

AMATEUR CHAMBER MUSIC PLAYERS

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Newsletter Supplement, February 2001
Susan M. Lloyd, Editor

We are again grateful to Ted Rust for arranging to send all our North American members *Music For the Love of It*'s largest CHAMBER MUSIC WORKSHOP CATALOGUE ever. Four North American workshops have been especially recommended by at least one ACMP member this year: CAMMAC; the Princeton Play Week; the San Diego Workshop (see Catalogue for details); and the annual weekend workshop held at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City (usually early March).

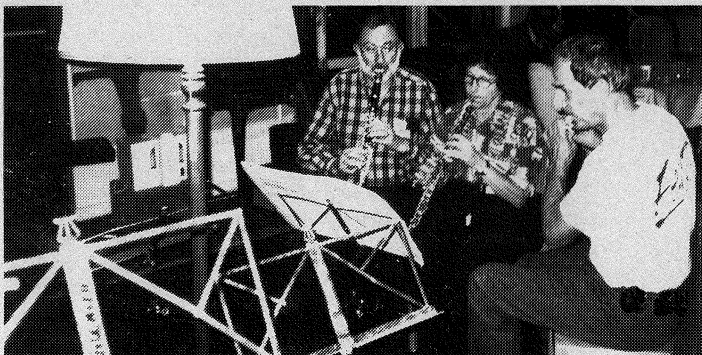
ACMP INTERNATIONAL

The most important news this issue brings is an account of the first regional meeting of the International Advisory Council, held in October at the Hindemith Foundation in Blonay, Switzerland. Twenty-nine ACMP leaders joined eagerly in both discussion and chamber music. Floryse Bel Bennett of Switzerland was both organizer and *Violin B*. Here are the questions that kept them busy all weekend:

- How can we encourage young people to play chamber music for the love of it?
- What is the best way to encourage amateur and professional musicians to play together?
- What role should ACMP and ACMP Foundation play outside of the United States?

It soon became clear that the answers were different for different countries—which meant the scrapping (for now) of one innovative thought: to establish an "ACMP Europe" with its own central office and Board. Other ideas were to find better ways to keep in touch with regional organizations such as the French Association de Musiciens Amateurs, and to follow the example of the Swedish Mazer Society in affording retired but active professional players the chance to continue playing with both young and older amateurs. "All professionals whose love of music is not destroyed by work are amateurs," David William-Olsson of Sweden told the group.

New questions emerged, e.g. should ACMP's name be changed to the "Association of Chamber Music Players" in order to more openly welcome professionals everywhere—especially chamber music enthusiasts living in nations whose amateur musical culture was discouraged in the Cold War years?



Late night at Blonay: Roland Wilk, Brenda Aloni, and Martin Donner

As each Advisory Council representative described the situation in her or his own country, a rich variety of national issues arose. Petru Dan of Romania, for example, began his presentation, "Somewhere In the the East," with his own questions and answers:

- Eastern Europe: another world? another culture?
- Romania: too far away? ignorant or ignored?
- Chamber music in Romania: is it different? Preferences? style? jokes?

Petru went on to answer some of them, describing his "Local Environment" as "a medium-size country with a very generous nature, relying on a long and rich history," then talking about Romanian music education and the special activities and dreams that engage players' musical passions. He closed by saying, "Chamber music is an invaluable gift, as well as a way of living. It is a door to friendship, a unique challenge for young people and a vital support for old ones."

Many other important presentations and suggestions followed. All these will provide crucial guidance for both the ACMP Board and the ACMP Foundation as they lead our association into the 21st century.

What matters most

Before and after the Blonay conference, attendees looked for chances to play still more chamber music. ACMP's Treasurer Don Spuehler took David William-Olsson up on an invitation to join the Mazer Society chamber music weekend, a supplement to this Stockholm group's weekly gatherings. "While there are many who help in organization," writes Donald,

David is the person who puts the groups together and takes care of all emergencies. I played with six different groups in 2½-hour sessions—15 hours altogether, Scandinavian music new to me as well as more familiar classics. My fellow players ranged from their teens to their 80s. ...The weekend was truly wonderful.

David and Stockholm's Mazer Society welcome ACMP members to their next Autumn Play-in on October 13-14, 2001. Watch the ACMP Bulletin Board for news of the next Mazer C/D Play-in day. Notify Advisory Council member David William-Olsson well ahead of time so he can plan for your participation: Phone: [46] 08-6111014 or <david.w-o@telia.com>.

