



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

January 2007



A THOUSAND-MILE JOURNEY STARTS WITH ONE STEP: DIZI MASTER TIM LIU

Interview by Rebecca Quigley

Tim Liu was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, and has been teaching traditional Chinese flute for more than 20 years. During his childhood overseas he was awarded the prestigious Best Musician Award in the Golden Lion Bamboo Flute Solo Contest and was a member of the Taipei City Chinese Classical Orchestra. Principal flutist of the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York from 1983 to 1992, Tim is now recognized as one of the outstanding masters of dizi in this country. More information about his instruments, educational packages, and Lyrichord-label recordings can be found at his website, www.2measures.com.

This interview was conducted via email in late October. As a shakuhachi player, I was particularly interested to hear about the evolution of dizi, along with its construction and performance techniques.

REBECCA QUIGLEY: Let's begin with the history of your instrument. When is the earliest known reference to dizi in Chinese history?

(Cont'd on page 4)

In Concert

Tim Liu, dizi (Chinese bamboo flutes)
LiQun Li, yangqin (Chinese hammered dulcimer)
BaoLi Zhang, erhu (Chinese two-stringed fiddle)

Sunday, **January 21, 2007**, 5:30 pm
Yamaha Piano Salon, 689 Fifth Avenue
(entrance between Fifth and Madison on 54th Street)

- Yang Bien Chuay MaWei Shen Dzowng
 ("Grain Delivery Man") (1969) (b. 1940)
- Zhe Goo FayHunan folk tune
 ("Flight of the Zhe Goo Bird") arr. Loo Chuen Ling (b. 1921)
- The General's CommandSichuan Yangqin folk tune
 re-arr. Shean Zhu Fua
- Soung Yeo Chu ("Village Utopia")Tsai Jing Ming
 (1958) (b. 1939)
- Streams of SorrowShandong Folk Tune
- Spring Comes to Xiang RiverNing Bao Sung
 (1977) (b. 1943)
- Journey to Gu-SuJian Shen Wei
 (1962) (b. 1924)
- The Horseman's New SongJien Guong Ee
 (1960) (1944-2000)

Program subject to change

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2006–2007

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Ergonomic Fluting

by David Wechsler



From the President

This month, I want to talk about posture and related occupational illnesses that affect flutists. We are all athletes of the hands and lips, and as such are subject to injury. The flute is a very asymmetrically held instrument, and because of this players can be susceptible to little niggling performance aches and pains that over time can become real chronic problems. Couple that with the absolutely essential use of the computer for everyone these days and your arms don't get very much of a rest. I have been acutely aware of posture issues for about 25 years.

Every time I ever had a small pain doing anything on the flute, I immediately went to work in a kind of self-biofeedback mode and tracked down the problem, then successfully corrected it. Of course the Alexander and Feldenkrais methods are excellent tools to help relaxation, posture, and body awareness.

Here are some of my helpful hints for playing and prolonging flute playing. The first thing one must do when holding a flute is to realize that the very position of your hands can cause problems. If you turn in too much, you kink your right wrist. If you turn out too much, you exaggerate the curve of same. Neither is good. You must find a hand position that gives the best possible gentle curve with the least amount of kinking or stretching. This is easily accomplished by just turning your headjoint in or out until the position feels good on your right wrist. It takes a little getting used to, but is easy. For arms, your upper body from the waist must point at a slight angle to the left from that of your legs. This has the effect of moving your arms closer to the center of your body, and correcting some of the unequal weight distribution of your arms and putting them closer to the center. This also removes a great deal of pull from your left shoulder. The flute should be angled down slightly, not straight out parallel to the floor. Also be aware of keeping your arms naturally hanging down against your body, not in an exaggerated elbows up position, or the opposite, pushing your elbows against your sides. There is no need for either, and an elbow up does nothing for breath even though you may feel that it does.

Players must learn to support the instrument and their arms without any added tension to their neck and shoulders. I am an advocate of young players playing for longer periods of time seated on a chair with arms, until they are strong enough to support the flute for longer periods. Even older players should do that if they get tired. One must also be careful not to sit slouched. This presses down on your belly muscles, which are the entire support system of your breathing. Always sit (and stand!) up straight. A great example for carriage (the *really* old fashioned word for posture) is to watch ballet dancers in their rest position before they begin dancing. They are all standing erect, yet relaxed, understanding the responsibility of being a calm vertebrate. For your face, the only muscular contraction should be that of your embouchure. The rest of your face should be like a really good Texas Hold 'Em player or a Botox injectionee—no expression. You must be careful not to do strenuous exercises or work unless you are used to it. You can hurt your arms that way. The dangers of tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome are real. If you use a computer a lot, you must watch the angle of your arms in relation to the keyboard. A minor thing to correct, yet a major cause of damage.

I am a righty, and for most of my life my left hand has gotten away with doing little. When I began to have tension in my right arm at the computer, I started mousing with my left hand. At first I was embarrassingly uncoordinated, but now I am better than with my right hand. I now lead with my left, doing basic everyday tasks as a lefty, to more equally distribute the workload. Of course, there's no substitute for being ambidextrous. I would love to be ambidextrous. Why, I'd cut off my right arm to be ambidextrous! *Ba-dump-pa*. I hope you find these little suggestions helpful, so you can concentrate on music, not pain.

Member Profile

Sue Carlson

*NYFC member since 2006
Newsletter layout/
production editor since 2006*



Employment: Manager of digital production for the book publisher W.W. Norton & Company, and freelance flutist.

A recent recital/performance: A busy November 2006: two performances of *Madama Butterfly* with the Brooklyn-based Regina Opera Company; soloist for the same group's International Opera and Song Festival, playing "The Swiss Shepherd"; and a performance with her woodwind quintet, Viva Voce, on Staten Island.

