

The Whole Note

Newsletter of
The Norwalk Youth Symphony
March, 2001



From The Chairman

I've been talking with parents of graduating seniors recently. They are beginning to wonder what happens to the skills and musicality of their young musicians after they pin on a red carnation and play their last NYS concert in May. What will they take with them from the NYS into the future, especially if they aren't planning to study music? I had the privilege of speaking with an alum recently who continues to work at her craft in part because of what the NYS taught her about the pleasures of playing in an orchestra.

Cynthia Gsell Bahr played in the Norwalk Youth Symphony from 1975 to 1979, and for the past fifteen years has been playing with the Danbury Symphony Orchestra under James Humphreville, currently as the principal second violinist. She spent her growing-up years in Norwalk in the Norwalk public schools, and was introduced to music in the third grade at Wolfpit School. She continued to play her violin throughout her years at Norwalk High School. Cynthia's parents, although supportive of her musical talents, were not music listeners or concertgoers. She was motivated by the gifted teachers she encountered and, most especially, by her NYS experiences.

"At the Norwalk Youth Symphony I finally found students similar to me who loved making music as much as I did. I loved the fact that there were not discipline issues and that there was such a feeling of commitment from the other kids and that it was so much fun."

Music was her outlet during some difficult family times, including the death of her mother when Cynthia was a college freshman. Throughout these years, she continued to play with the UConn Symphony Orchestra, although she did not major or minor in music.

Several decades after Cynthia pinned on her flower for her last Norwalk Youth Symphony concert, she and her husband are busily at work raising two little boys. Cynthia works in her chosen profession of physical therapy, and manages to squeeze rehearsals and concerts into her full days. She has found that her music has developed as she has matured and had more life experience. That has been a satisfying artifact of having "kept at it" all these years. She cherishes the cross-generational friendships she has made through the community-based orchestra and the technical skills she has honed through working with other talented musicians.

This week, she's hoping to pass along her joy of music by visiting her son's nursery school class, violin in hand. There, tentative 4-year-old fingers will touch the shiny wood and pluck the strings and they'll hear high notes and low notes and loud ones and soft. Who knows who might be taken by the magic in those sounds, and be graduating from the NYS in years to come? And maybe therein lies Norwalk Youth Symphony's legacy.

— Nancy Griffin
Chairman of the Board of Directors



Like everything else in nature music is a becoming, and it becomes its full self when its sounds and laws are used by intelligent man for the production of harmony, and so made the vehicle of emotion and thought.

— Theodore Mungers.

Newsletter Staff

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Chamber Orchestra Outreach Trips

Each year, the two Chamber Orchestras present special programs for school districts in Connecticut that have no instrumental strings programs. They have been heard in Bethel, Beacon Falls, New Fairfield, Ansonia, and Danbury; this season, they will travel to Derby and Seymour.

These programs are a delight to all who attend. Jim Andrews, the conductor, is a master at putting children at their ease and inspiring group participation. The schoolchildren tap their feet, wave their arms like conductors and even dance to the music as he illustrates what each instrument can do and how the orchestra is put together. Our

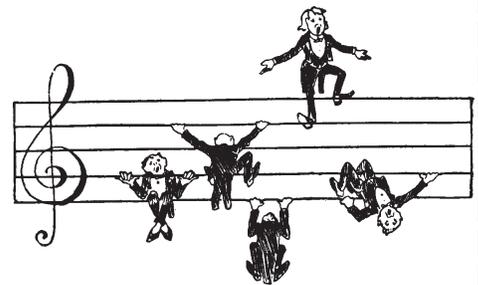
performers, at the same time, have an opportunity to "show off" what they have learned to an appreciative audience. We receive nothing but rave reviews at the end of each show. Music has become alive to these youngsters, and they are ready for more.

Here are some comments received from Ansonia students last year after they heard the program:

- I love to play the keyboard and I'm going to practice more, just like you do.
- I wish we could have an Ansonia Youth Symphony and if we did, I

would play the violin.

