



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

May 2001

2001 Ensemble Program Concert

The program will include performances by at least three groups (details below), and possibly more. An ensemble reading conducted by Rochelle Itzen (details to the right) will conclude the concert.

A Gaelic Offering

(Rose Cottage, The Doubtful Wife, Lake Solace, Describe a Circle)

Catherine McMichael

Hal Archer — Ardith Bondi — Michele Smith — Rochelle Itzen

This quartet, consisting of NYFC board members and a representative from Barbados, originally got together to play through the Dahl *Serenade*. They decided on trying the McMichael piece for the ensemble concert because it was new to most of the group. A challenge—but fun!

Sinfonico, Op. 12

Anton Reicha

Jennifer Ackerson — Nicole Grant — Rebecca Sayles — Carol Weinstein

Quartet members Jennifer Ackerson, Nicole Grant, Rebecca Sayles, and Carol Weinstein met through NYFC networking, and hail from NY's Westchester and Orange Counties. When not fluting, Jennifer and Nicole are elementary school music teachers, Rebecca is director of development at the Hoff-Barthelson Music School, and Carol is an attending psychiatrist at St. Vincent's Hospital.



NYFC members at the Fall Ensembles Gathering, Sunday, November 19, 2000, at the Bloomingdale House of Music.

In Concert

2001 NYFC ENSEMBLE PROGRAM

May 20, 2001
Sunday 5:00 pm

Bloomingdale House of Music
323 West 108th Street

Program subject to change

The concert will conclude with a reading of ensemble pieces (including the *Nutcracker Suite*, scored for flute, alto flute, and bass flute) conducted by Rochelle Itzen and performed by members of the audience.

If you'd like to play, please contact Rochelle Itzen: itzenflute@aol.com or 212-982-2703.

Duetto sur des Motifs

Americains, Op. 37

Franz Doppler

Ed Wolf — Ann Bordley (flutes)
Marilynn Mendelson (piano)

Ed Wolf and Ann Bordley met and began playing together several years ago through the NYFC ensembles program. They are being joined for the second year by Marilynn Mendelson, who has an M.A. in music from Indiana University and is active in the Chamber Music Associates group. Ann is an assistant district attorney in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, and Ed is a physics professor at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn.

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2000–2001**

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From the President:

**500 Strong...
Numbers Count**

by Patricia Spencer

As flutists we hear a lot about how tough it is that there are so many of us (and not enough jobs), and almost never about the advantages of our significant numbers. Yet there are distinct benefits to our much-touted “overpopulation.” Perhaps the most

exciting is that it helps us build a stronger repertoire. This is not only because of the large number of flutists pursuing commissioning projects, but also because it has a snowball effect on the composers themselves, who, observing that flutists are particularly active in commissioning and performing new works, are studying the instrument more and more seriously, writing ever more profound and delightful pieces for us. Intertwined with this are the benefits of greater variety and imagination in recital programming, plus (as we just heard in abundance at the concert of our New York Flute Club competition winners) an increasingly high and exciting level of performance. These natural consequences of a large number of recitalists can be expected to charm the public, spurring an increased attendance at flute recitals.

The confusing array of design improvements on our instruments—the Cooper scale, the immense variety of materials, the development of a quarter-tone system flute, new pads and mechanisms, square tone holes—would not be happening on such a large scale without a certain critical mass. And though of course we don’t need all of them (that’s the nature of experiments!), out of these experiments have come improvements that we are all grateful for. Further, due again to the critical mass, more flute music gets published and becomes more easily available.

Less tangible is the sense that with more numbers we might get the public buzzing about (for example), flutist A’s sense of cantabile versus flutist B’s sense of structure. This can be done with no trace of judgmental pronouncements, which are quite boring. How enlightening it is for audiences to compare recordings of different string quartets, or orchestras, to develop an awareness of different strengths from different artists, tuning in to the artistic message instead of tabulating who plays faster and louder. Horzowski’s collection of colors versus Arrau’s communication of structure, Pollini’s programming versus Alicia de Larrocha’s. One always hears differently after a good healthy argument with a friend about choices of tempos by conductors of the Mahler third, or whether the Met’s or the City Opera’s programming is more relevant. Yet the listening public still needs introduction to many of our superb flute soloists. If they recognize only one or two soloists’ names, they do not have enough basis for an argument. We need more (not fewer) soloists who are providing high variety, serious and imaginative flute programming with highly individual interpretations.

