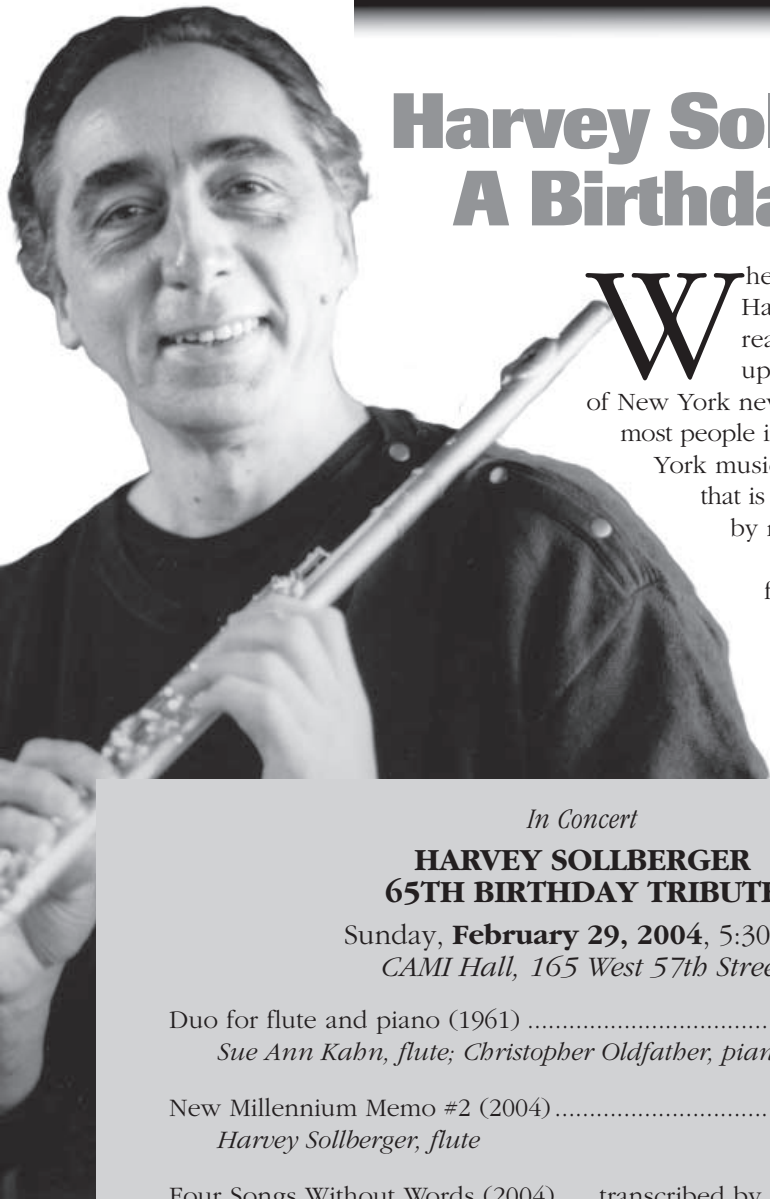




# The New York Flute Club

## NEWSLETTER

February 2004



FRANK WARD

## Harvey Sollberger at 65: A Birthday Tribute

*Interview by Patti Monson*

**W**hen I agreed to interview Harvey Sollberger, I didn't realize that I would end up rediscovering decades of New York new music history. Like most people in my generation of New York musicians, I knew the legend that is Harvey Sollberger only by reputation.

Harvey Sollberger—flutist, composer, conductor—his many accomplishments are astounding! I soon learned that Harvey

Sollberger had already been “interviewed” for the NYFC twice since the year 2000, by Cathy Comrie.\* So, I made a choice to combine my conversation with Harvey Sollberger with some words from a few of my own colleagues about this past and present figure who, as far as I can tell, is truly a genius—a gentle giant who has blessed the lives of many. My offering has turned out to be an interview with the very core of new music; the inspirations for the first seeds of what is now the absolute essence of contemporary performance in New York City; the attitudes and establishments that were encouraged to support and create alliances with the growing need for high level performances of new music; and basically, for someone like myself, the “genealogy” of several of the musical opportunities that I have had as a contemporary flutist in New York.

When I called to talk to these musicians one week late last December, all I had to say was, “I’m wondering if you would mind talking to me about Harvey Sollberger.” That was it...they were off...in some memory dreamland.

*(Cont'd on page 6)*

\* See December 2000 and 2002 NYFC newsletters, currently posted on the NYFC website.