Career highlight(s): As a flutist: principal in the Knoxville (TN) Symphony following graduate school, then years as a freelancer with many different NY-area orchestras including American Ballet Theatre. Performances with the Sylvan Winds, a 1988 performance at the Library of Congress with the Galliard Wind Quintet (when she and the oboist, Judith Dansker, were both about nine months pregnant), and lots of chamber music with her current quintet. At Norton: getting a "top secret" security clearance and then doing the layout/typesetting of the 9/11 Commission Report in one straight 56-hour period in July 2004 to make a press run on Saturday for books in the store on Thursday.

Current flute(s): A commercial model Powell from the 1980s that she loves for its big, rich sound, and a Jeff Weisman piccolo selected for the same reason.

Influential flute teachers: Her first teacher, Alexander LeSueur, a former

Kincaid student, who was teaching nearby at Western Carolina University; later, Philip Dunigan at the North Carolina School of the Arts (from whom she learned the real meat and potatoes of flute playing), Samuel Baron (at SUNY Stony Brook), Tom Nyfenger, and Trudy Kane.

High school: Sylva-Webster High School in Sylva, NC (where she spent many, many hours with the Golden Eagles marching band "getting it right").

Degrees: BM (North Carolina School of the Arts, 1977); MM (SUNY Stony Brook, 1978).

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishment(s): Raising her two kids and seeing them turn into "really great people"; regaining her health after some scary medical troubles. She says, "Although I love music with a borderline religious devotion, the music business is not where I want to be. I feel lucky to have found a career that challenges my brain every day and still leaves me enough energy to play."

Favorite practice routines: Practicing is not Sue's favorite thing. But to warm up the lips she still does a series of arpeggios and scales Philip Dunigan taught her years ago, a routine she also finds helpful for agility and intonation.

Other interests: Volunteering at the Regina Opera (her family company, co-founded by her sister-in-law), where her children perform with the chorus and her husband runs the sound system; reclaiming her inner jock with a now-seven-year-old routine of swimming (currently 3 miles per week), yoga, ballet, and Pilates; and improving her photo retouching skills (despite the fact that this sounds a lot like what she does at her day job).

Advice for NYFC members: Sue says, "I generally try to steer clear of giving people advice . . . unless you're a family member, then look out!"

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.

JANUARY '07

JAN 18

Thursday 7:00 pm

Duo Del Norte with **SHARON LEVIN**, flute, and Gene Pino, guitar,

performing a mix of baroque, classical, Latin and popular music including chorinos by Abreu and others, Ecuadorian mestizo music, Fauré's *Pavane* and Chopin's Variations on a Theme by Rossini.

• The Westport Arts Center, 51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, CT. • Admission: \$20. • Info, call Sharon Levin at 203-557-3973.

JAN 20

Saturday 5:30 pm

ELISE CARTER, flute, with Lin Li, piano, Dave Calkins, guitar, and

Matthew Demeritt, saxophone, in a recital of works by Burton, C.P.E. Bach, Reinecke, Schocker and others.

• Weill Recital Hall, 154 West 57th Street, NYC. • Admission: \$25 (through Elise Carter at 973-851-5435 or box office on day of performance).

JAN 28

Sunday 8:00 pm

"Second Viennese Roots and Shoots," a program of seminal

music of the early 20th century with reverberations in today's hearts and ears, by the Da Capo Chamber Players with **PATRICIA SPENCER**, flute. Works by Arnold Schoenberg (arr. Webern), Hanns Eisler, Alban Berg, George Perle, Milton Babbitt (a solo flute piece), and a world premiere by Kati Agocs.

• Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, NYC. • Admission: \$20 general, \$10 students/seniors. • Box office 212-501-3330 or visit www.dacapo-chamberplayers.org.

FEBRUARY '07

FEB 8

Thursday 1:30 pm

The OMNI Ensemble, with **DAVID WECHSLER**, flute, Deborah Sepe,

cello, Jim Lahti, piano, in a program including J.S. Bach's Suite in B minor and piano quartets by Fauré and Copland.

• Center for the Arts at the College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, NY. • Admission: \$15 general, \$10 students/seniors. Info/reservations, call 718-859-8649 or visit www.omniensemble.org.

Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Mail date*
February 2007	01/11/07	02/08/07
March 2007	01/25/07	02/22/07
April 2007	03/15/07	04/12/07
May 2007	04/05/07	05/03/07

*Projected

Tim Liu (cont'd from page 1)

TIM LIU: There are two schools of thought about where dizi originated. Official documents show that dizi was brought back from somewhere west of China by Emperor Wudi's messenger, Zhang Qian, in 119 BCE. But the discovery of older flutes in several ancient tombs show that the Chinese played bone and bamboo flutes long before. Some examples: a flute was found in a tomb from the Eastern Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) with an extra hole, perhaps for pasting a membrane; two bamboo flutes were found in a tomb dated to 168 BCE; and more than thirty 9,000-year old flutes (made from the wing bones of the red-crowned crane) with five or seven holes were found in the village of Jiahu (Central Yellow River Valley).

Despite some experimental dizi (11-hole flutes, half-note flutes, or adapting Western-style mechanical keys for temporary notes), six-hole dizi are still the popular choice of most dizi players. Dizi have basically been the same since the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368 CE).

RQ: Let's talk about your background. Can you tell us about your earliest musical studies?

TL: I think I am the first musician among my relatives. My parents like to sing and I think that is all the musical background I got from my family. Around age 12, my school was looking for students to participate in a newly formed Chinese Classical Ensemble.



What attracted me to join was that we wouldn't have to go to daily morning and afternoon cleaning, and flag-raising and lowering ceremonies, plus I would be able to get close to some cute girls! Erhu [a long-necked two-string fiddle that is played with a bow] was my assigned instrument, but I loved the sound of dizi. I got good at it and after a half-year of practice, won myself a fourth place award at the city musical competition (Yes, there were more than four kids in the competition!). Seeing my name printed in the newspaper was a bigger deal than a useless paper certificate. At that time, you had to take a city-wide test to fight for high school seats, which were limited. Most families saved up money for their kid to go to "after school study" to prepare for that important test. My parents gave me money too, but I hid it under the sink and went out to practice when it was time to go to those classes. While the others studied, I practiced dizi at the park, in the dark, where nobody would bother me, because people believed that playing dizi at night attracted ghosts. I was not afraid of that nonsense, but do remember mosquitoes in the summer, cold winds in the winter, and a few "reality shows" in the darkness of the park, if you know what I mean.