Finally, as flutists with colleagues we gain from the sense of community, the shared enthusiasm, the respect for someone who can play in tune even with a cold flute, for instance (see last month’s newsletter for an article by our editor about this!). This advantage might be comparable to the advantage of living in a city over living in the country, finding camaraderie, repertoire introductions, and other insights through the stimulation of collegial interaction. To conclude this final note of my three years as president of the New York Flute Club, here is a reminder of part of the mission statement of the Club: *to foster the association of professional, student, and amateur flutists, offering performance opportunities for flutists and composers, and welcoming as members musicians and music lovers who are interested in the flute and flute music.* □

Member Profile

Hal Archer

NYFC Member
since the 1970s

Employment:
Freelance flutist
and teacher.



A recent recital/performance: A chamber music concert at Weill Recital Hall in February 2001. The program, performed with fellow members of NYC's Housing Authority Orchestra, included works by Beethoven and Hindemith's *Kleine Kammermusik* quintet.

Career highlights: In the 1970s, performing the Griffes *Poem* at Alice Tully Hall, playing with the Spoleto (Italy) Festival Orchestra, appearing on WQXR's *Recital Series* and NBC's *Today Show*. In the 1980s, playing solo recitals at Carnegie Recital Hall and Merkin Hall, and a NYFC recital at CAMI Hall. From 1975–1982, flutist in the Alvin Ailey and Dance Theatre of Harlem orchestras and many Broadway shows. In Barbados, West Indies, performing a double flute concerto with his former teacher William Bennett and the English Chamber Orchestra (in 1992).

Current flute: Two favorites—one gold, one silver—both by Edward Almeida, with headjoints modified by Reiner Lafin, Germany.

Influential flute teachers: Frances Blaisdell, Thomas Nyfenger, James Pappoutsakis, and William Bennett; influential colleague: “Brother” Harold Jones.

High school: No formal high school! He left elementary school in Barbados at age 14; his high school years (1957–61) were spent with the Barbados Police Band, where the young cadets were privately tutored by visiting teachers.

Later, the Jamaican Defense Force Band sent him to England, where he spent a year as a prize-winning student at the Royal Military School of Music.

Degrees: B.M. (1972) and M.M. (1973), both from the Manhattan School of Music.

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishments: Teaching at the Harlem School of the Arts (1969–1985). From 1985–1996, working as an officer of the National Cultural Foundation of Barbados, West Indies: as cultural officer in charge of music/education he coordinated local and international music festivals, young audience concert series, and master classes with visiting artists; as government representative in charge of internationally touring Barbadian musicians he established a means for preserving and promoting indigenous music. Most personally satisfying: raising two boys to successful adulthood, and (the ultimate tribute to any teacher!) getting work from former students.

Typical practice routine: In this order: long tones from Moyses's *De la Sonorité*; harmonics, scales, arpeggios from Taffanel and Gaubert's *Daily Exercises*; single, double and triple tonguing (usually now with literature). Then etudes by Taffanel, Moyses, and Andersen (Opus 15), finishing with current challenges for performance and maintenance of repertoire. He never practices without the center of the sound first; otherwise it sounds terrible and he hates it.

Interests: Jazz; playing the saxophone and clarinet. Swimming and other sports (basketball and table tennis).

Advice for NYFC members: Play the flute because you love it—and always work on your basics and the core of your sound.

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

M A Y

May 11, 2001

Friday 7:30 pm

Flutist **Sophia Anastasia** and pianist Colette Valentine in recital. Program to include works by Copland, Griffes, Rivier, Jolivet, and Takemitsu, plus two new commissions: the solo piece *Oiseau Miro*, by James Romig, and world premiere of *Zynoglyko*, by Gary Schocker.

• *Union Congregational Church, 176 Cooper Avenue, Montclair, NJ* • Admission: free, donations accepted • Info: High5 Tickets at 212-750-0555 x200, or www.SophiaAnastasia.com.

May 11, 2001

Friday 8:00 pm

The OMNI Ensemble will perform the world premiere of Jim Lahti's *Six Poems of Robert Mitchell* scored for mezzo soprano (Emily Howard), flute (**David Wechsler**), cello, and piano. Also on the program are works by J.S. Bach, Doppler, Michael Rose and Hsin Jung Tsai.

