



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

1999–2000 Concert Season continues with **Mark Sparks**

Interview by Don Bailey

Currently Acting Principal Flute of the St. Louis Symphony (SLS), **Mark Sparks** also holds the Associate Principal Flute position in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Born in Baltimore, he spent his early years in Cleveland Heights, Ohio where, along with his two brothers, he began piano, ballet, and music theory instruction at the Cleveland Institute of Music Preparatory Department. Switching to the flute, Mark's first teacher was Hungarian flutist Joseph Jubos (Mark can still hear his thick accent, "Mark, you will be great zolo fluteest.") With his father, a biomedical engineer and talented choral tenor, he attended Robert Shaw concerts in Cleveland, Ohio at an early age. In 1972, the family moved to St. Louis, Missouri where Mark continued his studies with flutists of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. I'll pick up the interview here.



STUART ZOLOTOREW

Mark Sparks: St. Louis is where my real path with the flute began. Performing with my teachers there now as acting principal flute in the St. Louis Symphony is a complete thrill.

Don Bailey: Isn't it interesting how you've ended up playing with the orchestras of both of your childhood cities?

MS: Yes it is. Actually, my mother's family goes back to the 1860's in Baltimore.

DB: When did you know you would have a career in flute?

MS: Well, my first career goal was actually to play professional football! I was on the junior high school football teams growing up and continued into high school.

DB: And you played the flute the entire time?

MS: Not really. What happened though, was that the other football players were getting so big that I got injured every time I played. Sensing that I might relate better to a male teacher, Janice Smith, Assistant Principal of the SLS and my flute teacher at the time, sent me to Jan Gippo, who is the piccoloist in St. Louis.

DB: Jan is on our concert series this year, too.

MS: Yes, I know! Jan became a mentor to me. He introduced me to some of the French pieces that were technically challenging, and I was enthralled and began playing flute a lot more. He was a demanding, but very inspiring teacher.

DB: Did you continue with Jan through high school?

MS: Yes, until my senior year, when I took lessons with Jacob Berg—former principal in the SLS. Jake was also a wonderful teacher and helped me develop artistically. Both of these guys were, and in many ways still are, my heroes.

DB: I assume you never played in a marching band because of the football thing?

MS: As I recall, Jan forbade me to play in the band. I think he felt piccolo at that stage would be bad for my embouchure.

DB: Was it Jacob Berg who influenced your decision to attend Oberlin?

MS: Yes, it was Jake who told me about Robert Willoughby. (Cont'd on page 4)

In Concert

Mark Sparks, *flute*
Clinton Adams, *piano*
Michael Mermagen, *cello*

November 21, 1999
5:30 pm
CAMI Hall
165 West 57th Street

Program

Trio for flute, cello and piano
Bobuslav Martinu
Eight Pieces for flute alone
Lowell Liebermann
Tierkreis: 12 Melodies on the signs of the Zodiac for flute and toy piano
Karlheinz Stockhausen
Sonata for flute and piano
Verne Reynolds
(Program subject to change)

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Joshua Smith Masterclass
December 11, 1999
Saturday, 7:30 pm
CAMI Hall

See Details on Page 3 !



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1999-2000**

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From the President:
Postcard from Beijing

by Patricia Spencer

Seated in disbelief on a terrace in the inner sanctum of the Imperial Palace (or Forbidden City), surrounded by ornate stones, ginkgo trees, richly carved marble balustrades, brightly decorated balconies, my personal sense of disbelief pales at a larger wonder: the presence of hundreds of Chinese tourists, exploring every corner of the Imperial gardens, taking photos of every throne, crowding around to view the Imperial marriage bed. That this is possible — in a place that for five centuries was forbidden to all but the royal family, concubines, eunuchs, and maidservants (who were not permitted to speak) — tells profoundly of the awesome changes China has undergone in only one century, the present. And, one must add, this is only one of many such changes. My own pleasure at being permitted to visit these beautiful gardens, halls, and pavilions is far outdistanced by an intense gratitude that the Chinese people may experience this, may enjoy the beauty of these special halls created by their ancestors for the “son of heaven”. I’m not sure what this might mean for you as a member of the New York Flute Club, but it is so overwhelming I thought I would share it.