RQ: At what moment did you know you would pursue music for a living?

TL: It may have been those two slaps on the face from my Dad, after I told him I got accepted, and was leaving home to go to music school! I am not quite sure if those two slaps strengthened my mind to pursue music for a living or not, but after he spent all his money to send me to music school [there was no way] I could change my mind. I did not link music playing with money until I got into a professional music ensemble and realized how much money I could make by playing music and teaching private students.

RQ: What was it like to win the Best Musician Award in the Golden Lion Bamboo Flute Solo Contest in 1981?

TL: I was in the army serving my mandatory two years at the time of the competition. I asked my dizi teacher for guidance about entering the competi-

tion, and he suggested that I not, because the association sponsoring that competition was from another music school and students from my school might not be treated fairly. I thought about it for a few seconds, decided I didn't have anything to lose, and signed up for the competition.

I asked my captain in the army for a day off to go to the competition. Jokingly, he told me, "If you don't win the competition, don't come back to see me." You should have seen his face when I showed him my name printed in the newspaper to prove that I had actually won. I got five "Honorable Wild Vacation Days," and a reward of \$10,000 [new Taiwan dollars]. I had never had that much money in my life before, and it was a good foundation for a young soloist. That helped me get into the only professional Chinese music ensemble in Taiwan at that time. It turns out that it was a very fair competition after all!

RQ: When and why did you arrive in the United States?

TL: In 1982 or 1983, after my two years' service in the army and one year in the Taipei Municipal Chinese Music Orchestra (the only professional Chinese music ensemble in Taiwan at that time), I said good-bye to the members of the orchestra, my two girlfriends, and private students, and packed my bags. I arrived in the US with exactly \$3 in my pocket, which I paid to the luggage carrier who was so eager to take care of my luggage. They were my last \$3—I did not know I would have to pay this friendly person to help me!

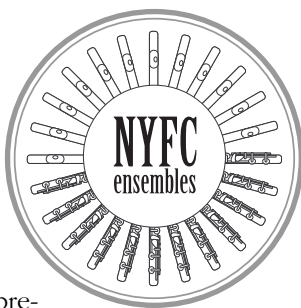
My parents had saved up enough money to open their own Chinese restaurant in Spotswood, NJ. Being the oldest son, I could not say no to my "duty," but had to help my parents who had supported me all these years. I started my duty the day I arrived to the US, going right into the kitchen directly from JFK Airport.

Two months later, I wrote letters back to my two girlfriends, along the lines of, "Forget about me, don't wait, go find someone else while you are still young, Christopher Columbus was wrong, it's hopeless here, very tired,

(Cont'd on page 6)

Ensemble Program Update and Next Meeting

by Annette Baron,
NYFC Ensembles Coordinator



The second ensemble get-together for the 2006–7 season was held on Sunday, December 10th in New Jersey. The five participants, representing a range of levels, benefited greatly from working together and learning from each other. For two hours, the group played through a variety of popular, classical, and novel choir pieces and talked about flute manufacturers, fingering issues, phrasing, tone, breathing, blending, and technique.



NYFC members Gwen Glaz, Hal Archer, Vanessa Levario, Diane Lynch, and Annette Baron participated in the December 10 ensembles get-together in NJ.

NEXT ENSEMBLES GET-TOGETHER

Sunday February 4, 2007
2:00–4:00 pm

The next ensembles get-together will be in Brooklyn (Park Slope), at the home of Julia Porter, 463 17th Street, Apt. #9. Please RSVP to Annette Baron.

Annette Baron
NYFC Ensembles Coordinator
New York Flute Club
Email: NYFCensembles@aol.com
Phone: 973-244-0992

FLUTE



HAPPENINGS

FEBRUARY '07

FEB
10

Saturday 8:00 pm

The OMNI Ensemble, with DAVID WECHSLER, flute, in same program as February 8.

- Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Avenue (corner of Lincoln Place), Brooklyn, NY.
- Admission: \$15 general, \$10 students/seniors. Info/reservations, call 718-859-8649 or visit www.omniensemble.org.

FEB
11

Sunday 2:00 pm

Duo Del Norte with **SHARON LEVIN**, flute, and Gene Pino, guitar, in the same program as January 18.

- Westport Public Library, Arnold Bernhard Plaza, 20 Jesup Road, Westport, CT. • Admission is free. • Info, call 203-291-4840 or visit www.westportlibrary.org.

FEB
11

Sunday 4:00 pm

The Kaiser Woodwind Quintet with **LAURA KAREL GEORGE**, flute,

will perform a world premiere of NJ composer Louis Gordon's "Movements," compositions by Leon Karel and Franz Danzi, Ronald Roseman's Renaissance Suite, and transcriptions of music by Gershwin, Respighi, and Cervantes.

- St. Cassian Roman Catholic Church, 187 Belleview Avenue, Upper Montclair, NJ. • Admission: \$15 suggested donation. • Info, call 973-744-2850.

FEB
11

Sunday 8:30 pm

Flutist **MICHAEL PARLOFF** and friends will perform music of Schulhoff (Sonata for flute and piano), Debussy (*Chansons de Bilitis*), Schubert ("Trockne Blumen" Variations, Op. 160), Bach (Sonata in G Minor, BWV 1001), and Jongen (Concert à cinq for flute, string trio, and harp, Op. 71).

- Weill Recital Hall, 154 West 57th Street, NYC. • Admission: \$35 general/\$15 students/seniors. • Info, call MidAmerica Productions at 212/239-4699 or email mwaymire@midamerica-music.com.

FEB
14

Wednesday 7:00-9:00 pm

"Swinging on a Star," a masterclass by Paula Robison featuring love songs and melodies, TBA.

