



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

March 2004

The Flute in Opera: Three Inside Views

Interview by Katherine Fink

This interview reflects the fascinating differences between our first chair opera flutists, not only in the way they think about their careers, but also in the way the interviews were conducted. Michael Parloff responded by email in a rich and eloquent narrative, Trudy Kane invited me to her home and fed me a delicious brunch, and Bart Feller gave a phone interview. The hardest part for me was to condense three fantastic commentaries into one. I encourage you to seek out these artists at the Flute Fair to hear more of their highly entertaining anecdotes.



BART FELLER TRUDY KANE MICHAEL PARLOFF

In Concert

Sunday, **March 14, 2004**, 5:45 pm

LaGuardia Concert Hall

*LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts
100 Amsterdam Avenue (at 65th Street)*

Program

- Rigoletto Fantasy for two flutes and piano..... Albert Franz Doppler
Michael Parloff and Bart Feller, flutes; Ken Noda, piano
- Two Poems of Ronsard, Op. 26 Albert Roussel
Bart Feller, flute; Theodora Hanslowe, mezzo soprano
- Sonata in A Major, Op. 13 Gabriel Fauré
Transcribed and edited for flute by Trudy Kane
Trudy Kane, flute; Peter Wittenberg
- Après Un Rêve Gabriel Fauré
Trudy Kane, flute; Peter Wittenberg
- Cantata No. 209 J.S. Bach
Theodora Hanslowe, mezzo-soprano; Bart Feller, flute; Linda Mark, piano
- XXV Opera Snatches for solo flute William Schuman
Bart Feller, flute
- Lucia's Mad Scene from Act III of
Lucia di Lammermoor Gaetano Donizetti
Lyubov Petrova, soprano; Michael Parloff, flute; Ken Noda, piano

*Free to members and those with Flute Fair badges; \$10 at the door for all others.
Program subject to change.*

KF: Trudy and Michael, how old were you when you got the job at the Met? Did you encounter difficulties because of your youth?

MP: I was 24 when I joined the Met Orchestra in 1977. At that time the flute section had recently been transformed from four men with an average age of about 60 to a group of still-wet-behind-the-ears twenty-somethings. Undoubtedly, it was strange for some of the older members of the orchestra to have young men and, particularly, young women heading up their sections. Interestingly, some of the "youngsters" from the class of '77 have already started to retire. It may be a cliché, but it's sobering to realize how quickly we progress from one side of the generational divide to the other.

TK: Youth and gender posed fewer problems because Karen Griffen, who was the piccoloist at that time, had

(Cont'd on page 5)

IN THIS ISSUE

The Flute in Opera:	
Three Inside Views	1
Interview by Katherine Fink	
From the President	2
<i>A Day at the Opera</i>	
Member Profile	3
<i>Carol Weinstein</i>	

Announcements

Flute Happenings	3
Classified	4
Flute Fair Update	4
Call for Members' New CDs	7



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A Day At the Opera

by Jayn Rosenfeld



Marcel Moyse was the “Father of Us All,” or of at least many of us. Georges Barrère firmly established the French school in America when he played in the New York Symphony. But Moyse taught us what it entailed, how to do it. His particular slant on it arose, I believe, from two influences. One, he always said that he was not a “natural” flutist, and therefore he had to work consciously, with clear goals in mind, to reach the level that he could imagine. Two, he played first flute for many years before the war (WWII) in the Paris Opera Orchestra and had the occasion to hear the great singers of his day. The material remnant of this is his book *Tone Development through Interpretation*, which is a collection of opera tunes, arias, intermezzi and selected short works by opera composers. We can imagine what he heard in the pit, many nights, good and bad, and since he was very susceptible and loved opera and loved good singing, he absorbed and applied the lessons to be learned there. The chief focus of his book is expressivity, not just musicality, but communication the way the human voice does it. He wanted the flute to sound like a voice, and this is why he used opera melodies, because one could copy exactly what one heard on the stage. This is a step beyond what we all think we’re doing when we play expressively, which is “sing”; this is mimicking the human voice, especially one highly trained in the deeply emotional and passionate music of French and Italian opera.

