



Great Amateurs Of The Past: Theodor Billroth

By Joel Epstein

The name Theodor Billroth will be familiar to the doctors among us, from the Billroth I and Billroth II surgical procedures. Alert quartet

players may also have noticed his name as the dedicatee of Brahms's first two string quartets (Opus 51). Indeed, medicine and music were Billroth's two passions, and he excelled at both. If there were an amateur musicians' hall of fame, Billroth – friend of Brahms and motive force in musical Vienna of the 1880's – would have a place of honor.

Billroth was born in 1829 in northern Germany. He took young to music, and became an excellent pianist. Billroth received his medical doctorate from Berlin in 1852, and in 1867 became head of surgery at the University of Vienna.

Throughout his studies he devoted himself to music as well as medicine. When soprano Jenny Lind – the “Swedish Nightingale” – came to town, he met her and accompanied her at several concerts. Like many pianists, he felt left out of the hottest chamber music scene – quartet playing – so in college he took up the viola, and became competent enough to play in a string quartet with two professionals and another amateur.



Professor Theodor Billroth lectures at the General Hospital, Vienna, 1880. Detail of a Painting by A.F.Seligmann.

Billroth first met Brahms after a concert, and they immediately took to each other. They made an odd couple: Brahms, laconic, irascible, and coarse (once, on leaving a party, he said, “If there is anyone in the room whom I have not insulted, I offer my apologies.”) versus Billroth, eloquent, suave, and the ideal host.

Brahms regularly sent Billroth manuscripts of his works for advice before publication. “Dear Brahms, Yesterday we played your new sextette (Opus 18 in G Major) at my home, partly with professionals, partly with amateurs, and I wish to tell you what an extraordinary joy we had in the playing of it.” wrote Billroth in 1866.

The leading surgeon of Europe, Billroth's medical achievements were prodigious: he developed many surgical procedures, including removal of a cancerous larynx, and several intestinal resections; he wrote extensively, including a textbook on surgical pathology, still studied today.

Billroth's home became a nerve center of musical Vienna. Players in his musical soirées — where many of Brahms's chamber works had their first hearing — included Joseph Joachim, Jacob Grun, concertmaster of the Vienna opera, and pianist Julius Epstein. His musical friends included both professionals and amateurs: Theodor Wilhelm Engelmann, botanist and amateur cellist, Max Kalbeck, music writer and Brahms's biographer, and the acerbic and influential music critic Eduard Hanslick.

Hanslick, Brahms and Billroth led the alliance against the musical innovations of Richard Wagner, in what became known as the “War of the Romantics.” Billroth was a key point man on this “war.” His home was a rallying point for the supporters of chamber music. Billroth himself often wrote musical reviews for leading Viennese music journals, supporting the music of Brahms and others and criticizing Wagner's school. This ideological battle of titans shook the musical world of Europe for 20 years, and shaped the future of music for the next century.

Billroth was a man of boundless energy. At the end of his intensive workday of teaching and writing, he turned to music. He often met Brahms at Zum Rotten Igl (“At The Red Hedgehog”) their favorite

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Letter from the Chairman

Dear Fellow Musicians

In a recent Newsletter I wrote about the invigoration of our Advisory Councils by Board members Floryse Bel Bennet and Janet White and specifically about the conference organized in Cratoule, France by Floryse for International Advisory Council members.

Now Janet White, ACMP Board member and Chair of the North American Advisory Committee (NAAC) has taken the initiative to organize a three day conference in September for members of the NAAC. This will coincide with the September ACMP Board meeting and thus provide a welcome opportunity for the NAAC and ACMP Board to interact.

A word of background. ACMP is governed by an international Board of Directors that meets twice a year to review finances and ACMP activities and to set strategic direction. The work of ACMP is carried on throughout the year by various Board committees and by two important Advisory Councils, each headed by a Board member. The International Advisory Council (IAC) is headed by Floryse Bel Bennet and the NAAC by Janet White. The main purpose of the Advisory Councils is to provide services to ACMP members to promote chamber music playing. This often takes the form of workshops or Play-Ins for ACMP members in different parts of the US and in other countries.

Both Floryse and Janet have built on the efforts of their predecessors to breathe new life into the Advisory Councils, recruiting new members and stimulating more activities. To this end, several IAC retreats were held in Europe, most recently in Cratoule, France in 2011. The conference organized by Janet in September will be the first held for North American Council members since the joint meeting of the Board and Advisory Councils in 2007. The ACMP Board will meet concurrently at this conference as well.

The goals of the meeting are to:

Provide a forum for Board and NAAC members to get to know one another better.