TWO NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

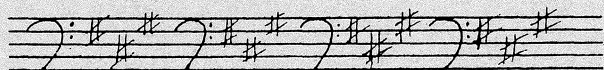
Nancy O'Neill Breth of Arlington, VA (*Pf-Pro*) is a chamber music specialist with years of experience both as performer and presenter in the United States, Latin America and Asia. She studied chamber music with Rudolf Kolisch, Janos Starker, Joseph Gingold and her own piano teacher, György Sebok. She holds degrees in piano performance from Indiana University and the University of Wisconsin. Praised in *The Washington Post* for her "superb musicianship," and pronounced "a magnificent pianist" by EL UNIVERSAL in Mexico City, Ms.

Breth also gained recognition for the quality of programming and performance which she has brought to the public in chamber music series she directed in Manila, New York City, Mexico City and Washington DC. She performs regularly with cellist David Howard of the National Symphony Orchestra, as well as appearing in chamber music concerts with a variety of other instrumentalists in the Washington area. For 13 years she directed the chamber music department of the Levine School of Music in Washington, greatly expanding the program and initiating innovative events such as the highly popular Chamber Music Weekend for adult chamber musicians. Breth's students, both of piano and of chamber music, are frequent prize winners in area, state and national competitions, including the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and National Public Radio's "From the Top."

Nanette Mills of Capetown, SOUTH AFRICA. *It was inevitable that I should be musical as my mother and sister were good singers and there was always music in the home. Encouraged by my godmother, who was an accomplished pianist, I began piano lessons as a child and was fortunate in having an outstanding teacher. My first chamber music experience came during boarding school days, when I accompanied a violinist in a Schubert Sonatine at an end-of-year concert. After marriage in 1957 and while bringing up our three children, I stopped playing the piano. Instead I sang in choirs and took voice training lessons. I resumed piano lessons in 1994 and finalised the Royal School Piano Examinations. In 1996 I continued studying with Florence Aquilina [PF-Pro] at the College of Music, University of Cape Town. It was through her interest in chamber music that I followed this discipline of music.*

Other than my enthusiasm about the ACMP and particularly the introduction of new members to the delights of chamber music, I encourage our four grandsons to play music. The eldest plays the recorder and another the violin and piano. They have both attained a level where they enjoy being accompanied. Other than music and family involvement, I enjoy art, reading, gardening, walking in the country, and entertaining good friends. I suppose that I am the average musician, who has the ability to encourage others to find enjoyment in the art of chamber music.

Editor's note: Nanette is currently the President of the regional ACMP of Southern Africa, which has grown to 120 members in three years. She and her group work to establish further chamber music contacts in Namibia and Zimbabwe, reaching out to interest young black Africans in classical music.



PLAY-INS COMING UP

Please note: We are glad to publicize any play-in you wish to initiate. Open-to-all Play-ins are seen by International Advisory Council members as a wonderful way to establish connections among players.

Lucretia Harrison will celebrate her usual *Brandenburg Sunday* at her new home in honor of J.S. Bach and Helen Rice, on March 18, 2001. Call or write her ahead if you can come, so she can plan to make the best use of her apartment rooms:

372 Main Street, Apt. 309

Port Washington, NY 11050; 516/767-1316.

The Toronto-area annual Play-In will take place on Sunday March 11, 2001, location to be announced. All members, and friends, from the Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario, western New York and farther afield, are welcome. We will begin at 3pm with string chamber orchestra music, then will welcome the wind and keyboard players at 5pm for a pot-luck dinner. In the evening we will break up into small groups for chamber music, and play until we drop (or the neighbors complain). Please contact Jane Wilson at 905/764-2837 or at <j.wilson@canoemail.com> for details and so that we can plan repertoire.

The ACMP will sponsor its traditional *annual Boston-area Play-In* jointly with the Appalachian Mountain Club Music Committee, on Sunday March 11, from noon until 7pm at Phillips Academy in Andover MA. We'll likely start with small free-lance chamber groups and informal madrigal singing, then try works for larger groups in late afternoon. As always, singers will enjoy an organized choral workshop, starting around 3pm. There will be a pot-luck supper at around 6 (please bring main dish, salad or dessert for 6). Coffee, juice, soft drinks and plastic utensils will be provided. All players and singers are welcome. To facilitate advance planning, please RSVP to Martha Jaffe, 617/244-0955; <jaffe@zko.dec.com>.

