 American Cello Congress. Larry Block reported on his exploration of potential sponsorship in the Mid-West. He indicated that Roosevelt University has become much more aggressive in promoting its music programs, and might be a sponsor in the future. Professors Elliot and Bengtson, at University of Michigan, Grace Fields, active with the Michiana Cello Club, and Kenneth Fischer, a professional arts administrator with the International Society of Performing Arts, were identified as potential organizers for a Congress in the early Summer of 1999. Esther Prince and George Moquin will explore with them the feasibility of a Congress at The University of Michigan.

The group was also enthusiastic about the possibility of a Congress in Los Angeles in 1999 given the able organizing talents of Eleanor Schoenfield, of the Los Angeles Violoncello Society. Her opinions will also be sought.

Another venue of interest for the future was Vancouver, British Columbia, where Judith Fraser sparks an active cello club.

It was agreed that a venue should be chosen for the early Summer, 1999, Congress, by the Fall of this year, preferably on a college or university campus, where accommodations would be available to young people at reasonable cost.

In discussion of the focus of next American Cello Congress, the group expressed enthusiasm for the possibility of inviting YoYo Ma to be Honorary President, and for developing a program which would highlight the popular, in lieu of the more traditional, dimensions of cello technique and literature. Participants also desired that the Congress program provide more recognition of the contribution of teachers, and also to ascertain whether there have been trends away from the programming of cello literature in concerts and recitals. It was also suggested that the Congress program include some component to stimulate the growth and health of the constituent cello societies. Links with the American Strings

Teachers Association (A.S.T.A.) were encouraged regarding the planning and promotion of the Congress.

Glenn Garlick offered to take charge of putting together, a package of practical information to assist potential sponsors of future Congresses. He and will work with Esther Prince and Professor Atsumi in gathering data on previous Congresses. This package would be distributed to the constituent Cello Societies. Glenn also reported the merger of the National Capital Cello Club with the Kindler Foundation of Washington, D.C. The new entity is called the Kindler Cello Society of Washington, D.C. It will continue the ongoing activities of the National Capital Cello Club and the musical composition and performance goals of the Kindler Foundation. The Kindler Cello Society honors the memory of Hans Kindler, cellist, conductor, and organizer of the National Symphony.

Professor Atsumi reported his experiences in China. He noted great enthusiasm for the cello, an association of seven-thousand cellists, and interest in sponsoring an International Cello Congress. However, funding by the Chinese Government is a limiting factor. He also reported that Prof. Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, had successfully organized a cello society in Japan.

The group discussed Professor Atsumi's recommendation that the Council publishing a newsletter to inform and assist the constituent Societies. Given the limited resources of the Council, and the logistical difficulties of such a venture, it was the consensus that the council consider publishing a brochure to inform cellists and the public of our activities. It was recommended that the constituent societies be requested to forward to Esther Prince copies of all mailings--newsletters and event notices--so that the Council can assist new organizations with ideas and model materials. Ron Costell and Ann Franke volunteered to draft and mail such a letter.

Larry Block reported a major cello conference at Indiana University in the Fall of 1999 to celebrate Professor Janos Starker's seventy-fifth birthday (which occurs on July 4, 1999).

Ann Franke reported that The Virtu Foundation, a private foundation based in Charlottesville, VA, is involved in obtaining cello to provide on loan to deserving young students and professionals. They may be contacted at P.O. Box 4274, Charlottesville, VA 22095 (804-462-5379).

The meeting adjourned at 2 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald M. Costell, M.D., Recording Secretary. A.C.C

American Cello Council , Financial Report as of February 28, 1998

Balance as of January 31, 1994		\$ 3,106.33
<u>Income</u>		
Dues, 1995/96/97/98	\$ 5,400.00	
Contributions	700.00	
Interest	18.43	
Luncheons 2/5/94 Meeting	90.00	
3 Luncheons 2/28/98 Meeting	<u>51.00</u>	
	\$ 6,259.43	<u>6,259.43</u>
Total		\$ 9,365.76
<u>Expenditures</u>		
Phone, Fax, Rent	\$ 2,500.00	
Postage	32.00	
Stationery	405.00	
*Guest Quarters	346.59	
Travel	1,991.17	
Tax Report	50.00	
**Petty Cash	684.19	
***Lunches - Meetings	<u>105.21</u>	
	\$ 6,114.16	<u>6,114.16</u>
Balance as of February 28, 1998		\$ 3,251.60

* This check was paid for the Feb. 5th 1994 Council Meeting in Washington, D.C.

** Includes Postage - \$166.30; Zerox, Fax (at Cape in summer - \$70.00, Meetings Lunches - \$134.67, Travel - \$313.22)

*** During the past four years we have had several meetings with Frank Chapper - Legal Advisor, George Moquin - Consultant, Taki Atsumi - President and Esther Prince

Cello Chit Chat

Congratulations to *Sophie (Willer) Reen* and *Stephen Reen* on the birth of a son, *Stephen Jarboe Reen II* on March 15th in Columbus, IN, weighing 8 lbs., 9oz.

Composer and cellist *Sean Varah* who won 3rd prizes in the 1997 CBC Radio National Competition for Young Composers in the orchestral category and in the electro-acoustic category for his work "Aria", has been made an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre. *Shauna Rolston* also premiered a new work written for her by Sean on April 15 at The Vancouver East Cultural Centre. The work, called "Borderline" is for cello and tape.