Engage and build a sense of community across the NAAC so that participants come away feeling inspired and energized.

Foster stronger communications within and across the NAAC and the Board.

Develop action plans to provide member services across our varied North American communities.

To play music together.

I know I speak for the entire Board in expressing appreciation to Janet for this very welcome initiative. I am confident that the meeting will produce much good energy, many creative ideas and will result in further encouraging and strengthening chamber music playing.

In the meantime, I've got to get back to practicing! I hope you all have a great summer, filled with music and other summer pleasures.



ACMP A New Presence on Facebook in Brazil

A Letter from IAC member Marjana Rutkowski (Vc, Brazil)

ACMP now has a Brazil Facebook page, and we invite you as well as the entire ACMP/IAC network to support our effort in Brazil by marking "LIKE" ("CURTIR"). (making sure to mark "LIKE" on the page itself, rather than one of the photos within the page.)

Your participation is valuable because the more "LIKES" a page has, the more Facebook offers tools to further the exposure of that page to the public. This will enhance the ACMP presence in a new way. It would also give legitimacy and respect to the page — and would encourage people who see it to join in. In addition, the popularity of the page (as measured by the number of "LIKES") counts very much to advance our presence.

You can also increase our presence if you are willing to post one or two photos of your own ACMP chamber music sessions on the Brazil page so that we can show a nice variety of chamber music settings and range of age groups. Our intent is to interest not only fellow Brazilians, but other nationalities (as well as the USA) in order to maximize the power of this Internet social media.

For that reason we posted our page in English as well as Portuguese. (Both the Portuguese content and the English texts were extracted from the ACMP website.)

Thank you for your attention and do not forget: when visiting the ACMP Brazil page kindly mark "LIKE" it!

Best regards to all of you,

Marjana Rutkowski
Vc, Porto Alegre, Brazil



Marjana Rutkowski and her cello are at Right

International News

Introducing New IAC Council Members

Portugal — Christel and Bernhard Schluender

Two of our new International Advisory Council Members, Christel and Bernhard Schluender (Vn and Va, Portimão, Portugal), are husband and wife - a "first" for ACMP. They first met at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in 1969, married in 1971, and have two adult sons. They have lived in Portugal since 1996, Christel practising medicine as a General Practitioner, and Bernhard, who is a past President of the local Rotary Club, and current President of the CIP Portugal-Germany.

Chamber music has always been a large part of their lives. While Bernhard was studying civil engineering in Braunschweig, Germany, he formed a string quartet with some other students, and also played with the Jeunesse Musical Orchestra, giving concerts in England, France, Norway, and Poland as well as monthly concerts in Germany.

Cristel says, "From 1973 to 1988 we both lived in Brazil and in addition to our professional lives we always played chamber music, in concerts and for our own fun. The same was true from 1988 to 1996, when we lived in Cologne, Germany. There it was easy to find two other doctors to form a string quartet and to play in an amateur orchestra as well."

Cristel began her study of medicine in São Paulo, received her Doctorate of Medicine in Cologne, and today is a general practitioner in Portimão. She speaks German, Portuguese, English, Spanish, and French.

Cristel began studying the violin in early childhood, but later she changed to the viola, and took bel canto lessons as well as studying the piano. At the age of 14, she began working at the Staatstheater of Wiesbaden (Germany), and studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. Since then Cristel has played quartets in São Paulo, Cologne, and has appeared as soloist with the Centro Cultural de Belem in Lisbon, Portugal. Cristel and Bernhard founded the Quartetto do Barlavento in Portimão, which has been active since 2000.

France — Michel Mayoud

Michel Mayoud, (Vc, France), completed his degrees as an engineer in Paris and Delft, The Netherlands. After a few years in France at the beginning of his career, he moved to the international environment of CERN (Geneva), the European Laboratory for Particle Physics, and has been there ever since.

As a child, Michel soon displayed a marked interest in music, first studying the piano and then the guitar. He says, "It's very accommodating for a student or a very busy young engineer with no piano!" As soon as he got his own piano, he devoted himself to it for many years, until he passionately turned to the cello because of a deep desire to play chamber music with others. He explains, "I was not a good enough pianist for chamber music and I had always been attracted by the cello."

As a cellist, he first joined the Orchestre de Chambre de Carouge, and then the AMA Symphonic Orchestra of Geneva, both a mix of amateurs and professionals, until he left the area in 2010. He also joined the French and the Swiss AMA. In both countries "AMA" stands for "Association de Musiciens Amateurs" (adults) — organizing their meetings, practice sessions, lessons and performances of Chamber Music. AMA France exists as regional entities under a federal governance, and it manages its activities and events at local and national levels (some with international participants).

