



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

November 2009



In Concert

Bonita Boyd, flute

Barry Snyder, piano; Gregory Zuber, percussion

Sunday, **November 22, 2009**, 5:30 pm

Yamaha Piano Salon, 689 Fifth Avenue

(entrance on 54th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues)

Come into My Garden, Op. 49 (1948) <i>flute and piano</i>	John La Montaine (b. 1920)
Sonata in A Minor, Wq. 132 <i>solo flute</i>	C.P.E. Bach (1714-1788)
Halil <i>flute, piano, and percussion</i>	Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
Suite en Concert <i>flute and percussion</i>	André Jolivet (1905-1974)
Suite Paysanne Hongroise <i>flute and piano</i>	Béla Bartók (1881-1945) arr. Paul Arma

Program subject to change

The Exuberant Bonita Boyd

Interview by Mindy Kaufman

I got to know Bonnie during the summer of 1976, when I was a student at the Chautauqua Institute Music Festival. She was about to join the faculty of the Eastman School of Music and I was about to return there for my junior year. Later that fall, at age 19, I won my first audition and became a member of the Rochester Philharmonic. This gave me the unique opportunity to play alongside Bonnie, who had been appointed principal flute with the orchestra five years earlier, at the age of 21, and who herself had studied at Eastman, with Joseph Mariano. This interview was conducted by telephone in September 2008 (in anticipation of her originally scheduled December 2008 concert), and I enjoyed speaking with her and reminiscing about our time together. She was an extremely supportive teacher, and gave me the confidence and skills to audition and win my job with the New York Philharmonic three years later.

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Frances Blaisdell

1912-2009



by Nancy Toff

The Club mourns the death of Frances Blaisdell, our loyal member for eighty years, on March 11 in Portola Valley, California. As a teenager, Frances studied with Ernest Wagner of the New York Philharmonic and in 1928 began her studies with Georges Barrère, first at the Institute of Musical Art and then at the Juilliard Graduate School. Considered his protégée, she made frequent duo appearances with him, and after he had a stroke in 1941 he chose her to take his place in the Barrère Trio. She later studied with Marcel Moyse and William Kincaid.

Although she was principal flutist of the National Orchestral Association, a training orchestra conducted by Leon Barzin, she found that an orchestral

(Cont'd on page 8)



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2009–2010

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Newsletter

Katherine Saenger, Editor
 115 Underhill Road
 Ossining, NY 10562
 914-762-8582
 klsaenger@yahoo.com

Naomi Ichikawa, Designer
 230 East 71st Street, Apt. 4D
 New York, NY 10021
 646-417-3789
 nichikawa@gmail.com

www.nyfluteclub.org

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Leonard Bernstein: Music, Politics and Inspiration

by Nancy Toff



The year 2008 marked what would have been Leonard Bernstein's 90th birthday and the 50th anniversary of his appointment as music director of the New York Philharmonic, an occasion that was commemorated by a two-month festival organized by Carnegie Hall and the Philharmonic. This month the New York Flute Club has its own more modest celebration to offer, as Bonnie Boyd plays his only piece for solo flute, *Halil*—remarkably, for the first time at an NYFC concert—in its flute, piano, and percussion version. It is also an opportunity to consider Bernstein's outsize role on the American musical scene and as a social activist, a role that seems eerily fitting as we once again find the world at war.*

Bernstein's contribution is something that I can appreciate firsthand. I was one of the fortunate generation that grew up on his Young People's Concerts—both live, at Philharmonic Hall, and on television. They introduced me to Gershwin, Ives, and other aspects of American music that continue to fascinate me and inform my research. And they convinced me early on of the importance of universal and engaging music education.

I continued to attend Philharmonic concerts from time to time, but my next sustained encounter with Bernstein came in the early 1970s, when my high school chorus performed Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*, and the recording recommended by our conductor was Bernstein's.** Some may forget how persuasive a Haydn interpreter Bernstein was; the fact that we were then in the midst of the Vietnam War made his performance that much more powerful. Soon after that I was fortunate enough to attend several of his Norton lectures at Harvard, and in 1990 was invited to attend the New Year's Eve Concert for Peace at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a memorial to Bernstein, who had founded those concerts seven years earlier. Held in one of New York's most inspiring spaces, it was the quintessential Bernstein event, with a dramatic academic procession and intense, reverent performances of *Chichester Psalms* and *Halil* (with Paula Robison as soloist).

Halil was written in 1981 and dedicated to the memory of a 19-year-old Israeli flutist who was killed while fighting in the Israeli army during the Yom Kippur War. As Bernstein noted, the work is “like much of my music in its struggle between tonal and non-tonal forces. In this case, I sense that struggle as involving wars and the threat of wars, the overwhelming desire to live, and the consolation of art, love and the hope for peace.”

It received its premiere in May 27, 1981, with Jean-Pierre Rampal as soloist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra; its American premiere in July 1981, with Doriot Anthony Dwyer and the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood; and its New York premiere on March 24, 1982, with Julius Baker and the New York Philharmonic. The composer conducted all three performances. The piano-percussion reduction was published in 1987 and first recorded in 1993, by Bonita Boyd and Barry Snyder, who will perform it for us; the disc was finally released in 2003 as part of the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music (Naxos 8.559407).

Halil takes its place in the sequence of Bernstein works on Jewish themes—from the *Jeremiah* Symphony of 1942, written in response to early reports of the atrocities of World War II; to the more serene and contemplative *Chichester Psalms*, a setting of six Hebrew Psalms, with the comforting Psalm 23 punctuated by interjections from Psalm 2, “Why do the nations so furiously rage together?”; to the Third Symphony, *Kaddish*. But Bernstein was non-sectarian in his commitment to a broad range of liberal political causes—civil rights, nuclear disarmament, and most of all, peace. However passionate he was about politics, though, he was above all a musician, and as flutists we are grateful for his one, late piece of music for our instrument.

