

Oh, Say can you C, or D or B-

This issue of *Ledger Lines* is published in conjunction with *Music for the Love of It* and a listing of North American chamber music camps and workshops for the coming season. Since many of our members are recent converts to “the chamber of music,” with a C or D self grade, this issue is dedicated to them; their aspirations, their fears, their enthusiasm and also the pitfalls that they face. The following stories address how much support is offered to those of any age or station who wish to raise their grade and the many paths open to each player to take advantage of this support.

Take Lessons

Karen Spechler (Vc-C), Santa Barbara, CA, is a real estate agent in the Santa Barbara area who took up the cello as an adult. Now, just three years later, she is participating in workshops, Play-Ins and recitals and even offering to “orchestrate your life” in her real estate ads! Karen says “Even though it does take time away from them, my family is very supportive. My husband knows how passionate I am about it and is very encouraging. My boys, ages 14 and 17, tease me a lot but I know they are proud of how hard I am working. They all come to all of my recitals.”

Karen chose the cello because she likes its rich gorgeous sound and the way it feels when she plays it. She also loves the give and take of chamber music. She found her teacher through a local music store and says “Even though it’s harder than I thought and I can see why some people get frustrated and quit, one just has to get over the hump. I will never quit! I cannot get over how much I love it and can hardly wait to practice every day. Music was not in my family when I was growing up, but it sure is in my blood.”

For the last 18 months Karen has been playing in an ensemble with a flute and violin player, also new to their instruments. She says, “We are all extremely dedicated. We are coached separately by our own teachers and then get together almost every weekend to work together. Last October we enrolled in **The Chamber Music Society of Santa Barbara** (CA) workshop as a pre-formed group. It seemed like everyone in the workshop had been playing all their lives and none of us had been playing for more than two years, but at the end of the day we performed for the whole group. Everyone was really supportive but it was one of the most frightening things I have ever done! Yet here we are a year later and doing it again this October.”



Karen Spechler (Vc-C), Santa Barbara, CA

Sign Up for Home Coaching

June Romeo (Vn-C), Berea, OH, writes: I can’t thank you enough for the home coaching grant that gave us the opportunity to work on “real” music and not just simplified

arrangements. Ever since I began studying the violin I’ve wanted to be in a quartet. Unfortunately, C & D level players don’t find much opportunity for that. I tried attending a

workshop, but found the other players to be very advanced, and several of them let me know in no uncertain terms that they were very annoyed to be “stuck” with someone at my level. It was so humiliating that I never went back.

Now I have a quartet better matched to my ability. We worked weekly for several months on Haydn Op. 76 # 2, before applying for the home coaching grant. Our coach, Alvaro de Granda, was great! He was able to come down to our level to explain things well, often illustrating points on his own violin. He joked with us, made us feel comfortable and encouraged us. At the first session, I was so scared of a “Cleveland Orchestra Coach” that my glasses fogged up, perspiration was dripping down my back and my bow bounced uncontrollably on the strings. Alvaro stopped us and said gently, “I don’t think Haydn made that passage staccato.” I replied, “He didn’t - I’m just so scared that my bow keeps bouncing.” He laughingly said that happened sometimes to him and gave us tips on handling stage fright. I learned more than I can tell and enjoyed every minute. He’s offered to coach us again and help us choose the next piece to work on. Thank you, thank you. We would not have been able to afford such a good coach without your help.

Learn to Count

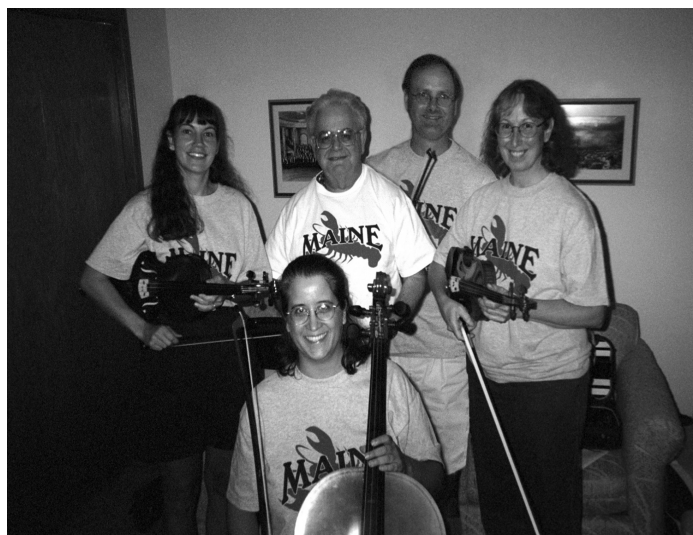
Advisory Council Member, **Susan Kannenberg** (Vc-B), Weston, MA, puts it this way: I was incredibly fortunate to attend the Meadowmount Amateur Week in its very first year. They were glad to have me as it was kind of last-minute organized. The turnout was sparse so they filled in with a group of students held over from the previous session. The students had fun because of all the opportunities to play chamber music, and they were experienced enough to keep things going. That was the week I ‘learned’ how to read ahead at least within a measure, and to reserve part of my