"Borderline" – *Sean Varah* ♪ The title *Borderline* comes from "Borderline Personality Disorders", something I learned about from my in-laws, who are psychiatrists. A "Borderline" patient perceives the world in polar extremes: one minute, someone they know is good and loving, another, they are evil and deceitful. *Borderline's* musical style is one of polar opposites - sharp mechanical synthesized sounds, long lyrical cello lines, classical form and techno sounds.

It is a piece for solo cello and digital tape. While the synthesized sounds you hear may sound bizarre and novel to you, *Borderline* is really very traditional. To compose it, I imagined the music in my head, wrote it down with a pencil and paper, and used a computer to create the tape part. I've written several works involving technology and live instruments, and while working with technology sounds interesting, it's really not (wrestling with UNIX or Windows 95 is not what I call a good time.)

I find human beings, especially great musicians, far more interesting. They spend years learning how to make beautiful phrases out of musical notes, and then communicate those phrases to an audience. I spend a long time creating my tape parts (*Borderline* took me over 500 studio hours), but only because my sounds have to accompany live players, whose sounds are so much more vibrant and alive than my mechanical ones. Put it this way: would you rather eat a handmade chocolate truffle or a Twinkie? In a way, I use computers to tediously create a tape filled with the most attractive, delicious "Sound Twinkies" I can.

Having the opportunity to write a piece for Shauna Rolston, I wanted to take advantage of her amazing sound, giving her a chance to use all of her lyrical abilities. Her sound is the focus of the piece, and the tape simply augments and extends the acoustic qualities of the cello, along with providing a harmonic accompaniment. It might sound attractive next to what the cello is playing. I strive to have the synthesized sounds relate closely to the timbre of the live instrument, to draw the instrument and tape together to the point where you don't quite know who's playing what. That way you focus on their combined sound, and can follow the form of the piece more clearly: introduction (exposition), development, recapitulation, and coda.

Sean Varah was born in 1968 in Madison, Wisconsin, and grew up in Vancouver. He holds degrees from Stanford and Columbia University, where he received his DMA. His teachers have included Mario Davidovsky, Ross Bauer, and David Rakowski.

In December 1993, Varah had his Carnegie Hall debut with the premiere of *Burning*, a work commissioned and performed by the New York Youth Symphony. Recently, *Burning*, and *Aria* (for tape and cello), were broadcast live in the final round of the CBC's National Competition for Young Composers. *Burning* was performed by the National Arts Centre Orchestra under Mario Bernardi, and was awarded the National Arts Centre People's Choice Award.

For the 1997/98 concert year, Varah has several commissions, including a piece for flautist Robert Cram, commissioned by the CBC. His recent awards include a joint commission from the Canada Council and the Canadian Electronic Ensemble, a commission from the Fromm Foundation, 1995 and 1996 ASCAP Young Composer Awards, a grant from the Margaret Fairbanks Jory Copying Assistance Fund, a fellowship to the Composers Conference at Wellesley College, a Canada Council Arts B Grant, and a Meet the Composer Award. Mr. Varah is currently on leave from his position as Associate Director of the Harvard Computer Music Center, and is working at Stanford's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA).

Shauna Rolston

...will return to Vancouver to premiere a Concerto for Cello by Heather Schmidt with the CBC Ratio Orchestra, June 3 at 11:00 am at the Orpheum, commissioned by David Lemon as part of the 2nd Vancouver International New Music Festival May 29 - June 6, 1998.

Recent performances include a newly commissioned work for solo cello, percussion, piano and accordion by Douglas Schmidt, as well as the North American premieres of *Farewell to Philosophy* concerto for solo cello and orchestra by Gavin Bryars and *Kai* a work for solo cello and 18 instruments by British composer Mark Anthony Turnage. In 1997-98, Ms. Rolston will premiere five other new concerti, all written for her: *Confessional* by Christos Hatzis, *Theme and Variations* by Larysa Kuzmenko, and *Concerto for Cello* by Heather Schmidt. Kelly-Marie Murphy's *This is the Colour of My Dreams* was performed with Jukka-Pekka Saraste and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in November 1997 to much critical acclaim and she premiered John Estacio's *Triple Concerto* in September 1997 with Gregorz Nowak and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra for the Gala opening of the Winspear Performing Arts Centre.

Ms. Rolston has been featured on several discs, including releases with the London Philharmonia Orchestra, the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, and the Calgary Philharmonic. She has collaborated with pianists Isobel Moore, Angela Hewitt, Menahem Pressler, and Bernadene Blaha. Her most recent CD recorded for CBC records with Bernadene Blaha is of sonatas by Strauss, Debussy, and Barber.