* See Paul Boyer's essay, “Leonard Bernstein: Humanitarian and Social Activist” in *Leonard Bernstein: American Original* by Burton Bernstein and Barbara B. Haws (HarperCollins, 2008).

** This recording has recently been re-released on CD, along with several other symphonies and masses and *The Creation*: Sony 884977033830.

Member Profile

Elyse Knobloch



NYFC member
since 2006

Employment: Freelance flutist and teacher (giving private lessons in her home studio and being a “teaching artist” in a few Bronx public schools), supplemented by office work to make ends meet.

A recent recital/performance: A lobby concert with Northern Westchester Flutes at this summer’s NFA convention in NYC playing Mussorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain* (arr. by Ben-Meir) and Arcady Dubensky’s Suite for Nine Flutes. Elyse says, “The convention was fabulous and it was an honor for us to be chosen to perform.”

Career highlight(s): Elyse is optimistic that her best career highlights are ahead of her, but past ones include freelance orchestral work in Boston and New York (with the Boston Light Opera, Taconic Opera, Chappaqua Orchestra, and Cornell Philharmonic) and chamber music performances with a variety of mixed ensembles including two woodwind quintets (the West Point-based Storm King Woodwind Quintet, and the Hudson Chamber Music Ensemble during their residency at Mercy College).

Current flute(s): Thin-wall silver Brannen-Cooper A-442 c. 1982 with traditional modern Cooper silver headjoint; William S. Haynes alto flute and piccolo.

Influential flute teachers: Paige Brook (in high school), Paul Fried (in college), and Thomas Nyfenger (post-college).

High school: Clarkstown Senior High School North in Congers, NY.

Degrees: BM in applied flute (Boston

Conservatory of Music, 1976); Diploma in computer programming (College of Westchester, 1999) and Certificate in C/C++ programming and UNIX administration (Pace University, 1999); MA in music education (Lehman College of CUNY, 2008).

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishment(s): Seeing the results from the great effort she has put in over the past few years to “make things happen,” particularly with the Bas Duo (www.basduo.com) she founded in 2007 with classical guitarist Peter Press. “Our group thrives on creativity, challenges, hard work, and mutual respect—perfect ingredients for personal growth. We have performed concerts including a Performer’s Showcase at Caramoor, and provided lecture recitals to public schools. We have begun our first recording project, and are looking forward to our upcoming concerts.”

Favorite practice routines: For daily warm-ups she likes Moyse chromatic tone exercises, as well as 10-15 minutes of tone exercises she invents on the spot. She also likes playing through etudes by Altès, Andersen, or Jeanjean, sometimes as many as six at a time, to work at different skills. Elyse says, “At least twice a year, I take 26 days to go through Moyse’s *Daily Exercises*, doing each single-tongued, double-tongued, and slurred. This can take hours each day and a commitment must be made to work consistently and completely. Another great skill builder which requires a similar commitment is Robert Stallman’s *Flute Workout Book*.”

Other interests: Her family (husband Davis, a cellist and music teacher in Westchester County, and their two sons) and favorite activities: taking walks, cooking soups and baking bread, and talking with friends.

Advice for NYFC members: Reach out and make the flute a part of your life in a way that works for you. If you want to perform, do the work and make the connections necessary. If you want it just for yourself, that is fine, too.

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

NOVEMBER '09

Nov 6 Friday 8:00 pm

The OMNI Ensemble with **DAVID WECHSLER**, flute, will perform trios for flute, cello, and piano by Beethoven (a transcription of the Op. 28 piano sonata) and Rorem, flute sonatas by J.S. Bach (E major) and Wilder, and two Elliott Carter pieces for solo cello.

- Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Avenue (at Lincoln Place), Park Slope, Brooklyn. • Admission: \$15 general, \$10 students/seniors. • Info and ticket reservations, call 718-859-8649.

Nov 8 Sunday 7:00 pm

The Ensemble du Monde orchestra will present “Wonders of the Red Priest,” an all-Vivaldi program of concertos and vocal music featuring Antonio Amenduni, flute; mezzo-soprano Lara Nie; and Koh Gabriel Kameda, violin.

- Merkin Concert Hall, Kaufman Center, 129 West 67th Street, NYC. • Admission: \$50 general, \$30 students/seniors. • Info, visit www.kaufman-center.com or email Marlon Daniel at director@artistworld.org.

Nov 9 Monday 7:30 pm

ROBERT LANGEVIN, principal flutist of the New York Philharmonic, will present a masterclass and recital with collaborative pianist Gary Hammond.

- Ingalls Recital Hall at New Jersey City University, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, NJ. • Admission is free. • Info, visit www.NJCU.edu.

Nov 15 Sunday 3:00 pm

PAMELA SKLAR, flute, Linda Finegan Lott, violin, and Jay Shulman, cello, will play music by Beethoven, Pleyel, Gossec, and Pamela Sklar (the premiere of *Remember*).

- North Castle Public Library, 19 Whippoorwill Road East, Armonk, NY. • Admission is free. • Admission: freewill donation.

Nov 15 Sunday 3:00 pm

HAROLD JONES, flute, with the Antara Ensemble, performing music of Vivaldi, Janáček, Mozart (concerto for flute and harp), and the premiere of “Fantasie on a Hymn” for flute and string orchestra by Richard Spencer.

- St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, 2065 Fifth Avenue (at 127th Street), NYC. • Admission: \$25 general, \$20 seniors. • Info and ticket reservations, call 212-866-2545.

Nov 18 Wednesday 12:10 to 12:45 pm

PAMELA SKLAR, flute, and William Anderson, guitar, will perform music by Handel, von Paradies, Anderson, and Sklar at a Downtown Music at Grace Noon Getaway concert.