Which brings me to our Flute Fair on March 14, A Day at the Opera. We are indebted to the flutists of the City Opera and the Metropolitan for showing up in a big way, and contributing their talents, skills and interests. Through the superb organization and imagination of our Program Chair, Kathy Fink, the flutists will highlight many aspects of the opera, the music and the flutist’s demanding excerpts, the techniques of playing in an orchestra with singers, audition techniques, and the special world of the piccoloist. I am particularly happy that we will have some singers performing with our flutists. You may hear what inspired Marcel Moyse, and hear the power and huge appeal of the human voice. I hope you will be tempted to attend an opera in the near future to use your new perspectives.

An anecdote to end: I was once playing *La Bobème*, a familiar and much beloved old chestnut, at the Garden State Arts Center, a matinee, and there were two older ladies sitting behind my husband in the audience. One read the synopsis of each act to the other, quite audibly, before it started. Before the third act, all of a sudden, my husband reported, the reader gasped in amazement and said in a startled, pained tone, “I can’t believe it. She dies!” Would that we all could be so involved in the stage dramas of the human heart.

Have a wonderful time at our Opera Fair! □

Raffle!

BE SURE TO ENTER the Flute Fair Raffle to win a flute lesson with one of New York’s premier flutists:

Trudy Kane, Michael Parloff or Bart Feller.

\$5 for one ticket or 5 tickets for \$20. All proceeds help support the New York Flute Club.



Member Profile

Carol Weinstein

NYFC member since 2000



Employment: Physician practicing psychiatry privately and in a hospital in Westchester.

A recent recital/performance: Two fall (2003) semester concerts at the Mannes School of Music, as part of a chamber music class she took. The pieces performed were two flute/violin/piano trios: *Deux Interludes* (Ibert) and *Madrigal Sonata* (Martinu).

Career highlight(s): In high school, playing Chaminade's Concertino with a summer community band on Long Island; in college, playing with the Cornell Wind Ensemble. More recently, her performances in the 2002 and 2003 NYFC Ensemble Program concerts at the Kaplan Space at Carnegie Hall. Also, staying in the Juilliard dorms and attending Jeanne Baxtresser's masterclass in 2001 (her first masterclass ever), then performing in Julius Baker's masterclass later that summer.

Current flute: Haynes 14k gold flute with silver keys, A=442.

Influential flute teachers: In high school, Les Scott and Eleanor Lawrence. As an adult: Harold Jones (who taught her great techniques for practicing difficult passages and also made playing fun) and Baroque flutist Sandra Miller (who got her to practice intonation by playing with a tuning note). Brief masterclasses with Brad Garner and Gary Schocker were exciting; week-long masterclasses and follow-up lessons with Jan Vinci and Keith Underwood helped her embouchure and tone a lot, though she thinks her need for more work will be a permanent condition!

High school: Valley Stream South High School, in Valley Stream, NY.

Degrees: BS in biology with a concentration in genetics (Cornell University's

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences), MD (SUNY Buffalo).

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishment(s): Professional: Her psychiatry residency at NY Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, Westchester Division, and subsequent employment as associate director of a Psych ER in the Bronx. Personal: starting to play the flute again as an adult and getting over the stage fright she had in high school; becoming certified in scuba diving.

Favorite practice routines: For technique and tone: scales and harmonics; for tone: sometimes the 2nd movement of Bach's Sonata No. 1 in B minor, focusing on not forcing the air. For embouchure: rabbit exercises from Jan Vinci and buzzing exercises from Keith Underwood. She likes to sight-read something in each practice. For ongoing pieces, she practices slowly, often with a metronome. Daily practice is a goal, but she occasionally misses a day due to her work schedule and fear of waking the neighbors!

Interests/hobbies: Chamber music with friends and family (who include flutists, pianists, and violinists); spending time with her two very attention-seeking Bengal kittens. Computer and other electronic gadgets, reading, and getting away to warm places as often as possible. She'd like to find a local serious amateur or semiprofessional orchestra or chamber music group to play with.