• *The Brooklyn Conservatory, 58 Seventh Avenue (corner of Lincoln Place in Park Slope), Brooklyn, NY* • Admission: \$10, \$8 students/seniors • Info: 718-859-8649.

May 19, 2001

Saturday 8:00 pm

Flutists **Carla Auld** and **Miriam Lachenauer** will be performing as “I Due Flauti” with pianist Marsha Tyshkov and cellist Jennifer Gravenstine. Program to include works by Haydn, J.S. Bach, W.F. Bach, Doppler and Kuhlau.

• *St. Paul's United Methodist Church, corner of South Broadway and Division Street, Nyack, NY* • Admission: \$6 donation at the door. • Info: 845-352-1795.

May 20, 2001

Sunday 3:00 pm

Flutist **Michael Laderman** and pianist Maria Garcia will perform *Works from the Second Golden Age of Flute*, a recital of music by Enesco, Godard, Casella, Roussel, and Widor.

• *Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 West 69th Street, NY, NY* • Admission: \$20, \$15 for students/seniors • Info: 212-787-2755.

J U N E

June 3, 2001

Sunday 8:00 pm

New York recital debut by flutist **Zara Lawler** with pianist Margaret Kampmeier, soprano Mary Ellen Callahan, and members of Tales&Scales on percussion, bass trombone and clarinet. Program to include the world premiere of a set of songs by Mark Zuckerman, and selections from *The Animal That Drank Up Sound*, composed for Tales&Scales by Alla Borzova. Additional works by Lukas Foss, J.S. Bach, Ruth Crawford Seeger, and François Borne.

• *Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, NY, NY* • Tickets \$17 • Info: 845-353-0534.

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

(Cont'd from previous page)

JUNE

June 5, 2001

Tuesday 8:00 pm

The Da Capo Chamber Players, with flutist **Patricia Spencer**, will offer a 30th Anniversary gala program with a retrospective of works written for the group by Shulamit Ran, Bruce Adolphe, and Joan Tower, plus new works by Alla Borzova and Giya Kancheli.

- Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, NY, NY • Tickets \$15, \$10 students/seniors
- Info: 212-501-3330 or visit: www.da-capo.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Global Master Class" from July 30 to August 3, 2001 at Wagner College. **Linda Wetherill** will teach her CD *Sound and Repercussion*, with guest composers Robert Martin, Dary John Mizelle, Joseph Pereira (and others) coaching, performing, and clarifying their works. Participants and observers 18 or older are welcome at classes, lectures, ensembles; commute or reside. For repertoire and application contact Linda Wetherill Master Class, 38 West 74th Street 3C, New York, NY 10023, Muzarte@msn.com or 917-861-4528.

Call for COMPOSER NOMINATIONS

THE NYFC WILL BE SELECTING a composer to write a commissioned work to enhance the flute repertoire. To nominate a composer, send a cassette tape of a recent work, a brief resume of the composer, and a signed note of nomination to:

Sue Ann Kahn,
Commissioning Committee
New York Flute Club
Park West Finance Station
P.O. Box 20613
New York, NY 10025-1515

Deadline for submissions:
October 15, 2001

For additional information, contact Sue Ann Kahn:
212-675-1932 or
kahns@newschool.edu

Letter From Paris II by Nancy Toff



This past October, I made what is becoming my annual pilgrimage to Paris to research a biography of Georges Barrère. If this had been my first trip, the roadblocks I encountered would have sent me screaming into the courtyard of the Louvre. But this was my fourth, and I had become somewhat resigned to the vagaries of the French bureaucracy.

On my agenda this time were several matters: finding the scores of the 61 pieces of music that Barrère's Paris chamber music society, the Société Moderne d'Instruments à Vent (SMIV), had premiered between 1895 and 1905; reading newspaper accounts of those concerts; and piecing together some puzzle pieces of the family history.

The first order of business was to consult the microfilms of French newspapers, which are housed in the three-year-old Mitterand building of the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN). A few weeks before my departure, I attempted to consult the BN online catalog, only to find a notice stating that a major electrical outage in the neighborhood of the Mitterand building had caused a "*fermeture exceptionnelle*" (extraordinary closure). The library hoped to reopen on October 15.