### *In Concert*

#### **HARVEY SOLLBERGER 65TH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE**

Sunday, **February 29, 2004**, 5:30 pm  
*CAMI Hall, 165 West 57th Street*

- Duo for flute and piano (1961) ..... Harvey Sollberger  
*Sue Ann Kabn, flute; Christopher Oldfather, piano*
- New Millennium Memo #2 (2004) ..... Harvey Sollberger  
*Harvey Sollberger, flute*
- Four Songs Without Words (2004) .... transcribed by Harvey Sollberger  
*Harvey Sollberger, flute; Patricia Spencer, alto flute;  
David Bowlin, violin; André Emelianoff, cello;  
Al Cerulo, vibraphone*
- Three Canons for two flutes ..... Otto Luening  
*Sue Ann Kabn and Katherine McClure, flutes*
- Sunflowers for flutes and vibraphone (1976) ..... Harvey Sollberger  
*Patti Monson, flutes; Al Cerulo, vibraphone*
- Riding the Wind I (1974) ..... Harvey Sollberger  
*Patricia Spencer, amplified flute; David Bowlin, violin;  
Meighan Stoops, clarinet; André Emelianoff, cello;  
Blair McMillen, piano; Harvey Sollberger, conductor*

*This concert is partially supported by The Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.  
Program subject to change.*

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2003–2004

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# Harvey Sollberger: Reflections

by Jayn Rosenfeld



All this talk about Harvey Sollberger emphasizes to me how much time has passed in the contemporary music world, and in the world of flute playing. For more than forty years, Harvey has presided in a focused way over a general raising of performance standards, setting the course with his own playing, composing and conducting. I see it in a fast-forward view: first, a few people working very hard on extremely difficult music and feeling like pioneers, or fanatics; later, the groups that played difficult new music gradually becoming quicker at learning, broader in their tastes, older in their lives and careers, and

(by example and guidance) inspiring new groups and new individual players. An improved fundraising climate in the '90s made us feel we were over some hump of acceptance and recognition, but that period is in the past; now there is a competition of choices for everyone, not only what worthy causes to give money to, but which worthy concerts to go to.

I would say the latter is definitely a good thing, but the audience for serious new music has not grown proportionally. Dare I ask why? Music is so often used as “wallpaper” sound-filler; it appears not to be designed to be “through-listened.” I wish, somewhat hopelessly, that people would plan on listening to a piece from beginning to end without making an assumption about what will happen. Those who read books are prepared to spend the time to go from beginning to end, and this is the way one should listen to music, or at least music which doesn't fully explain itself the first time round. My personal guidance to neophytes is to concentrate very carefully on the first seconds of a new piece. You often get, right away, the sound world, the motifs, the rate of change, the intensity, the “way to listen” to that particular piece. If your mind wanders at the beginning, you have no frame of reference when you finally start listening.

The first new music group I played in was a group called Tone Roads, named after a piece by Carl Ruggles. We played for free, and we rehearsed incessantly. I think I remember that I was scared most of the time, everyone else seemed to count better than I, and the conductor, James Tenney, seemed a priest-guru in his involvement and simplicity. I loved the challenge, and the distance traveled from first rehearsal to concert. No one was married, had a family, had any serious financial responsibilities...or am I totally idealizing the past? Probably. I'll ask Harvey.

One final note, a sartorial one. No one mentioned what a spiffy dresser Harvey is, white linen suits, that sort of thing. I want to give him full credit.

See you at the concert on the 29th. □



Mark **SUNDAY, MARCH 14**, on your calendars with three big stars for NYFC Flute Fair 2004, which will be held at the LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts. Check our website, [www.nyfluteclub.org](http://www.nyfluteclub.org), for detailed information and updates.

*Opera Masterclass*—The application deadline is **February 21** for those interested in participating in one of the four masterclasses. See our website or contact Patricia Spencer at [newflute@earthlink.net](mailto:newflute@earthlink.net) for more details.

*NYFC Table*—Members may sell up to 10 flute-related items at the NYFC Table. Contact coordinator Rie Schmidt at [rieschmidt@aol.com](mailto:rieschmidt@aol.com). □

## Member Profile

### Edward L. Wolf

NYFC member since 1994

**Employment:** Professor of physics at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, NY.



**Most recent recital/performance:** Louis Moyses's Four Pieces for Three Flutes and a Telemann duet at a NYFC Ensemble concert at the Kaplan Space at Carnegie Hall on May 11, 2003; the flute solo in Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* at the Old First Reformed Church in Brooklyn on June 22, 2003, with a group organized by the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music.