Shauna Rolston, cello
The CBC Vancouver
Orchestra,
Owen Underhill, Conductor



World Premiere:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
by Heather Schmidt

June 3, 1998, 11:00 a.m.
Orpheum Theatre

Music in the Morning, with Vancouver New Music and The CBC Vancouver Orchestra, presents the world premiere of Heather Schmidt's Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, commissioned by David Lemon as part of the 2nd Vancouver International New Music Festival, May 29 - June 6, 1998. Sponsored by Robert M. Ledingham Inc., Design Consultants



Summer Music Camps

UBC School of Music

Junior Strings (age 7 - 15 years)
8:30 am to 3:00 pm
July 5 - 10th
Plan 1 Day Session incl. lunch \$300.00
Phone / Fax: (604) 822-5739

Richmond Community Music School

Summer String (age 6 and over - all levels)
9:00 am - 12:00 noon / \$300.00
Phone / Fax: (604-272-5227)

Music on the Mountain (CYMC) Mt. Washington

July 4 August 2
Strings: July 19 - August 2 / \$550
3 Levels
Phone: (250) 338-7463 / Fax: (250) 334-2934

Vancouver Early Music Festival

Baroque Program: July 19 - 31
Intensive course for vocalists and instrumentalists at an advanced level such as professional musicians, university, college or conservatory students.
Fees: \$750.00 / Tuition: Deposit \$75.00 / R & B pkg avail.
Phone: (604) 732-1610 / Fax: (604) 732-1602

Young People's Cello-Bratton

Age 8 - 16 years
Participants able to "get around" a few different keys. For young cellists to learn to improvise, play jazz, blues, non-classical styles.
\$25 U.S. plus festival pkg \$130 (U.S.)
NDCA, 501 Linn St., Ithaca, NY (607) 277-5372
email: ndca@clarityconnect.com
Phone / Fax: (201) 509-6567

Seattle-based musician/composer **Jami Sieber** is a pioneer of her instrument: the electric cello. Jami not only enlarges the vocabulary of the cello by employing signal processing and various performance techniques, she then transforms the sounds into music that is evocative and memorable. Her style of performance has been recognized throughout the Northwest. In 1988 she received the Northeast Area Music Assoc. (NAMA) award for Best Rock Instrumentalist, no easy feat for a cellist.



Jami began studying classical music at an early age and performed in numerous orchestras and ensembles. Her classical roots gave her the foundation of her relationship with the instrument and deepened her passion for music and the arts. Sieber has composed music for film and dance and has gained recognition for her work as co-leader of one of the Northwest's most acclaimed urban/rock bands, **Rumours of the Big Wave**. Jami has appeared on numerous recordings and has toured as back-up cellist/vocalist with Warner Bros. Recording artist **Ferron** since 1994. In her first solo CD "**lush mechanic**", she explores the breadth of her instrument creating sounds never associated with the cello before. Sieber is currently working on her next solo CD project. *Will give workshop at Young People's Cello-Bratton.*



Aaron Minsky is becoming internationally recognized as a composer of popularly inspired cello etudes and string ensemble pieces. He has a catalogue of seven books published by Oxford University Press with three more to be released this year. His music has been performed in many parts of the US and Europe by such well-known composers as John Graham, professor of viola at Eastman School of Music. Janos Starker said, "I find these etudes excellent, innovative, intelligent, useful and amusing. I will advise their use wherever I can." This past year Minsky showcased his string ensemble pieces at the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference. He maintains a steady performing and teaching schedule during the year. Aaron will be performing at the festival with a rock trio.

Marrowstone Music Festival August 2 - 23, 1998 Port Townsend, Washington

c/o Seattle Youth Symphony
Phone: (206) 362-2300 / Fax: (206) 361-9254
<http://www.syso.org>

Cello: **RICHARD AARON** (wk 2/3)
NATASHA BOYKO (wk 1)
PAULA KIFFNER (wk 1)

FOR SALE!!

French Cello (4/4) in excellent condition. Hard case and German bow. \$4200.
Florian - Tel: 822-2182

Reid Hudson bow, nearly new - round stick, silver wound, 81.5 grams. \$1800.
Linda Bardutz - Tel: 733-4029

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PRO-NOVA CONCERT, May 29

Dvorak Piano Quintet
Mt. Seymour United Church
North Vancouver - 7:30 p.m.

* * *

ADULT ENSEMBLE CLASS

Rm 22B V.A.M.
June 1st, 7:30 pm
(No class May 25 as there will be a student cello recital that night).

* * *

DAVID FINKEL

will play the Haydn C Major Concerto with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

* * *

**UPDATE ON THE
PROPOSED MASTERCLASS
WITH YO YO MA**

Talks are in progress between our President, *Lee Duckles*, Pr. Cello of the VSO, and the management of the VSO with regard to venue, cost, availability, etc. We should know more

by the AGM, June 8, 7:30 pm in Rm 22B, V.A.M. It will probably be the evening of September 16th, 1998.

The V.C.C. has access to a block of seats on the lower floor, left hand side of the Orpheum for the September 17th concert @ \$29.00. We will be taking orders at the AGM. When things are finalized, the Executive will mail out a special information letter.

* * *

BRIDGET MacRAE (Victoria) was a quarter-finalist in the CBC's 1997 Young Performers Competition.

BECKY WENHAM has completed her 2nd year at Harid Conservatory, Florida, and will be attending the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany, July & August, finishing with a tour of Germany and including Amsterdam. Also going to Schleswig Holstein is *Meran Currie-Roberts*, currently studying with Shauna Rolston at the University of Toronto.

AMY LAING, 3rd year student at Harid Conservatory, Florida will be a member of the Festival Orchestra at the Spoleto Festival (paid!)