Changing to a flute subject: yesterday’s concert of the ICMC99* [on October 24] included two pieces for a traditional Chinese flute with electronic sounds. The *Chinese Virtuosi*, founded and directed by Josef Fung, are dedicated to “bringing Chinese music into the 21st century, as well as preserving the best of Chinese classical and folk music”. The dizi, a traditional Chinese transverse flute, was part of an ensemble (with erhu, pipa, zheng, and yangqin) performing a work for instruments and tape composed by Lydia Ayers, titled *Ghost Shadow in Fragile Light*. The sound of the flute is enchanting, with a soft reediness and many expressive sonic capabilities reminiscent of the shakuhachi. In this piece, the computer-realized sounds added a high, luminous blending texture in some spots, an almost vocal presence in others. The entire second movement highlighted the fascinating textures of the traditional Chinese instruments, with electronic enhancement. Another piece on the program, composed by Bill Alves and titled *In-yo*, was scored for solo dizi and computer-generated sounds, and made wonderful use of the expressivity of the instrument. One special feature of computer-generated sound, namely the ability to set up a very long crescendo (for instance, very gradually over a five minute span, or even longer) was very effective in this piece.

In conclusion, best greetings to NYFC members from the other side of earth —hoping you all may be able to visit China for yourselves, if you have not already.

**From October 22-29, Patricia Spencer attended the International Computer Music Conference in Beijing, People’s Republic of China, where she performed pieces for flute and computer-realized tape by Bret Battey, Diane Thome, and David Layman, and for flute and live (computer-controlled) electronics by Judith Shatin. □*

REMINDER: Flute Fair Proposals are due **November 15, 1999.**

Send to: Svjetlana Kabalin, 444 Central Park West, #9H, NY, NY 10025;
Fax: 212-222-3569; *Email:* svjkabalin@worldnet.att.net.

Erratum—In the October NYFC newsletter Edward Wolf was misidentified as David Spielberg in the 1999 Concert Scrapbook. The correct caption for the bottom photo on page four should have read, “(l) Ann Bordley, (r) Edward Wolf. Not pictured: Liza Wu, piano.”

*Special Announcement:***Joshua Smith to Give Master Class**

Joshua Smith, principal flutist of the Cleveland Orchestra and head of the flute department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, will hold a two-hour master class on Saturday, December 11th at CAMI Hall, 165 West 57th Street, beginning at 7:30 PM. All ages are eligible to apply. In fact, the Club encourages serious young flutists, even if having played for only a short time, to apply. The cost of the class for participants is \$25; auditors may purchase tickets for \$10 (your NYFC membership card will not get you into this event). You do not need to be a member of the NYFC to apply for, participate in, or attend this class. Here is how to apply:

- First, anyone wishing to play in the class must submit a cassette tape of approximately 10 minutes in length. Excerpts of contrasting selections are recommended but not required. The tapes will be reviewed by a panel. All tapes must be accompanied by a short biography, a fee of \$25 in check or money order (no cash) made out to *The New York Flute Club, Inc.* and your correct phone number. The \$25 fee will be refunded if you are not chosen to play in the class.
- Second, all applicants will be notified by phone by Friday, December 3rd. For those not chosen to play for Mr. Smith, checks and tapes will be available for pickup at the class on December 11th and at Mr. Smith's concert on December 12th at CAMI Hall. Participants' tapes will be returned to them at the class.
- The tape, biography and check (in one package) should be sent (or hand delivered) to Rie Schmidt, 711 Amsterdam Avenue, #10G, New York, New York 10025. All materials must be received by 5:00 PM on Monday, November 29th.
- Finally, all performers selected for the class will be responsible for providing and paying for their own accompanists.

Please direct questions to Rie Schmidt at (212) 662-8795. □

Member Profile**Calvin Mercer**

NYFC Member since 1991

Employment: Freelance photography; flute-repair apprentice with Louis Carlini.

**Most recent recital/performance:**

Student recital at the Turtle Bay Music School in spring of 1999, performing a Handel flute sonata.

Career highlights: Traveling throughout the U.S. and Caribbean as a freelance photographer's assistant; exhibiting photographs at the Museum of Modern Art and the International Center of Photography in joint shows with *Kamoinge Workshop*, a cooperative organization of black photographers.