- Grace Church, 33 Church Street, White Plains, NY. • Admission: \$10 suggested donation. • Info, visit www.dtmusic.org.

Bonita Boyd (Cont'd from page 1)

MINDY KAUFMAN: When I played second flute to you in the Rochester Philharmonic, I learned a lot from the spontaneity in your playing. You always tried to be creative, playing differently each night, as opposed to playing the same way every time.

BONITA BOYD: That's cool to hear. I write things down only if I feel like it's a great idea that I don't want to forget. I like to get to know the music so well that I'm free to create as I go along. One has the most freedom when the score is part of your soul. Memorization is an asset if you're secure enough with it but even if you have the music up, you can approach that level if you know it really well.

MK: Would you talk about your philosophy on making music, and how you convey it to your students?

BB: I feel that everyone is unique, and in my teaching, I love to encourage people to be themselves and say what they have to say. For that reason I'm not a teacher

I feel there is a “golden box” in each person, and that it is my job to unlock it.

who says, go listen to a tape of this or several recordings of this and go about learning it. I never suggest that, and, in fact, I never do it myself. For instance, when I was preparing the Paganini Caprices, I never listened to the violin recording. I didn't want it to sound like a flute transcription of a violin recording, I wanted it to sound like a flute piece. I think that's important if we're going to play transcriptions.

For that same reason, I like to hear my students play first so I can help them work with *their* idea, rather than go from my idea. I feel music is an art and not something that should be uniform. We need individual voices. Sometimes when words don't serve I do play, and it's important to play for inspiration—but it's the last thing I do, rather than the first. Roger Stevens, my high school teacher and principal flutist of the LA

Philharmonic, had that philosophy. He wanted you to sound like yourself, and not a copy of him. I have discovered that when musicians really “bare their souls” in their music making, it truly touches other people's souls. It is like taking off a mask. It takes courage and boldness because we always risk a type of rejection, but it is the only thing that truly communicates on a deep and intimate level of human experience. That is why it is so important to learn to be ourselves onstage.



MK: Who are your favorite musicians, not necessarily flutists?

BB: That's easy. Some singers—Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Jessye Norman, and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, and some cellists, Steve Doane and Yo-Yo Ma—are wonderful. All of them exemplify the kind of freedom I was talking about in their approach to playing. Also, David Zinman [the conductor] and Jan DeGaetani, both great artists. And Mariano was one of my favorites in the universe.

MK: I wish I had heard him live.

BB: I know. It was really different from the National Flute Association's [Historic Recordings Series] CD, but you can get an idea if you put on the CD and go in the next room. You'll get an impression of how he'd be in a hall. It's just hard with the old recordings. They couldn't get rid of the production noise that goes along with a great sound. When you were more distant from him in a hall it was just phenomenal with the color range and emotional range, still more, I think, than [from] anyone I've still ever

heard. He was truly remarkable. He allowed me to get a tape of his last recital [and you can hear it all there. His mother was a singer, and he was raised with opera.

That brings me to my second philosophy, which is that I think the flute is the closest to voice of any of the instruments, and the closer we get to what the great singers do, the better. I believe in singing things and then playing them again because if you get the flute out of your hands, then the flute is not dictating to you what you are going to sound like and you can really get to the heart of what you wanted to do yourself and then go back to the flute. Students always play better after that. Even if they don't sing it very well, you can hear what they really want to do.

MK: Often they don't sing it with the quirks that they play it with.

BB: Oh, hardly ever; they sing it so much better.

MK: Mariano was always talking about abstract concepts...

BB: A couple of times I thought I had discovered something new and then realized that it was something Mariano had been saying in another way. I'll get technical now. Especially in the middle register, if the upper lip is tight and pulled over or covered, there's no brilliance in the sound. Have you ever experienced that if you lift the upper lip a little bit, you create more of a tunnel through the lips? There's more of a channel and all of a sudden you hit this brilliance in the sound. In the *Afternoon of a Faun*, it makes the C# alive rather than dead. I tell people to hug the channel, and it's a miracle, it never fails. Then I realized Mariano used to say that the sound is a sphere, so I finally put two and two together, and it was a huge revelation. It's kind of like Oscar from *Sesame Street* when he comes out of the garbage can and lifts the lid a little bit. You'd see his eyes, and it's something like that, a lid in the center of the lip. Mariano didn't get technical, and maybe that was a problem for some people. He would just give you images. Then there's something else in the mouth with the soft palate. Singers talk about lifting the soft palate. I thought I had discovered something new, and told my professional

singer sister about it and she said, “Oh yes, that’s lifting the soft palate!”

MK: Technique always seemed very easy for you.

BB: I don’t know whether it comes easily to me, but I do practice for hours and hours. I played the piano at an extremely high level early on and made a decision between the instruments extremely late, right before college. I played the Liszt E flat and the Mendelssohn G minor piano concertos in high school, so I was very advanced. I still miss the repertoire horribly but I really feel the piano technique helped my flute technique, and, of course, it helped me radically as a musician.

Flutists tend to be lazier than pianists.

MK: What about for students who don’t play piano?

BB: First of all, relaxation is key. If your fingers are tight, which I’ll call brain tension, that’s not good. I envision the flute as a keyboard, instead of a pipe that you grip. If you play flute as though it were a keyboard and leave your fingers relaxed, you can practice slowly but not tightly. Many people practice slowly, but too tightly—it’s crucial to be relaxed. Staying near the keys is a big factor. I always encourage people to play scales and chords. I feel that there are two kinds of technical studies. One I would call “abstract,” which would be scales and chords and all kinds of patterns out of context, and that’s very necessary. It’s like learning the alphabet of a foreign language. Then there’s “in context,” and that’s why etudes [are needed]. Sometimes you can play something out of context and you’ll be just fine, but then you get to it in the piece and you can’t play it there. That has to do with the context of hearing it. So then you have to practice the whole context slowly, almost like programming it in to your brain, because your brain is what is giving the signal to your fingers. There is just no substitute for that kind of

practicing. Flutists tend to be lazier than pianists. How many flutists do you hear going from C to D until the fingers are beautifully coordinated so that there’s no flaw?

