

# JLNotes

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## *Volume 1 November 2009*



Being extremely busy and not always having enough time to personally discuss some important topics of musical education prompted me to do it in a written form. I hope that this newsletter will represent a great communication tool and I certainly would encourage and invite any comments and suggestions that you may have.

In this issue of JLNotes you will find some important information regarding violin competitions and festivals, RCM examinations dates and deadlines and some information about upcoming concerts in Toronto. You also will find a recommended listening of various violin repertoires with links to the YouTube and of much more.

So, enjoy reading and hopefully the next installment of JLNotes will appear this time next month.

*Jacob Lakirovich*

## **News from JVL Summer School for Performing Arts**

The 2010 season of JVL SSPA will commence on Thursday, July 8 and will conclude on Sunday, July 18. This season will feature a wonderful violinist Oleg Pokhanovski.

Dr. Pokhanovski is a prizewinner of number of international violin competitions, Associate Professor of Violin, String Area Coordinator at the Marcel A. Desautels Faculty of Music University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. He will no doubt bring a wealth of experience and fresh ideas to our violin and chamber music departments. You will be able to read more about him and other faculty members in our soon to be updated website.

On the JVL SSPA website some of the 2009 season's performances will also be accessible, so you could see students and faculty in action. Many members of the faculty, students and parents alike commented that 2009 season was the best ever, and I'm certainly working on achieving another "best ever" in 2010.

I would invite anyone who would like to share his or her 2009 experience (any stories, funny or not so) to submit it to me for inclusion into the next edition of JLNotes.

## **A Topic**

### *Practicing*

A subject of practicing is very dear and near to my heart. How many times a day, in an hour, per minute, per second I'd say to a student: Please practice properly!

However often most of the student (and parents) would think that practicing is a repetition of a piece or, at the best, of a section of the piece, let say 5, or 10 or whatever number of times, so more so better... The problem is that the time student spends doing so is mostly wasted and unfortunately leads turning mistakes into bad habits. Thoughtless practicing contribute to a general dissatisfaction with the process and instead of enjoying every second of music making a student perceive it as a chore, that eventually will end at the end of the "practicing".

I'm sure that most of the people will agree that a Quantity can never be equated to a Quality. Quality practice does not have to be very long and can be enjoyable! However a full concentration is required (even for very young and beginner students). When student's concentration is waning it is better to have a break for a few minutes, to have an apple or just to walk around rather than to continue with the thoughtless work.

Listening to yourself is one of the most important requirements to achieve an effective and useful effort. Student's ability to hear what he is actually playing (rather than what he thinks he is doing) lead to a much quicker detection of mistakes (technical or intonation) and helps generally to create a much clearer understanding of phrasings and musicianship.

Of course the internal ear is incredibly important. It helps you with intonation, by pre-hearing notes and with the musical aspect of the piece e.g. phrasings, dynamics, colours, general interpretation etc. Yet, the external ear is responsible for what you're actually playing.

And of course repetition is needed, but this is a repetition of a technically secure section where every time you repeat adds to your confidence in performance. In a technical passage a repetition helps to produce a secure execution (as long as metronome is in use), and also helps to connect various sections of a piece.

Remember: it is better to practice for 10 minutes, but fully focused instead of a customary 30-45 minutes where most of the time will be spent on counting how many more times do I have to play this again. Number of minutes or hours of practicing of course varies from student to student, depending on the age, level and general concentration span.

## Point of view

### *Opinion: Why can't players get vibrato right?*

Vibrating need not compromise purity of tone if it's done tastefully, says Tully Potter, who takes to task those who overplay, misplay or completely disown it.

We live in an age of too many certainties, and string playing has not escaped the attentions of the fundamentalists. If I had a pound for every word of nonsense that has been vented on the subject of vibrato, especially by Roger Norrington, I would be a rich man. I hesitate to add to the stream of vibrato-guff, but at a time when 'modern' orchestras are prohibited from playing 'old' music, while the period brigades move their entrenchments forward to encompass Elgar, Mahler and the like, perhaps a mere listener may have his say.