- Diller-Quaile School of Music, 24 East 95th Street, NYC. • Admission (auditors): \$30 general, \$15 students. • Info, call Heather Holden at 212-369-1484 x26, or email hholden@diller-quaile.org.

New Date and Place for May Ensembles Concert and Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 20, 2007
Greenwich House Music School
46 Barrow Street, NYC

5:30 pm

Tim Liu (cont'd from page 4)

need sleep, good-bye.” They must have thought that because I was a restaurant owner’s son I was having a good life in the US, and had decided it was the time to dump them. But that was not the truth. I did not see hope at that moment and thought I was doing them a favor.

RQ: Did something happen after that to change your mind and make you want to stay in the US?

TL: I did not change my mind. I believed once I left Taiwan, my music career would be over, that as the oldest son I felt it was my turn to contribute and my duty to help the family. My heart told me that it was the right thing to do and I followed it. I am glad I made that decision. More than a few times I wondered if maybe I would be happier, become famous, or make more money if I had stayed in Taiwan, but because I followed my heart, I had peace in my mind and knew everything would be all right in the future.

RQ: Can you talk about your experiences during the nine years you performed with the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York?

TL: The Ensemble was founded by Mr. Tran-Nien Zhang with four other members. Mr. Zhang was friends with my erhu teacher back in Taiwan. When I joined the group in 1982, there were only one or two formally-trained musicians, but their musical style was very rich, and I hungrily absorbed from each player’s style like a starving baby. I discovered some beautiful music from these amateur players and got to perform many famous dizi solo pieces that were not allowed to be played in Taiwan at that time because it was considered to be “promoting communist culture.” Later, when more professional performers joined the ensemble, it enriched and expanded my music style even more. I remember when Baoli Zhang had just joined the ensemble playing erhu, his playing made me think, “That is the way it should be.”

RQ: What have been your experiences with the Western flute?

TL: I tried it once, but didn’t have any special feeling about it. I am sure learning more would open up my world and advance my dizi playing, but when you are in love with someone, you don’t even want to look at others. The thought of the benefits of playing flute only entered my mind for a few seconds. It’s OK, I can only handle one lover at a time, and I know my limitations.

RQ: How do you balance your performing career with your day job?

TL: I keep reminding myself that I want both, and that I can have it all. My day-time job in sales allows me to arrange my own hours and my time is spent between my two sons, my job, practice, performances and my web business (www.2Measures.com). I get up around 7:00 am and rarely hit the bed

before 1:00 am. I realize this is not a good thing for my health, but you only live once and I only have 24 hours per day, so what can I do?

RQ: How did your business come into existence?

TL: I got calls from a few professional woodwind players [see sidebar discussion with one of them, David Weiss], especially after the Broadway shows *Miss Saigon* and *The Lion King* opened. I was busy with my daytime job, practice, performances, and my newborn first son, so I just didn’t have the time to give private lessons. But the demand of people wanting to learn how to play dizi kept coming up, and finally, I stayed up to 5:00 am for more than a few nights to put my first instructional program together. Based on my teaching experiences, I’ve tried my best to make the program as clear as possible. I then offer my full support via email and any form of communication possible. To me, it’s a joy to receive recordings from participants, to share their progress, and to get asked for my opinion of their playing.

After the program was made, I called Carol Wincenc for [feedback].

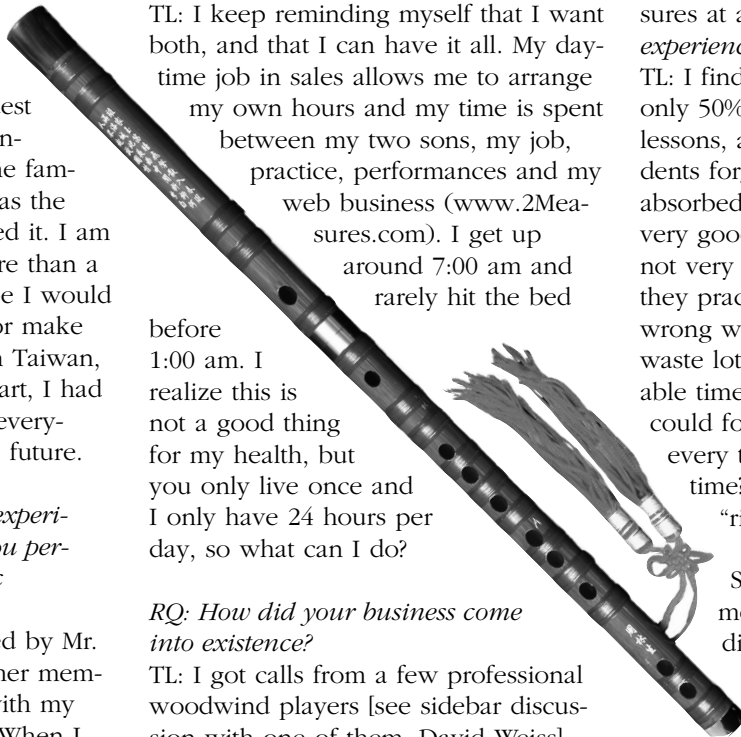
She told me she loved the program and was nice enough to give me her endorsement to help me promote it. Along with her endorsement, and those of Dave Weiss and Paula Chan Bing, I distributed my program through www.shakuhachi.com, the website of Monty Levenson, a wonderful shakuhachi maker out in California. I set up my own website after I produced my other two dizi programs.

RQ: How were your instructional packages How to Play the Dizi and 2 Measures at a Time™ influenced by your experiences as a teacher?

TL: I find that most students absorb only 50% of what I teach them during lessons, and after the lesson, most students forget 50% of what they absorbed. (Perhaps because I am not a very good teacher? Or maybe they are not very good students?) Then, when they practice at home, they practice the wrong way without knowing it and waste lots of their money and my valuable time. I told myself, what if they could follow and practice with me every two measures at a time, every time? Would they practice the “right way” and get better results within a much shorter time? Sure they will! I think this method is not only limited to dizi.