**Career highlights:** As a teenager, under auspices of the Eastman School of Music, performing in Kilbourn Hall and the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY. Since coming to NYC in 1986, the highlight of his musical year has always been the NYFC Ensemble Concert—performances with Ann Bordley of accompanied flute duets by Berlioz, Doppler, Fauré, Gaubert, and Kuhlau, and accompanied flute trios by Moyses (joined by flutist Nina Attar). Other highlights include his three summers at Kammermusik of Santa Fe (a woodwind quintet workshop), a performance of Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* at the Lucy Moses School in 2001, and a very early performance of Enric Andrew Zappa's suite for flute and piano, *On Wendling Farm*, at the Southampton Chamber Music Festival in 1996.

**Current flute:** A Brannen-Cooper 14k gold open-hole B-foot (his "superconducting" flute, purchased in 2000, see below).

**Influential flute teachers:** Walfrid Kujala (during his high school years, through the Preparatory Department at the Eastman School of Music); Mary Peterson, Susan Lurie and David Wechsler.

**High school:** Fairport High School, in Fairport, NY (a suburb of Rochester).

**Degrees:** A.B. in physics (Swarthmore College, 1958); Ph.D. in experimental physics (Cornell, 1964).

**Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishments:** As a flutist: his performances (as mentioned above) of the flute duet from *L'Enfance du Christ* (at the NYFC, with Ann Bordley) and *Le Merle Noir* (at the Lucy Moses School, with pianist Marilyn Mendelson). As a physicist and educator: (i) his election as a Fellow of the American Physical Society in 1982 (based on his research in superconductivity), (ii) his ten years as head of the physics department at Polytechnic University, and (iii) his Wiley-VCH book manuscript *Nanophysics and Nanotechnology* (completed in September 2003), based on two courses he introduced at Polytech. A minor windfall: the success (on NASDAQ) of a small company whose product was based on the exotic phenomenon of superconductivity (his academic specialty). When Wall Street realized that superconductivity could benefit cellular telephony, the stock went up enough to allow him to buy his "superconducting" flute (above).

**Favorite practice routines:** Taffanel and Gaubert's *Daily Exercises*, with modifications suggested by David Wechsler (e.g., play No. 2 with exaggerated crescendo and diminuendo, or every second line in flutter-tonguing), and Reichert's Op. 5.

**Other interests:** Regular jogging and bicycling; skiing and summer hiking and mountain-biking in the mountains of Colorado (elevation 9,000 feet) with his wife, Carol, and, on occasion, sons Doug and David and their wives. Last May he completed an organized bike ride (Five Borough Bike Club) from NYC to Montauk Point. Ed says, "Bike riding is good for your wind, which is helpful for flute playing!"

**Advice for NYFC members:** Encourage musically inclined young people to play the oboe or the bassoon!

## FLUTE HAPPENINGS

FREE to current NYFC members, this section lists upcoming performances by members; flute-related contests, auditions, and masterclasses organized/sponsored by members; and brief descriptions of members' new recordings, sheet music, and books. Send submissions to the Newsletter Editor.

### FEBRUARY '04

FEB  
29

Sunday 3:00 pm

**MICHAEL PARLOFF**, principal flutist, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, will perform a program of opera-inspired chamber music with colleagues Eugene Izotov, oboe, and Warren Jones, piano.

• Tarrytown Music Hall, 13 Main Street, Tarrytown, NY • Admission: \$20 general, seniors/students \$15/\$5 • Info, call 914-631-3390 or visit [www.chambermusicwestchester.org](http://www.chambermusicwestchester.org).

### MARCH '04

MAR  
6

Saturday 4:00 pm

"The Scandinavian Flute," a program of music by Roman, Sveinsson, Kuhlau, Saariaho, and Grieg featuring the Sylan Winds with **SVJETLANA KABALIN**, flute.

• Victor Borge Hall, Scandinavia House, 58 Park Avenue, NYC • Admission: \$20 • Info, call 212-222-3569 or visit [sylvanwinds@att.net](mailto:sylvanwinds@att.net).

MAR  
8

Monday 8:00 pm

The New York New Music Ensemble with **JAYN ROSENFELD**, flute, in a program of "House Music, Chamber Music with Flute" including works by Leo Kraft, Elizabeth Brown, George Perle, and Arnold Schoenberg (arr. Anton Webern).

• Merkin Hall 129 West 67th Street, NYC • Admission: \$15 • Info, call 718-605-1856 or visit [www.nynme.org](http://www.nynme.org).

MAR  
13

Saturday 5:30 pm

Flute Cocktail: A Flute Quartet with members **AMY ZIEGELBAUM**, Lauren Ausubel, Jordan Vogel, and **HELEN RICHMAN**, will perform as winners of the Artists International Chamber Music Competition. Program to include works by Debussy, Massenet, Boismortier, Dubois, and Rimsky-Korsakov plus world premiere of Steven Rosenhaus's *In the Cave of Aeolus*.