Current flute: Yamaha 581H Silver (A=442).

Influential flute teachers: Sato Moughalian, Clare Hoffman, and Suzanne Gillchrest, starting with lessons as an adult beginner.

High School: George Washington High School in Washington Heights, New York, NY.

Education: Brooklyn College, Germain School of Photography (New York, NY).

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishments: Missing hardly a concert since joining the New York Flute Club, becoming personally acquainted with so many NYFC members, being a member of National Flute Association's Jazz and Cultural Outreach committees.

Favorite practice routines: 1 1/2 to 3 hours daily, including Moyses *De La Sonorit *, Andre Maquarre daily exercises, etudes and repertoire for his current flute lesson.

Interests/hobbies: Jazz, Jazzmobile Workshop, African percussion instruments.

Advice for NYFC members: Stop and introduce yourself to me at the next NYFC concert—I'll be the one collecting the tickets. □

FLUTE
HAPPENINGS
NOVEMBER

November 6, 1999

Saturday 2:30 pm

The Madison Chamber Ensemble; Elaine Bernstein, soprano, **Ardith Bondi**, flute and Naomi Lehman, piano; includes Three Irish Folksong Settings by John Corigliano, Songs from Queen's Road by David Ashley White, and works by Handel, Mozart and others.

• *Donnell Library Auditorium • 20 West 53rd Street • Admission is free.*

November 6, 1999

Saturday 8:00 pm

The duo ESSENCE with **Helen Richman**, flutist, and Jenny Mitchell, pianist in a program featuring works by Schumann, Mozart, Copland and Poulenc.

• *St. Paul's Festival of the Arts at St. Paul's United Methodist Church • Corner of S. Broadway and Division Ave., South Nyack, NY • Suggested donation \$6.00 • Info: call (914) 352-1795.*

November 10, 1999

Wednesday 7:30 pm

Svetlana Kabalin with The Sylvan Winds in "Music at the Court of Frederick the Great." The concert will feature guest artists **Susan Rotholz** (flute) and Dongsok Shin (harpichord) in music by Quantz, C.P.E. Bach, J.S. Bach, and Frederick the Great.

• *Christ and St. Stephen's Church • 122 West 69th Street • Tickets \$15.00 & \$7.50 • Info: call (212) 222-3569.*

November 10, 1999

Wednesday 8:00 pm

Flutist **Patricia Spencer** performs Milton Babbitt's *None But the Lonely Flute* in a program honoring Jacques Monod, presented by the Guild of Composers.

• *Merkin Concert Hall • 129 West 67th Street • Info: call (212) 501-3330.*

November 14, 1999

Sunday 7:30 pm

The duo ESSENCE with **Helen Richman**, flutist, in program above.

• *Christ and St. Stephen's Church • 120 West 69th Street • Admission \$8.00 • Info: call (212) 787-2755.*

November 17, 1999

Wednesday 8:00 pm

Geoffrey Kidde will perform his own composition *Island* (1992) for flute and tape at the SEAMUS conference/meeting at Hofstra University.

• *Hofstra University (Lowe Hall) • Hempstead, NY • Admission is free.*

(Cont'd on next page)

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

(Cont'd from previous page)

NOVEMBER

November 30, 1999

Tuesday 8:00 pm

Flutist **Patricia Spencer** with the Da Capo Chamber Players in Concert #4 of the SONIC BOOM Festival presenting BY GEORGE! — a celebratory tribute for George Perle on the occasion of his 85th year. Four classic works by George Perle plus a premiere, written for the occasion, by Paul Lansky. Guest artists Lucy Shelton, soprano; David Taylor, bass trombone; Stephen Gosling, piano.

• *The Great Hall at Cooper Union* • 7th Street & 3rd Avenue, New York • Info: call (212) 674-5142.

DECEMBER

December 5, 1999

Sunday 3:00 pm

Patricia Davila, flute and Darren O'Neill, guitar in a program including works by Piazzolla, Kleynans, Beaser, Larson and Rodrigo.

• *Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Pearl River, NY* • Info: call (201) 529-2337.

December 5, 1999

Sunday 7:00 pm

Patricia Davila, flute and Merynda Adams, harp, in recital.