Advice for NYFC members: For students and adult amateurs: "Play in or audit a summer masterclass; you can hear the top flutists in the world teach and you can really learn a lot about how to fix your playing!" For everyone: "Take advantage of being here in NY near some of the best musicians in the world. I love the NY Philharmonic's chamber music series at Merkin (especially the ones with flute), and the NY Philharmonic and Metropolitan Opera (especially for the flute solos!). And come to the NY Flute Fair—it'll be great!" □

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.

MARCH '04

March
6

Saturday 4:00 pm

"The Scandinavian Flute," a program of music by Roman, Sveinsson, Kuhlau, Saariaho, and Grieg featuring **Svetlana Kabalin** of the Sylvan Winds.

• Victor Borge Hall, Scandinavia House, 58 Park Avenue, NYC • Admission: \$20 • Info, at 212-222-3569 or sylvanwinds@att.net.

March
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.

March
20

Saturday 8:00 pm

Sue Ann Kahn, flute, in "Mozart and More," a concert featuring the Mozart quartets for flute and strings, Takemitsu's *Toward the Sea*, and George Rochberg's *Serenata d'estate*. With Eriko Sato, violin, Ronald Carbone, viola, Alex Kouguell, cello, Oren Fader, guitar, and Jian Liu, harp.

• Concert Hall, Mannes College of Music, 100 West 85th Street, NYC • Admission is free.

March
27

Saturday 8:30 am to 6 pm

Drew University Music Department presents The Tenth Annual NJ Flute Choir Day "Flûtes Extraordinaires." Guest artist Gary Schocker, directed by Dr. **Virginia Schulze-Johnson**, coached by members of UpTown Flutes and guests. Concert at 4 pm.

• Grace Episcopal Church, 4 Madison Ave, Madison, NJ • Info, call Virginia Schulze-Johnson at 973-408-3428.

March
29

Monday 1:00 pm

The "Concerts at One" series will present Duo Essence with **Helen Richman**, flute, and Jenny Mitchell, piano. Works by Beaser, Caplet, Mompou, Honegger, Piazzolla, Gryc, Glück, Bartok, and Vaughan Williams.

• St. Paul's Chapel, Fulton Street at Broadway, NYC • Admission is free. Info, visit www.trinitywallstreet.org/music.

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

APRIL '04

April
8

Thursday 8:00 pm

The Sylvan Winds with **Svjetlana Kabalin**, flute, will appear as part of the "Cutting Edge" concert series in a program including works and talks by composers Oteri, Shatin, Zannoni, and Deak.

• Greenwich Music House, 46 Barrow Street, NYC • Admission: \$15 general, \$10 students/seniors • Info, call 212-242-4770.

April
10

Saturday 8:00 pm

Palisades Virtuosi with **Margaret Swinchoski**, flute, will perform works by Fauré, Debussy, Dutilleux, Ravel, along with the world premiere of the newly commissioned *Three Scenes from the Mountains* by Robert Manno.

• Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, 113 Cottage Place, Ridgewood, NJ • Admission: \$15 general; \$12 students/seniors • Info, call 201-836-1124 or 201-488-1149 or visit www.palisadesvirtuosi.org.

Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Mail date
April 2004	03/11/04	04/01/04
May 2004	04/01/04	04/22/04

CLASSIFIED

NEW CD by Petina Cole. *Works for Flute By People I Know*, a diverse collection of classical and new age music by living composers, for flute with other instruments. "...a CD unlike anyone else's, and one that is refreshing to listen to."—composer Katherine Hoover. Info/sound clips and purchase, visit the Flute Fair exhibits or cdbaby.com/petina.

Members may advertise in this section for \$10 for up to 320 characters/spaces. Your ad should be submitted by hard copy or email. Name and phone number are required. Deadline is the same as for Flute Happenings submissions. Ads must be paid for in advance. Make checks payable to the New York Flute Club and mail to the Newsletter Editor.

EXHIBITS

9:00am-5:30pm, Band Rooms—Flutemakers, publishers, and other members of the music industry will exhibit their products. This is an ideal opportunity to shop for new and used instruments, music, recordings, and other flute-related items. Also visit the NYFC table for recordings and publications by NY Flute Club members.



It's Here!