(Two very happy red heads!, Editor)

* * *

Cellist, **MARGARET GAY** will marry violist *Patrick Jordon*, Sunday August 9 at 11:30 am at the home of her parents in Burnaby

* * *

CELLO FEST NO. 3

at Banff Centre with
TSUYOSHI TSUTSUMI
February 22, 23, 24, 1999

Details to come.

Reprinted from

**KINDLER CELLO SOCIETY NEWSLETTER (formerly the National Capital Cello Club)
Spring '98**

American Cello Council News

Council President Takayori Atsumi, and Executive Director Esther Prince convened a meeting here in Washington, D.C. on February 28 to plan for the Sixth American Cello Congress.

Council Secretary Ron Costell began by reading minutes from the Council's 1994 meeting, when plans for the Fifth American Cello Congress were first discussed.

As readers of this *Newsletter* know, that event - at Tempe, Arizona, in 1996 - was very well attended and successful in all respects. Thanks to the organizing talents of Mr. Atsumi, and to his fellow cello-enthusiasts at Arizona State University, the event closed with a modest surplus in the account book.

The American Cello Council is composed of twelve North American cello societies, ranging from groups in Arizona, Oregon, California (two groups), and Vancouver in the west to Georgia, and Kentucky in the south, Chicago, Bloomington, and Ann Arbor in the midwest, and Washington and New York in the east.

Representatives of several of these groups have been approached regarding possible sites for the 1999 Congress. As

this report was being prepared, no final decision had been made. The Congress could feature the distinctively North American contributions to the cello world: the "new directions" pioneered by performers, the developments in cello instruction pioneered by the legion of superb teachers on this continent, new works by North American composers, and the artistry of the new cadre of young cellists.

Esther Prince emphasised that all the member societies should stay in close touch with her so that suggestions, news, and information can be disseminated efficiently among all the member groups. She can be reached at 340 West 55th Street, #5D, New York, NY 10019. Telephone: 212-586-7137.

* * *

and also

**Anner Bylsma's Book:
*Bach, the Fencing-Master***

Anner Bylsma has written a book, *Bach, the Fencing Master: Reading Aloud from the First Three Suites* which will be published this spring. We visited the cellist-author recently, on the morning before his appearance as the Piatigorsky Memorial soloist at Johns Hopkins

University. He very kindly agreed to discuss his writing project.

Anner Bylsma says he has enjoyed writing about the Bach suites. This writing effort, his first "since those hated assignments in school," he likened to the experience of a sober man who, after a lifetime of abstinence, "becomes intoxicated with the taste of one drop."

Unlike a school essay, this book was not put together overnight. It coalesced gradually, he says "like an intergalactic cloud of dust," as a result of his constant study of Bach and Baroque performance. "While practicing, an idea comes to you. You jot down a sentence. Then an hour later you look again at what you wrote: It seems all wrong! You debate with yourself! In this way, writing became a natural extension of his musical study.

The book's "Fencing" title arose from a comment of Mr. Bylsma's wife, violinist Vera Beths, who returned from rehearsing a violin concerto "bedevilled by the issue why people always immediately change the bowings." He laments that it is difficult to find a perfect match for the word 'fencing' in German, French or even Dutch, so any translations from the original English may acquire a substitute title. He contemplates none of these versions at present, but half seriously

proposes to publish an edition in Frisian, the language of Holland's northern province.

The subtitle, *Reading Aloud from the First Three Suites*, captures the author's style and intent. Anner Bylsma's commentary is meant to be read aloud and contemplated, almost as a melodic accompaniment to cello practice sessions - "in the *style gallant*," as he puts it.

The book's often provocative section headings ("A Quill Pen is Not a Primitive Tool ... Accusations ... Bach's Minuets Never Have an Upbeat... The Listener Speaks ... Slurs for Comfort...") are collected in a copious index. The pages blossom with notated examples from Bach's manuscript. There is an Appendix with realizations for the violin and viola.

Mr. Bylsma admits that his writing expresses some antipathy toward those who would interpret Bach only from a keyboard point of view, but he dedicates the book to the memory of his friend and performing colleague, pianist Gerard van Blerk, who passed away last year. Van Blerk had read and liked an early draft. In a section of the book entitled "Speaking and Singing," Anner Bylsma takes on what he regards as the typical viewpoint of pianists toward Bach's music, and he quotes a letter written by C.P.E. Bach about his father's mastery of violin-playing. Reflecting on the letter, Bylsma argues that as a performer, Bach must have been "an inventor, unable to play something the same way twice; not somebody dreading to make a mistake."

A film about Anner Bylsma's approach to Bach is being produced by the Dutch filmmaker Cherry Duyns. Filming began last month at the Smithsonian, where Mr. Bylsma's supporting cast included Kenneth Slowik, the improvisatory cellist Ernst Reysiger and the Smithsonian's 'Servais' Strad.

We asked why his book does not include Suites 4, 5, and 6. He was prepared for the question with a ready comparison: "Formerly, when archaeologists found tools or bones at some grave of the Etruscans, or whatever, they dug the whole thing out. They took everything worthwhile to a museum. Nowadays, they go at it more carefully (as if it's a piece of fine cheese). They take out only one sliver, and they progress that way layer by layer to the bottom, because in the next generation they may have better techniques, and then they may be able to go further. I want to open things up, not to close them. So three Suites are enough."