Find Like-Minded Players

ACMP Board Member, Jane Stein Wilson, says: My HQ (Handicapped Quartet) is made up of experienced chamber musicians playing the ‘wrong’ instruments. The first violinist, a retired high school teacher, and the cellist (yours truly), a nurse, normally play viola and second violin. The second violinist is an accomplished amateur pianist and choral singer

Attend Workshops

Jane Wilson says: CAMMAC is a haven for all chamber musicians. Participants are accepted based on when they apply (when the camp is full, that’s it!) We range from total beginners to experienced players who are learning a new instrument, and advanced amateurs. Those who can hold their instruments but not play them, or who can play them but can’t read music, or who can read music but can’t count are welcomed into the “Elementary Orchestra”. Chamber music



Home coaching Participants

L to R: Michelle Neudeck, (Va-C); new ACMP member, Julie Hickey (Vc-D), Vermillion, OH; Alvaro de Granda, (coach); Rene Niemoller (Vn-C), June Romeo.

brain to keep counting while trying to figure out whatever alien clef or other wacko thing the composer was throwing my way. As a result, even though I missed a given bunch of notes, I learned to keep playing and NOT stop, one of the most serious faults of the C/D player. So now when I play, sometimes I have to skip a lot of notes if it’s a weird clef or a lot of black notes, but at least I’m counting like crazy and therefore am able to get in again. In the end I’d conclude that if you CAN’T count, then you really can’t play! So learn to count to if you want to get better and eventually graduate from D to C or C to B-.

and the violist is a professional pianist. We can play anything and never get lost because we can count really well, but it sounds awful because we can’t play our instruments. We especially love to play the Mendelssohn quartets. It has been suggested by **Dr Nick Cunningham** (Vc-A), New York, NY, that we change our name to the Malpractice Quartet.

opportunities for absolute beginners are limited, but there are always many “low-intermediate-level” quartets, trio sonatas, and other ensembles. At times it is even possible to mix the less-experienced participants with those who are more accomplished as we did last summer when we put together one of the Spohr double quartets (some very difficult parts and some much easier) and a transcription of the Beethoven horn sextet for strings.

New Designations

In order to remain consistent with other chamber music organizations, the Board has determined that we shall change the abbreviation for violin in the ACMP Directories will change from **Vl** to **Vn** and viola from **Vla** to **Va**. The cello abbreviation will remain as is and not change from **Vc**.

Find Experienced Players to Play With You

International Advisory Council Member, **Nanette Mills** (Pf-C+), Newlands, South Africa, writes: Being a C grade player myself and having some 45 members in our area who are graded C & D, I feel that it is most necessary to accommodate these players at all times, but not to the detriment of A & B players! Although I agree that initially these lower grades feel more comfortable with others of similar grades, they in time must have the opportunity to play with higher graded players. Only in this way will they improve. When a new member joins the ACMP-Southern Africa in Cape Town, we introduce them to other players, suggesting works to play at their level of expertise, then keep in touch with them regularly encouraging them to continue with their music. Many of them have upgraded themselves over a

period of two years, playing regularly in groups. We also find that Workshops and Master classes are very beneficial to these C&D players, affording them the opportunity of listening and learning the finer points of playing chamber music and being coached by professionals.

Having also been a solo pianist, I am very sympathetic to the solo pianist who has difficulty fitting into chamber music groups when joining ACMP. Nobody wants to be grouped with them! Even if such pianists play well, they are usually not aware of the other instrumentalists around them. We are now experimenting with an idea of having our members who are teachers of music invite an inexperienced pianist to play in a coached chamber music session once a month to introduce them to the art of accompaniment.

The Directory at Work

Advisory Council Member, **Sharon Hinckley** (Pf-Pro), Vancouver, WA, writes: It pays to read the directory! Sometimes you find long lost friends. After many years, **Audrey Jarach** (Pf-B), Portland, OR and I got together to play a marvelous piano/four hands recital to celebrate her mother's 91st birthday at her retirement home. We selected a light repertory, Diabelli and Beethoven sonatina-length pieces, Schubert waltzes, and short contemporary pieces such as the *Hoe-Down* by Miller, and *Harvest Dance* by Karp. What fun to play beautiful, short pieces with a marvelous duet partner. Retirement centers are wonderful places to

perform. Add them to your list of things to do with chamber music! The largest audience this center had ever seen turned out for this event. At the end one person came up to declare that our Schubert was in the true waltz style of old Europe where she grew up.