COME ONE, COME ALL on **Sunday, March 14** to the NY Flute Fair 2004, held this year at the LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts, 100 Amsterdam Avenue (at 65th). Please check our website, www.nyfluteclub.org, for more information.

CONCERTS

STUDENT FLUTE ENSEMBLE SHOWCASE

1:00–2:30pm, *LaGuardia Concert Hall*

This is a wonderful showcase for our younger performers. The concert features student flute ensembles from NY area music schools. For more information contact Stefani Starin: 845-358-2759 or starin@newband.org

ANNUAL COMPETITION FINALS

3:30–4:30pm, *LaGuardia Theater*

The annual NYFC competition for flutists ages 18-27 is open to the public and will be held in two parts. [The preliminary round is free and open to the public from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday, March 13, at Kaplan Space in Carnegie Hall, entrance at 161 West 56th Street. Because of Carnegie Hall security policy, names of all who attend must be given to Patricia Zuber at zuber.flute@verizon.net prior to March 13.] The finalists will perform at 3:30pm on the day of the fair. The winners will be announced at the Artists' Concert at 5:45 and will present a joint recital at CAMI Hall. For more information contact Patricia Zuber, zuber.flute@verizon.net

ARTISTS' CONCERT with Bart Feller, Trudy Kane and Michael Parloff

5:45pm, *LaGuardia Concert Hall*

This concert will feature NYC's principal opera flutists, singers Theodora Hanslowe and Lyubov Petrova, with pianists Linda Mark, Peter Wittenberg and Ken Noda in an unusual concert of varied solo and ensemble works. Each artist offers a unique musical viewpoint in literature of Bach, Donizetti, Fauré, Roussel and Schumann.

All programs and schedules subject to change.

NYFC TABLE—NY Flute Club members in good standing may offer for sale a total of 10 items per member (CDs or publications) at the NYFC table in the exhibit rooms. Bring items to the table for price labels and inventory record, and pick up unsold items by 5 pm on March 14. The NYFC will take a 20% commission to support its programs.

EVENTS

WAKE-UP CALL! with Gerardo Levy

9:00am, *LaGuardia Concert Hall*
Warm up for the day with NY City Opera flutist Gerardo Levy. Learn his secrets of longevity and beautiful tone in this warm-up session.

FLUTE CHOIR READING

9:30–11:00am, *LaGuardia Concert Hall*
All warmed up and nowhere to go? Stay for the Annual Flute Choir Reading Session hosted by Flute Force and directed by Rochelle Itzen. This year's mini-concert by Flute Force features the world premiere of Trudy Kane's quartet arrangement of music from Bizet's *Carmen*. Bring all your flutes and reading glasses for this exciting entr'acte.

MASTERCLASSES

OPERA OVERVIEW and AUDITION STRATEGY with Bart Feller

11:15am–12:45pm, *LaGuardia Concert Hall*
Newly appointed principal flutist of the NYC Opera, Bart Feller offers a two-part discussion. Flutists Karen Griffen of the Metropolitan Opera and Gerardo Levy of NYC Opera will share highlights of their incredible opera careers as well as some of the colorful history of New York's major opera companies. Then join Feller for his audition strategy session to learn how to maximize your audition efforts.

PICCOLO! with Stephanie Mortimore

11:15am–12:15pm, *LaGuardia Theater*
Metropolitan Opera piccoloist Stephanie Mortimore offers a master class on piccolo technique and tone.

INTERPRETING THE ROMANTIC MASTERS with Trudy Kane

12:30–1:30pm, *LaGuardia Theater*
Metropolitan Opera principal flutist Trudy Kane will coach the sonatas of Carl Reinecke and Cesar Franck with intriguing interpretive insights.

OPERATIC ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE with Michael Parloff

1:45–2:45pm, *LaGuardia Theater*
Metropolitan Opera principal flutist Michael Parloff explores the major operatic solo flute repertoire with special attention to contextual and programmatic elements. □



THREE VIEWS, (Cont'd from page 1)

already been there for two years. In 1976, Karen left and Jimmy Hosmer retired as second flute. One audition was set up for both positions and you could apply for either position, or both. I had been subbing with the orchestra and knew that I had a terrific reputation as a piccolo player. I also knew that there would soon be a principal flute opening and that if I got into that piccolo chair at the Met, I would never get out of it. I auditioned for both positions, stating my preference for the second flute, which I won. Fortunately, I did win the principal flute audition later that season.