During our interview Anner Bylsma offered a piece of paper on which he had penned a "prelude" describing how he hopes his book will be useful to cellists:

Every year or two there is something in the paper about somebody who found the secret of Stradivari. One day, one of those crackpots will really have found it and will tell us that it was hardly a secret and that anybody could have seen it, but that it is devilishly difficult to bring up the varnish well. (This is true.)

My book, "Bach, the Fencing Master," is of course about bowing and of course I think that I solved the riddle of what the slurs mean in Madame Bach's copy of the suites, and of course I tell you they are devilishly difficult to play.

The book has three purposes:

- 1) the above.
- 2) to make string players aware - if that is necessary - of the unsurpassed beauty of the art of bowing and
- 3) to help build a dam against all the nonsense that we fencers-with-the-bow have to take from conductors, composers and other pianists.

There is still another reason for buying this book: Everyone of us knows this initial "antagonism" which we experience in the morning on our way to our cello (especially after a concert on the previous day); Every excuse is valid not to begin playing. Once having started all goes well, but before ...

My dream is that cellist-colleagues will have my book on a stand in a corner, open at some page. Glancing, while passing by and thinking: "Oh, no, Anner, no no!" they'll perfunctorily try out what they see there on that page; Having started, that is!

Carla Rosenberg, who helped to edit the book, reports that it does more than goad her into starting to practice: "I found the book wonderfully inspiring, not only for beaming Anner's ideas, but for how it launched my own musical thinking. Now, the ideas of the book surface in all the music I play."

Editor's note: Mr. Bylsma is publishing his book privately. Information on how to order it was not yet available as we went to press. Members of the Cello Society will receive information in a separate mailing.



Reprinted from "Wolf" Notes Los Angeles Violoncello Society Newsletter January '98
Editor: Lynn Angebrannt

Orchestral audition! Words used to frighten small cello students, or sometimes employed to accelerate a slowly beating heart in an older, sickly player. Whatever your age or position in the musical world, it is an ordeal everyone passes through and gains a position or at least gains experience and confidence for the next attempt.

At the November 16 meeting, Ronald Leonard spoke on the audition process in general and how it has changed over the last 20 years, generously sharing some of his audition experiences and walking a group of 4 cellists through some typical orchestral literature which might show up in an audition for a major orchestra such as the LA Philharmonic.

Today, most major auditions are conducted behind a screen. This has the obvious advantage of separating the musical elements from other, possible prejudicial factors, such as race, gender, appearance, age and identity (i.e. a student of someone in the orchestra or someone well-known, as opposed to a younger player), Ron pointed out that even when a judge is trying to be objective, it is sometimes difficult to maintain that fairness; when one knows someone's potential playing ability, one might be tempted to give weight to that, rather than how he actually performed at the given audition. A level playing field is beneficial to the artistic health of the orchestra and con-

sidering the paucity of good positions available, absolutely essential to the aspiring artist.

Ron's first major audition was in the old tradition; it is a story worthy of inclusion in a romantic novel about a young aspiring musician. Ron was only 20 years old. His teacher, Leonard Rose, was told of an opening in the Cleveland Orchestra which was coming up and asked if he highly recommended anyone. Mr. Rose thought that Ron possessed the outstanding qualities needed to succeed and so an audition was arranged. Ron went to the hotel room of the conductor of the Cleveland Symphony, George Zeil and played with Mr. Zell sitting about 4 feet away. It was an ordeal by fire. Mr. Zell certainly had a reputation for being extremely demanding & sometimes rather severe with the musicians; it must have been even more difficult to relax and play one's best in front of such a famous, awe-inspiring conductor than an audition of today before a committee, which generally tries to put the performer at his ease. Well, youth often takes into stride what would be extremely daunting later in life. Luckily, this story had a happy ending, or should I say a happy beginning; Ron got the position with the Cleveland Symphony and started a wonderful career.

Ron was assisted in his presentation by four talented members of LAVS: Collin Oldham, Bronwyn Banerdt (both students of Ron Leonard), Harriet Katz and Marilyn Harris. The repertoire covered included excerpts from: The adagio movement of Brahms Symphony #2; Theme & variations from Beethoven's Symphony #5; Recitative from Beethoven Symphony #9, and Tempo di menuetto and Trio from the 3rd movement of Beethoven's Symphony #8. Collin Oldham played the bravura passage from rehearsal letter C to E from the Overture to the Bartered Bride by Smetana (this section has a warning from the Surgeon General: playing up-to-tempo more than 10 times a day may result in Carpal Tunnel Syndrome!). The volunteers also played chosen selections from La Mer of Debussy; Don Juan by R. Strauss and Mid-Summer Nights' Dream by Mendelssohn.

Ron pointed out some of the things that a conductor/orchestra is looking for. Obviously there needs to be a high degree of technical skill; a player must be able to play in a basic, musical, technically sound manner, possessing self-confidence, excellent rhythmic sense, strong (wide) dynamic range, and good intonation. In addition, a player needs to be flexible, able to adjust and modify how they play according to what the leader wants. This flexibility can manifest itself in many ways: the ability to bow a passage in a requested manner, perhaps different from what was practiced; changing fingering or choosing fingering to achieve a particular result; playing more, or less legato, on request and so on. But assuming a player has all the technical skills necessary, the bottom line is that making music is primarily the art of communicating. If a player has a good idea of what the composer was all about and what he was trying to say in his music, and is able to communicate that vision, he will have a good chance of coming through the audition process a winner.