RQ: The 2 Measures at a Time™ method was inspired by an old Chinese proverb. . . .

TL: Yes, “A thousand-mile journey starts with one small step.” A destination a thousand miles away seemed impossible in old China, but with an experienced guide by your side, a thousand-mile journey can be achieved by taking one small step at a time. This applies to learning dizi as well. The *2 Measures at a Time™* method is based on the natural learning process of imitation and repetition. You can go at your own pace, repeat each individual lesson as many times as you wish, and get feedback from me by email. The program comes with a dizi, dizi accessories (membrane, membrane glue, and tassel), the CD, and my book, so participants can start to learn and enjoy this wonderful instrument the minute they open the package.



RQ: Let's talk about the construction of dizi and how it differs from the Western flute. Can you describe the mokong (the hole between the embouchure and the finger holes) and the dimo membrane that covers it? Why is the dimo selection and pasting ability so important to the sound of dizi?

TL: Compared to the modern Western flute, dizi have a very simple construction. On the upper side of the bamboo tube it has one embouchure hole, one membrane hole, six fingering holes, and two holes to balance/correct the pitch. On the underside of the bamboo, there are another two holes at the end to balance/correct the pitch and from which some people hang tassel decorations.

A special feature of dizi is the mokong. This membrane hole was invented by Liu Xi during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). The mokong is located between the embouchure hole and fingering holes, and is covered by a thin membrane called the dimo. When the dizi is played, the dimo vibrates and produces a very special crisp sound. The inventor called his new instrument Chi Sing Guang or the “seven stars tube” (six finger holes plus one membrane hole equals seven) and said the reason for his invention was to “help produce a better sound.”

The dimo is very sensitive to moisture and the temperature of the environment. Dizi players adjust it from time to time to get the best sound we can and when we cannot get the sound to our liking we have to change it. Dizi players are very picky about the quality of the dimo; how it should be pasted and how loose or tight it is adjusted. I once ran into a so-called “woodwind specialist” who proudly told me that he pasted Saran Wrap™ on the membrane hole, and was able to leave it on for years. What does that say about his talents if he cannot recognize the difference in sound between Saran Wrap™ and a real membrane?

RQ: What other modern flute techniques, like circular breathing, flutter-tonguing, multiphonics, and harmonics, are used on dizi?

TL: Dizi techniques can be categorized into three kinds: blowing, fingering, and tonguing. Long and even breathing is fundamental. Dizi players also use

circular breathing, and a variety of vibrato types and timbres. Fingering techniques include trills, glissandi, tremoli, portamenti, and half-holing, among others. The basic tonguing techniques are flutter-tonguing and different kinds of staccati such as single-, double-, and triple-tonguing. The use and combination of these techniques depends on the styles (folk, silk and bamboo, or operatic), schools (Southern or Northern) and regions (Shangshi province or Hebei province) of dizi repertoire. However, contemporary conservatory-trained performers are generally required to integrate all these techniques so that modern composers can freely apply these techniques according to their specific needs.

RQ: You have recorded several albums. Can you tell us about the challenges you faced in the recording studio with dizi?

TL: In the recording room usually the air is very dry. This slows down the dimo's vibration, making the dizi sound muffled. The same thing happens on the concert hall stage, especially on a brightly lit stage.

A humidifier in the recording room will usually take care of the dryness problem, but on the stage we rely on our experience to paste the dimo looser than usual, then count on the brightly lit stage's higher temperature and dryer air to bring the dimo down to the right tightness. Most of time it works, but when we paste it too loose, and the dimo does not come back to the right tightness in time, we are in serious trouble, because it is very hard to blow out high notes when the dimo is too loose. That happened to me once on stage and is a recurring nightmare—it is time for your entrance and no sound comes out of your instrument!

RQ: Can you tell us about your upcoming NYFC concert?

TL: Since this is the first time I am playing for the Club, I will just share some dizi music I like and mix traditional and modern pieces. I will start with a smaller Northern-style dizi called BanDi (literally opera flute), follow by a larger Southern-style dizi called QunDi. I will play these two pieces without any accompanying instruments to let the

audience compare the different playing styles. My friend LiQun will demonstrate YangQin (hammered dulcimer) for us, then my friend Baoli Zhang will demonstrate the erhu with LiQun's accompaniment, and we will play several pieces together. If time allows, we will answer some questions and let the audience members look at the instruments. By the way, there will be an after-concert dinner in Chinatown, and you are all welcome to join us. We'll share the costs for about \$15–20 per person.



LiQun Li at the Chinese hammered dulcimer.

RQ: Have you composed works for dizi? Will any of your compositions be featured in the concert?

TL: I have written a few songs and an ensemble piece, but none for dizi. There are still too many lovely dizi pieces out there that I haven't had time to play yet. Maybe after my two young sons move out of the house, I will have a chance to give it a try! □

Rebecca Quigley is a Westchester-based freelance flutist, teacher, and shakubachi player.

RQ and TL thank Mary Ann Lach (Mrs. Tim Liu) for her help in straightening out the nuances of TL's English.



DAVID WEISS PUTS DIZI TECHNOLOGY TO WORK ON BROADWAY

David Weiss, a New York City-based musician, performs on flutes and woodwinds from many different cultures. Active in the recording industry, he has been heard on television commercials, films, documentaries, and CDs.

REBECCA QUIGLEY: *When you met Tim Liu, did you already have a personal interest in the dizi and Chinese music, or did you need an instrument for a job?*

DAVID WEISS: I've always been interested in world music, beginning with East Indian and Japanese music. I first met Tim in 1991, through a friend. I found his instruments suitable for working with a western ensemble, after I retuned them a bit. I bought them to use in *Miss Saigon*, for which I had just been hired, but also because I concluded they could work for me in many different ways. Tim imports his dizi from both Shanghai and Beijing; my instruments are about 15 years old.