MK: It takes such patience to do that.

BB: We have to realize that if we want incredible flawless technique that sounds effortless, there’s no other way to get it.

MK: I guess you have to like doing that kind of work; I happen to like it. It’s very detailed.

BB: Even if it’s tedious, if you want the end result, you just can’t skip the rest. You can get away with it, but it won’t be great.

MK: You’ve done a wonderful job balancing career and family. How old are your boys now?

BB: Henrik’s 23, Didrik’s 18, and Ulrik’s 15, and we just got this wonderful 15-year-old exchange student. Henrik just finished at the Rhode Island School of Design last year. We’re very excited that his stage design was chosen for the *Silk Road* project with Yo-Yo Ma, and it opened at Lincoln Center in November. Didrik just finished high school; he’s an actor and is just starting at Tisch (NYU). Ulrik is still in high school, and he’s a math/science guy. As far as balancing, it’s been wonderful to have them, and I did what I wanted to do. [Parenting is an] exciting and creative process, and when you start out there are no courses. If I ever get around to it, I’d love to write some memoirs, because I had some of the most hilarious stories.

MK: Any favorites?

BB: There was one concert with an orchestra in New England that my manager had booked for what I thought was the following year. My manager didn’t know I was pregnant and had already signed a contract. The week of the concert, Didrik was already one week late. I rehearsed on a Tuesday and then came back on Sunday for the dress rehearsal and concert. So on Tuesday I was very pregnant, but nobody said anything. I was playing C.P.E. Bach and Griffes. Didrik was born on Friday morning. Sunday morning I’m wondering how it will sound—I hadn’t played the flute for two days—but I played the rehearsal and it seemed

(Cont’d on page 6)

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

NOVEMBER '09

Nov
21

Saturday 8:00 pm

Palisades Virtuosi, with **MARGARET SWINCHOSKI**, flute, will perform “The Czech Connection,” a program featuring the world premiere of a newly commissioned composition by Paul Moravec and works by the Czech or Czech-American composers Martinu, Dvorak, Svoboda, and Husa.

• Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, 113 Cottage Place, Ridgewood, NJ. • Admission: \$20 general, \$15 students/seniors. • Info, www.palisadesvirtuosi.org.

Nov
22

Sunday 7:00 pm

SHARON LEVIN will conduct the Stamford Young Artist Philharmonic Flute Choirs and the Young People’s and Young Artists Flute Choirs in a shared program with the Young People’s and Young Artists Jazz Ensemble.

• Stamford High School, 55 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, CT. • Admission is free. • Info, call 203-557-3973 or visit www.syap.org.

DECEMBER '09

Dec
3

Thursday 11:00 am

PAUL LUSTIG DUNKEL, principal flutist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, will present a recital with Peter Basquin, collaborative piano.

• Ingalls Recital Hall at New Jersey City University, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, NJ. • Admission is free. • Info, visit www.NJCU.edu/mdt.

Dec
3

Thursday 1:00 pm

Trinity Wall Street presents **ZARA LAWLER**, flute, with Paul J. Fadoul, marimba, and Margaret Kampmeier, piano. The program will include Lawler’s *Flute Story Set* (classic flute solos performed in a storytelling style) and works by Chaminade, Piazzolla, Part, Ravel, and Brooklyn’s own Randall Woolf.

• Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall Street, NYC. • Admission is free. • Info, including live and on-demand webcast, www.trinitywallstreet.org.

Dec
7

Monday 7:30 pm

PAUL LUSTIG DUNKEL, flute, with Peter Basquin, piano, Joseph Passaro, percussion, and Matt Van Brink, accordion, will perform the world premiere of Gatonska’s *Sugar Maple Cosmica*, transcriptions of cello sonatas by Debussy and Shostakovich, Piazzolla’s *Études Tanguistiques*, and J.S. Bach’s Sonata in C Major.

• Christ & St. Stephen’s Church, 120 West 69th Street, NYC. • Admission: \$90 benefactors (includes reception at Telepan), \$30 general, \$15 students. • Info, visit www.paullustigdunkel.com.

Bonita Boyd (Cont'd from page 5)

okay. Nobody said anything, although I thought I looked a lot thinner. At the end of the rehearsal, the conductor said, "Why don't you go back and get a nice rest, I'm sure you've had a busy week." Then the concertmistress asked when the baby was due, and I told her that I'd had the baby on Friday. The conductor looked at me and said, "Well, I didn't know just how busy you had been." It was hilarious and [later] they announced it to the audience.

MK: What about balancing the various aspects of your career?

BB: Balancing the solo and the orchestral was harder. The real reason I left orchestral playing was to pursue the solo playing. It came to a point, as you yourself remember from Rochester, that I wanted to be away even when big pieces were happening on flute, like when you played Ravel *Scheherazade* in my absence! When you get to that point of wanting to be released during major orchestral flute solos, I think it's time to move on. It was always in my heart to have a solo career. The other real love in my musical life these past years has been chamber music. Working with other artists is the most fun of all. When I retire, I want to practice piano again and play chamber music.

MK: What is the most important quality people need to be successful?