• *First Presbyterian Church of Basking Ridge, NJ* • Info: call (201) 529-2337.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Hoff-Barthelson Music School *Flute Club Composition Competition* is soliciting new (i.e., never publicly performed), original, unpublished compositions for four or more flutes. Entries due by December 15, 1999. Contact **Elly Ball** for competition details, (914) 723-1169 or ball5555@msn.com.

Deadlines for Flute Happenings Columns

Issue	Mail Date	Deadline
December 1999	11/29/99	11/11/99
January 2000	01/17/00	12/30/99
February 2000	02/14/00	01/28/00
March 2000	03/06/00	02/17/00
April 2000	04/17/00	03/30/00
May 2000	05/08/00	04/20/00

Sparks, (Cont'd from page 1)

DB: What were your lessons with Willoughby like at Oberlin?

MS: A disaster at first! He and I joke about this now, but I was an extremely stubborn student, and I think my first year there was very frustrating for him. He threatened me with expulsion at the end of the year, which I probably deserved.

DB: Stubborn in the sense that you had your own way of doing things?

MS: Exactly. Bob wanted to open my mind and show me new possibilities with the flute, but I was loath to let go of some of the stylistic traits that I had developed. To this day, I'm still hard-headed at times and like to do things my own way.

DB: So, were you expelled?

MS: Amazingly, no. The turning point was when Bob recorded my playing and had me listen to myself. I had to face the fact that I didn't sound the way I thought I did. He pointed out things that I needed to change in order to grow, and he was RIGHT! From that moment on I realized what a compassionate teacher and open-minded person he was. I finished my degree at Oberlin with him.

DB: What was your course of study—etudes, solos, orchestral repertoire?

MS: Bob's style was to require that you accomplish certain fundamentals: tone production, breathing, study of vibrato, and certainly plenty of scales and etudes—mainly the Andersens, but also the Karg-Elert Caprices and the basic repertoire. As long as you developed these areas, you could go pretty much anywhere you wanted. Looking back, I think the most important thing I learned from Willoughby was that I had the ability to think my way through fundamentals. Bob had a unique, crystal clear way of guiding you through a phrase.

DB: Did Mr. Willoughby encourage you to pursue an orchestral career, or was this your own idea?

MS: I had actually decided I wanted to play flute in an orchestra when I was 15. As Jan Gippo's student I was required to listen to pieces and write reports on them. As a result I learned a large amount of mainstream orchestral repertoire and fell in love with it.

DB: After your graduation from Oberlin, what was next for you?

MS: Well, soon afterward a friend mentioned an opening in the Caracas, Venezuela Symphony, so I hurried to New York that same week and won the audition. I had only a few days to pack and move to Caracas, where I stayed for almost a year until I won the principal flute spot in the Canton [Ohio] Symphony.

DB: Did you find your self-confessed "stubbornness" from your student years a hindrance in the orchestra?

MS: It's interesting, I found that although I applied my stubbornness to my own standards, I really did have the ability to be flexible and work with others. I had very good training in my high school orchestra, and especially in the SLS Youth Orchestra, but I admit that playing in a professional orchestra proved to be a different thing altogether. I had to learn many things on my own and was thankful for Willoughby's training in this area. I worked a lot with a tape recorder, listening carefully, asking myself a lot of hard questions about my playing.

DB: Ah, the tape recorder thing... it's like a picture's being worth a thousand words.

MS: Absolutely. I think if you do it for enough years, you begin to know what you really sound like.

DB: Mark, students today don't want to wait years, they want to win on the first audition!

MS: Well, (laughing) all anyone has to do is look at my career and see that you can start from the bottom and gradually learn as you go.

DB: Some players are fortunate, they start at the top and stay there. Yours is certainly a more realistic and common path.

MS: I think students can relate to my career. I started by taking small auditions for small jobs. For me the audition process has been a way of getting to know my playing and develop my ideas.

DB: When you were taking these small auditions, did you have the opportunity to take major ones, too?

MS: Yes, there were some. I auditioned for the Pittsburgh Symphony when I was still a student. That was a valuable

learning experience. Did I honestly think I was going to get the job? I don't think so. I knew that I wasn't ready for it, and obviously the committee agreed.