I monitored the situation daily, and the reopening date kept sliding. When I left on the 20th the library was still closed. On the 23rd, I went to register at the old Rue Richelieu building, and the registrar told me with some embarrassment that the reopening was now scheduled for October 26. The good news was that without their computer—which is in the Mitterand building—they were unable to issue electronic reader cards or record payments, so admission was free. Plus, I got an extra measure of sympathy from the librarians, who just rolled their eyes at the mere mention of the trouble-plagued Mitterand building. The bad news was that the online catalog (for all items cataloged since 1980) was inaccessible. But there was plenty of work I could do.

I moved on to goal no. 2: finding the scores for the works premiered by the Société Moderne. Here I had quite a bit

of luck. Until it became time to make photocopies—at which point I learned that the French copyright laws are quite different from our own. First, there is no concept of "fair use," under which a scholar can make one copy of a copyrighted work for private consultation. Moreover, under French law copyright endures for sixty-eight years after the author's death, plus eight years when the clock was stopped, so to speak, for the world wars. The eight-year addition pertains even if the composer died after World War I! (Logic does not enter into the equation.)

So I spent several hours researching the death dates of the composers, and more time convincing the librarians that I was right. I soon figured out that some librarians were more flexible than others, and if I didn't get the answer I needed, I should wait until the changing of the guard at the reference desk. There are also arbitrary page limits on copying from one source, so sometimes that meant dividing a particular job into pieces, allocated to different days and different librarians. The Battle of the Marne was probably not planned quite as carefully!

While I was at it, I decided to play a hunch and check all the woodwind works by composers who had written for the Société Moderne, even if those works were not listed on the Société programs that I had. Here I hit paydirt, finding several more works dedicated to Barrère, including *Chant dans la Nuit* by Albert Seitz and *4 Pièces* by Eugène Lacroix.

Meanwhile, the Mitterand reopening kept getting postponed. Finally, the staff was to go back on Thursday, November 2—and they did. But fifteen librarians got sick from the "bad air," and the *fermeture exceptionnelle* was succeeded by a *fermeture temporaire*. As it turned out, the building did not reopen until a week after I returned to New York.

I turned my attention elsewhere. I was very curious to learn more about the *Bataillon Scolaire*, the schoolboy fife and drum corps in which Barrère was introduced to the transverse flute. On previous trips, I had been bounced

around from the Archives Nationale to the Archives de Paris to the Archives de l'Armée de Terre. All I had learned was that the Bataillons were founded in 1881 to provide elementary military education following the Franco-Prussian War.

Numerous books on French education had proved useless. I consulted one of my authors at Oxford University Press, Professor Bonnie Smith of Rutgers, who referred me to Professor Linda Clark at Millersville University, an expert on French education. Professor Clark recommended a trip to the Institute on the History of Education.

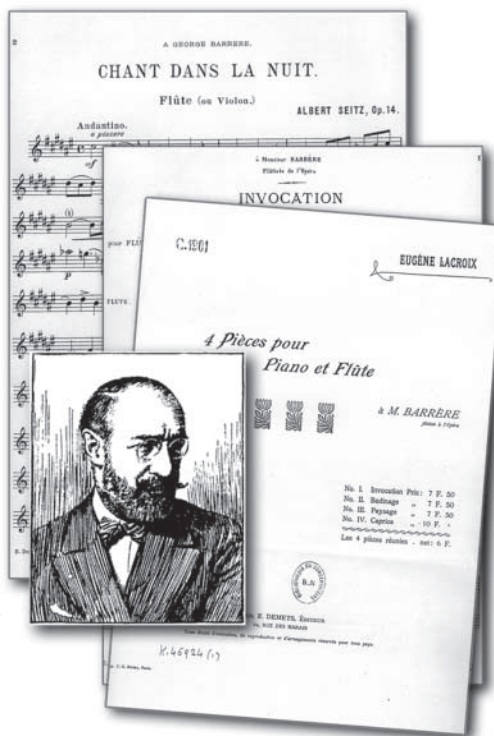
I got there about 3:00 pm and was referred to a tall, skinny reference librarian bearing an uncanny resemblance to an overaged Twiggy. At first she was skeptical of my project—"My brother was a conscientious objector," she said, "and I don't believe in military education." I explained that Barrère's military education was compulsory, and that he was all of ten years old, and she relented—and roared into action in a manner quite uncharacteristic of French librarians. First she located some references in an antiquated, pasted-up loose-leaf periodical index, and then she started madly thumbing through a mysteriously organized card catalog. Voilà! There was a doctoral dissertation on the Bataillons Scolaires. But the witching hour was approaching, when book delivery would stop. She seized the call slips and took off for the basement, returning triumphantly with the dissertation, the proceedings of a conference at the museum of education in Rouen, and the official government regulations on the bataillons.