KF: Talk about audition preparation in general and if the process is different for an opera orchestra audition.

MP: The preparation process is essentially the same: you learn the excerpts and take the audition. However, since there are fewer opera companies in the United States, American instrumentalists tend to grow up with less exposure to the major operatic solos. My motivation in compiling my volume of opera excerpts was to create an annotated resource for flutists who want to study these beautiful but relatively unfamiliar solos in depth.

TK: It's definitely different for the opera, partly because the music is provided. When I was taking symphonic auditions, you had to know all the tutti passages for all the symphonies. Because of this, I used to hate preparing for section auditions, and found it easier to prepare for a principal audition where you knew which solo parts would be asked for. The operatic style is also very different. I would recommend studying with someone who plays opera to prepare your audition.

KF: And go to the opera as well!

BF: Preparation for the opera audition was wildly different, because the repertoire was brand new to me. This was the opposite experience of a symphonic audition. Instead of having to figure out how to make the standard rep sound and feel fresh, I had to figure out how to play new repertoire with conviction and authority. So, it wasn't about making it fresh, it was about "how does this go?"!

KF: Tell me about the challenges of assuming a principal position. Did you preserve the traditional style of your predecessor?

TK: I did sit next to Jimmy Politis for a little while. He was a very strong, wonderful leader, and I learned an enormous amount from him. There are still things that I remember about his playing. Stylistic tradition was all around me and I was really struck by the stretching of the music, which was new to me. It was a whole new way of making music, which I thought was just wonderful.

MP: Many of the "Old School" conductors expected the musicians to have a working knowledge of traditional phrasing mannerisms and to automatically insert the unwritten pauses, fermatas, and rubatos. Some of these traditions could be rather extreme, and it took a while for me to absorb them. Today, many conductors feel duty bound to cleanse the performances of such phrasing eccentricities, so the younger players aren't exposed to these traditions as frequently. Many of my students thought I was putting them on when I demonstrated the extreme kinds of rubato that are customarily lathered onto the Mad Scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

BF: I didn't really know John Wion's playing, so I have had to rely on my own instincts and learn as I go. The biggest challenge lies in how little the opera rehearses. They don't need a lot of rehearsal because of their vast shared repertoire, but we "newbies" have to do our homework, which means listening to the entire opera CD many times.

KF: Describe your first experience on the job.

TK: When Jimmy Politis became ill during my first season, I was asked to fill in as principal flute. My first performance on principal flute came at the end of the third week of my first season. The opera was *Il Trittico* with James Levine conducting. The principal oboist came in, looked at me, and said, "What's going on here?" It was very nerve-racking. I knew it was important to do well, or I would not be allowed to continue. At that point I was the only woman playing principal in the orchestra. When they saw that I could handle the job well, they relaxed.

MP: My first opera was Mussorgsky's four-hour *Boris Godunov*. I distinctly remember stumbling over the finish line at midnight and wondering how anyone

ever survives this job. I now can attest to the fact that one's biorhythms make the necessary adjustments.

BF: It's been an exhilarating first season at the opera, although I feel like a house fell on me with so much brand-new literature to learn. My first performance of *Lucia* was with soprano Jennifer Welch-Babidge, who was seven months pregnant. She is a truly gifted actress as well as singer and during the Mad Scene she was totally in the acting zone and truly "mad," so giving any cues to me with body language would have been inappropriate. I had to add mind-reading to my opera "skill set." In my first season this was a real trial by fire! Every season at the opera has some big solo flute moments, but to have *Lucia*, *Carmen*, and *Magic Flute* in my first season has been quite amazing.

KF: Has your close work with singers changed your playing and teaching?

MP: My teacher at Juilliard in the early '70s was Arthur Lora, who had spent several seasons as principal flutist in the Met Orchestra in the 1930s. His favorite admonition was to "sing through the medium of the flute." Now, after listening to, accompanying, and imitating the world's greatest singers for 27 years, I'm beginning to understand what he had in mind. The art of the best singers comes out of deeply felt expressive impulses. They express themselves directly from their emotional core, and that is a wonderful example for all instrumentalists.