- I wish I could play strings like that. But many people say I can sing very good. I would love to be a singer when I group up. I think about being very famous one day.
- That performance inspired me to start a band with my friends.
- I wanted to know, is it hard to play those instruments?



Small Ensembles Recital



Apollo String Quartet

Rear, L To R: Dana Cole, Jennifer Chieffalo
Front, L To R: Brandon May, Alexandra Lillie

Nine chamber music groups presented a wonderful afternoon of music at the Norwalk Youth Symphony's Small Ensembles Program's annual recital on February 4 at Pequot Library.

The goal of this program is to allow young musicians to:

- Experience the enjoyment of playing with a small group of friends/acquaintances
- Develop the social/emotional aspect of group playing by learning to exhibit responsibility and sensitivity to the needs of other players.
- Develop the finer skills of intonation, interpretation and listening to each other.
- Achieve musical growth through the exploration and performance of the chamber music repertoire.

Two of the groups are comprised of youngsters from the Chamber Orchestras, who are just starting their musical careers. They did a fine job in their performances of works by Mozart and Haydn. The flute ensemble also played beautifully, using the alto and bass flutes that were recently purchased for them. Several string quartet movements were presented by the other quartets, culminating in the *Allegro* from Dvorak's *American Quartet* by the Apollo String Quartet.

All of the Small Ensembles are coached by professionals, who are: Jean-Rodolphe Bindschedler, Sharon Fugate, Kenneth Kuo, Julia Lawson-Haney, Asya Meshberg, Richard Wyton and Mark Fischer.

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Small Ensembles Recital Continued

Special thanks go to Louise Wagner, who helps to coordinate and organize this program and who planned the reception which followed the recital, and to Jana Bertkau, who plans the “gigs” that the advanced groups perform at events such as weddings, receptions, business gatherings, community affairs, etc.

This program is made possible through the generosity of Amateur Chamber Music Players and the Clinton B. Ford Fund of its ACMP Foundation, an organization that promotes chamber music activities for amateur musicians, and by a grant from the Westport Rotary Club.

Music takes us out of the actual
and whispers to us dim secrets
that startle our wonder as to who
we are, and for what, whence,
and whereto.
— *Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

Aspen Kids Project

The Norwalk Youth Symphony, the Wilton Candlelight Concerts and the Aspen Wind Quintet participated in a very successful, unique cooperative venture on Sunday, February 25, that the Quintet calls its “Kids Project.”

For several years now, the renowned Aspen Wind Quintet has pursued a unique educational mission. In over 300 communities around the country, it has brought high school soloists on stage to participate in some of its concert program pieces. For its Wilton program, members of the Principal Orchestra of the Norwalk Youth Symphony were invited to audition to be a soloist with the ensemble. Ultimately, five young musicians chose to try out. Since they all played so well, the auditioners decided to use them all instead of selecting just one! They are:

Jacob Greiner, flute, from Fairfield
Steven Horowitz, trumpet, from Monroe
Rebecca Lipsitz, French horn, from Easton
Jonathan Kantor, clarinet, from Cos Cob
Louis Morgan, percussion, from Weston

Norwalk Youth Symphony

Swing Into Spring Benefit

The Norwalk Youth Symphony held this year's gala benefit, ***Swing into Spring***, on Sunday, March 4 from 2:00-5:00 PM at the Westport Woman's Club, 44 Imperial Avenue, Westport. This “fun-raiser” featured the music of the Romero Brothers. Dancing, delicious hors d'oeuvres, wine, desserts and a lively silent auction completed the afternoon's festivities.