• Weill Recital Hall, 154 West 57th Street (at 7th Avenue), NYC • Admission \$22. Info, 212-247-7800.

#### Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Mail date
March 2004	02/05/04	02/26/04
April 2004	03/11/04	04/01/04
May 2004	04/01/04	04/22/04

# 65th Birthday Tributes to Harvey Sollberger



*Betty Bang Mather, professor of flute at the University of Iowa (now retired):*

I first met Harvey Sollberger in the 1950s, when I audited a concert and master-class given by the New York Woodwind Quintet at his high school in Marion, Iowa. There Sam Baron and colleagues coached a student woodwind quintet with Harvey as its flutist. I was impressed with the remarkable energy, intensity, and intelligence of both Harvey and Sam.

When Harvey subsequently began his undergraduate work at the University of Iowa, he studied flute with me. He also studied composition and conducting. He practiced more than any student I'd ever had, adopting one particular classroom as his practice room whenever not in use for classes (day and night).

Harvey's lessons were exciting! Once he gestured so dramatically with his flute that the foot joint flew across the room. Perhaps the most exciting was Luciano Berio's lecture at our school. He played a tape of one of his recent pieces, the *Sequenza* for solo flute performed by one Severino Gazzelloni. Harvey and I were totally astounded! Never had we heard such flute music, nor such flute playing. They changed our lives.

During his college years Harvey wrote his flute duet [*Two Pieces for Two Flutes*, 1958; revised 1960, 1962] to play with me on one of my recitals. Since I would be busy learning the other pieces on the program I asked him to put all the hard places in his part. He did.

After Harvey moved to New York City to attend Columbia University, I continued seeing him when I visited my parents in midtown Manhattan. One evening he and his then wife Sophie (a top flutist in her own right) invited Sam Baron and me for dinner. Harvey had studied flute with Sam and once filled in for him on Varèse's *Density 21.5*. After dinner the four of us played Friedrich Kuhlau's *Grand Quartet*—which inspired Harvey's own *Grand Quartet*.

After my parents retired to Florida I often stayed with Harvey and Sophie in their Morningside Drive apartment. They introduced me to their many friends, including Josef Marx, Pat Spencer, Charles Wuorinen,

and Joel Krosnick. Their first baby (then called Anna) taught me uvular flutter tonguing, at which she was quite professional as a babe in arms.

In 1978 Harvey wrote his unaccompanied alto flute piece, *Hara*, for me. The dedication reads: "*Hara* is dedicated to Betty Bang Mather—my teacher; it celebrates her 25th year as Professor of Flute at The University of Iowa." I was very honored. I later performed it at a convention of the National Flute Association. I was happy that Harvey told me then that I had made it my own.

Perry Goldstein's introduction to Harvey's piece explains the Japanese meaning of "hara." Harvey's associates will recognize the concept of hara as central to Harvey's own life, composition, and performance:

"The Japanese concept of 'hara' has both a physical and spiritual meaning. The literal definition of 'hara' is 'belly,' or more specifically, the region of the body which lies just below the navel. Spiritually, 'hara'...represents the...primal life force...[and a] state of self-mastery and inner calm...[from] which perfection of thought, action, and art can be achieved."

Harvey and I were honored together at the 1996 Iowa Flute Festival—I because I was retiring that year, and he because he was arguably my most notable student. In a masterclass he coached a group of my current students playing his *Grand Quartet*. It was the first time I'd seen him as a teacher. He was extremely kind, sensitive, and articulate. Everyone loved him. I felt privileged to have had the chance to work with him.

*Rachel Rudich, flutist and faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts School of Music:*

There is no one who has been more inspirational to me or had a greater influence on me than Harvey Sollberger. I have known Harvey as a teacher, mentor, performer, conductor, composer, colleague and friend for more than half my life. He is the reason I became a musician, and

without him the career I have enjoyed as a performer and teacher would not have been possible. Wherever Harvey has been he has touched countless musicians with his generosity, his enthusiasm, his creativity, his penetrating insights, and his uncompromising craftsmanship. I speak for many who have had the great fortune to work with him when I say that he has profoundly influenced our lives, and molded our futures.

Harvey, I am deeply grateful for what you have given me. Thank you for being you, and for helping me to become me. Happy Birthday!

*Laird Addis, professor of philosophy at the University of Iowa, double bass player, and former clarinetist:*

Harvey and I met in the fall of 1956, his freshman year and my sophomore year in music at the University of Iowa. We were both reluctant members of the marching band, as required by our music scholarships, and soon found that we had many interests, beliefs, and values in common including something that, alas, was rare among music students—a love of good music and, even rarer, an interest in new music.