TK: From the greatest instrumentalist, you won't learn what you can from a really extraordinary singer. There's a way of phrasing and timing and delivering the music that we don't think of because our instruments are so limited. I do my best to communicate that in my teaching and I find myself saying, "Phrase this like an opera singer," or "Think of Pavarotti here."

BF: Every one of my teachers spoke about listening to singers, singing the line, singing between the notes and playing through the intervals. The singing style and influence was so deeply embedded in my training that it took this opera experience to crystallize those concepts. It's been fun to discover how much vocally-oriented training I have actually had!

(Cont'd on page 6)

THREE VIEWS, (Cont'd from previous page)

KF: How does flute playing relate to singing in areas such as vibrato, breathing and phrasing?

MP: The flute is a naturally “vocal” instrument. The ways in which we breathe and support our air are very similar to the ways in which singers support and phrase. I believe that hearing, accompanying, and imitating great singers on a daily basis can have a very positive influence on one’s playing.

TK: There was an article in *Opera News* a few years ago with photos taken in a master class of Joan Sutherland. I kept the pictures of her breathing demonstrations to show to my students. You can just look at the pictures and understand how she breathes. The way of supporting is so special and as flutists we sometimes forget.

KF: *There’s nothing like the posture of a brilliant singer.*

TK: That’s right. You don’t see them slouching over, which we tend to do when we hold up our heavy instrument and have our arms in a very awkward position. It’s good to be reminded of these things. The vibrato raises interesting questions. When you hear great singers you don’t think about their vibrato. You just hear wonderful music with the vibrato as part of the sound. I always work toward that in my own playing and with my students.

KF: *Speak about the physical and mental demands of the opera schedule. How do the long hours affect your life?*

TK: This year I hired a physical trainer. I asked her specifically to help me work on core strength, which is the area that we need most for breathing and which suffers most from sitting all the time. In the midst of a very tiring schedule it is difficult to get myself to the gym, but it is an enormous help. I also make it a point to take a nap. If I don’t, 11 o’clock comes around, I’m too tired to think and the opera goes until midnight. It can be difficult. As for my personal life, the hours are extraordinary and take an enormous amount of mental and physical strength. You don’t have much time for socializing.

MP: It’s not at all unusual for operas to last four, five, and, in the case of some of Wagner’s long-winded offerings, even

six hours. There have been many days when I’ve played a three-and-a-half or four-hour rehearsal in the afternoon and a four-hour opera in the evening. (We often joke that playing at the Met can bear a surprising resemblance to working for a living.) You gradually learn how to pace yourself. Frankly, the most important asset for an opera orchestra musician (aside from a comfortable seat cushion) is a patient and understanding family.

KF: *Discuss the pros and cons of performing in a pit.*

TK: The Met pit is a very rewarding place to play because the acoustics are fabulous. You can hear everything and the sound is wonderful. The down side is that there is often not enough room, sometimes you can’t see, and you find yourself sitting in very uncomfortable positions over the course of long operas. The long hours add to the stress. There are periods where we do very long operas three or four times a week, plus rehearsals. That takes a toll.

KF: *Bart, could you characterize the difference between the opera orchestra and the symphony?*

BF: Every orchestra has its own style, culture, and way of doing business that evolves through the years. Having been a member of the New Jersey Symphony for 15 years, I am very excited to work in a new place and discover how another orchestra deals with these elements. One particular difference is the way people perform in each job. The opera musicians perform five different operas each week and are masters at pacing themselves and maintaining the same excellent standard from the beginning to the end of the season. One has to be more flexible in the opera because there are more variables. Playing in the pit is more collaborative and differs greatly from being on stage as the center of attention. The Symphony performances are in the span of a single week, and are more intensely focused. To have four rehearsals for a Mozart program now seems positively luxurious.