BB: We all know about talent—whatever

that is, whether it's a naturalness, or a lack of inhibition—which allows people to have an easier time bringing out their feelings. I think everyone has ideas to express, but for many people these don't come out. I feel there is a "golden box" in each person, and that it is my job to unlock it. Also, for everyone, there's a need to not get hung up on or obsess about what you don't need to fix. I think the ability to focus on the right things and to stay calm is very important. If you can say, "Okay, I know I play well, but I need to work on this particular aspect," you will improve much faster than if you say, "Oh, I'm terrible, this is awful," because then you're unable to focus on the real issue. A part of this is helping people get the most out of their time and organize the way they practice. Unfortunately, one can practice six hours and not get six hours' worth.

MK: What do you like to do when you are not involved with music?

BB: Spiritual things are big for me. I spend time reading and seeking the Lord. Of course, I spend lot of time with the kids, and I home-schooled the two youngest ones for grades two through nine. That was one of the most fun things I ever did because I felt like I continued and completed my own education! Nowadays it's really developed—not like it was 20 years ago. So much wonderful educational material is now available.

MK: Any recordings on the horizon? Are

your Paganini Caprices available?

BB: Yes, the Paganini is still available. The flute-guitar recording, *Chronicles of Discovery*, with guitarist Nicholas Goluses is on Albany Records. Nicholas and I are planning to record again soon. We will have several premieres on the album. Bernstein's *Halil* is out on Naxos, as well as Sierra's *Concierto Caribe*.

MK: Tell us about your November program.

BB: I'm doing *Halil* in the chamber version arranged by Bernstein for flute, piano, and percussion. Our recording came out about three years ago. I'm thinking of doing something else with percussion, and the Bartok *Hungarian Peasant Suite*. I've played so much repertoire in New York and I'm trying not to duplicate. I did a lot of my favorite music last time [at the Flute Fair in 2000], like Poulenc, Paganini, Jolivet, so those pieces are out this time. I like remembering Joseph Mariano's last recital. It was all Baroque music—the Marcello sonata, the Bach B minor, Couperin's Concert Royal No. 4, Handel, and then the Debussy trio. He only wanted to play the best music and I really get a kick out of thinking about that.

MK: Thanks so much! We look forward to hearing you.

Solo piccolo and flutist **Mindy Kaufman** joined the New York Philharmonic in 1979.

BONITA BOYD IN NEW YORK

From the Archives

Bonita Boyd was the featured guest artist at the Sixth Annual New York Flute Fair, held on March 19, 2000 at the Union Theological Seminary. Readers interested in learning more about Bonnie can take a look at Glenda Dove Pellito's interview from the March 2000 *New York Flute Club Newsletter*, now posted at www.nyfluteclub.org. While nothing quite tops the "baby born between rehearsal and concert" story Bonnie tells in Mindy's interview, there are still some pretty amazing and entertaining events from Bonnie's youth and young adulthood (including her early misadventures with flute technique, and more on the conflicting pulls of flute and piano) that shouldn't be missed.

Bonita Boyd as the Pied Piper

In a more recent New York performance, Bonita Boyd was featured in the Little Orchestra Society's performance of John Corigliano's *Pied Piper Fantasy* as part of a program of "Musical Mysteries" at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center on January 26, 2008. A photo of her (in costume) with a few admirers, taken backstage after the performance, is on the right.



Photo: Brian J. Klasevitz

PICCOLO ANSWERS from Seth Rosenthal

by Katherine Saenger



In the April 2009 NYFC Newsletter, Mindy Kaufman, piccoloist of the New York Philharmonic, provided an article's worth of answers to questions on the pleasures, challenges, and tricks of playing and teaching the piccolo. Readers were invited to respond with their own answers to the same questions. Seth Rosenthal, a NJ-based private teacher and freelancer on the faculty of Rider University's Westminster Conservatory (who seems no stranger to the combination of terror and exhilaration one can feel when asked to play some challenging piccolo parts on very short notice!) had the following responses.

KATHERINE SAENGER: How did you get started on the piccolo? What difficulties did you have in the beginning and how did you overcome them?

SETH ROSENTHAL: I first started learning piccolo while studying with Harold Bennett (a nine-year period that began in 1962 when I was 12). Although he was best known for his years playing principal at the Met [1944 – 1965], he played some piccolo in Philadelphia [1940 – 1944] and was a fine piccolo player. He had me play my flute etudes on piccolo as a starter. When I started getting D \flat parts, and I had to learn to transpose, he had me transpose the Andersen etudes (Op. 33, 30 ...) as if they were D \flat parts. It made them truly terrifying. He worked with me on the Vivaldi concertos; back then there didn't seem to be the wealth of published repertoire that we have today.

KS: What pieces do you find most enjoyable to play on piccolo?

SR: I like to occasionally put a piccolo piece on a recital, there are so many wonderful pieces available nowadays. I love the 19th-century Golden Age pieces, and when I used to play piccolo for the Seuffert Band, I regularly would do *The Elephant and the Flea*, or other pieces of that era. They are quite fun. On a recent Westminster faculty recital, I played some of the movements of Lowell

Liebermann's Eight Pieces on piccolo. It totally changes the sound of the pieces in an interesting way. I also play some orchestral and opera piccolo in local New Jersey groups. I love doing *Aida*, and the Khachaturian orchestral piccolo solos have been a recent pleasant surprise to me.

KS: What type of piccolo do you play? Do you use different piccolos for different pieces? Or is one piccolo good for everything?

SR: Some of my earliest professional experiences on piccolo were with some of the professional bands in New York. In those days I played an old Haynes wooden piccolo made in 1922. It had a gorgeous sound but the scale was "needy." I also needed a D \flat piccolo, the most urgent need came when trying to transpose Wagner's *Magic Fire Music* from an old D \flat part. It was an embarrassing attempt; the next time I played that part I had an old wooden Haynes D \flat which at least eliminated the transposition. Today I play on a Haynes wooden piccolo from the 1980s. It has a mellow sweet sound that blends very well into a woodwind section, but it's an A-440 instrument. When I need an A-442 instrument, I use a Burkart piccolo.