RQ: *Let's talk about the mechanics of your instruments. What pitch is your dizi tuned to?*

DW: Because dizi have no keys—and have just six fingerholes—it is necessary to use different instruments depending on which key you are in. Chinese musicians carry instrument cases with 12 flutes, because it is essential to have a flute in each key. This sounds expensive, but I could have purchased a new flute headjoint for what I've paid for all my flutes from Tim. The range of each instrument is about two octaves. The lowest one I have starts on F# above middle C; the highest is a fifth up from a piccolo.

RQ: *The bamboo on my shakuhachi requires constant attention to prevent cracking in drier climates like New York. Do you have to take extra steps to protect your dizi?*

DW: Like shakuhachi, dizi are made of bamboo, and have tone holes and interior bores evened out by hand. But the dizi is bound at several intervals by wire, and this really helps prolong the life of the bamboo. Repairs and patches

are possible in the bamboo with epoxy and “pinning.” I rub oil into the bamboo three to four times each winter, a technique also used by shakuhachi players. I've found playing around New York that the halls are dry, but not too dry, and the older the instruments, the more they seem to adjust to our climate.

RQ: *How did you get your start playing on Broadway?*

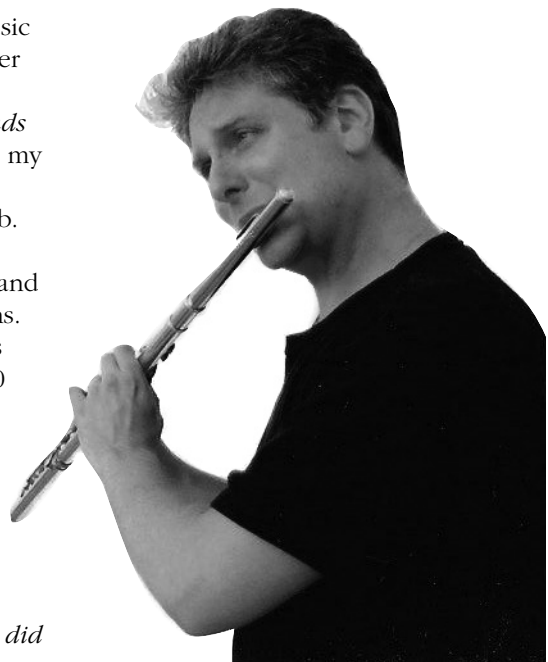
DW: In 1983 I got a call from a music contractor who needed a flute player for a Broadway production of the Shakespeare play *All's Well That Ends Well*. Andrew Lolya, who had been my teacher at the Manhattan School of Music, recommended me for the job. The show closed after about two months, but my name got around, and I started subbing for other musicians. I slowly started getting more shows of my own. I've worked on over 50 productions, between shows of my own and subbing. These days, I split my time between the theater and the recording studio.

RQ: *Tell us about how and when you use the dizi in *The Lion King*. Was it written in the score, or did you suggest the instrument for its timbre?*

DW: I was hired to play for *The Lion King* because they wanted someone who could play flute, piccolo, panpipes, and all sorts of “ethnic flutes” (I hate that term, but that's another story). The idea was to jointly create the part, as I brought an extensive knowledge of these unusual instruments and the distinctive colors they have. The composers were willing to go anywhere in the world musically to get “the sound” that worked. I play 13 instruments in the show. Three of them are dizi I purchased from Tim. One is a high F soprano dizi and another is pitched in B major. One utilizes dimo paper, the membrane that gives the dizi such a distinctive sound. The other sounds like a standard wood flute. The dizi were not originally part of *The Lion King* score. I brought them into the mix. The

beauty of Tim's instruments is their malleability—if you play them without “Chinese” ornamentation, they can work in almost any ensemble, and not sound Chinese.

RQ: *What scene(s) does it appear in? Can you also briefly talk about the other flutes you use in the show?*



DW: The song “Can You Feel The Love Tonight” features the two B instruments, especially the one with the dimo paper. It has a very sensuous sound and fits the instrumental ballet in the middle of the scene. The other flutes really “color” the characters of the show. The panpipes are associated with Simba, the young Lion King; his father Mufasa, the older Lion King, is colored with low wood flutes. One of the dizi in B is also featured right after Mufasa dies. The evil uncle Scar gets stuck with the nasty sounding bass pan pipes. I've used dizi for all sorts of things, literally every aspect of the business. It's up to the player to take the instrument somewhere new.

*For more about **David Weiss**, visit www.davidweissflute.net.*



RELAXATION FOR FLUTISTS: A FEW TECHNIQUES

by Patricia Spencer

Building a relaxation habit into one's flute technique is one of the cornerstones of learning the instrument—others including, of course, a deep artistic involvement with the world of music, a tireless search for your own creative voice, a constant curiosity and excitement about understanding/shaping/hearing more in the repertoire (and not just flute repertoire!).

The importance of the relaxation cornerstone is sometimes underestimated. We all want to play ever faster and louder, tongue at the speed of light—we imagine technique-building as the development and strengthening of certain muscles and muscular memory patterns. But for maximum efficiency and effectiveness (and thus maximum fun!), the habit of loosening and releasing needs to be an integral part of all technical workouts.

Below are a few relaxation methods I have found helpful in my own playing and teaching.

“No-fault” Practicing

An important first thought: if you are experiencing tension, don't imagine that you are somehow at fault. In many cases, almost the opposite is true: the fact that you feel the musical excitement, that you care about the sound that comes out of the flute, leads you to put out special effort which can take the form of physical clenching. Most of us (probably 99% of the people I have worked with or taught) need to develop methods to counteract this. The tension slows the learning process and makes performances into daunting, high-pressure events instead of enjoyable challenges, opportunities to communicate your artistic vision.

A “no-fault” approach to practicing can be step one. When you play a wrong note (or wrong rhythm, or out of tune note, or wrong dynamic, etc.), rather than saying “Oh, how stupid I am, that's wrong, it should be an F#” (for example), try simply saying

“Oops—next time I'll be sure to play an F# at that spot” (or the correct rhythm, or a louder crescendo, or whatever is needed). This simple change keeps your level of observation high, and omits the tension-producing part about “how stupid” the error was. Everyone makes errors. The trick is to deal with them intelligently and with a “loosening” approach to fixing them.