We have learned of the first *Cleveland Area Play-In*, a great success. All play-in news welcome.



LETTERS

Connections made and in the making

Greetings!

Thank you for the letter about your San Francisco meeting. I live in the hills above Palo Alto in an old apricot grove. ACMP has "saved my life" by making it easy to get connected musically in Brussels (we were there eight years), Connecticut (a couple of years) and now here. Come visit!

—Cathie H.Perga, California

Hello!

I want to say a very warm "Thank You" to John in Australia for arranging a wonderful evening of chamber music during my recent visit down there. He had a talented violist with him, a bag of music, and was not keen on ending the evening early for his long drive home. My friend Allan was on the Olympic Planning Committee but we convinced him to come home early, turn the phone off, and join us—which he did as 1st violin. I certainly appreciated both the outreach of ACMP and John's efforts in coordination.

—Roberta Clark, Alberta, Canada

Our quartet here faces extinction

Cellist fell prey to a dating agency; our loyal, diffident violist has treble clefphobia; pupil apprentices have exams; and increasing chronological realism compels my own self-reassessment to A- (at most), Vla B+. My favourite Hindemith and Walton have lain mute for years. Lots of music and instruments here, and my house includes a 2/3 bed, self-cook, non-smoke flat, free to musicians in need of rescuing. Daily flights (BA) and boat (P&O, overnight) to Aberdeen, ca. £120 return. June is usually the least disappointing weather.

—Roger Wildman, Shetland Islands, Scotland

A NEW BOARD MEMBER INTRODUCES HIMSELF

We invited *William Simmons*, Vc-A, of Woods Hole, MA, to send us a "Musical Autobiography" so that our members could get a sense of how chamber music enthusiasts grow to be the way they are—and of the variety we all enjoy among our most active members. Here he is.

Paul Kuriga was forming a plucked-string orchestra for Philadelphian children, and I, being large for nine, was to be its bass balalaika player...except they didn't have a balalaika. Instead I got a shiny white western-style six-string guitar and Saturday-morning lessons, within the orchestra, on how to form and strum the various chords that Mr. Kuriga called out to us from behind his mandolin or domra. We performed several times for enthusiastic parents, and Mr. Kuriga went on to found countless area plucked-string orchestras.

At age 11, I asked Gertrude Spergel if I might strum my shiny white guitar in the Penn Treaty Junior High School orchestra, which she directed. With great gentleness, she noted that guitars were uncommon in symphony orchestras, but that there was another instrument "just like a guitar," and I could have one if I wanted it. That day, she lent me one of the school's three well-worn cellos to take home, and arranged for me to have weekly lessons, cost free. (In those days, musical instruction was a regular part of big-city public education. Remembering it, I have come to be ashamed of my generation. We seem utterly incapable of offering the musical benefits to our children that our parents offered to us. If our members have ideas as to what we can do to convince our legislators to reinstate instrumental music as a regular part of public education, please let me know.)

In High School, four of us formed our first string quartet and performed *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* for a lady's tea, earning \$5 in the process. It seemed utterly baffling that people would pay us to have such good fun. We were hooked on chamber music at age 14. My school cello teacher advised me to switch to Joseph Durian of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who taught at the Philadelphia Settlement School. Mr. Durian was a stickler for scales and drills, but he was also an inspiration to work hard. Rehearsals and performances with the All-Philadelphia Junior and Senior High School Orchestras, completed this spectacular music program for me. I might well have pursued music as a career had it not been for my interest in physics and engineering, which were both extremely exciting at the time.

Lehigh had no orchestra, but then, Lehigh engineering students had no time either, so I joined the choir, which seemed doable without practice. We performed mostly at girls' colleges, which was enjoyable, and cello dropped out of my life for the next decade. In 1969, I accepted a scientific appointment in the Physical Oceanography department of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. I played both orchestral and chamber music in the area until the early 1970s, when my work became too intense. Meanwhile I was making my way from Engineering to Fluid Mechanics and Oceanography. In the mid-70s, while on temporary assignment at the United Nations, I met many chamber players, got to join the Geneva Symphony, and began to play seriously again.