DB: I find the various paths flutists take interesting. There are so few jobs, the smaller ones just don't pay very well, then on top of that there are so many applicants for all of them. It seems inevitable that one would continually move upward from job to job.

MS: Yes, if one has the determination, that is. I was intent on working my way up the ladder to better orchestras, improving not only my salary but also my playing along the way. After a year in Memphis, I won the principal flute position in San Antonio and stayed there for a couple of years before moving to Baltimore.

DB: You have a position in Baltimore, yet you're playing currently in St. Louis? What's this about?

MS: Yes, I've been the Associate Principal Flutist in Baltimore for 13 seasons now. But when Jacob Berg announced his retirement in St. Louis, I was asked to be his replacement during this time until they fill the vacancy. I was able to take some time off from Baltimore to play here until mid-November.

DB: Mark, through the NY grapevine, I heard that you were being considered for the principal flute spot in the NY Philharmonic. What's the story with that?

MS: Well yes, I was a finalist for that position, as well as for the Chicago Symphony, but I really can't elaborate further at this time.

DB: Do you think you're successful in your auditions because you've learned from so many of them, or do you think there just comes a time in one's life when you're seasoned enough to start winning?

MS: Definitely I have learned from them. When taking auditions, I set two goals: *mastering the fundamentals* of flute playing, and *developing a system of practicing* the repertoire so that I become musically and emotionally free in the audition environment. And yes, some seasoning matters here.

(Cont'd on next page)

MEMBER PERSPECTIVES

Some responses

Regarding last month's question about the challenges of being or teaching an adult amateur, **Michael Ronall** and **Calvin Mercer** identified themselves as NYFC members who began their flute studies as adults. Some of Michael Ronall's thoughts on this topic can be found in his article, "Spitting Images: Reflections of an Adult Beginner" [*Flutist Quarterly*, Spring 1998]. Michael also provided a pointer to Helen Jones's bibliography of resources for adult flute beginners: <http://www-student.lboro.ac.uk/~lsbej/flute.html>.

Last month's question on the advisability of flutist parents teaching their own children generated strong opinions, both pro and con. NYFC member **Elly Ball** writes:

"I repeated this question [My 8 year old daughter says she wants to play the flute. Should I consider teaching her myself?] to a family that I teach at the Hoff-Barthelson Music School. I teach Mom (Erica) and daughters Emily, 14, and Lily, 10. It doesn't end there—they are all in three different flute choirs that I coach. This week I asked Emily and Erica your question. They both immediately replied, "NO!". Of course the reasons varied, but the agreement was unanimous. These were the main points:

- Mom thought that although she was fairly advanced and musically literate, she felt that a better flutist would set a better example for the children.
- Teenager, Emily thought that it would be very difficult to prepare or practice—with "teacher" Mom listening and criticizing. She also brought up the feeling of pride that comes from measuring up to another (non-parent) adult's expectations that would be missing from at-home lessons.
- Both agreed that mothers and daughters have enough to deal with in the usual dilemmas of growing up, that it would not make life easier or more pleasant.

Having said all this, I have found them to be very supportive of one another, and quite happy to play together. So, in this family, their decision is working quite well."

On the other side of this question is your editor (myself), who is a proponent of the home teaching approach, at least for young beginners who can really benefit from daily mini-lessons during supervised 10-15 minute practice sessions. I don't claim that this path is easy—or that it can or should work for everyone. A universal problem (in the three households I surveyed) is getting your child's respectful attention. A commitment by the child to 5 minutes per day of attentive listening is often enough to get off to a good start. In my own case, I'm delighted with my 9-year-old daughter's progress after a year and a half of "lessons." Although we've had some rocky periods, she is now in a phase where she clearly enjoys her short lessons and is happy that I'm teaching her. Her current positive attitude may have been triggered by compliments from a new school band teacher (the "non-parent adult" Elly's student referred to). But while home teaching is working for us now, I think I'd vote for a professional (non-parent) teacher if and when my daughter is ready for weekly lessons and independent daily practice sessions.

Members are invited both to submit paragraph-long responses to an existing query, or to submit discussion-provoking new queries for either the general membership or a specific NYFC member. Responses and new questions can be sent by email to saenger@us.ibm.com.