We took courses together in history and philosophy but, more important for Harvey's future, we became the first two undergraduate students to study composition in the School. We enjoyed our life and work immensely in those three years together at Iowa.

The summer of 1960, following Harvey's graduation, we spent together in Europe. We lived on a shoestring but did manage to attend performances of *Wozzeck* in Holland and *Die Meistersinger* in Germany. The only extended time I have been with Harvey since that memorable summer was later in the 1960s when he was a visiting professor at Iowa (where I was by then on the philosophy faculty). But we have seen each other for a few days at a time on numerous occasions over the years since—in his places of abode in New York, Indiana, and California; and in Iowa to which he still returns to see his mother and visit old friends.



*Patricía Spencer*, flutist with *Da Capo Chamber Players* and former *NYFC* president:

The historic role played by Harvey Sollberger in the pioneering years of new music performance has made him a legend in his own time. With Charles Wuorinen as co-director and oboist Josef Marx as manager, he founded the Group for Contemporary Music. One of only two (yes, two) new music ensembles in existence at the time, the Group inspired the formation of many distinguished younger groups, who in turn inspired still more, generating the rich array of new music activity that surrounds us today. The electricity of Harvey's compositions and flute playing were a key element of the early forces behind the present explosion.

What did it mean, for Da Capo, when Harvey wrote *Riding the Wind I* for us? We had just won the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, and had asked him (along with Milton Babbitt, who gave us *Arie Da Capo*) to write one of the commissioned works that were part of the award. Shortly before that, I had heard Harvey play a solo flute version of *Riding the Wind* (this version later became *Riding the Wind II, III, IV*)—an incredible, dramatic piece that stretched the capacity of the flute and seemed to make a whole new musical statement possible on the instrument. It was overwhelming; everyone who heard it was talking about it for months. When we heard that he planned to expand that piece into an ensemble piece for us, still featuring the flute, my excitement was extreme, and heightened with the hugeness of the responsibility. (I still feel this hugeness of excitement/responsibility!)

Preparing the premiere of *Riding the Wind I*, with Harvey conducting, was a major milestone in my life—an unbelievable gift of profound insights and expertise. Harvey's legendary passion for detail, his concept of the flute as the ultimate expressive tool for every possible dramatic feeling (embodied in the dramatic language of extended techniques, at that time very new), the intensity of his conducting—all these became part of my own musical goals. For this and many other wonderful musical experiences with him, I will be forever grateful!

*Arthur Kreiger*, composer and faculty member at Connecticut College:

For a young composer arriving in New York City in the early 1970s, the most interesting and most compelling new music concerts were those presented by the Group for Contemporary Music. Attending these "Group" concerts, one quickly learned (if one hadn't already known it) that Harvey Sollberger was a man of many fine musical abilities. He was a composer held in high esteem, a conductor who brought clarity and beauty to the most difficult of scores and a flutist possessing infinite agility and great interpretative sensitivity. These initial impressions of Harvey still hold true after these many years. It is altogether fitting and proper that the New York Flute Club now honor him on his birthday. Simply put, Harvey Sollberger is one of those flutists who "redefine" the instrument for the contemporary concertgoer. One leaves a Sollberger performance with an expanded notion of musical gesture, a fresh sense of musical possibility.

*Charles Wuorinen*, composer and professor of composition at Rutgers University:

Harvey Sollberger has been my friend and colleague for more than forty years. Over the time during which we collaborated on the Group for Contemporary Music we presented and performed and conducted not only our own music but that of dozens of other composers. Of course, Harvey's magnificent flute playing was always at the center of our efforts. And in all this activity, Harvey was the model and example of wonderful musicianship, artistic idealism, and compositional accomplishment.

Lives diverge, and ours did too. Now separated by thousands of miles, we no longer collaborate as actively as we once did. But I have still been the lucky recipient of Harvey's skills as conductor. His musicianship is fungible: the prodigious talent that has served him so beautifully as a player now extends to the guidance of an orchestra.

*Roger Reynolds*, composer and professor of composition at the University of California at San Diego:

Harvey has been a dear friend and deeply admired colleague for decades. A sensitive, probing, fanciful, knowing, and unpredictable mind shapes his ways and our encounters. He and I have been coworkers at the University of California, San Diego, for some time now, and the

sole disadvantage of our proximity is that I no longer receive those singular written-out communications, inscribed with a hand that endows each individual letter with unexpected facets, concatenates words in ways that can spin the mind.

I value his letters—the subtle and soaring phrases of his playing or the thread of an argument I have heard him make—because they have had such impact in my life. Many years ago, for example, I received a multipage letter from him regarding *Ambages*, a work I wrote for Karen, my flutist wife. Harvey was preparing to perform it; and here were page after page after page of detailed queries on all aspects of the notation and the musical intent. Excepting Karen, no one had ever paid this level of attention to my music. At first I was incredulous. Only later did I realize that this letter epitomized the kind of musician and human being he was and remains. What he does matters.