Earl Van der Vord

IMPROVISATION

by Fred Lieder

Reprinted from *Cello Scroll March '93, Chicago Cello Club Newsletter*

I am an improvisatory cellist. Impro-isation is a part of me: part of my teaching technique, my daily practice, and my performances.

In my early teens, my friends had electric guitars, basses and drums. They would "jam" together in basements and garages. I would place a microphone near my cello and play along, finding notes to fit with their chords.

Later, I began to listen seriously to jazz artists, like Louis Armstrong, Sidney Becket, John Coltrane, and Charlie Parker. I nearly wore out my father's tape machine, playing them over and over until I had memorized them on the cello. Meanwhile, I continued to study cello in the standard way, learning the classical literature, playing in the Montgomery County Youth Orchestra, and playing chamber music.

My music teachers did not object to my interest in jazz, as long as I kept it completely separate from my study of the cello. Now that I am a cello instructor myself, I try to take advantage of my students' musical preferences. If they enjoy listening to a contemporary style of music, I encourage them to try to improvise like some of the musicians they hear on the radio. When students improvise, either on a popular piece or a jazz standard, I will play the chord changes for them on a guitar. At other times, I'll "walk" a bass line for them on the cello while they play through a song. After we do that a few times, students become fascinated and usually want me to teach them how to construct bass lines. It's a natural introduction to music theory.

Of course, not all students enjoy learning unfamiliar styles of music, and for them I keep to a standard, classical course of study. For the others, I try to balance improvisation with rigorous training in the classical literature.

The art of improvisation is actually a good deal older than the classical style, and, one might argue, a more universal aspect of music-making. It enlivened the music of the Renaissance, and it is a central element in the long tradition of classical Asian music. Practice in improvisation is one way to build a bridge between different musical cultures, bringing together the relatively recent Western reliance on printed notes with the older, more geographically widespread tradition in which musicians rely on their ears.

To improvise in the modern or the ancient sense means to construct a soloistic embellishment within the chord structure of a given piece. The performer must understand, first, what key is called for, and then how each chord relates to the tonic. These elements of music theory, as well as the modes and scales must become the tools of the performer's art. They must be tools whose use becomes second nature, rather than just an intellectual property. For this reason, I recommend improvisation as a superior way to approach music theory. The attempt to improvise boosts a student's creative urges just as it helps them to learn their instruments. I find, for example, that the more improvisation I do, the more comfortable I feel using the cello's whole register, from low C to the high thumb positions.

When performing, I find the cello well-suited to many different kinds of music. My cello has found a comfortable niche in rock bands, small jazz combos, folk groups, and big bands, as well as orchestras and chamber groups. I sometimes perform in a jazz trio of flute, guitar, and cello. When the flute and guitar take the lead, I pluck my strings like a bass player. At other times, I use the bow to solo over chords of the guitar. The variety in this kind of performance brings a stimulation and a challenge that is different from that of classical music, but just as gratifying.

Fred Lieder teaches and performs classical and jazz music for cello. After studying with Ervin Klinkon at Montgomery College and Evelyn Elsing at the University of Maryland, he has performed with the Maryland and Alexandria symphonies and in smaller groups including a jazz trio. He teaches privately and at Dale Music Co., in Silver Spring.

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BRAHMS THE CELLIST

by Styra Avins (November '92)

Styra Avins is a cellist by training, a student of Luigi Silva, Rudolf Matz, David Wells, and Zara Nelsova, with a B.A. in Social Sciences from CCNY, a year at Julliard, and an M.S. in cello from the Manhattan School of Music. A freelancer in New York and cello teacher at the United Nations School, the author has edited a comprehensive collection of the letters of Johannes Brahms, published by Oxford University Press, was the first such collection ever to appear in English. The author discovered Brahms's connection to the cello in the course of extensive background reading preparatory to editing his letters.

It is possible that the news that Johannes Brahms played the violoncello when he was a child will not come as a total surprise. His writing is so gorgeously suited to the instrument that the discovery that he actually took lessons for some years only puts on solid footing what many have always known—that between Brahms and the cello there is a special affinity.

Brahms took up the instrument at the insistence of his father Johann Jakob, a musician who earned his living playing in theater orchestras, and in cafés, bars, and dance halls. The elder Brahms played horn in the Hamburg Citizens' Militia Band, and substituted as flutist and double bass player in the Hamburg Philharmonic. Johann Jakob had become a musician the old-fashioned way: he had apprenticed with the town musician of a small city in. Hostein, that huge, flat farmland district which lies south of Denmark and north of Hamburg. He had earned the right to practice his profession by demonstrating proficiency at playing the flute, violin, viola, and flugelhorn; and when it was nevertheless difficult to earn a living in the Hamburg of the 1820's, he taught himself to play the double bass, as performers of that instrument were in

short supply. He continued to play all these instruments professionally throughout his career. When the 7-year old Johannes asked for piano lessons, Johann Jakob reluctantly agreed, but never gave up the idea that both his sons, Johannes, and the younger Fritz, would become self-sufficient only if they were able to earn their living the way he did, and in such a career the piano had no place. The boys had to learn to play something useful, and for Johannes that something was going to be the horn—and the violoncello.