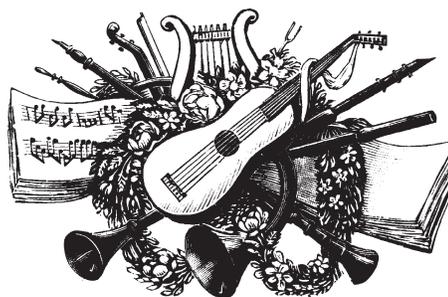
The Romero Brothers, founded in Greenwich in 1976 by Pete deLisser, is a nine-piece horn band specializing in jazz, blues and rock 'n roll. For the past 25 years, it has played in the tri-state area. It is also the house band for WCBS-FRM. While on tour in Sun Valley, Idaho, The Romero Brothers played at Bruce Willis' nightclub, The Mint, as well as at this theatre, The Liberty. The group has performed with Dion, and was featured at The Motown Café and the Copacabana in New York City. Mr. Christopher McLoughlin, a Westonite and the Romero Brothers' veteran trumpet player, is currently the leader of the band.

The Silent Auction included a full-size violin from Merit Music in New Canaan, a full-size viola from Atelier Constantin Popescu, a semester of music theory lessons, cello lessons and a place in its new summer camp from the Connecticut School of Music, an evening's concert to be performed in the home of the winning bidder by talented cellist Lois Errante and her virtuoso husband, violinist Richard Errante, and the use of a condominium in Venice, Florida for a week's stay as well as countless other exciting items donated by local retailers and friends of the NYS.

Proceeds from this event go towards the operating budget of the Norwalk Youth Symphony.

The Norwalk Youth Symphony had close associations with this program in several ways. Not only did its members perform; Barli Nugent, the leader of the Aspen Wind Quintet, grew up in Wilton and was a member of the orchestras while a teenager, and one of the pieces played was composed by Chris Brubeck, also a former member of the NYS.

The performance was a delight to hear and to behold as our players sat side by side with the Aspen musicians and played with poise, concentration and musicality. . . . beautifully.



Conductor's Corner

I recently conducted an all-county orchestra in Long Island, where the musicians were mostly 12 and 13 years old. After a rehearsal one of them came up to me and asked if I had met some of the great composers. I said hesitantly: "Not many, but yes, I have met for instance John Corigliano, the composer who wrote the music for the movie *The Red Violin*. He had apparently never heard of him and said: "I mean some of the really famous ones - like Telemann?"

We performers have obviously a huge problem. We have to play pieces by composers that have mostly been dead for a while, and we have to bring them back to life. When you first think about it, this sometimes doesn't really seem so difficult; the music is printed and available everywhere, and we have our instruments, and the will and skill to play them. But there's another and tougher problem: HOW are we going to play it? Much of the music does not have a tempo marking, so WHAT tempo is one to take? How loud is *piano*? How fast is an *Allegro ma non troppo*? What is the difference between an eighth note and a staccato quarter note? It's this huge grey area that initiates so many discussions and even fights and that has so many rather strange names like "interpretation" or "musicality" or "style". Very vague words for a very vague subject...

An old teacher of mine asked me once the following question: "What is interpretation?" I stammered something about tempo and rubato, articulation and dynamics until he interrupted me: "Nonsense! It's three things — First: who wrote the piece? Second: why did he write it? And third: for whom did he write it?"

This answer seemed to me for a long time insufficient and very odd. What has that to do with HOW I play a piece? Everything. It's the composer and his intentions that we have to understand in order to express what he wanted to say. Think about it: when you write a letter about your life and the events that are important to you, you want the

reader to participate in and to understand your life and feelings. That's why you write the letter. A piece of music is most of the time exactly that — a musical letter. We as musician have to read and understand it, and then present it to an audience, who should understand and share the same feeling.

There are pieces that have a pretty obvious content — think about the *Reformation* Symphony by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy or tone poems like Sergei Rachmaninov's *The Isle of the Dead* or Bedrich Smetana's *Moldau*. But what do you do about a piece with the title *Sonata No. 4* or *Concerto*, or a *Symphony No. 1*?

So, next time when you play a concerto or a piece of chamber music, try to find out what the circumstances of it's making were, and read about the composer's life — and you'll see how your imagination will fly and take you to new musical heights.

—Eckart Preu

Writing a column for the "Whole Note" can be a daunting task when there are no controversies swirling around, auditions are a long way off, and nobody is whining about my choice of programming! I've sat here looking at the computer monitor screen for some time now, and nothing has come to mind to write about.