KS: Do you do much piccolo teaching?

SR: I've had a few high school students studying with other flutists come to me for lessons just on piccolo. Jean-Louis Beaumadier [NYFC, January 2009] and Jan Gippo have done a great service to someone like me and the students I teach by making these 19th-century Golden Age pieces available for us to work on and perform. At my student recitals, we have heard Damaré's *The Love of A Nightingale*, Balleron's *The Noisy Bird*, Donjon's *Bamboche*, and

other really fun pieces. This year I expect one student to play a movement of John La Montaine's piccolo sonata.

KS: What do you do to keep in shape on the piccolo?

SR: I still occasionally practice etudes on piccolo, and try to have a solo work "under construction" whether I'm planning on playing it or not. Right now I've been working on Mike Mower's Piccolo Sonata. When in good practice, I have fewer problems with high notes, soft upper register, beautiful sound, etc., so I try to keep in practice (though at some times of the year it is difficult to do so). I also try out works, often published by Billaudot-Beaumadier, as possible repertoire to teach those students who study piccolo with me.

KS: Thank you so much. Your answers have inspired me to order some of those Golden Age pieces you mentioned, and I am looking forward to trying them out.

Katherine Saenger, an amateur flutist and sometime piccolo player, is the editor of the NYFC Newsletter.

Frances

BLAISDELL Flutist

New York Herald-Tribune: "Miss Blaisdell made a striking impression last evening by the grace, skill and taste with which she played the important solo flute part in the Fifth Broadcasting Concerts."

New York American: "Frances Blaisdell covered herself with glory in Griffes' 'Pagan' for flute and orchestra. This young woman has astonishing aptitude for her instrument, with lovely tone, marked stylistic sense, and flawless execution."

Philadelph Post: "Landscape fascinating was Miss Blaisdell's flute playing. Fine phrasing and lush sonorosity marked her performance."

MISS BLAISDELL has appeared as soloist with the following organizations:
 N. Y. PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 NEW FRIENDS OF MUSIC, NEW YORK
 BACH CIRCLE, NEW YORK
 NATIONAL ORCHESTRAL ASSOCIATION (3 TIMES)
 RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

And in Chamber Music Recitals over networks of
 BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY
 COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM MUTUAL BROADCASTING

Now Seeking as Soloist with
 FRANCES BLAISDELL TRIO OF NEW YORK
 Flute — Piano — Cello



Obituary: Frances Blaisdell (Cont'd from page 1)

career was not a possibility for a woman in that era, and instead forged a successful career as a soloist and chamber musician. She made her solo debut with the New York Philharmonic at a children's concert in 1932, playing the Mozart D major concerto, and also appeared as soloist at Radio City Music Hall. She formed the Blaisdell Woodwind Quintet, whose other four members were all members of the Philharmonic (including clarinetist Alexander Williams, whom she married in 1937), the Blaisdell Trio of New York, and various other ensembles. She also played with on Broadway and as accompanist to Lily Pons.

In 1938, the harpsichordist Yella Pessl invited Frances to join the Bach Circle, which performed cantatas and instrumental works in Town Hall, and in 1940, she played in the first

recording ever of Bach's *Musical Offering*, on the Victor label. She gave numerous recitals with harpist Mildred Dilling, harpsichordist Ernst Victor Wolff, the Gordon Quartet, and composer Henry Hadley. At the League of Composers, she gave the premiere of Ruth Crawford Seeger's Suite, and in Town Hall she played the New York premiere of the Bloch *Suite Modale*.

Blaisdell did find orchestral positions as principal flute in the Phil Spitalny All-Girl Band* and the women's orchestras conducted by Ethel Leginska and Antonio Brico, the New Opera Company under Fritz Busch, and the New Friends of Music under Fritz Stiedry, and later was principal flutist of the New York City Ballet. In 1962 Frances Blaisdell became the first woman wind player to perform with the New York Philharmonic—as an "extra man."

Frances taught for many years at the Manhattan School of Music, Mannes, and NYU. In 1973, she "retired" to California, where she accepted an interim appointment as flute teacher at Stanford University. She continued teaching there until two months before her death, and in 2006 received the Lloyd W. Dinkelspiel Award for Outstanding Service to Undergraduate Education. She is, in fact, best known for passing on the French tradition as the teacher of several generations of American flute students, among them many members of the New York Flute Club, with whom she maintained lifelong friendships.

Chamber Music magazine wrote in 1992, "Every woman flute player in every major American orchestra, every little girl who pays the flute in a school band, has Frances Blaisdell to thank. She was first."

In 1992 the National Flute Association named Frances an honorary member, and two years later it honored her with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Her many performances for the New York Flute Club spanned more than sixty years, beginning in 1928, and culminated with her autobiographical presentation, *First Lady of the Flute*, in 1992,



Frances Blaisdell with Nancy Toff and Jean-Pierre Rampal when she gave her legendary *First Lady of the Flute* talk at the New York Flute Club in February 1992. Photo: Ira N. Toff

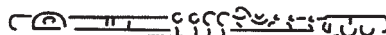


Alexander Williams, Frances Blaisdell, and their daughter Alexandra

an event at which Jean-Pierre Rampal made a surprise appearance to introduce her.

She is survived by her daughter, Alexandra Hawley, who teaches flute at Stanford; her son, John Williams, of San Francisco; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. The family has started a scholarship fund in her name to help pay for flute lessons for Stanford students. Contributions may be sent to Stanford University, with F. Blaisdell Lesson Scholarship in the memo line, and mailed to Mario Champagne, Stanford University, Department of Music, 541 Lasuen Mall, Stanford, CA 94035.