*Joan Tower*, composer and former percussionist with the Group for New Music:

I mostly knew Harvey in the '60s when he was living in NY. He was a fantastic flutist, always tackling the most challenging music. And I played under him a few times as conductor, which was very exciting since he always knew the music well and was a good "listener" to what was actually coming out.

*Susan Elizabeth Deaver*, NY-based freelance flutist and conductor:

I first met Harvey Sollberger in 1972 when he was the director of Manhattan School of Music's Contemporary Ensemble and I was an undergraduate flutist studying at MSM. Harvey's rehearsals were inspirational. His way of approaching music and bringing it to life—whether the music was his own or that of Stefan Wolpe, Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, Igor Stravinsky, or Charles Wuorinen—greatly influenced me as a flutist, teacher and conductor. In 1993 I wrote my DMA thesis at MSM on the Group for Contemporary Music, founded by Harvey and Charles Wuorinen in 1962. The Group was one of the most influential contemporary ensembles in New York for the 30 years of its existence, in no small part due to Harvey's energy, focus, and creativity.

[Editors's note: Interested readers can find the complete text of Susan's thesis at [www.stokar.com/Deaver.htm](http://www.stokar.com/Deaver.htm).]

(Cont'd on next page)



TRIBUTES (cont'd from previous page)

*Cathy Comrie*, Chicago-based flutist and teacher, and curator of the NYFC's Sollberger 65th Birthday Concert:

Some time during the fall of 1992 I was in a used record shop in New Jersey when I came upon a old CRI LP of Harvey Sollberger's *Riding the Wind I* featuring Pat Spencer and the DaCapo Chamber Players conducted by the composer. That recording changed my life. After only one hearing, I just knew that I had to study flute with Pat Spencer and I absolutely had to play *Riding the Wind*.

My first meeting with Harvey Sollberger was a few days before a performance of *Riding the Wind II, III, IV*, in November of 1994. He was visiting New York, and Pat Spencer set up a lesson for me with him. I

felt prepared (as my performance was only a few short days away) but eager to hear his thoughts. However, there was no way I could have been prepared for how many thoughts he would have!

I played through all three movements and we covered every single note, detail and nuance of the piece—he pulled no punches. We wrapped up with the final movement 2-1/2 hours later! I was exhausted and exhilarated.

Since that time we have become good friends. I've performed his music on many occasions and he's always generously offered his valuable insights and kind encouragement. □

expressive conductors I've worked with—both at the same time!

He conducted *Ionisation* on a Group for Contemporary Music concert and remarked that he loved it when the sirens played in thirds and could the players get that every time. Of course it's hard enough to control the dynamic and envelope, but Harvey always went that extra step.

When I think of Harvey, I always picture him conducting *Deserts*, or *Syringa*; elbows flying, hair flying, eyes blazing. Every piece firmly in place, yet imploring his players to go further, to reach deeper into the score for more meaning, more musical phrasing, to make the listener hear what HE heard in the music he loved."

FRED SHERRY first worked with Harvey as a 17-year-old cellist. "Harvey was the first person to inform me that I could not count! After a bit, I realized he was right. He was a very powerful player—such command of his tone—his sound could be broad and beautiful or cut like a knife—a sharp focus I had never heard before...and such imagination with vibrato. One of the first to make an overblown sound, and have it sound good. We always trusted Harvey immensely—if we were ever in doubt, we followed Harvey!"

JACKIE LECLAIR, oboist in two of my own groups (Sequitur and the Curiously Strong Wind Quintet), says: "In early 1996, you could have knocked me over with a feather when I learned I was slated to collaborate with Harvey Sollberger at the June in Buffalo festival that summer. The prospect floored me...to work with THE Harvey Sollberger. Wow. Eventually I managed to wrap my head around the concept, and went up to play the world premiere of Roger Reynolds' *On the Balance of Things* for solo oboe, chamber ensemble and tape, which Harvey conducted.

He was inspiring and exciting to work with, and we had an exhilarating outing with the Reynolds. Shortly afterwards, Harvey sent me a very nice and supportive handwritten letter. It was a kind gesture that meant a lot to me.

A few months later, I was on the phone with him, gossiping about new music, and what was going on in New



SOLLBERGER (cont'd from page 1)

I was drowned in stories that included phrases like, "He was the clearest, most inspiring conductor I've ever known," or "The world just seemed perfect when he was around," or "He is such a wonderful person...."

