



Part II of the Supplement to the Fall 2007 Newsletter of the North Carolina Suzuki Association

Editor's note:

We had so many excellent articles that I had to make some omit some and cut others to get a news letter out. I wanted to put the all in so I have produced a supplement that includes all the articles I left out of the shortened form. I have included Jennifer Laursen's essay and Nan Freeman's. History of the Suzuki Tour Group of the Carolinas and all of my piece on the Swannanoa Chamber Music Workshop.

David Teague
Newsletter Editor.

Suzuki Tour Group of the Carolinas – A History

Nan Freeman

The Suzuki Tour Group of the Carolina's is sponsored by the Suzuki School of the Arts in Hickory, NC. The tour group originated as a means of motivating advanced students in our program and programs from surrounding areas. We began in 1994 with our first tour to Florida. It was such a huge success that we did a cruise the following year. It has snowballed so that we have now done tours to New York, Washington, Williamsburg, 3 cruises, England, France, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The tour group is comprised mainly of students from North Carolina, however, we have also had students travel from Tennessee, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Numbers of participants range from 37 – 98 including parents and teachers. It is a great way to travel and know that there will be lots of fun activities, and no planning on the part of the tour participants. Parents are strongly encouraged to come with their children as a good time is had by all.

Not only is it a tremendous motivator for our students, but it allows us to share music with people from other countries and regions. When possible we collaborate with local Suzuki groups.

In order to be eligible, participants are recommended by their teachers after meeting the appropriate performance level. Students are responsible for fund raising, practice and attendance at all rehearsals with a positive attitude at all times.

Our next tour will be a cruise in January of 2008. Bon Voyage!



Developing musical identity in the young child

Jennifer Laursen jennifer_laursen@hotmail.com

I believe that a parent who feels their child is musically gifted is never wrong. If it seems inevitable that a child will become a fine player, both the parent and the child will be patient and persistent. They will also be unconcerned about the perceived rates of progress or playing levels of other children. Faith in their child's musical nature frees the parents to take joy in the achievements of the other students. This in turn is communicated to the child. In this way, a strong musical identity also leads to a generosity of spirit towards others.

Children who believe they are destined to become fine players can watch more advanced players and think to themselves, "I will be able to do that someday!" They tend to see the players around them as blossoming artists just as they see themselves as blossoming artists. They also recognize the hard work involved. It is my observation that this habitual optimism and generosity of spirit generalizes to non-musical arenas as well.

Last summer Orin attended a quartet camp called Madeline Island run by violinist/pedagogue Vartan Manoogian. Manoogian is on faculty at University of Wisconsin, Madison. (He was Joe Genualdi's high school violin teacher at NCSA and Jose Bastardes' master's degree advisor.) Manoogian was able to set the tone of optimism, support and enthusiasm for the entire camp of about 80 musicians in the most remarkable way. He made it abundantly clear from the very beginning that competitive or superior attitudes were absolutely not to be tolerated and he coupled this with contagious joy and enthusiasm and absolute faith that they were all fine musicians.

The result was unbelievable! The quartets, made up of students aged 14-25 and grouped by age, played incredible music at a level of musicianship I have not seen anywhere else. Orin has stayed in touch with his friends from the camp all year. They have flown from all over the US to spend weekends together and to continue to play chamber music. While he is attending Encore rather than Madeline Island this year, his roommate at Encore is the cellist from his quartet at Madeline Island. I can't wait until Colin is old enough to have the Madeline Island experience.

Manoogian's aim is for all to experience beauty in music, to strive for excellence both collectively and individually and to form lasting friendships. So, what a parent can do for their child, a teacher can do for a studio and a director can do for an entire camp.

Swannanoa Chamber Music Workshop
sponsored by the
Swannanoa Chamber Music Festival at Warren Wilson College.

By David Teague

The Swannanoa Valley Chamber Music Festival added a new opportunity for string players and pianists this year. This was a 5 day Chamber Music Workshop at Warren Wilson College (June 10-15). The Chamber Music Workshop was the most intense and positive playing experience I have had, with the possible exception of time spent at Suzuki institutes. Here are some of my experiences at the workshop with my bass tuned in fifths.



We had about 40 participants, 4 coaches and 1 administrator who also played cello. Of these there were 13 violinists, 3 violists, 10 violin/violists, 10 cellists, 1 bassist, and 4 pianists (two part-time). Any discrepancy in the numbers is due to participants doubling instruments.

The coaches were Scott Cook, the Musical Director (Wisconsin), Carol Hayes (Florida), Katherine Winterstein (Mass), and Inessa Zaretsky (New York).

Groups were trios of several kinds and piano trios; quartets: a standard quartet, a double quartet, piano quartets with various instrumentation; quintets of various kinds: double viola, double cello, piano quintets, piano and violin, viola, cello, bass.