Upon returning to the States, I founded the Woods Hole Library Chamber Music Series, which I still direct. The series offers several chamber concerts per year by local players for the benefit of the library. Shortly after, the ACMP invited me to join its Advisory Council, and I became active in the Music Committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club, a group that annually organizes a half dozen one-to-three-day chamber and choral plays-ins for up to 100 participants from the greater Boston area. Their March outing in Andover is currently co-sponsored by the ACMP. In 1989, I founded "Heaven" (which I continue to direct), a week-long invitational chamber-music binge for 36 players from North America and England. So far as

possible, "Heaven's" players are well-matched in playing skills and/or knowledge, in fanaticism for playing, and in anger-control skills. It's a winning formula.

I'm presently serving my final term of three as a member of the Board of Directors of Greenwood Music Camp, an extraordinary Massachusetts summer chamber-music school for talented junior and senior high-school children who love music. Greenwood grads rarely pursue careers in music, although those who do tend to rise to the top. The camp's can-do approach to instrumental playing, the splendidly good manners it instills through adult and student examples, its pervasive focus on "what can I do about MY playing to help this group sound as good as it possibly can," have influenced my musical thinking more than any stimulus besides my childhood teacher Gertrude Spergel.

Since my oceanographic responsibilities have eased up, I have enjoyed working to strengthen local choral and orchestral groups, whether public or non-profit. In 1999, I agreed to serve as outside editor for the ACMP's directories, a formidable task that helped me to appreciate Cecilia Saltonstall's extraordinary contributions to the ACMP. I continue to play chamber music enthusiastically at every possible opportunity, to perform occasionally, to teach ocean physics in the Boston University Marine Program, and to run a small Cape Cod violin, viola, cello, and bass repair and rental shop called "The Soundpost."

Several ACMP members have told us that this is the most convenient place in the US to look for chamber music:

PHILADELPHIA FREE LIBRARY

With more than 27,000 titles, the Free Library Chamber Music Collection is available to amateur and professional musicians. Includes works for solo instruments and vocal-instrumental combinations. All periods of music are represented, from Baroque to Modern, and from trio sonatas to jazz ensembles. The bulk of the collection is not on-line and can only be accessed by mail, phone, or through e-mail queries.

Conditions of loan include a refundable deposit for each work of music requested. For more information, or to inquire about holdings, please contact the library at:

Chamber Music Collection, Music Department
Free Library of Philadelphia
19th and Vine Streets, Philadelphia PA 19103
Phone: 215/686-5316; E-mail: chambermusic@library.phila.gov

EVENTUALLY, EVERY ACMP MEMBER will receive a single copy of the Cobbett Journal in the mail, a quarterly collection of information and wisdom about the chamber music works most of us know little about. While we lend out our mailing list only on exceptional occasions, your Board officers believe that many of you will welcome this small benefit from an association dedicated to a mission ACMP has itself assumed for about 40 years: to spread news of unfamiliar but worthy chamber works. This independent effort was begun in the 1970s by four Florida ACMP members who gathered for many years as the "Palm Strings" Quartet. Robert Maas, the prime mover, had amassed an extraordinary library of non-standard works, and every few days, the quartet would sit down and work one through, exploring its quality and assessing its accessibility for amateur players. When Maas died, his fellow players—and others who had benefited from his repertoire suggestions—came together to establish the Cobbett Association, named after the eminent scholar of the chamber music literature.

A grant from ACMP Foundation made it possible for the Association to buy the core Maas library from his estate: some 1,150 worthwhile chamber works culled from a still larger number over the years. Once this library has found a permanent home, ACMP members will be invited to borrow from it at cost-of-lending. In the meantime, the Cobbett Journal brings enticing news of chamber works by little known composers such as Nicolai Berezovsky, Louise Farrenc, and George Onslow (the latter more familiar all the time, partly thanks to the Association's efforts). It describes some in depth and others more briefly, rating many for both difficulty and general quality. Because the Cobbett Journal is home-printed, there will be no mass-mailing, but over the next three years virtually all of you will eventually receive your sample copy. We hope you enjoy it.

parties over two weekends with a total of 31 players joining us for the celebrations (one quartet was expanded to a two-cello quintet).