Perhaps just a few random thoughts.

* * *

At the recent workshop on Performance Anxiety, our orchestra members were polled about their pre-concert jitters. Many raised their hands to acknowledge they have NEVER experienced ANY degree of anxiety relating to a performance. I found this a little disturbing. I recalled a quote attributed to master cellist Pablo Casals: "When I stop getting nervous before a concert, I'll stop playing concerts." SOME adrenaline is necessary to boost our systems and gear us up for a performance. A few nerves illustrate

the importance of what we do and our desire to make it the best it can be. I fear that those who have never experienced *any* nervous reaction probably have participated in dull, ordinary performances. It's when those very nerves that propel us to do our best become destructive and detract from our performance that we have a problem.

* * *

One of our violinists had a bowing put in her part by a private teacher that altered a rhythmic phrase. This was done to accommodate a technical problem in the bowing. I believe we should all think very carefully about changing a composer's idea to make it easier to play. NEVER break ties unless your conductor has told you to do so for interpretive reasons. Remember that music is SOUND, *not* all those dots on the page! If you change how it sounds, you are meddling with the composer's intentions, and that gets into very dangerous territory artistically.

* * *

Last season, when Anne Goldenheim announced that all of us conductors were returning this season, she made the observation that we all seem ideally suited to the groups we lead. I thought that was a rather profound observation and one that makes me proud to be part of the "team" at the Norwalk Youth Symphony.

Eckart Preu, conductor of the Principal Orchestras, recently conducted the Northern Regional High School Festival's orchestra at its performance in New Britain on January 27.

continued

Conductor's Corner continued

I listen to the Chamber Orchestras, and I hear Jim Andrew's passion and humor coming through in the playing. I always marvel at the sound he gets out of such relatively inexperienced musicians, and the obvious joy he imparts to our youngsters is a pleasure to behold.

Eckart Preu is undoubtedly our most refined conductor and his skillful baton technique is always inspiring to observe. Our most developed players have the opportunity of working with someone whose training has prepared him for the ultimately challenging task of training professionals, of dealing with the finer points of articulation and interpretation in the masterworks. That he maintains a sense of humor and avoids the nastiness that can often permeate the podium is an added blessing!

And then there's me. I'll leave any evaluation of my ability to others, but suffice it to say that I love working with the Concert Orchestra and am continually amazed at what its members can accomplish together through the cooperative efforts of their private



instructors and individual practice, our coaches, and our weekly rehearsals. The collective whole definitely is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

* * *

And lastly, the extraordinary work of our illustrious Executive Director, Carolyn Phillips, is a treasure beyond imagination! That she is ALWAYS prepared, has thought of EVERY detail, and is ALWAYS at every rehearsal to smooth problems and deal with the inevitable occurrences that disrupt things, makes everything function better. I can't even imagine a Norwalk Youth Symphony program as effective as it is without Carolyn! That many of you may not be aware of all she accomplishes is testament to her devotion and ultimate professionalism.

On to the May concerts!

—Richard Brooks

Thank you all for a wonderful concert on February 11. I was very proud of the way the members of the Chamber Orchestras concentrated so that they were able to perform three difficult pieces well. These groups have come a long way since September.

I am looking forward very much to the upcoming run-out concerts that the Corelli and Vivaldi groups will be giving next month in Derby and Shelton. These events are very important. Through them we provide a vital service to others who are not fortunate enough to have a school strings program, and are also reminded of how lucky our children are to have this opportunity. As a music teacher, I want to thank my principal and the Westport School System for allowing me to be excused from my regular teaching duties to lead these programs.

There's lots more work to come in order to get ready for the May concert, so get ready to practice, kids!

—Jim Andrews

New Additions to the Book Library

Teaching Genius; Dorothy DeLay, by Barbara Lourie Sand. This book documents the life of Ms. DeLay, who was a noted teacher of the violin at The Juilliard School. It has received wonderful reviews.