Leslie Tatz (Pf-A) Forest Hills, NY, and **Leon Vieland** (Vc-A), have sent a joint contribution. Leslie writes: When I started teaching in Princeton I called musicians from the ACMP Directory, and Leon responded. We will be married in January!

From the Mailbox

June Romeo (Vn-C), Berea, OH, writes: I'd like to thank you for posting my request for a Boccherini score on the ACMP bulletin board. I have had several replies and have now gotten a copy of the score I was looking for. What a nice service this is from ACMP!

Henry Tulkens writes: Originally I enrolled as an amateur pianist but lost contact because I didn't travel much anymore, and there were too few members here in Belgium. Today, things are different: First, I switched to cello, and then I became a quite active member of "I CAMBRISTI," an ACMP-

like organization in Brussels founded a few years ago. I shall soon be residing in the Fiji Islands (South Pacific) for six months. Do you have members there? If so, I must rejoin!

Bowing Out

The following members have written to regretfully resign or change their ratings for personal reasons. We will miss them.

Dolly Gaus (Vc-C), Williamsburg, VA

Susannah C. Jones (Vc-C), Bernard, ME

Mary Louise Stewart (Vn-B/Vla-B), Stuart, FL

Cadences

We are saddened to learn of the deaths of the following members:

Fred Buch (Vn-B), Los Angeles, CA.

Lydia de Amicis-Reeve (Vc-C/Vla-C), Weare, NH.

Dr Leo D. Kahn (Fl-C), Deerfield Beach, FL.

Ron Kalman (Vn-B), Monroe Township, NJ.

Dr Helen Prinz (Pf-A), Beverly Hills, CA.

Mark Wolk, (Vn-C+), Pittsburgh, PA. Mark, a former member of the Advisory Council, was a model for us all. He began to study the violin late in life, realizing a childhood dream, and reached a level where he could make satisfying music with others.

Junior Moments



Above: Members of the Jacksonville, FL, Youth Orchestra performing before the Jacksonville Symphony Holiday Pops Concert

Top Right: Sumi Kudu of the Avalon String Quartet coaching 6th graders in the Westport, CT, *Music for Youth* program.

Bottom Right: The Clarinet Section of the Harvard-Westlake Middle School Concert Band, Beverly Hills, CA.



Play-Ins

Rochester, NY: Cynthia Howk, (Vn-B/Harp C+), Rochester, NY, writes: I've been an ACMP member for about three years - but wish I'd known about it decades sooner. Although we have a large music community in Rochester, it is rather odd that so few know about ACMP (even though one of your board members, **Alvin Wen** (Va-B+), lives nearby in Penfield, NY). So, instead of just thinking about some sort of event that would bring together the local ACMP members - I've made the giant leap & will be the "coordinator" of a Play-In for the Rochester area next March 14, 2004 at 3 PM.

I know that ACMP can provide a mailing list of local members, as well as a "Guide to Organizing a Play-In" to help us with this event and I've already had positive feedback. At a recent Board meeting of the Brighton Symphony Orchestra, one of our community orchestras, I announced that there would be an ACMP Play-In (Rochester's first, as far as I know). There was a most enthusiastic response from other board members and we already have two possible locations for the Play-In. The orchestra's principal clarinet, **Don Youngkurth** (Cl-A/FI-B), Webster, NY, is also a member of ACMP and has volunteered to help with the planning. For more details call **Cynthia Howk**, 585 224-9775.

Andover, MA: Plans have not yet been finalized for this traditional Play-In. Please contact the ACMP office for news updates.

Port Washington, NY: Lucretia Harrison schedules her annual

Brandenburg gathering on the Sunday nearest Bach's birthday. This year the Play-In will be on Sunday, March 31 (from 1-6 PM) at her home, 372 Main St, Port Washington, NY. Parking is available across the street on the town dock. If you plan to attend, bring a stand (marked with your name) and please call her at 516 767-1313.

Ottawa, Canada : The second annual Ottawa Play-In will be on Sunday, March 14, from 3 to 6PM at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Kilborn Ave, Ottawa. All string players are welcome but please contact **Patrick Fitzgerald** at 613 736-9008 so that he can have enough music.

Toronto, Canada: The 12th annual Toronto-area Play-In will take place on Sunday, March 14 starting at 3 PM. As usual, string players will gather in the afternoon for chamber orchestra, and wind and keyboard players will join us at five for supper and chamber music. Please contact **Jane Wilson** at <vvcb4@juno.com> or 416 227-2451 for information about location and arrangements for food.

Northampton, England. Michael Watkins (clar, Bsn, Hn-B/Sax, C), Northampton, England, has a web site for playing events in his area. For more details and booking forms, visit the web site: <www.argonet.co.uk/users/reynard/>.

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