* See Victoria Balloon's article "All-Girl Bands: Phil Spitalny and Frances Blaisdell" at <http://matineeatthebijou.blogspot.com/2009/08/all-girl-bands-phil-spitalny-and.html>



FRANCES BLAISDELL

Her Students Remember

Family, friends, and students gathered at the NFA convention in August to remember Frances Blaisdell—loyal member of the New York Flute Club for eighty years—as musician, teacher, mentor, and friend. This month, Nancy Toff asked several former students from the New York area to reflect on what she taught them about music and about life.

Hal Archer

In February 1968 I enrolled at the Manhattan School of Music after having submitted a tape of a recital I performed in Barbados. After my acceptance I had to decide on a flute teacher. Being from Barbados, I did not have a clue about flute teachers. It was then I met two students of Ms. Blaisdell, Jackie Goudey and Beverly Radin. They suggested Ms. Blaisdell was the best.

At my first lesson, she told me that she had listened to my application tape and had decided she would take me as a student, despite my “many deficiencies.” She said, “Hal, your reading and technical control are pretty good but your sound is absolutely unacceptable.” She then outlined the relevant long tone studies I had to do and recordings I had to listen to, and demonstrated what she wanted to hear. That is what I did for the next six months, nothing else. She was a master at speaking very quietly but pushing very forcefully and constantly. You didn’t push back; you just listened and followed directions. There were always a couple of pages of notes to read following each lesson, and after I became a member of the school orchestra, pages of notes on style, intonation and ensemble greeted me after every performance.

But Ms. Blaisdell was more than a thorough, excellent teacher; she was a caring friend. All of her students would meet at her house for masterclasses and critiques of our individual performances, even during summer vacation. Here is one example of her kindness and generosity: My flute was stolen and I called to tell her that I would be dropping out of school, as I had no money for a replacement instrument. Her response was “You will not do such a thing. Meet me in Manhattan tomorrow.” The next day she took me to the Haynes and Powell stores and paid \$633 for my new flute with the gentle admonition, “Do not leave town.” That was the Ms. Blaisdell I knew and loved. I studied with her for five years and she became an absolute mentor and friend. Her memory will be with me always.

Hal Archer is the author of *Step One: Play Flute, a method book*.

Marti Lewis

Flute lessons with Frances Blaisdell were life lessons. She had high standards and inspired them in us for flute playing that we could apply to anything in life. She had wit, wisdom, integrity, virtuosity, and passion for music. She respected her students and had a great deal of interest in them.

Emily Tepper Mazur and I carpoled, and our parents took turns driving the 90 minutes from Long Branch to Englewood, NJ. Emily had her lesson first, while I read English literature assignments in the den on the first floor. A few minutes before my appointed lesson time, I ascended the two flights of stairs and was often nervous at the beginning of my lesson, but she brought out the very best in my flute playing. I think I had never focused so fully on anything until I played, listened, and learned in these lessons with her.

Miss Blaisdell passed along some of the concepts she learned from Marcel Moyse and William Kincaid. She illustrated how to phrase by using words to keep in mind how to say something with the music. She prescribed and worked with me on Moyse tone exercises and the Taffanel & Gaubert 17 Daily Exercises so that I would have the tools and foundation required in performing all music. Breathing technique and good tone production were a major part of what she taught me, as well as expressing the music in an interesting way.

She told us that she had been approached by the parent of a potential student, who wanted their daughter to learn a “little flute.” She said that she doesn’t teach a little flute and that she only teaches one way—so that the student plays to his or her potential, even to the point that the student might aspire and qualify to play principal flute in the Philharmonic.

Marti Lewis studied with Frances Blaisdell for two years during high school and occasionally during college. She was a member of the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra while studying at UNC-Greensboro and continued her flute studies at Manhattan School of Music.

(Cont’d on page 10)



Students Remember (Cont'd from page 9)

Mardee Reed-Ulmer

I studied with Frances from the 5th to 12th grades, about 1962 or '63 to 1970.

[Her husband] Alex Williams would teach clarinet in the living room and she would be stationed on the third floor in a wonderful studio. She would have her thermos of coffee (decaf, I later found out) and be there much of the day teaching one lucky student after another.

Not only was the house perfect but Frances—Miss Blaisdell—was always impeccably attired, always in a skirt or dress and heels.

Scales and etudes were “meat and potatoes.” The piece was “dessert.” If a specially gifted student preceded me, I'd hear them play and she'd say “Isn't that wonderful?” A pang of insecurity would sweep over me, but she would suggest that one day I, too, would be able to accomplish as much.

I had many an opportunity to solo at band concerts in Red Bank, New Jersey. Frances taught several students in that system, and she would attend concerts where her musical offspring performed. She would say, “I'll be sitting in the back row, and if I can't hear you, I'm going to stand up and tell you to start over again.”—a scary prospect in a large gymnasium filled with parents. She never did.

Mardee Reed-Ulmer studied with Frances Blaisdell from the fifth to twelfth grades in New Jersey, as did her sister. She is principal flutist of the Orchestra of St. Peter by the Sea and freelances and teaches privately in Tinton Falls, NJ.



Eve Slater



Photo: Beth Ross-Buckley

I first met Frances Blaisdell in 1954, when I was in the fourth grade. My band director had recommended finding a private teacher, and my dad had heard talk of a famous woman flutist living in Middletown, New Jersey. I will never forget our first meeting. She lived in an elegant manor house with 18th-century axe-hewn wooden beams where, as story had it, a revolutionary rider had galloped through. She appeared in a cherry red wool suit, was immensely warm and charming, and played magnificently on her golden flute. I had never heard the flute sound so wonderful. Thereafter, our lessons were filled with discoveries of new music, rigorous analysis, stories of her performances, and of course, her unspoken confidence that women indeed deserve to play in the world's best orchestras. In December of that year, she invited me to a *Nutcracker* matinee, and afterwards took my dad and me backstage to meet the players and dancers. I was entranced—from that evening on, I placed the music stand in front of me and resolved to become the finest flutist that I could be.