Lessons began when Brahms was about 9 years old. His father bought him an instrument at the cost of 300 Marks (a sum equivalent at that time to a year's wages for a sailor, by the way, and one of many pieces of evidence that Brahms's early years were lived in limited, rather than in poverty-stricken circumstances, as has often been claimed). Brahms must have worked diligently in the short time that he had lessons, for he himself told Julius Klengel that he had advanced to the point of playing the Romberg concertos.

But his lessons came to an abrupt end. One day the cello disappeared, along with the cello teacher. Nowhere is it recorded that Brahms regretted the larceny—by this time, he was both a formidable pianist and an eleven or twelve-year-old school-boy with his nose to the grindstone; it is just possible that the theft of his cello caused him no pain whatsoever, but instead allowed him a little extra time to waste on his real love—"It's a pity, Herr Brahms," his piano teacher is reliably reported to have said to Johann Jakob, "the boy could be such a fine pianist if only he would stop that incessant composing.")

Brahms's first known work for cello is a Duo with piano, which appeared on the program of a private concert given in Hamburg when he was 18 years old. The composer was at the piano, the work listed as being by Karl Würth, a pseudonym the teenage Brahms used when he was not entirely satisfied with a work. Not surprisingly, the Duo was never published. It is now lost.

Only with the Op. 8 Piano Trio, written when he was 20, do we learn how Brahms conceived of the cello's capabilities. The Trio was written in the first glow of his association with Robert and Clara Schumann and the success they had helped him to achieve so suddenly—it is the music he was working on when Robert Schumann threw himself into the Rhine—and anyone who had the pleasure of playing that work knows how splendidly written for cello it is; indeed, that first version of 1854 is more taxing for the cello than the revision which superseded it more than 30 years later, and in which form most of us have come to know the work. Left out in the reworked version is, among other things, a lush quotation from a song by Beethoven, which is given to the cello to sing.

The next nine opuses were devoted to piano, vocal and orchestral works, and Brahms's life at that time was entirely taken up with the anguish of Schumann's illness, his feelings for Clara, and his subsequent efforts to set his life on an even keel once more. But when Brahms returned to chamber music with the Op. 18 String Sextet, he returned to the cello.

Curiously, it is the composer and great violinist Joseph Joachim, at that time Brahms's closest friend, who suggested to him that he begin the Sextet with the cello carrying the melody and then allow the violin to continue. Brahms was so pleased with the effect that he repeated it in the last movement.

Although Brahms did not turn his attention specifically to the cello until the Op. 38 Sonata in E minor, published in 1866, he was never out of touch with good cellists; and by performing with them, must have refined his understanding for the instrument. In the six years following Schumann's breakdown, Brahms hardly published anything, but he was nevertheless very active, composing and conducting and performing. His friendship with Joachim kept him in contact with the best performers of the time, for example with Bernhard Cossmann, who had been the cellist of Joachim's quartet in Weimar, under Liszt; and the virtuoso August Lindner, the cellist of the Joachim Quartet in Hannover. During Brahms's very first journey away from Hamburg, in 1853, he had been befriended enthusiastically by Christian Reimers, the man for whom Schumann had written his cello concerto. Reimers and Brahms maintained contact during the next several years, and even went together to visit Schumann in Edenich. "Reimers is here," Brahms wrote to Joachim in 1854, from Düsseldorf. "We are rehearsing my Trio, which Frau Schumann has need to play again." During the three seasons he spent as court musician at the little Duchy of Detmold (1857-1859), Brahms performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto as well as his own Op. 8 Trio with the excellent resident cellist there. He also played the Trio many times in Hamburg during those years, where he now mingled with the best musicians in town. This helps explain the full-bodied, mature writing for cello in the chamber works which followed: the Piano Quartets Op. 25 and 26, the Piano Quintet OP. 34, and the second string sextet, Op. 36, all written in the early 1860's. That Brahms was particularly interested in the tonal possibilities that the cello presents is further witnessed by the fact that the original version of the Quintet, which Brahms eventually destroyed, was written as a string quintet with two cellos, A la Schubert. But a trial performance by Joachim and his colleagues convinced Brahms, Clara Schumann and other friends that the power of the work's ideas was insufficiently carried by that instrumentation; he rewrote the work for two pianos, and then, missing the warmth of the strings, wrote it again as a piano quintet, a brilliant example of the perfectionism with which Brahms approached the art of composition.

The Sonata in E minor, Op. 38, was probably begun in 1862, while Brahms was still living Hamburg, although the urge to complete it was missing until he moved to Vienna and met a cellist who was also a friend, Dr. Joseph Gänsbacher.

Gänsbacher, to whom Op. 38 is dedicated, was no ordinary cellist. In fact, he was not primarily a cellist at all, but rather a jurist, pianist, composer, and highly regarded singing teacher (who eventually joined the faculty of the Vienna Conservatory). He was a keen and experienced mountain climber (Brahms's first Swiss hiking trip was made in Gänsbacher's company), son of a famous Tyrolean patriot, and an enthusiastic and active admirer of Brahms virtually from the day of Brahms's arrival in Vienna in the Fall of 1862. It is due to Gänsbacher's efforts that the 29-year old Brahms was selected in 1863 by a margin of one vote in the committee-as director of the Vienna Singverein, thus shifting for evermore the center of Brahms's life from Hamburg to the Austrian capital.