Now retired and settled in Valence (not far from Geneva), Michel still belongs to both the Swiss and French associations and regularly play chamber music. He says, "As I became more and more committed to the French (rather than the Swiss) group, I recently accepted leadership in the AMA Federation and agreed to represent "AMA France" within the International Advisory Council of ACMP, replacing Michelle Gelbard, who retired after many years of filling this role."

Advance Planning for an IAC Conference

Floryse Bel Bennett (Vn/IAC Chair/Board Member) writes: The IAC currently has 28 members in 18 countries. Mihai PERCIUN has suggested that we hold the next IAC meeting in Bucharest, possibly a three-day conference in late May or early June 2013. The idea would be to meet for one or two half days of discussion, meet new IAC members and play music together, and discover a country that has not yet developed much tourism and has many musicians. A project with young musicians might possibly be developed as well. Accommodation and food are not expensive in Romania, and we are sure that most IAC members would be able to cover both living and travel expenses.

New IAC Council Members



Dr. Christel Schluender,
(Va, Portimão, Portugal)



Bernhard Schluender,
(Vn, Portimão, Portugal)



Michel Mayoud, (Vc, Valence, France)

Gelencser, cellist. Warming up with a Michael Haydn quintet, we spent the afternoon playing Mozart's G minor and C major quintets.

Our next port of call was St. Gallen, Switzerland, where nearby we had a joyful reunion with the von Heyl family, capping a day together playing Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven quartets with Johannes on viola; daughter, Madeleine, violin; and son, Benedict, cello. A couple of days later, Johannes, Benedict and I essayed Mozart and Beethoven string trios.

While visiting friends near Aix en Provence, we journeyed to La Croix Valmer to the lovely home of Jacqueline and Philippe Caudal where we enjoyed a sumptuous lunch followed by a delightful couple of hours reading works for two violins by Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart among others. What a joy to play with Jacqueline once again!!

Our travels continued – Paris, then five days in Tunis where after 36 years we reunited with dear Palestinian friends. Music and friendship, essential elements of a rich life, truly marked our journey.

Sheet Music Resources Needed

John Kula (Pf, Mount Prospect, IL) recently polled the Board for recommendations of music for violin, viola and piano.

Ivy A. Turner (Vc/Board, Cambridge, MA) suggested a search of the listings of Silvertrust Editions, <www.editionsilvertrust.com>, a resource for less well known compositions founded and maintained by former NAAC member, Ray Silvertrust (Vn/Vc, Riverwoods, IL). Ivy wrote: Click on SEARCH,Piano Trios. Works for non-standard combinations are in Green. There are many for violin, viola and piano.

Janet White (Vc/NAAC/Board, San Diego, CA) recommended searching the holdings at IMSLP (see the Autumn, 2010 newsletter, page 2) which lists 48 pieces for that combination. The internet source may be found at <

John Wilcox (Cl/Board, Edina, MI) listed his personal holdings for that "serene combination," which includes 66 works by 43 composers ranging from Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, to Ignaz Lachner, Pietro Locatelli, Andrew Imbrie, and Jules Massenet.

Another option is the Max Bruch trio, Op 80, originally scored for clarinet, viola and piano, but some editions include a transcription of the piano part for violin.

Counterpoints

Irwin Winsten (Vn/Va, Scarsdale, NY) writes: Joachim Heusler's note in the Winter 2012 issue about the Steinway grand in his chamber music room made me wonder—full stick, short stick or no stick? So many pianists love to play with strings, but have little awareness of appropriate voicing. Young professional groups have the same problem, using a full stick that overpowers the sound.

I'm wary when asked by a pianist to join a group session. Many a the time the pianists seemed to enjoy themselves while the rest of us wished for extra hands to cover our ears.

Professional groups that include pianists have the same problem when playing in homes and small halls. Don't pianists realize how loud they can be? My heart sinks when someone walks up to raise the piano lid to its highest, knowing that this will hurl the piano voice into the furthest reaches of the room. Do pianists really sense the sound level at the keyboard to be the same as the level experienced by others?

Chamber Music has traditionally been played on small instruments in intimate settings. After all, pianos originated in the quiet voices of seventeenth and eighteenth century harpsichords and clavichords. Bach, Haydn, or Mozart couldn't possibly have anticipated the nineteenth-century modifications which have transformed pianos into the virtuosic concert-hall filling instruments that we hear today.