KF: *Is the relationship different with the conductor in the opera and the symphony?*

BF: The conductors at the opera don’t talk as much. With few rehearsals comes little talk. In the NJ Symphony, after four rehearsals I know the conductor much

more as a person. If things are not working, they have the option of putting down the baton and opening up the mouth. At the symphony, you play, and then you talk. At the opera, you play and then you play some more.

KF: *Trudy and Michael, do you think that the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra approaches symphonic literature in a different way than a regular symphony orchestra?*

MP: Playing opera develops rhythmic flexibility, good listening and ensemble skills, and an orientation towards phrasing in a vocal manner. These skills transfer particularly well to symphonic repertoire by composers such as Strauss and Mahler, and, of course, to music involving solo singers and instrumentalists. It’s great fun, for instance, to play a Mozart piano concerto with the MET Orchestra and a great pianist. Our collaborative orientation and our deep familiarity with Mozart’s operas inform our interpretations in ways that I believe are discernible to the audience.

TK: Some of the symphonic literature comes from opera and certainly there’s that sense of freedom and style that one can’t have without having played the opera. Take for instance the *Song of the Nightingale*. When we do the opera *Nightingale*, the big “flute solo” is sung. This was the original. Once I had heard it sung I could never play it the way I had thought of it before. It’s completely different!

KF: *Do you feel appreciated for your contribution to the whole opera production or do you think that the audience is predominantly interested in the singers?*

TK: Twice in my first year I went to the bank with my check and two different tellers looked at the check and looked at me and said, “I really enjoyed your playing.” I do get the occasional letter at the Met and people do come down to say thanks. Conductors as a rule are wonderful and really appreciative, as are my colleagues, and I think that these are the most valuable things. The critics don’t mention us, but that’s the way it is.

MP: Obviously, an opera orchestra is a not a great place for a musician who needs to be the center of attention all the time. No matter how beautifully and sensitively you may believe you’re

playing the final scene of *Carmen*, for example, the audience is bound to be somewhat distracted from your contributions by the fact that Placido Domingo is standing above you in the middle of a multi-tiered Zeffirelli production involving 250 chorus members and supernumeraries, a troupe of leaping Flamenco dancers, and an assortment of horses and various barnyard animals. That said, playing opera offers many kinds of musical satisfaction, and a solo flutist gets plenty of moments in the sun.

KF: Who are your favorite singers and how have they influenced your flute playing?

MP: Over the years I've learned an enormous amount from listening to the world's best singers. The sound of a great human voice affects an audience on a visceral, emotional level that can be completely overwhelming. I've never heard an audience roar for an instrumental soloist in quite the same way that they did for Jon Vickers, Placido Domingo, or Joan Sutherland. It has been tremendously gratifying to hear and work with such great artists as Domingo, Pavarotti, Kurt Moll, Birgitt Nilsson, Leontyne Price, and Mirella Freni.

TK: My favorite opera singers are Leontyne Price, Placido Domingo, and Ruth Ann Swenson.

KF: What do you like about them? Why are they your favorites when there are so many to choose from?

TK: All of them have a wonderful sense of line and the overall concept of the music. They support the sound, which is something we all need to think about as flutists. All of them are aware of everything going on around them; they are not just singing by themselves. Playing *Lucia* with Ruth Ann is what one would dream about doing. She is listening, echoing and paying complete attention. When I perform it with her I know she's looking at me as I'm looking at her. We are really making music together, which is wonderful. One doesn't experience that with every singer.

KF: What kind of music do you listen to away from the job, and does that influence you as a performer?

MP: I've been a big jazz fan since high school. When I first came to NYC, I used

to visit the downtown jazz clubs on a regular basis. I tried to stay involved in both the jazz and classical worlds, but there finally came a point where I realized that I couldn't play both kinds of music at levels that would be satisfying to my listeners or to me. As a performer I made a decision to focus on the classical route, but as a listener I remain a serious jazz fan. One advantage that improvisation affords classical musicians is in fostering a kinesthetic relationship to the instrument that is analogous to the relationship that singers have to their own voices. Playing "by ear" makes an instrumentalist focus less on the mechanics of technique and tone production; the instrument becomes a more natural extension of what one feels and hears inside one's head. Improvising can be a way for an instrumentalist to regain some of that "singer's connection" to the natural underlying musical and expressive gestures.