It is clear to me that Harvey Sollberger set standards for the performance of new music with his incredible passion in presentation, his extremely talented set of ears, his renowned intensity of style, and (most dear to me!) his requirement that new music be extremely well rehearsed and absorbed. Everyone I spoke to talked about the Group for Contemporary Music. Co-founded by Harvey Sollberger and Charles Wuorinen, the group considered Varèse as their "godfather," and was associated with many firsts in NYC: one of the first electronic music concerts in the US, the first group organized and run by composers, etc. Since so many of the contemporary music groups currently performing in New York have been directly or indirectly influenced by Harvey, I found the stories that my colleagues had to share very inspiring.

Below are some snapshots of moments during the week's many "interviews":

CLAIRE HELDRICH, percussionist, and successor to Harvey as director of the Manhattan School of Music Contemporary Ensemble (a post I now hold and thoroughly cherish): Claire recalled a recording session with Harvey at McMillin Theater at Columbia University. "We had started at 10 pm, because there was less subway noise at that hour. The energy in the room was very intense and felt by the entire ensemble. Harvey was such a wonderfully demanding soul, a perfectionist in the most musically thrilling sense...and he had brought the level of the recording to such a high level that we were not for ANY moment concentrating on anything else that evening." Then she started to laugh. Why? "Because when it was over, everyone stepped out onto Broadway and it was daylight. We hadn't realized we had been there all night."

WILLIAM TRIGG, percussionist: "I played under him many times. Perhaps the most memorable was a performance of his *Flutes & Drums*, scored for eight flutes, ten percussionists, and four string basses. Harvey has the finest ears I've ever experienced! His technique would drive a conducting teacher crazy! All elbows, and a different hand position for each beat. He was, however, one of the clearest and most

York, his old stomping ground. At some point Harvey mentioned a new composition by Heinz Holliger on a double CD he'd recently been gorging himself on. He said he'd been listening to it for days and was almost feverishly elated about its irresistible intoxication. Two days later, I opened my mailbox to find a package of CDs from California, from Harvey. A brand-new copy of *Scardanelli Zyklus*. On a postcard enclosed with the CDs he wrote, "It's catatonic/anorexic much of the time—and so expressive being so—" Over the next few days, I listened to it over and over, and I too was transported and strangely intoxicated. Harvey is ordinarily extraordinary, and that inspires the hell out of me."

JAYN ROSENFELD, president of the New York Flute Club and flutist of the New York New Music Ensemble, talks about commissions such as *The Advancing Moment* (1993) written for her ensemble, and her many times working with Harvey at the June in Buffalo Festival. Jayn says "He's the 'Gazzelloni of America,' and one of the best conductors we've worked with."

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And, now some words from the man of the hour. My questions to Harvey turned out to be a wonderful conversation.

*PATTI MONSON: Could you talk about the importance of giving new music its due rehearsal time?*

HARVEY SOLLBERGER: Personally, as a flutist, I have always loved the world of solo flute music, [because] you can take as much [rehearsal] time as you want. For example, Milton Babbitt's *None But The Lonely Flute* and Charles Wuorinen's *Flute Variations* are very demanding pieces. [You can] live with them for a long time—the more you penetrate them, the more you discover their large and small worlds. I like to have that feeling when I play music. It comes from a desire to be productive—to get to the heart of the matter. Sometimes we're under pressure, there are time limitations, the other players come from different mindsets...but you just have to do the best you can.

Ideally, it's best to have a small ensemble to play with all the time, with musicians who are willing to work to get to that core and to be very detailed. That is the most satisfying.

I think, today, we underestimate how far performance has evolved. Now people are better and faster at learning new pieces. There are more models, more standards...there are also so many more musicians willing to spend the time working on some of the really hard repertoire. There are so many more groups—in every generation there seem to be at least five new groups—and they can be very different, some specializing in a certain style, and others playing a more comprehensive repertoire.

In the 1950s, the state of performance was very low...abysmal, really. For example, it took 15 years for Milton Babbitt's piece *Composition for Four Instruments* [1948] to get performed in the way the composer intended (evidently previous performances were a disaster). But that was one of the reasons we started the Group for Contemporary Music—the composers deserved better. We wanted to spend a lot of time practicing and absorbing this music, and in doing so, raise the level of new music performance.

*What sort of repertoire do you like to program these days? And do you feel that you favor certain styles of new music over others?*

I am interested in works that take me on a voyage to a place I have never been. This is usually music that is more complex and ambiguous; music that presents many possibilities to discover—perhaps even perils and dangers. Certainly the music of one's youth doesn't completely dictate your adult tastes, but it does have an influence. I think my own orientation is more traditional; compared to some people, my tastes are [relatively] narrow.... Although I am occasionally influenced by jazz or rock music, my own music is not going to sound that way.