Participants often express themselves aghast at the thought of the burden on the hostess having to provide twelve people with morning coffee, lunch, tea, and supper and at the same time lead string quartets for three two-hour sessions. It certainly needs stamina and forethought, but provided you abandon any pretence of cordon bleu presentation, it can be done with the aid of an automatic pre-set oven which heats the quiches or pizzas for lunch and cooks the chicken casserole and bakes the potatoes for supper. Not everyone will have enough space—or enough friends—to follow our example. But I can assure you, if you have a go at it, that there is no more joyous way of celebrating the passing years.

—Theo Wyatt, England

MUSICIAN'S "WHAT IS"?

(Sensitive to insults? Read no further.)

A young child says to his mother, "Mom, when I grow up I think I'd like to be a musician." She replies, "Well honey, you know you can't do both."

Q: What do you call a beautiful woman on a trombonist's arm?

A: A tattoo.

Q: What do you call a guitar player with two brain cells?

A: Pregnant.

Q: What's the similarity between a drummer and a philosopher?

A: They both perceive time as an abstract concept.

Q: What's the difference between a guitar player and a large pizza?

A: A large pizza can feed a family of four.

Q: How do you get an oboist to play A-flat?

A: Take the batteries out of his electronic tuner.

Q: What is the dynamic range of a bass trombone? A: On or off.

Q: What's the difference between the front desk of violas and the back desk of violas? A: At least a semi-tone!

Q: Why are a violinist's fingers like lightning?

A: They rarely strike the same spot twice.

Q: What's the difference between alto clef and Greek?

A: Some conductors actually read Greek.

—Anon. (Spread about on the Internet)



It's Rare, But...

Now and then we hear from some generous chamber music host who has gladly given hospitality to ACMP travelers again and again, but whose guests never seem to have time to do the same when he or she reaches *their* homeland.

TWO MAXIMS TO PONDER:

Chamber music is all about reciprocation.

No, an invitation to play is not necessarily an invitation to spend the night, etc.



HOW TO CELEBRATE (AND PERPETUATE) A 50-YEAR MARRIAGE

Kitty and I reckon we are pretty fortunate. Together we make half a string quartet, she on violin and I on cello, so organising chamber music is comparatively easy, especially if you know a fair number of violin/viola couples. Then we are members of the Kingston and District Chamber Music Society, which I think might lay claim to being the most successful amateur chamber music society in the United Kingdom, if not in the world. I will write you an article about it one day and see if anyone can tell me of one which surpasses it. And finally when we married almost 50 years ago we bought a house with four bedrooms, which was bigger than we needed or could afford but has proved to be an inspired investment.

Our birthdays are a few days apart at the end of November and one of our closest violin friends has a birthday then also; so about twenty years ago we had the idea of a joint celebration with three quartets here all day. We would have three sessions at which, so far as possible, everyone would play with everyone else. We have two separate rooms downstairs—a music room which will take an octet if necessary and the office where I do my printing and publishing, where the machinery is fortunately on castors and can be pushed aside to make room for a quartet. The guest bedroom upstairs is over the kitchen/diner, acoustically separate from the downstairs playing rooms and big enough for a quartet if you take out all the furniture.

Many old folks in their twilight years complain that one of the most grievous sadnesses of old age is that their friends keep dropping off their perches, leaving their social life restricted to funerals. We have had one or two good musical friends go to join the great harp ensemble in the sky, but our circle of active musical contacts seems on the contrary to go on expanding. By the time I reached 70 we were having to leave out so many of our regular musical partners from the birthday celebrations that we decided to devote two days to it—a Saturday (for the God-fearing) and a Sunday (for the Godless) on successive weekends. And so it continued until this year when I reached 80 and something special seemed to be called for. So this year there were three

ACMP BULLETIN BOARD SERVICES OFFERED

CHAMBER MUSIC NETWORK, 30+ members at present from all around the New Haven, CT area. For a \$10 annual membership fee, we share our roster for your use, invite you to all our parties and zilches, and support your matching yourselves up for informal purposes. Some of our members have taken viola da gamba lessons together for five years, having met through a party!

Cynthia Russell

22 25 Main Street, Stratford CT 06615

<Psynnie@aol.com>

TO OUR 630+ NEW YORK AREA MEMBERS: looking for weekly chamber music? You may want to join Chamber Music Associates, 50 years old this year. Professional amateurs and unpaid amateurs take part in the music and friendship at the Lucy Moses School of the Arts, West 67 Street. Coaching for at-cost fee. Call our President, Evelyn Gilbert, at 212/861-7024, or me, Irene Z. Schenck, at 212/628-5929.