Singing

Singing a phrase or a tricky spot can be a helpful way of learning it—away from the flute. This eliminates the fingering and tone production part and lets you relax and focus just on the musical shape and rhythm. It is also helpful to say just the rhythm (not worrying about the pitches) and vice versa—sing just the pitches and no rhythm. And here's a surprise: it actually doesn't matter if your voice won't “go” to the pitches you're learning—the process of trying to get it to go there will still help your flute playing!

Every breath is a special opportunity for relaxation

We all know that, in order to develop smooth and quick finger technique, we need to practice slowly. But how often we forget to apply the same wisdom to the development of breathing technique! This is partly because of our wonderful Andersen etudes, which for the most part leave little or no time for breaths, even between phrases. Our repertoire is also chock-full of fabulous pieces (the Bach Sonatas!) that require quick and hopefully quiet breaths.* Therefore in order to build a habit of relaxation with every breath, we must start by simply taking the extra time that is needed for a relaxed breath. Try this for a week: for at least half of your practice time on an Andersen study, put a quarter rest, with a fermata over it, at the end of every

* This short article will not describe the mechanics of breathing technique (that would be a different article!).

phrase. (Then take it away and breathe quickly for the other half of the time.) Do the same for your scales—put a nice fermata over every breathing spot. Two years ago I was privileged to play on the same concert (at an NFA convention), with the superb flutist Paul Edmund-Davies, first flutist with the London Philharmonia Orchestra. In addition to hearing his wonderful performance and rehearsals of the John Harbison concerto, I heard part of his pre-concert warm-up: he was playing Taffanel & Gaubert No. 4, and he was taking several beats for every breath!

Here's something else to try: play your scales until you are almost but not quite out of breath, then, instead of breathing immediately, exhale a little more and at the same time relax your jaw, throat, shoulders, and breathing muscles. This could result in your next breath simply coming in as a reflex, which would be terrific. But even if the little extra “puff and release” does not happen to trigger a reflexive breath, it is still a good relaxation habit and will improve your sound. (Needless to say, as with developing speed of fingers, after slow practice one must also go fast—but with a looser feeling!)

“Paint the ceiling”**

Intersperse your flute practice with various relaxing physical stretches. One of my favorites is “paint the ceiling,” a series of arm circles. Put the flute somewhere safe. Let your right arm fall limply at your side and then spread your fingers into a big wide open hand. Rotate your hand clockwise, pointing your thumb away from you and back, perhaps even toward the wall behind you. Imagine your wide-spread hand is a paint brush, and, with

**This exercise came from a wonderful class I attended in “Semiokinesis,” taught by Marc Bassis. For more information, see: <http://www.semiokinesis.org/mski/Accueil.html>.

(Cont'd on page 10)



Photos: Ardith Bondi

The author demonstrates the “paint the ceiling” exercise: (1) Let your right arm fall limply at your side and then spread your fingers. (2) Rotate your hand clockwise, pointing your thumb away from you. Letting your gaze follow your hand, start a big arm circle from way behind you to way above, first “painting” the wall behind you (3) and then the ceiling (4). After holding the stretch for several seconds at the highest point of the arc, relax your hand and let your arm “flop” down in the forward curve of your circle (5).

a big arm circle from way behind you to way above, you are painting first the wall behind you and then the ceiling with the center of your palm. Let your gaze follow your hand, and pause at the highest point of the arc, with your fingers still spread wide and your palm facing straight up. This will feel a little uncomfortable, as you are stretching your hand, wrist, forearm, and shoulder muscles. After a few seconds of holding the stretch, relax your hand and let your arm “flop” down in the forward curve of your circle. Repeat with your left arm; do both sides, alternately, five to ten times. Try inhaling on the upward part of the arc, and exhaling on the downward “flop,” and ask yourself if that gives you even more relaxation.

Thought-practicing

This simple technique not only promotes relaxation but also speeds up the learning process. After you have played a “tough spot” several times, instead of actually playing it, imagine it as clearly as possible in your head: sing it silently to yourself, imagining each fingering change, no matter how slowly. Don’t move your fingers—just imagine the movements. And don’t be shocked if it takes several seconds to imagine a finger change that you can already manage easily on the flute. This process brings the essence of the fingering (or the big slur, or the pitch/dynamic control, or whatever you’re working on) into a different level of consciousness and helps you shed some of the extra, tension-related

motions that you might be adding when you actually play.

In an insightful article,^{***} Betty Bang Mather reported on an experiment in “thought-practicing” by basketball players. Team A practiced as usual, shooting baskets and making passes, team B sat on the benches and imagined what it felt like to shoot baskets and make passes, and team C did a combination. The team that improved the most was team C. And the team that made the second most improvement was team B—after only sitting on the benches and “thought-practicing.”

^{***} Betty Bang Mather, “Playing the Flute with Your Whole Brain,” *The Flutist Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 4, Fall 1990.

Tonguing workouts

In the same way that swimming or running can contribute to relaxation and smooth muscle coordination, a moderately strenuous tonguing workout can help relax your tongue and throat. Depending on your level, this workout could be some tongued scales, an Andersen tonguing etude, Saint-Saëns "Volière" (or perhaps Marco Granados's fun "Hibiee-Jibiees" joropo etude!). Intersperse your workout with resting moments (maybe with some relaxed breathing exercises) and keep focusing on loosening and "floating" all the jaw, neck, and occipital musculature. Make sure to incorporate nice long relaxed breaths into your workout, especially at the beginning. (As you get into it, you may find that your breaths naturally get quicker while still keeping relaxed.) Also make sure not to overdo it. Experiment with different time periods (10–15 minutes, up to 45) and figure out what works for you. A helpful secret—it doesn't have to be daily! For developing both speed and relaxation, a tonguing workout four or five times a week is sometimes even better than daily.