TK: I still love classical music. I don't listen to a lot of flute music. I'd rather listen to a great singer or pianist, or a great orchestra. I sometimes listen to jazz, and I love Barbara Streisand—talk about knowing how to phrase a song!

BF: I played piano before I played flute. I've always had a love of jazz and find great relaxation in playing Cole Porter or Gershwin. I listen to great jazz singers, such as Ella, Sarah, Frank, Tony...but I also love pop singers Joni Mitchell, Bonnie Raitt and James Taylor. I once backed up Tony Bennett on morning TV in Philadelphia. The station called Curtis and asked which of their piano students could read jazz charts. They said, "None!...but our flute player does." I was very nervous, but Mr. Bennett was relaxed and appreciative.

KF: The theater is such a wild place to work. Do you have a favorite anecdote?

TK: Once, during *La Bohème*, a novel used as a prop was thrown into the fire and the fire took off. The performance

stopped while the stagehands came out to extinguish the fire. The audience clapped and off we went. An even more interesting evening took place quite a few years ago. On the second night of the season and the opening night of *Tales of Hoffmann*, tenor Neil Shicoff had to cancel, but his cover had laryngitis. The stage was set but we had no tenor. After a long wait the poor tenor with laryngitis began the opera, and about 20 minutes later, I heard his part being sung from behind me in the pit. Kenneth Riegel had sung the role with us before and had been in the house that evening, rehearsing something else. He was standing in the back of the pit, in his street clothes, singing the part from the score. There was no break in the performance and the tenor on stage mimed the part through the end of the opera.

KF: Kind of like Milli-Vanilli, upscale.

MP: Backstage life in an opera house is much more colorful and amusing than backstage life in a symphony orchestra. You constantly rub shoulders not only with other musicians, but also with singers, supernumeraries, dancers, stagehands, costume designers, prompters, coaches, directors, patrons, and administrators. I remember a lunch break during a rehearsal of *Elektra*, standing next to a supernumerary dressed as a slave, his face slathered in fake blood. I remarked "Boy, Richard, you really look terrible today." As he paid for his salad, he replied, "Yeah, the audition process around here gets worse and worse."

KF: A cheerful note on which to conclude! I look forward to seeing you at the Flute Fair.

Katherine Fink is a member of the Borealis Wind Quintet, freelances in NYC, and teaches at the New Jersey City University. She has subbed at the Metropolitan Opera since 1982.

New CDs



A LISTING OF RECENT CDs by NYFC members is being planned for the April or May issue of this newsletter. Members wishing to list their CDs should send a brief description (including title and purchase information) to the editor at klsaenger@yahoo.com. □



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From the Editor

Greetings! March is New York Flute Fair month! Guest artists Bart Feller, Trudy Kane, and Michael Parloff will be joined by flutist colleagues, singers, and pianists to present an exciting day of workshops, masterclasses, and performances planned around the “Flute in Opera” theme. Also on the schedule are our yearly staples: the annual Young Artists Competition, the flute choir events, the exhibits.... Check the NYFC website (www.nyfluteclub.org) for the latest details.

Flute Fair Chair Kathy Fink interviewed the three guest artists. I loved their stories! What's it like to be new on the job? (This is recent history for Bart Feller of the NYC Opera,

but the memories are still fresh and vivid for quarter-century Metropolitan Opera veterans Trudy Kane and Michael Parloff.) Do opera musicians get enough recognition? (During her first year at the Met, *two* different bank tellers told Trudy Kane how much they enjoyed her playing when she brought her paycheck in.) What do they learn from the singers? The most amazing anecdotes? The hardest part of the daily routine? Read the interview for yourself, and hear it in their own words.

Dr. Carol Weinstein, a serious amateur who regularly performs in the NYFC's May ensemble concerts, is this month's Member Profile subject. Her interest locating the “right masterclass” inspired last April's Masterclass Guide, and I suspect that her recent foray into extension school chamber music classes will soon bring a request for a survey of reader recommendations/experiences in this area as well.

All for now. Hope to see you at the fair.

Best regards,

Katherine Saenger (klsaenger@yahoo.com)