Assignments of participants to groups and the pieces to be played were usually made the previous evening, in most cases after requests or at least discussion with the music director, Scott Cook. Scott seemed to know everything about every piece of chamber music in the library. In assigning groups and music, he knew the abilities of each of the participants, people who came from all over the USA.

The groups met from 9 to 10:30 AM to begin work. The assigned coaches (who were really good, but who were always overworked) appeared and made suggestions, then left for their other assigned groups. At 10:30 there was a break, after which we worked until lunch. We reconvened at 1:30 PM and worked until 3. After a short break we had a recital with each of the 10 or 12 groups performing their assigned pieces. Not all letter perfect, but always astonishingly good and with wonderful musicality.

After hours people did "free lancing" -- we formed impromptu chamber groups and played until we ran out of energy. We played the 3rd Brandenburg after hours Wednesday evening, with perhaps 20 violins and violas, 6 or 8 cellos, and a piano and a bass. Great fun.

Every bassist I have heard in a chamber music setting has been too quiet to my ear. I could feel the bass, but never really hear it, not even when they played the Trout. I'm serious. Not a robust sound at all. So I emulated that. That was not what the coach wanted. He kept calling for more bass. I gave them more, and as I gained confidence, I produced enough sound to satisfy everyone. Great fun. Great learning experience.

In the workshop on Monday, my group was a piano quintet, with instrumentation violin, viola, cello and bass. We played the first movement of the Trout. My Tuesday group played the Rossini Sonata II in A, for two violins, a cello and a bass. This piece has neat double bass solos. In fact everyone has nice solos in this piece. On Wednesday my group (with different players than Monday) played the Scherzo from the Trout; Thursday, the Michael Haydn Divertimento in C (violin, viola and bass). My Friday group played the Adagio and Presto from the WA Mozart Divertimento. The instrumentation is 2 violins, viola, cello with the bass doubling the cello. With the bass supporting from below, this was a very different experience than the Trout,.

The Rossini Quartet in A (#2), first movement had a double bass arpeggio figures followed by the plaintive responses in the violin. The coach said I should think of this exchange as my bass part being Snidely Whiplash twirling his long black mustache while tying Polly Purebread to the railroad tracks. He said I was to think of the violin as Polly's plaintive responses and the bass part as Snidely's, "AH, ha, HA!" This fetched the required conversational effect. Pure opera!



I changed the tuning of my bass from the usual, fourths, EADG, to fifths, CGDA, in August 2004. I have been playing basses tuned in fifths since August 2004, when I bought a laminated bass and installed a set of Thomastic "Red Mitchell" strings for tuning in fifths. (The story about Red Mitchell is for another time.) After experimenting a year, in the Summer of 2005 I decided I would stay with fifths tuning, so I had my luthier take the extension off my my Pollman bass and we replaced the strings in fourths with strings for tuning in fifths. A bass in fourths is usually tuned E(lowest) A, D, G. The solo set is one step above this, F# B E A, for a brighter, more soloistic sound. In fifths, the bass is tuned an octave below the cello, C1, G1, D2, A2.

After some experimenting, I found a combination of strings that works well for me. For the top string, the 1st string, I use a medium tension Corelli Tungsten Solo set A; for the 2nd string, I use the Corelli Tungsten Forte D string, for the 3rd string, I use the Medium solo set F# (turned up to G) and for the 4th string, -- the lowest string -- is a Thomastic Spirocore C string. This combination gives an even sound across the strings.

About a year ago, I had my luthier, David Rhodes, "revoice" my bass. He thinned the plates and put in a new bass bar. The results were wonderful. My bass, now, produces a sound that is huge, resonant. People described it as having a clear, pure sound, more like a cello than a bass, yet clearly a bass. And it matched the other instruments very well, better than other basses.

Many attendees at the Workshop thought I would have to stretch my hands horribly to play with fifths tuning. They and many bassists with whom I have discussed this were astonished that I would even try such a thing. They were even more astonished to watch me play with no evidence of stretching and no discomfort.

Generally speaking, the first approximation for fingering a passage for the bass tuned in fifths is the cello fingering. Differences are due to physically not being able to do some of the cello extensions in the low positions.

Do you know the difficult variation in the Trout? It is Variation IV, the one with the sixteenth note triplets. Once I got the cellist's fingerings, I was able to PLAY it immediately. Not at a proper tempo, but I could play it, and I will be able to play that at tempo in time.

The Swannanoa Chamber Music Workshop was a wonderful program that I will surely attend again. I encourage anyone with a week to spare to come to the workshop June 8 through 13, 2008. You should write to Ron Lambe who is a cellist and is the administrator asking to be put on the mailing list.

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Addendum:

Here is a link to a page listing solo and chamber music that includes the bass, listed by composer, by piece name, and by publisher. The web site is maintained by Kurt Muroki and the web page is copyright Homer Mensch, one of the 20th century's bass greatest bassists. The link is:

<http://24.215.176.44/muroki/musicdata.htm>