Some piano teachers arrange for students to play with others, providing opportunities to learn the acoustical requirements for the leveling and voicing of chamber music. Similarly, experienced performers make adjustments for the acoustics of different spaces, adjusting the stick accordingly. Amateur chamber music pianists should bear this in mind—tone down the *fortes* and use a gentler touch with accents to enhance the playing experience of the group.

Cadences

We are saddened to hear of the deaths of the following members

Lawrence, Marilyn (Vn A),
San Diego, CA

Miller, Dr. Robert (Vn/Va),
Dearborn, MI

Bequests

We are grateful for a generous donation, by an anonymous donor, in memory of Eva Nussbaum (Pf, Mamaroneck, NY).

Your generous bequests and contributions will help us to continue to support the playing of chamber music for pleasure, and as well to nurture the next generation of chamber music musicians.

In these difficult financial times we are especially grateful to those who wish to honor the memory of their musical friends with a bequest or contribution in any amount.

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It's easy to update your info on the web, so please let us know of any changes to your information, especially if your E-mail address changes.

Members are reminded that a copy of ACMP's last annual report may be obtained from the New York Office of Charities Registration, Department of State, Albany, NY, 12231



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ACMP Bulletin Board

WANTED

HAYDN QUARTETS Vol 3 and 4

I have been struggling with printing sheet music parts from a CD-ROM. But find I want the print editions of Vols 3 and 4. Does anyone have a suggestion? <Bobcello@me.com>

SCORE FOR MOZART PRELUDES & FUGUES K.404a

Scores (not parts) to these works for string trio needed for coaches at a chamber music workshop later this summer, and to help my trio rehearse. Internet search yielded only a score for the first one (D minor) and the fugue only (not the prelude) of the second (F minor). Any leads would be appreciated, even if you don't own it yourself. Eric Godfrey <godfrey@bigw.org>

AVAILABLE

ORIGINAL STRING QUARTETS AVAILABLE

I have composed eight string quartets, much in the style of Antonin Dvořák, each about 30 minutes in length, four movements, engraved to meet MOLA standards with attention to detail, rest measures for every page turn, a little difficult but not requiring virtuoso skills by any means. Free score and parts for ACMP members. If you are just curious, I'll Email .pdf files for you to look at. <davideyoungmd@hotmail.com>

BASS CLARINET AND CASE

Buffet Profession Low E flat Bass Clarinet and Case for sale. Very good condition. Excellent wood, no cracks or checks. Some original white leather pads some new top grade tan leather. Lightly used. Minor signs of wear, will not affect fingering or tone. Case is original with little wear and new \$400 Alterie padded double pocket case bag. Asking \$3,000 plus shipping. Carl Todd, phone 516-676-1806; Email <cltodd@optimum.net>

GRAND PIANO IN THE PYRENEES

Lovely Yamaha grand piano in the French Pyrenees, surrounded by spacious house with lots of room for other chamber players, gorgeous views and gardens. House sleeps 6 - bring your own group, enjoy wonderful meals in beautiful surroundings, and play chamber music to your heart's content at the home of ACMP member Sydney Patten. Chef, chauffeur, and maid are included. Sydney and her husband, Bill, will act as your guides for sightseeing. Photos at <http://www.vrbo.com/294529>, Phone 011.33.5.6.6179.1529; Email <etonetheater@aol.com>

KLEZMER TRIOS FOR STRINGS

These 33 selections span the vast emotional range of the human spirit. The tunes, a combination of Jewish religious and secular tunes, with folk music of other Eastern European cultures mixed in, will make you want to dance, sing, cry, and just enjoy life in general. The klezmerim (traveling musicians) toured Eastern Europe, playing mainly for weddings, dances, and other happy celebrations. To order click on the following link: <http://greenblattandseay.com/book_trios_klezmer.shtml> For more information, Email <debby@greenblattandseay.com>

Home Coaching

"Home Coaching is an awesome use of ACMP Funds. We worked hard and had fun at the same time. The inspiration we got is thrilling." Marion Richter (Vn/Va, Olney, MD).

Home coaching is open to all dues-paying members at all levels. Form your own group, choose your own repertory, your own schedule, your own coach, and your own location at your own convenience. The ACMP Grants Program subsidizes half of the cost.

To take advantage of this program, all you have to do is complete your application and submit it to the office. Include the names of all the members of your group, the work you will study, the prospective coach, the dates of your coaching sessions, and the amount that the coach will charge.

Download the application from our web site, <www.acmp.net>, or telephone the office (212) 645-7424 to receive one in the mail.

After the application is approved and the sessions begin, you pay your half directly to the coach, who then submits a bill for the remainder to ACMP.

Members may apply for one course of home coaching each year, and all members of the group must be members of ACMP.