Sparks, (Cont'd from previous page)

DB: Do you insist on perfection, or do you make allowances for just being human?

MS: I don't really focus on playing excerpts perfectly or not perfectly. Mostly, I compete with myself to try to play my best. Also, I try to achieve consistency so that on the day of the audition I have confidence that all of the elements involved in my presentation will come together.

DB: How do you personally prepare for an audition?

MS: I start one month before and practice as many hours as possible, concentrating on fundamentals first. With every excerpt, I start with rhythm, which establishes a framework in which to develop all of my other thinking. Rhythmic mastery is the basic key to being able to play well in an orchestra. I start with a metronome, and if the piece is technical I start slow to fast, organizing and grouping the notes where necessary. I also reconsider interpretation and concepts; old ways of playing an excerpt may give way to a new approach. Then I will address another element, such as tone. Am I producing the tone that I want on every note? A tape recorder is the most efficient way to improve all these elements. I often use the tape recorder as an audience or an audition committee; repeating the excerpt a number of times to build consistency. Whereas in a recital setting I allow for spontaneous feelings and ideas, in an audition setting I put every note under a microscope. Then, on the day of the audition I am finally able to show the results of all my work. This is the time to have fun!

DB: Okay, now you've won the audition. What are some of the difficulties of playing in an orchestra?

MS: Well, intonation is certainly a wildcard.

DB: (Laughing) Your aforementioned stubbornness comes to mind now. Do you expect others in the orchestra to match YOUR pitch?

MS: Ha, I like to think that I'm pretty flexible. Certainly, playing in tune with one's self is the place to start.

DB: Does intonation tend to take care of itself as you move to better orchestras?

MS: Well, I don't think it ever takes care of itself really, but perhaps in the better orchestras intonation might be less of an issue.

DB: How would you compare playing in tune with piano to playing in an orchestra?

MS: It's easier to play with piano because it's a consistent medium, and you're dealing with only one other artist/collaborator. One just needs to be at all times aware of the scale of the piano. The orchestra, on the other hand, is a constantly fluid medium, and one has to be very sensitive to pitch differences with other instruments and be able to quickly perceive what's high, or a little low. For example, there will be passages where distinctions have to be made between like pitches. You may have played an F natural in one bar, and because of the chord structure or the other instruments involved you had to influence it a certain way. In the next bar, however, you might play the same F natural, but its context may have changed and you will have to play it differently. In addition, when we play with the strings, we have to influence pitch in certain ways, and certainly if you're playing the third of a major chord, you have to play it lower...but then, not every time! There will always be extenuating circumstances to keep you on your toes. Playing in tune with yourself is the beginning.

DB: Tell us about your summer musical activities growing up. I know how important these are for all of us in terms of shaping our goals.

MS: I attended a small festival in Nebraska, which is not in existence any more, called Festival of a Thousand Oaks. It was there that I met Ransom Wilson, who was and still is a great inspiration to me. Ransom was very generous with his time and gave me many lessons. I later went to NY to take more lessons with him. When I returned to Oberlin, Willoughby was thrilled at the progress I had made with Ransom. Another summer I spent with the National Repertory Orchestra which was also a great experience. And later, after I had left Oberlin, I attended Aspen and Tanglewood. I studied with Nadine Asin in Aspen just before I moved to Memphis

in 1984. Nadine, who is now one of my colleagues there, was a fantastic teacher and my first experience studying with a dyed-in-the-wool student of Julius Baker!

DB: I'm constantly reminded how small our flute world is. I interviewed Nadine last year, and we talked a bit about you; now we're remembering similar experiences you and I both had with her in Aspen.

MS: Yes, it is a small world. When I was a student there, Nadine was particularly inspiring in her playing in the Aspen Chamber Symphony, which was, and still is a high level ensemble. I was delighted when they invited me to join the faculty as principal flutist in that orchestra. Aspen is one of the great joys of my life.

DB: Let's talk a bit about your teaching at the Peabody Conservatory. Do you have a set curriculum for your students?