In the orchestra I conduct—which is a combination of the school [UCSD] orchestra and the town community orchestra (a very interesting mix)—I am challenged by time elements... symphony movements that are 40

minutes long or so...you get to live in the music more, and by the time you get to the middle you're heavily transported to another world. However, in the contemporary music world, many of our pieces are 10–12 minute works and you must be transported immediately—before the piece is over! So I also enjoy many of the extended works of Morton Feldman.

I would program works by Roger Reynolds...one of America's greats, and little recognized...also, Chinari Ung, Toru Takemitsu, Milton Babbitt, Webern. I also like the music of Boulez, Berio, Jacob Druckman, Luigi Nono, Davidovsky, Rand Steiger, and of course Charles Wuorinen. David Lang is someone who is very interesting to me, and has a developed sense of process in his music. Also, Donald Martino—one of the hardest composers to please! He has such a precise idea of everything! But, oftentimes, repertoire is a collective decision [involving] boards and faculty colleagues...I don't think everyone is completely satisfied this way, but you learn a lot about other people's tastes.

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I was glad to have been asked to write this article, as it gave me an opportunity to learn much more about someone I wish I had known years ago. ELIZABETH MCNUTT, a former student of Harvey's sums it up in this story. "I house-sat for him while he was out of town. Harvey had an enormous espresso machine imported from Italy. As I made morning coffee, I found I had to hang my entire weight on the plunger arm just to extract one shot of espresso. It occurred to me that a man who easily performed a near-impossible feat every morning just to make coffee would naturally expect miracles from those around him—and inspire us to achieve them." □

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*Patti Monson performs as flutist with the new music ensemble Sequitur, Flute Force, and the Curiously Strong Wind Quintet. She is on the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music as director of the Contemporary Ensemble, TACTUS.*



The New York Flute Club  
Park West Finance Station  
P.O. Box 20613  
New York, NY 10025-1515



## February 29, 2004 concert

Sunday 5:30 pm • CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th (across from Carnegie Hall)

### HARVEY SOLLBERGER 65TH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

## 84<sup>th</sup> Season

### 2003–2004 Concerts

**October 19, 2003** • Sunday 5:30 pm  
FLUTISTS OF THE NY PHILHARMONIC

**November 23, 2003** • Sunday 5:30 pm  
FULA FLUTE ENSEMBLE from West Africa

**December 21, 2003** • Sunday 5:30 pm  
CHRISTOPHER KRUEGER, Baroque Flute  
*Saint Peter's Church, 346 W. 20th at 8th Ave.*

**January 18, 2004** • Sunday 5:30 pm  
ARIFE GÜLSEN TATU, Turkish National Artist

**February 29, 2004** • Sunday 5:30 pm  
HARVEY SOLLBERGER 65TH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE  
with Harvey Sollberger and assisting artists

**March 14, 2004** • Sunday, All Day  
FLUTE FAIR 2004 — A DAY AT THE OPERA  
*LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and  
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2004 NYFC COMPETITION WINNERS

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### From the Editor

**Greetings!** On February 29th the NYFC will celebrate the 65th birthday of flutist-composer Harvey Sollberger with a concert featuring his musical compositions. Cathy Comrie, the ever-cheerful “curator” of this event, collected the composer and performer tributes in this newsletter issue. News to me (and maybe to you): Harvey played flute in his college marching band, and his *Two Duets for Two Flutes* was written (and performed with his teacher Betty Bang Mather) while he was still an undergraduate at the University of Iowa.

Patti Monson (interview, p. 1) recently spoke with Harvey and some of the many colleagues who enjoyed working with him over the years, an experience that she describes as a weeklong rediscovery of several decades of New York new music history. Readers who like to keep track of musical genealogy should note that Patti and Harvey have a peculiar connection: she now directs the Manhattan School of Music Contemporary Ensemble (TACTUS) that he directed for the ten year period 1971–81. Those of you interested in a more detailed history of this era should check out Susan Deaver’s Ph.D. thesis (at the website listed on p. 5).

Physicist Ed Wolf, a regular performer at the NYFC’s May ensembles concerts, is this month’s member profile subject. I got to know Ed soon (*very soon!*) after my debut as Newsletter editor in October 1999, when he informed me (as kindly as possible) that a photo caption in our first issue mistakenly identified him as another NYFC member. Those of you who missed the correction (and the last several years of May concerts) will now finally get to meet the *real* Ed Wolf.

All for now. See you soon. □

Best regards,

*Katherine Saenger* ([klsaenger@yahoo.com](mailto:klsaenger@yahoo.com))