I found out that the government mandated the precise marching routines, equipment, and rifle drills. There were copies of sheet music; engravings of buglers, drummers, and a few fife players; and lots of useful information on the philosophy and organization of the bataillons; but no indication whatever of the musical training involved.

I did finally find a citation to a series of twenty boxes in the Archives nationales (AN), but when I returned there, I discovered that the detailed inventory of that archival series said merely "See Etat Sommaire" (the summary inventory), which had no description at all. The AN allows a reader a measly five *bulletins* (call slips) per day,

meaning it would take four days to see all twenty boxes. So I am trying to locate the dissertation author before my next trip, hoping to get more a detailed description of the boxes and thus focus my search.

Another goal was to locate programs for the Paris Exposition Universelle (World's Fair) of 1900, at which Barrère



Two pieces dedicated to Barrère at the turn of the 20th century. His Société Moderne d'Instruments à Vent premiered larger chamber works by both composers.

played in the orchestra conducted by Edouard Colonne. Several French colleagues had told me that the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris had extensive program files, but on previous trips I had been rebuffed by the librarians: "Rien!" (Nothing). This time I got luckier: the librarian in charge of ephemera (the archival term for printed matter of supposedly ephemeral interest) was just coming on duty. She said she'd look, and I should come back in a few days.

Indeed, she had left folders of concert programs for both the SMIV and the Exposition—and I found not only several Colonne programs, but one for an SMIV concert *at* the Exposition, something I had never expected to find. I decided to request folders for other chamber music performances, but then the customary French library karma kicked in—the ephemera specialist was on holiday and would not return for

another week. No one else could help.

On to the Bibliothèque Gustav Mahler, a private library that owns the papers of pianist Alfred Cortot. Barrère and Cortot were friends from Conservatoire days, and Cortot was the French government's emissary to the United States for cultural propaganda in the World War I era. I was sure that he and Barrère had continued their acquaintance then, but had not been able to prove it. For several years, I had been corresponding with the BGM librarian, who insisted that there were no Barrère documents. But I remained convinced—and when I arrived there was a phone message that indeed there were: a postcard and a letter from about 1918. Mme. Blavette assured me I could come any time to see them. But when I arrived, the librarian on duty could not find them. I paced and frowned and pleaded for mercy, and after forty-five minutes she found them. However, it took her no time at all to remind me that I must pay the fifty-franc research fee.

Finally, it was November 1—All Saints Day in France—when the entire country closes down to attend church and honor its dead. But the French Flute Association, La Traversière, opened its biannual convention. Organized by the tireless Denis Verroust, the convention honored the memory of Jean-Pierre Rampal. I had the opportunity to meet many French flutists whom I'd previously known only by correspondence, and to see such familiar colleagues as Michel Debost (who has been of enormous help to me in finding research contacts in France), Kathy Chastain, Trevor Wye, and Robert Aitken. The final concert, at the Sorbonne, included performances by two Americans, Robert Stallman (the Reinecke concerto) and Ransom Wilson (the Nielsen concerto). Afterwards, Lilian Burkhart, Jim Phelan and I enjoyed a memorable dinner at a Left Bank bistro recommended by Paris flute repair specialist Allain Cadinot, where we toasted Barrère with a fine Bordeaux wine. Next fall, I will again make the sacrifice and return to Paris to continue my research. □

Nancy Toff, who Samuel Baron once dubbed "Nancy Drew," last wrote about her research on Barrère in the May 2000 issue of this Newsletter.

Tai Ji, Qigong and the Flutist

by Andrew Serman

Now more than ever before, Westerners are exploring the cultural treasures from other parts of the world. As this interest grows deeper, it changes from a focus on “things we might be able to have” to a focus on “things we might be able to do.” Nothing demonstrates this change in a more positive way than the blossoming interest in the West for tai chi and qigong, the ancient movement-based practices of self-cultivation from China.