Brahms did not pay much attention to Op. 38, once it was written. Although finished in 1865 and published in 1866, the sonata was not performed until 1871, in Leipzig. After that, the sonata rested in oblivion. The Viennese pianist Anton Door relates that when he proposed putting it on one of his own chamber music evening many years later, in 1878, Brahms came to every rehearsal, listening to the sonata as if for the first time. "He seemed quite to have forgotten its existence, [and] said repeatedly that if I had not pulled it from the dusty archives, it would have continued to moulder there.... He rejoiced in its unsuspected success." As a result of Door's concert, the sonata was performed publicly eight times that winter, and has been in the repertory ever since.

In its purely technical requirements, the sonata may reflect that fact that it was not written with a virtuoso cellist in mind. Indeed, Brahms offered it to his publisher, Peter Joseph Simrock, as a work "which is entirely non-difficult for both instruments to play"! But its working-out allowed Brahms to deal with a number of ideas he was currently busy with, from Bach's Art of the Fugue (compare Contrapunctus 17 with the theme of the last movement's fugue) to the Schubertian-Romantic intermezzo of the middle movement. In fact, the sonata was written at a time in Brahms's life when he was profoundly preoccupied with Schubert's music.

The Cello Sonata in F, Op. 99, is quite another story. This work was written at the urging of Robert Hausmann, a cellist of the greatest stature in the German-speaking world of that time. Trained in his teen years at Joachim's Hochschule in Berlin (for a long time he was the only cello student at the school!), groomed, in fact, to be the next cellist of the Joachim quartet, Hausmann was sent to England to study with Piatti and by age 23 was back at the Berlin Hochschule, teaching. His career was of Continental scope, and as a member of the Joachim quartet, he had many occasions to meet Brahms. They became good friends; when Brahms visited Berlin, Hausmann was usually at the railway station waiting for him, and their first stop was his home. For Brahms's taste, Hausmann was the cellist *par excellence*, so that it is of some interest to us to know that Hausmann was particularly distinguished, in comparison to the other greats of the day (Hugo Becker, Julius Klengel, David Popper) by his soulful playing and powerful tone. It is due to that power that most of us lesser mortals have to struggle so at the opening of the G Major String Quintet (Op. 111). Everyone, Joachim and Hausmann included, complained that the cello could not possibly compete with the four upper strings playing sixteenth notes *forte*, and that the latter should be marked *mf* against a *ff* for the cello. ("One would really like to have three cellists in one, Joachim wrote to Brahms.") Brahms was concerned enough to write to several friends for their opinion and was not opposed to experimenting with differing dynamics, at which point Joachim informed him that with only a slight modification, Hausmann could be heard. Even though one of his more fearless friends disagreed firmly, letting' Brahms know that all *she* could hear from the cello was merciless scraping, when the score was prepared for printing Brahms let stand the *fortes all* around, and

he is said to have approved enthusiastically of the performance by the Joachim Quartet in Berlin.

In 1884, Hausmann went to see the composer as he was enjoying summertime in the little Austrian village of Mürzzuschlag. (We too, have reason to enjoy that summer-Brahms used it to write his Fourth Symphony.) During the visit, Hausmann apparently begged Brahms "to enrich the oft neglected cello with a gift-if not a concerto, then at least a companion piece to the splendid E minor Sonata." Brahms half promised; and the compelling performance of Op. 38 with which Hausmann made his Viennese debut in 1885 convinced him to keep his promise. Or so writes Max Kalbeck, Brahms's most exhaustive biographer, who does not always let us know the source of his information-but perhaps it is correct, anyway.

...to be continued

JANOS STARKER CELLO CLASS

This class is open to professional cellists, established ensembles, students, teachers, and advanced amateurs. Chamber groups (more than two players) will receive a tuition discount. Pianists (for duos) do not have to register or pay tuition. The class covers all periods for cello and ensembles with cello. Auditors are welcome in the class. Practice facilities will be available for performers.

Qualified pre-college cellists will be accepted; however, dormitory housing is not available for participants under 21. Pre-college participants should be accompanied by a parent, or special arrangements should be made for housing and general welfare.

Performers who have not previously studied with Professor Starker should submit an audiocassette tape of themselves performing two contrasting pieces or movements. The tape does not need to be a professional recording, nor do the pieces need to be those proposed for performance in the class.

JANOS STARKER

The great virtuoso cellist and teacher JANOS Starker is recognized throughout the world as one of the supreme musicians of the twentieth century. Hallmarks of his performances and classes, given over the course of an extraordinary career spanning more than five decades, include peerless technical mastery, intensely expressive playing, and great communicative power. His concerts have been broadcast around the globe on radio and television, and he has been the subject of numerous news stories, magazine articles, and television documentaries. Starker has amassed a recording catalogue of more than 165 works on various international labels. Since 1958 the Hungarian-born artist has taught at Indiana University in Bloomington, where he holds the title of Distinguished Professor of Music.