Play slower

This is so obvious you'll think I'm insulting you—nevertheless, each year at auditions I am amazed at how many young players play too fast for themselves, sacrificing relaxation, tone color, phrasing, and notes in the process. At least half of your practice time on difficult passages should be slow (and singing), building relaxation into the phrase at each of several different slow tempos. Furthermore, the fast practice can be in short spurts, interspersed with rests, for the same reason.

"Bell for awareness"

A certain ebb and flow of tension and release are part of the learning process. By going a little bit beyond your limit, in speed, softness, tonguing, or whatever, you'll experience more relaxation in the next day's session. A student once told me she had attended a meditation retreat where a "bell for awareness" was rung at random intervals. When they heard the bell, they would each take a moment to check in on their breathing, balance, and spiritual connection with their activity. After they had completed the retreat, their teacher suggested they

use a bell we all hear everyday as a continuing "bell for awareness"—namely the telephone. Personally, I have to admit I have not been able to learn to loosen and relax and do a little breathing exercise whenever I hear the phone. (Probably I need to attend this retreat!) Nevertheless, you may be able to find a signal, for yourself, that helps you develop a habit of regular "checking in" on your breathing, balance, relaxation, and spiritual connection.

Conclusion

This brief outline of methods is far from exhaustive. Your teacher will have many good methods, some tailored for your particular habits. Watch for a planned list of recommended further reading. □

A champion of new music, flutist Patricia Spencer (www.patriciaspencerflute.com) is well known for her performances, solo and chamber recordings, and commissioning of present-day composers. She is a member of the Da Capo Chamber Players and on the faculty of Bard College and Hofstra University.

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UPDATE ON NEW YORK FLUTE FAIR 2007: STAR TRACK, SETTING YOUR COURSE

Katherine Fink, Flute Fair Chair

Date: Saturday, March 10, 2007

Venue: Union Theological Seminary

International soloist and teacher **Carol Wincenc** inspires a day of career planning with stellar performances, masterclasses and lectures, including a world premiere by illustrious composer Paul Schoenfield. Teachers, future stars and star gazers will enjoy this view from the top. Please check www.nyfluteclub.org for detailed information and updates.

MASTERCLASS with CAROL WINCENC

Those interested in participating in the masterclass should send a one-page resume and good quality recording (tape or CD) with two contrasting movements or works which you intend to perform at the class (standard flute or piccolo repertoire, no avant-garde). Advanced high school level and beyond are preferred. Please send materials by February 1, 2007 to:

Jeanne Wilson
2600 Netherland Avenue, Apt. 425
Riverdale, NY 10463
JAWflute@aol.com

ATTENTION ALL ENSEMBLE TEACHERS!

Please contact Stefani Starin at Starin@newband.org by February 1, 2007 if you are interested in having your student ensemble perform at NY Flute Fair 2007 on Saturday March 10 at 2:00 pm. Any ensemble of three or more students (ages up to 18) is eligible. Maximum 10 minutes for each group.

NEW YORK FLUTE CLUB ANNUAL COMPETITION

The preliminary auditions will be held at the Kaplan Space at Carnegie Hall on March 9, 2007 with final auditions at the Flute Fair on March 10. Winners will perform at the Yamaha Piano Salon on April 29. Eligible age is 18–27, applications must be postmarked by February 10. See www.nyfluteclub.org for details and application.



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



January 21, 2007 concert

Sunday, 5:30 pm • Yamaha Piano Salon, 689 Fifth Avenue (at 54th Street)

Tim Liu, dizi (Chinese bamboo flutes)

87th Season

2006–2007 Concerts

October 29, 2006 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 FENWICK SMITH, flute, and SALLY PINKAS,
 piano

November 19, 2006 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 LEW TABACKIN, jazz artist

December 17, 2006 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 LAUREL ZUCKER, flute, and
 MARK DELPRIORIA, guitar
Holiday reception

January 21, 2007 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 TIM LIU, Chinese bamboo flutes

February 25, 2007 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 THE HANOVERIAN ENSEMBLE
 JOHN SOLUM and RICHARD WYTON,
 baroque flutes

March 10, 2007 • Saturday, all day
 FLUTE FAIR 2007—CAROL WINCENC,
 Union Theological Seminary

April 29, 2007 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 2007 NYFC COMPETITION WINNERS

May 20, 2007 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
 ANNUAL MEETING & ENSEMBLE CONCERT
 Greenwich House Music School

All concerts and events (except as noted) at Yamaha Piano Salon, 689 Fifth Avenue (entrance between Fifth and Madison on 54th Street). All dates and programs subject to change. Tickets \$10, only at the door; free to members. For more information, visit the NYFC website at www.nyfluteclub.org or call 732-257-9082.



From the Editor

Happy New Year! The first Club event for 2007 will be a concert by the dizi master Tim Liu, followed by a dizi Q&A session and a post-concert dinner in Chinatown. Rebecca Quigley's interview left me impressed with Tim's good humor, his childhood dedication to music (how many junior high students do you know who would skip high school entrance exam coaching sessions to practice the flute in the park?), and expertise in dizi pedagogy. Rebecca also had some questions for a Broadway practitioner of the dizi, David Weiss (see sidebar on p. 4).

This month we have two self-help articles on the closely related topics of ergonomic fluting (Dave Wechsler's "From the President," p. 2) and mindful relaxation (Pat Spencer on p. 9). We also have some updates from Kathy Fink on Flute Fair 2007 (note that several planned events have early February deadlines for participants) and from Annette Baron on the ensembles program.

Sue Carlson, the NYFC Newsletter's new layout/production editor, is this month's Member Profile subject. First a freelance flutist and now a graphic production manager for a book company, she is probably the only one of our subjects who can claim a family opera company to volunteer with. Makes me wish I had a family opera company, but it is probably not an endeavor for the faint-hearted!

Anyway, all for now. See you soon.

Best regards,

Katherine Saenger (klsaenger@yahoo.com)