The *New York Times Magazine* (1 April 2001) reported that tens of thousands of people in 80 countries would be participating in the third World Tai Chi and Qigong Day on April 7th. In China, tens of millions practice each day. Research at the National Institutes of Health and Johns Hopkins University is underway to explore the proven effectiveness of tai chi in reducing blood pressure and the diseases of aging. What do we know about tai chi? Can an ancient practice really help flutists such as ourselves develop mastery of breath, overcome performance anxiety, protect us from hand injury, and help bring our performances to life? Many musicians are beginning to think so.

Although tai chi (which is now more properly spelled “tai ji,” just as “Peking” is now “Beijing”) is much better known in the West, it is actually a much more recent evolution of the movement and principles developed in qigong (formerly spelled “chi kung”). In fact, qigong is the “grandparent” of all the martial arts, including karate, judo, aikido, and tae kwon do, as well as being a main source for the healing practices of acupuncture and many kinds of massage, such as shiatsu, trigger point work or tui na. Qigong is also the foundation for many Chinese styles of meditation. Combining these aspects into one practice, the qigong masters from ancient times to the present have sought to reach their fullest human potential, often leaving behind legends of their nearly superhuman achievements that entertain as well as inspire us, as can be seen in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the wonderful Taiwanese movie about a magic sword and qigong masters from Wu Dan mountain.

Qigong, in fact, is the overall name for a wide collection of practices, some of which are still being invented, but most of which are truly ancient, coming to us in an unbroken chain of lineage-holders dating back to the time of legend. The story begins with a Buddhist monk from India named Bodhidharma. He was born in 440 C.E., and had flaming red hair and huge, penetrating eyes. Just like flutists, monks would mention their teachers, so we know that Bodhidharma studied with an enlightened monk in India, and back the line goes, about 800 years, to a famous monk named Mahakashyapa, who studied personally with the Buddha. So well did he understand the Buddha’s last teaching that he was named his successor, the holder of the teaching. In time, Bodhidharma too, like his teachers before him, achieved great understanding.

When Bodhidharma was invited to China by the Emperor, he welcomed the chance to carry this thread of wisdom to a new world of people. Bodhidharma left India on a boat with Chinese merchants, and learned Chinese on the voyage. It’s

hard to imagine how strange this red-haired monk with rudimentary Chinese must have seemed to people unused to foreigners, so long ago. We know from the written records, however, that Bodhidharma was a very tough teacher. When he informed the Emperor of China that the Emperor was not only ignorant, but also very materialistic, the monk was banished from the court and abandoned in the middle of a huge, unknown country. Bodhidharma, for his part, didn’t seem to mind at all, and he found himself living high up on Shaolin Mountain, near a famous monastery full of Chinese Buddhist monks. It is here on this mountain that the story of qigong begins.

According to the story, the monks were restless. They practiced meditation all day long, under the direction of the head abbot, but they didn’t seem to be growing in spirit, knowledge, or warmth of heart. When Bodhidharma offered to teach these monks in the Shaolin monastery, all the monks laughed, because he didn’t respect the older monks or any of the traditions of the place. Over and over the monks rejected Bodhidharma’s teachings. For nine years he waited, living in a cave high up on the mountain. Once a day a novice monk would carry a little food up to him, and the story was always the same: the master from India seemed perfectly happy and healthy and spent his time doing odd movements or sitting on a stone “cushion.”

Of course, a time came when things in the monastery got worse, and the head abbot, having no one to turn to, climbed up the mountain to see the red-haired recluse for advice. In a stunning exchange of a very few words, the abbot achieved full enlightenment. He then brought Bodhidharma down from the cave and asked him to help the community of monks.

What Bodhidharma said started a revolution of thought, inspiring to me and to countless others. He told the monks that they were practicing with good discipline, but without the proper spirit; he told them that their bodies were tense and tight, that they weren’t breathing fully and naturally; he told them that if they were truly healthy and full of life that everything they applied themselves to would be resonant and beneficial to others; and finally, he began to teach them the strange physical exercises that he had developed from the yoga he had grown up with in India. He had invented qigong, the practice to weave mind, body and spirit together.