There followed the familiar saga of All State competitions and solo performances. It was not unusual for her to travel hours to surprise me by appearing backstage as a most special surprise at an important concert. Then too, a letter would follow, filled with encouragement and gently-rendered critique. At age 16, also as a surprise, my parents and Ms. Blaisdell presented me with my Powell flute, No. 2150, specially selected. As my career evolved and I migrated from music to science and medicine, suffice it to say that her example remained foremost in my mind: women can and must succeed, wherever they can contribute.

She was the consummate professional, and one of the most charismatic and caring individuals I have ever known. We continued to correspond, and my most recent memory is that of her teaching at Stanford, looking as elegant as ever, in her wheelchair, still radiating the love of music that so typified her very being. This May, my birthday was strangely empty—she had called me on that special day during the entirety of our friendship. She is irreplaceable.

Eve Slater, a cardiologist, is a senior vice president of Pfizer and was assistant secretary for health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She has performed as flute soloist with the Boston Pops.

NYFC ENSEMBLES PROGRAM

UPDATE

**Participants
at the October 3
ensembles get-together
(L to R):**

- Laura Barlament,
- Jinni Rock-Bailey,
- Christina Biamonte,
- Annette Dorsky,
- Matti Zelin,
- Michael Siegell,
- Lei Tang-Hohme,
- Riannan Wade,
- Denise Rhrissonalera.



The NYFC Ensembles program had its first get-together of the season at Shetler Studios on Sunday October 3. For two hours, the participants played through many interesting pieces in a variety of genres—flute, alto flute, and piccolo were well represented!

The Ensembles program will be meeting again at Shetler Studios (244 West 54th Street, NYC) on **Sunday, December 6, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm**. For further information, please contact the Ensembles Coordinator, Annette Baron.

Annette Baron, New York Flute Club Ensembles Coordinator

Email: ensemblesnyfc@aol.com
Daytime phone number: 973-628-7700



Guidelines for Listings

- **Flute Happenings** (free): listing of upcoming performances by members.
- **Member Announcements** (free): flute-related contests, auditions, and masterclasses organized and/or sponsored by members.
- **New Releases** (free): brief descriptions of members' new recordings, sheet music, and books, listed periodically.
- **Classifieds** (\$10 advance payment required; make check out to the New York Flute Club and mail to the Newsletter Editor): member advertisements (up to 320 characters/spaces).

*Submissions (email or hard copy) should be sent to the Newsletter Editor at klsaenger@yahoo.com
Deadlines are listed on the right.*

TRAFFIC ADVISORY

To avoid getting caught in traffic on concert days, please visit the NYC Department of Transportation's weekend traffic advisory site:
www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/wkndtraf.shtml

Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Mail date
December 2009	10/29/2009	11/26/2009
January 2010	12/10/2009	01/07/2010
February 2010	01/14/2010	02/11/2010
March 2010	TBD	TBD
April 2010	03/11/2010	04/08/2010
May 2010	04/08/2010	05/06/2010



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



November 22, 2009 concert

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

90th Season 2009 - 2010 Concerts

October 25, 2009 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
DENIS BOURIAKOV, STEFÁN RAGNAR
HÖSKULDSSON, newly appointed principal
flutes, Metropolitan Opera

November 22, 2009 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
BONITA BOYD, professor of flute, Eastman
School of Music, with GREG ZUBER, percus-
sion; BARRY SNYDER, piano

December 13, 2009 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
MINDY KAUFMAN, solo piccoloist, New York
Philharmonic, with harp and piano

January 24, 2010 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
RACHEL BROWN, baroque flute

February 28, 2010 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
MARIANNE GEDIGIAN, associate professor of
flute, University of Texas, formerly member of
the Boston Symphony

March 2010 • date TBA
NEW YORK FLUTE FAIR

April 25, 2010 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
2009 NYFC COMPETITION WINNERS

May 23, 2010 • Sunday, 5:30 pm
ANNUAL MEETING & ENSEMBLE CONCERT

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

Greetings! This month's performer will be Bonita Boyd, back with us for the first time since March 2000, when she was the guest artist at the Sixth New York Flute Fair. Mindy Kaufman's interview touches on their shared time together in the Rochester Philharmonic during the mid-1970s, Bonnie's philosophy of teaching (no cookie cutting for her!), and a story that is hard to beat as an amazing example of success in combining motherhood with a solo concert career. More stories, from a previous interview with Glenda Dove Pellito, can be found on our website, www.nyfluteclub.org.

Nancy Toff's "From the President" is perfectly keyed to Bonnie's concert program, which includes Leonard Bernstein's arrangement of *Halil*, his only flute piece. This year is just over the 90th since Bernstein's birth, and Nancy shares her recollections (similar to those of many others of us in the baby-boomer age group) of growing up with and being inspired by Bernstein's Young People's Concerts.

Frances Blaisdell, the "First Lady of the Flute" and a loyal member of the Club for 80 years, died in March at the age of 97. This issue's 12 pages include an obituary by Nancy Toff, remembrances from some former Blaisdell students, and some wonderful vintage photos.

Elyse Knobloch, a Westchester-based freelance flutist and teacher who performed with Northern Westchester Flutes at this year's NFA convention in NYC, is this month's member profile subject. I remain in awe of the discipline she brings to her practice routine, but confess to feeling no motivation to emulate it! Fortunately Seth Rosenthal's answers to some piccolo questions posed last spring (p. 7) *did* spur me to some action (so I now have copies of some of his favorite piccolo pieces).

Anyway, all for now. See you soon.

Best regards,

Katherine Saenger (klsaenger@yahoo.com)