The Book of Musical Anecdotes, by Norman Lebrecht, is a collection of interesting tidbits and fascinating reminiscences about famous musicians. It's a good book to "dip into," if not to read in its entirety.

The Life of Mendelssohn by Peter Mercer-Taylor, is from the acclaimed series of conductor biographies currently being issued by the Cambridge University Press.

We also own ***The Life of Moussorgsky*** and ***The Life of Schubert*** from this series.

Members of the NYS, parents and friends are invited to look over these volumes during rehearsal times and to check them out for a period of three weeks.

Performance Anxiety

Janet Esposito, author of the new book *In the Spotlight; Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking and Performing* gave a most interesting talk to members of the Norwalk Youth Symphony and to the public on Saturday, January 27. Herself a former sufferer from stage fright, Ms. Esposito had several suggestions as to how to overcome such fears before musical performances. They include the following:

1. Don't avoid performing. This only tends to worsen the fear over time.
2. Remember that you are not alone; many people experience the fear of performing. When you are feeling upset with yourself over having this problem, think about these others.
3. Change your relationship with your fear. Instead of thinking "Oh no, here it comes again. I can't stand this anxiety," accept the feelings. Think, "I know this is an uncomfortable feeling, but it is okay that I have it. The fear won't kill me; it is simply unpleasant."
4. Imagine yourself riding out a wave. If you resist and thrash about trying to fight it or to get away, you will panic and

lose your confidence and energy in the process. Instead, imagine relaxing and riding the wave out until it dissipates naturally. As you do this, picture yourself in a different setting – with a friend, doing your favorite activity, in a special place, enjoying yourself after the performance. Apply this imagery as you perform.

5. Deep breathing is an important technique to use to calm your nervous system.
6. Take the focus off of yourself and transfer it to your audience. Don't think about how you will be perceived but about how you can best serve the needs of others and share your music with them.
7. Stop that inner critical voice. This creates negative beliefs and predictions; if you so strongly believe that the worst will happen, the chances of it actually occurring increase. Assess the probabilities of forgetting the music or playing the wrong notes realistically. Then create a more rational pattern of thinking that might say, "People tend to be more accepting of me than I am of myself. If someone else makes a

mistake or forgets, I do not automatically lose respect for him or her, so why should I think others will do that to me?"

8. Envision yourself playing very well before you perform. Go through the entire piece in your mind in this way several times. See yourself as confident and successful.
9. Take care of yourself in the days before a performance. DO: get enough sleep, avoid caffeine, eat well and exercise. DON'T: rush around, eat junk food, skip meals or stay up late to complete your preparation.
10. Practice relaxation exercises to reduce muscle tension and to relax your mind and body.

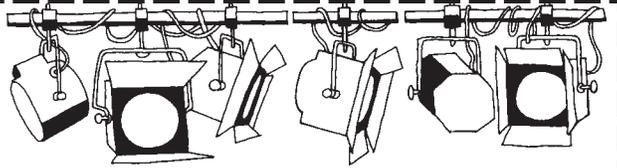
After her lecture, Anne Giroux and Nancy McMillan, students of Ms. Esposito, performed for the audience to demonstrate how they had overcome their fears of performing.

Janet E. Esposito, *In the Spotlight*. Strong Books. 2000. ISBN 1-928782-07-8.



Left: Anne Giroux; Center Janet Esposito; Right Nancy McMillan.

Spotlight on Teachers



RICHARD ERRANTE has enjoyed teaching young musicians of the Norwalk Youth Symphony for over 20 years. Currently, 15 of our members study the violin or viola with him. He is also unfailingly helpful with musical questions that the Executive Director has from time to time!

Richard's first violin teacher was his father, a professional violinist, pianist

and composer. He gave his first public performance at the age of eight, and at fourteen was accepted at the Juilliard School of Music. As a scholarship student at Hartt College and the Manhattan School of Music, Richard completed his violin studies with Ariana Bronne and the internationally renowned Raphael Bronstein.