“Qi” means breath, but not just breath, it means life-breath, like the breath of spirit which is the difference between alive and not-alive. When you have qi (pronounced “chee”) you are healthy; when you have a lot of qi you are really healthy. “Gong” (pronounced “gung”) means practice, mastery or method. Qigong is a method to increase your life force, your health, vitality and peace of mind through gentle, elegant, profound movements. But it is not just gentle movement. Bodhidharma understood what practitioners of qigong now call the meridian system of energy in the human body. He understood that a healthy person doesn’t just have lots of qi; the qi flows within his or her body, like water flows in rivers, lakes and canals in the body of a country. It is this flow of qi

that acupuncture needles help restore, and the exercises of qigong are designed to do that as well. But qigong is done without any needles—without anything at all except a place to stand and the knowledge passed on by a good teacher.

First, a qigong student works on the level of the physical body, getting a bit stronger, developing better balance and helping all the joints to feel loose and flexible. Gradually, the idea of “qi” becomes a real experience, and you can actually feel something lively and almost bubbly flowing within your organs and limbs. If a practitioner works very deeply, it is possible to heal more quickly from being sick, avoid the illnesses that one might otherwise get, and even improve long-standing conditions. Qigong exercises are brilliantly designed to help the body’s qi move in all the different ways to improve vitality. Over the centuries many different special kinds of qigong exercises have developed. Some are short and are repeated a number of times, to stretch the body and build qi, such as “Holding Up The Sky,” “Wild Goose Nibbles Grass,” or “Crane Step”; others are long sequences of special postures, such as the now-famous “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” which is actually the name of a rare and ancient set of qigong movements.

Amazingly, the original qigong taught by Bodhidharma to the Shaolin monks about fifteen hundred years ago can be learned and practiced today. According to their history, the Shaolin monks did finally embrace the qigong practice; by mixing physical practice with meditation, they developed invincible self-defense techniques based on mental clarity, perfect balance and flexibility, and mastery of their qi.

A modern student of qigong, tai ji or any “martial art” practices for self-development rather than self-defense. In that way we are like the original monks of Shaolin, practicing for the sake of realizing our potential. For musicians, qigong can be a very useful tool for improving the same qualities of interest to the monks: calm, confident clarity of mind, perfect flexibility and coordination, and mastery of breath. Of course, mastery doesn’t come in qigong any more quickly than in music, but at each step of the way there are benefits and insights. Just as qigong helps a person stay young while growing wiser, so it can help a musician stay artistically idealistic while growing in ability and experience. Perhaps most important of all is the very simple fact that qigong can be of benefit for musicians who may develop pains in their hands, arms, shoulders, back, neck, or jaw. There are wonderful qigong exercises which can help restore health to each area of the body as well as protect a busy musician from any problems that might arise in the future.

As the monks of Shaolin traveled, qigong spread and took root all over China. As with all things, time brought change, and local masters added the influences of their particular local traditions. Some were expert in self-defense, others in healing (or rituals derived from the ancient shamanistic past), navigating by the stars, or divining the future with the *I Ching* (“Book of Changes”). Some were masters in telling myths through movement, like the contest between the crane and the snake, or the story of Buddha naming Mahakashyapa to be his teaching successor by handing him a flower with a silent smile. After a thousand years of qigong, all these influences were woven together, gradually, into a form called “tai ji,” where “tai” means “great” and “ji” means “universal ultimate.” Each

movement of tai ji is based on the flow of yin and yang, the constant and universal dance of complementary and opposite forces. Unlike qigong, which is made up of short exercises which can be put into different sequences for the development of different aspects of health, tai ji is a set form which flows without stopping from one movement to another, taking about twenty-five minutes to complete. The tai ji form is a great gift from countless anonymous (and not so anonymous) masters, which includes within its movements a method to perfect what was begun in qigong: balance, flexibility, alert calmness, and above all the flow of one’s own life-breath through all the channels of the body.

From the point of view of qigong and tai ji, the way to play the flute to one’s fullest potential is to play from the integration of body, mind and spirit. In order for qigong or tai ji to be authentic, every single movement must provide the chance to integrate these three aspects of life. We don’t just move an arm or a leg; the physical movement begins in the mind and depends on the breath. Over and over this is woven together. To move in this way is very special, very unusual. At first it comes only once in a while, then more often. At every step of the way, flute playing gets better, more resonant, easier. One day the shoulders feel loose and strong, another time tension in the neck disappears and the sound begins to sing more and more. When the arms are full of qi right out to the fingertips, no tendinitis or carpal tunnel syndrome can develop.