MS: I try to take into account what each individual may need and tailor the curriculum to the student. However, we do have a heavy orchestral emphasis at Peabody, and my opinion is that if students want to participate in the audition process, they should start refining the many factors of auditioning while still in school. I teach a rigorous and demanding class in orchestral auditioning.

DB: How do you teach your students to prepare for an audition?

MS: I encourage them to make every excerpt a personal statement that expresses everything they feel about the character of that part of the piece. Achieving that goal makes for a successful audition. Add a little bit of luck to this mixture, and then it's possible to win. Each student must develop his or her own routine, but again, the fundamentals are the place to start.

DB: Do you require your students to participate in competitions around the country?

MS: I encourage them to, yes, but this may be an area of instruction that I want to emphasize more.

DB: May we talk about your CD recording experience? The Newsletter focused on this issue last year and the readers seemed to enjoy hearing about it.

MS: I've only done one recording. There was time pressure, and there were times when I wondered why I

was doing it, but in retrospect, it was an intense learning experience. It allowed me in the end to really discover some things about myself and my playing, which I don't think I would have learned any other way.

DB: Your recording has an interesting collection of pieces—some which are rarely, if ever, performed. The Casella Barcarole and Scherzo is in my own repertoire, and I find many flutists aren't aware of it.

MS: I just wanted to record beautiful music that I thought people would be interested in, works that aren't well known or that may be infrequently recorded, and pieces that students might be learning.

DB: Did you record in several sessions, or in a concert setting?

MS: We used a small concert hall and recorded in sessions over three days, although the last day was about a month after the first two. My recording engineer, Ed Kelly, has a fine reputation throughout the country, and his positive attitude, flexibility, and knowledge of the process made the whole experience a positive one for me. I suggest working closely with the recording engineer during the editing phase so that the final decisions are your own.

DB: I agree. I came away from my project with much improved listening skills, just due to the editing process. Did you feel this?

MS: Oh yes, it definitely requires a knowledge of the score and an awareness of your own sound.

DB: Think you'll make another CD?

MS: Yes, I've scheduled some recording sessions in December for more of the same type of repertoire.

DB: Mark, if you'll allow me to switch gears here... may I ask about your personal life?

MS: Absolutely, and I was hoping you'd ask because I have a remarkable family. My wife Dee is a highly successful freelance violist in Baltimore and former classmate at Oberlin. My son Luke is 7, and my daughter Tory is 4, and they remind me every day what is really important in this life. My family is so supportive; I can hardly express what an inspiration they are to me. Dee

has stood by me during my struggles for so many years. Her ability to understand what I'm doing and why I'm doing it has been remarkable.

DB: Why ARE you doing it?

MS: (laughing) Because I still love music as much, and more, than when I started out. I like to think of myself as a musician first and a flutist second.

DB: You're not burned out?

MS: No, I am not burned out. I do get tired sometimes, though. I have a very heavy schedule many weeks of the year, and now it continues on into the summers with Aspen and other festivals. But the music and my students are constantly energizing me.

DB: How do you find time to practice?

MS: It really depends on my schedule. On one extreme, if an audition is coming (Dee knows this only too well), as much as possible I will shut myself in a room for a month. On the other extreme, some weeks are not so demanding, and I can spend more time with my family. Generally speaking, I seem to always have something I'm preparing, which I'm thankful for.

DB: Where would you like to end up, Mark? What's the last stop on this path of yours?

MS: Frankly, I try not to think in those terms.

DB: But you're obviously driven to keep going to a higher level, yes?

MS: Well, it's true that I would like to be principal flute of an orchestra, but at the same time I realize that I've been incredibly fortunate, and I'm always inspired by the many projects I have going.

DB: Any hobbies?

MS: Yes. One thing I've rediscovered here in my thirties is mountain biking. That athletic bent that I had in my teens is still there, and I've always loved bicycles. I've been biking for 6 or 7 years now. Having another activity that requires intense focus is very important because I'm able to free my mind from the music world for a short time. Then, when I come back I'm refreshed. You know, the flute is a very physically demanding instrument. When we play the flute, we are athletes, and my schedule demands that I play a lot. I feel if I

can keep my body in good condition, then maybe my career will last a little longer.

DB: Before we stop, Mark, any comments to other performers about nerves?