In addition to numerous concerto and chamber music performances, Mr. Errante has appeared on radio and television in the United States and Europe. He now performs frequently with his wife, the cellist Lois Errante.

Our thanks go to both Richard and Lois for their support of our program.

Where Are They Now

The Norwalk Youth Symphony's conductors for its Principal Orchestra have in recent years been selected partly on the basis of a concept called *rising stars*.

The leaders of this orchestra since 1984 have been at the beginning of their musical careers, either still students from The Juilliard School, new to this country or just starting out as conductors in the wide world.

Nearly all of these young conductors have been highly successful in their musical careers and are now in prestigious positions with top orchestras in the United States. The NYS has fond memories of all of them, and would like to think that we gave them their start!

Gisele Ben-Dor is Music Director of the Boston Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and the Santa Barbara Symphony. Her performances continue to receive an overwhelming critical reception. Recently, Ms. Ben-Dor substituted as a last-minute replacement with the New York Philharmonic, and caused a sensation. She has also conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops, and the Israel Philharmonic. Her recordings are well known; she recently produced a CD of Ginastera's work with the London Symphony Orchestra, of which reviews said, "These are top-flight performances as thrilling as they are sensitive."

Yong-Yan Hu currently serves as Music Director and Conductor of the Lincoln (NE) Orchestra and the Duluth-Superior Symphony in Minnesota. He has also guest-conducted both here and in China (where he was born) and last July led the Hollywood Bowl in a televised concert that has already been broadcast for over one billion people in 17 different countries. In October, he conducted the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center for President Clinton and President Jiang Zemin of China.

Miguel Harth-Bedoya is the newly appointed Music Director of the Fort Worth Symphony and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in addition to being the Music Director of the Eugene Symphony in Oregon and the Auckland Philharmonia in New Zealand. His guest conducting schedule includes appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and Seattle Symphony, among others, as well as festivals at Ravinia, Tanglewood and Interlochen.

Keri-Lynn Wilson left the Dallas Symphony where she was Associate Conductor to pursue a free-lance career. She presented a program with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra with Isaac Stern, where she was referred to as the "golden protégée." A review said "If innocence and experience can conspire to achieve such astonishing results, then those responsible for the inspired

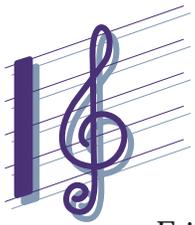
programming decision that brought them (Stern and Wilson) together deserve some of the thunderous applause with which this splendid concert closed." Ms. Wilson also has the distinction of being the first woman conductor in the history of the Grand Opera of Verona, Italy.

Andre Raphael Smith has been an Assistant Conductor with the Philadelphia Orchestra for several years. Last summer, he conducted the New York Philharmonic in a concert on Central Park's Great Lawn. "The orchestra played brilliantly for him; Mr. Smith is an agile, demonstrative conductor, one who is physically drawn into the music but who doesn't get so carried away as to forget to give cues," read a review of the performance.

David Amado was recently appointed Associate Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, where he is also responsible for the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. He has had conducting engagements with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, several Juilliard Orchestras, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and the New World Symphony.

Arthur Post is resident conductor of the New World Symphony.

Stuart Malina is the new Music Director of the Harrisburg Symphony and Music Director of the Greensboro (SC) Symphony Orchestra.



Schedule of Upcoming Events

Friday, March 9, 2001 – 10:00AM. **Corelli Chamber Orchestra** plays in Seymour

Saturday, March 17, 2001 – 8:00 PM. Members of Orchestras attend a **New Haven Symphony Orchestra “pops” concert.**

Friday, March 30, 2001 – 10:00 AM. **Vivaldi Chamber Orchestra** plays in Derby

Sunday, May 13, 2001 – 3:00 PM. **Spring Concert**

Wednesday, May 16, 2001 – 12:00 PM. **Concert Orchestra** performance on the Plaza at Lincoln Center, NYC.

Sunday, June 2 – time to be announced. **Principal Orchestra** plays at opening ceremonies for Heritage Park in Norwalk.

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