Bodhidharma, in fact, was probably only one of many early masters. Ongoing scholarship in the origins of tai ji and qigong show a coming-together of sources wider than reported in the legends. One thing we know is that, from the beginning of these practices, there were women masters working on equal footing with the men. While tai ji is suited for nearly everyone, qigong offers different things to practice for different people, or people in different stages of life. There is general qigong for anyone to do, as well as special qigong for men and for women, for strengthening, for overcoming different diseases, for longevity, for the cultivation of healing abilities, for spiritual development, and so forth. All have in common the cultivation of healthy flow of qi through the body and the integration of a person’s mind, body and breath. Qigong and tai ji cannot be learned through books or videos, but only through direct introduction by a good teacher. A teacher should be healthy, compassionate and willing to work with each student in an individual way. And, just as with a flute teacher, the student and the teacher must be able to develop a real connection.

Of course, countless great musicians master their instruments without also learning qigong or tai ji. But more and more, musicians are among those around the world who are seeking to explore their vast human potential (and add new depth and confidence to their musicianship) by accepting these living gifts from ancient masters. □

Andrew Stermán is working to extend the benefits of qigong/tai ji to flute playing and teaching, and has taught this topic at music schools in America and at three major universities in Australia. His flute teachers have included Thomas Nyfenger, Keith Underwood and William Bennett. He teaches tai ji and qigong in Manhattan, and plays flute and piccolo with the Philip Glass Ensemble.

2000–2001 Concert Season

October 22, 2000 • Sunday 5:30 pm
PAIGE BROOK MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

November 12, 2000 • Sunday 5:30 pm
ROBERT LANGEVIN, flute

December 10, 2000 • Sunday 5:30 pm
INTO THE MILLENNIUM
The “Best of the New”—Highlights from recent repertoire

January 28, 2001 • Sunday 5:30 pm
FLUTE FORCE: Sheryl Henze, Gretchen Pusch, Rie Schmidt, and Wendy Stern, flutes

February 25, 2001 • Sunday 5:30 pm
RANSOM WILSON, flute

March 11, 2001 • Sunday 9:00 am–8:00 pm
Seventh Annual FLUTE FAIR
Remembering JEAN-PIERRE RAMPAL
Union Theological Seminary; 100 Claremont

April 22, 2001 • Sunday 5:30 pm
2001 NYFC COMPETITION WINNERS
Andrew Day, Julietta Curenton, and Nam-Kyoung Kim

May 20, 2001 • Sunday 5:00 pm
ENSEMBLE PROGRAM CONCERT
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May 2001



From the Editor:

Greetings! May brings us the annual membership meeting and ensemble program concert (coordinated by Rochelle Itzen). Come hear your fellow members play at the Bloomingdale House of Music, and join them for a post-concert reception.

Our Member Profile subject this month is Hal Archer, who will be playing in the concert (in a quartet with three NYFC board members). Also in this issue are two full-length articles. In *Letter from Paris II*, Nancy Toff reports on the highlights of her latest trip in search of facts for her Barrère biography. And in *Tai Ji, Qigong and the Flutist*, Andrew Sterman (husband of Ann Cecil Sterman) tells us something about the ancient Chinese practice of qigong, and how it might benefit our flute playing. Unfortunately, we didn't have room to include Patti Monson's annotated list of sources for new music performed at NYFC concerts this season. We'll print it in the fall; those of you who'd like it sooner can obtain advance copies at May's ensemble concert or by email.

For your amusement, I'd like to report on one reader's response to last month's cold flute article. Alice Barmore decided to put my equations to the test: would her flute's pitch really change if she blew helium into her flute instead of air? Bravely she inhaled the contents of a party balloon and blew a note while I listened over the phone. Just as expected, we heard an upward-moving glissando as the helium replaced the air in the flute. The effect was quite amazing! (A safety note for readers who want to try this at home: a giant lungful of helium may cause dizziness, so make sure you inhale some air along with the helium.)

This is the last of the 2000–2001 season's NYFC Newsletters. A big thank you to all of this year's contributors—the interviewers, the writers, and the behind-the-scenes proofers. Next season's newsletters will begin with the October 2001 issue; if you have suggestions for next year, let us know.



With best wishes for a good summer,

Katherine Saenger
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