MS: I think nerves are very personal. We become nervous for all kinds of different reasons, and what is going to help one person may not help another. Confidence, though, is very important. That may be the real answer.

DB: What happens to you as you sit waiting for a big flute solo in the orchestra? Anything?

MS: Well, I'm just always very excited to play, and in a way that has been my cure for nervous jitters. I feel that playing in general, the act of communicating musically through the flute, has a great deal to do with the way I feel about things in terms of my soul. I'm very thankful for my career. If it were to stop today, I would feel satisfied with the whole thing.

Thank you, Mark, and let's hope your career doesn't stop just yet. First the jock, then the musician/flutist... now you speak as a poet. I'm looking forward to your concert on November 21st.

Don Bailey was a board member of the NYFC for five years; he was the Newsletter editor last season. His debut CD, VOYAGE, on the Summit label expands the repertoire for flute, string quartet, harp, and bass. Premiered at the Atlanta convention VOYAGE reviews can be found on amazon.com; audio samples on cdnow.com.

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1999–2000 Concert Season

October 17, 1999 • Sunday 5:30 pm
TIMOTHY HUTCHINS, *flute*
at *The Lighthouse, 111 East 59th St.*

 **November 21, 1999** • Sunday 5:30 pm
MARK SPARKS, *flute*

December 12, 1999 • Sunday 5:30 pm
JOSHUA SMITH, *flute*

January 30, 2000 • Sunday 5:30 pm
JUBAL TRIO, Sue Ann Kahn, *flute*;
Christine Schadeberg, *soprano*;
Susan Jolles, *harp*

February 27, 2000 • Sunday 5:30 pm
PICCOLO EVENING Mary Ann Archer,
piccolo; Jan Gippo, *piccolo*; Karen
Griffen, *piccolo*

March 19, 2000 • Sunday 9:00 am–8:00 pm
SIXTH ANNUAL FLUTE FAIR
Guest Artist, BONITA BOYD
*Union Theological Seminary; 100 Claremont
Ave. (between 120th & 122nd Streets)*

April 30, 2000 • Sunday 5:30
2000 NYFC COMPETITION WINNERS

May 21, 2000 • Sunday 3:00 pm
ENSEMBLE PROGRAM CONCERT
at *the Kaplan Space at Carnegie Hall*



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NEWSLETTER

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All programs at CAMI Hall, 165 West 57th Street, unless otherwise noted.

Please note that CAMI may schedule renovations this season! After January 1, 2000, confirm venue in NYFC's monthly newsletter. Info: call (212) 757-8339.

From the Editor:

Greetings once again. Alice and I have gotten a lot of positive feedback on the October Newsletter, and hope to keep up the good work. So far we're enjoying the many challenges of the job, as well as the stimulation of interacting with the people whose names and contributions you see in these pages.

Our interview series continues this month (November 1999) with former NYFC Newsletter Editor Don Bailey interviewing Mark Sparks, who will be giving the NYFC concert on November 21 at CAMI Hall. Interviewers lined up for our coming issues include Elly Ball on Joshua Smith (December 1999), Geoff Kiddle on Sue Ann Kahn and the Jubal Trio (January 2000), Ann Cecil on piccoloists Mary Ann Archer, Jan Gippo, and Karen Griffen (February 2000), and Ulla Suokko-Hixson on Flute Fair guest artist Bonita Boyd. The first interview of the 1999–2000 NYFC season appeared in the last issue—Cathy Comrie on Timothy Hutchins (October 1999). If you have questions for any of the artists still to be interviewed, send them in to me for forwarding to the appropriate interviewer.

It's looking like the content of the *Member Perspectives* column is going to be driven by who I happen to be on the phone with during the previous month, since the responses so far have been mostly by casual phone conversations on unrelated NYFC topics. While I'm still looking for written responses and queries, I will (for a limited time only!) experiment with preliminary feedback by phone. Call me up if you think you might have some insights to share and we can go from there.

Observant readers of the *Flute Happenings* column will notice a new category in this section called *Member Announcements*. This space is to alert our membership to flute-related contests, auditions, and masterclasses organized and/or sponsored by individual NYFC members. Listings are one time only, and free; deadlines for submission to the Editor are the same as those for the concert listings.

Happy reading,

Katherine Saenger