I do not like hearing Mozart, whose style is founded on singing, without vibrato, although Haydn's more bracing, contrapuntal style can take it. Nor do I enjoy Beethoven's music without vibrato: some passages can be effective when played *senza vibrato*, and the greatest of all Beethoven players, Adolf Busch, employed that device. But he told his students: 'If you play without vibrato, you could be feeling things as deeply as anything, and no one would know it.'

If the period players were serious about their calling they would have a different armoury of vibrato effects for every national style, if not for each composer. Hungarian music would be played with the Hubay school's wide wah-wah vibrato, for instance, while French music would have quite a silvery finger vibrato, with now and then a spot of right-hand vibrato produced solely with the bow, as Capet used to do. But I am happy if each player comes before me on the concert platform with his or her own painstakingly developed range of vibrato styles. I am also at ease with constant vibrato.

What I cannot stand, either musically or aesthetically, is the modern habit of beginning a note 'straight' and then starting to wobble in the middle of the note. It seems to have started with the cellists – Daniil Shafran being the most vulgar exponent – but it has spread to violists and violinists. When a player does it, I hear the note twice,

as a sort of 'uh-huh' effect. It is jarring in a very tasteless way. If continuous vibrato is employed, it should be continuous. As Lionel Tertis put it, 'The finger must remain and vibrate on the string you are about to leave until you have actually begun to play the note on the next string – and this second note must immediately take up the vibrato of the note you are just leaving.'

String playing goes hand in hand with singing, although one discipline will be ahead of the other at any given time. When modern orchestras began to play more and more loudly, partly through the use of string vibrato, singers found they could compete better if they too used vibrato. This use of vibrations to 'throw' the sound evolved because musicians had to play or sing in bigger and bigger auditoria, especially in America. I dislike the later playing of Piatigorsky for this reason; and I can usually identify one of his pupils within seconds.

Let us, by all means, encourage purity of tone in string playing. But that purity need not rule out a tasteful use of vibrato, where the player really listens to himself or herself when preparing and performing the music.

*(From the Strad, October 2009)*

## News from Competitions

Good Luck to the following students participating in the Arts Richmond Hill Music Festival:

Daphne Chu  
Shoshana Hershkop  
Nicolas Hung  
Alison Kam  
Yoni Katchan  
Clara Lo  
Julia Mirzoev  
Daniel Temnik  
Alex Volkov

## Here are some dates and deadlines for RCM examinations and local competitions:

### RCM Examinations

Winter

Registration

November 3, 2009

Session

Deadline:

<http://www.rcmexaminations.org/>

### 2010 Kiwanis Music Festival

February 16 - February 27, 2010

Entry Deadline for this year's Music festival is November 6, 2009.

<http://kiwanismusictoronto.org/index.html>

### Canadian Music Competition

April 29 - May 4, 2010 Toronto - First round

Registration deadline November 22, 2009

<http://www.cmcnational.com/en/>

### **Pickering GTA Music Festival**

Festival Dates: January 16th - February 2, 2010

Entry Closing Date: November 15, 2009

[http://www.pgtamf.ca/Pickering\\_GTA\\_Music\\_Festival/Welcome.html](http://www.pgtamf.ca/Pickering_GTA_Music_Festival/Welcome.html)

### **Peel Music Festival**

Dates for the 2010 Festival: March 22 to May 1

<http://www.peelmusicfestival.ca/Main.aspx>

Deadline for registration is December 7, 2009

### **Newmarket Lions Music and Dance Festival**

Applications must be in by January 31.

Karen Barker, Administrator, Phone: 905 252-3203, Email: [karen@zonas.ca](mailto:karen@zonas.ca)

### **... and some international:**

Pretoria, South Africa 5th Unisa International String Competition: violin, cello 2010

Brescia, Italy "Città di Brescia" International Violin Competition

Genoa, Italy 53rd International Violin Competition "Premio Paganini"

Leipzig, Germany 17th International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition

Martigny, Switzerland 43rd Tibor Varga International Violin Competition

Gorizia, Italy 29th International Violin Competition "Rodolfo Lipizer Prize"

Naples, Italy 16th International Violin Competition Alberto Curci

Helsinki, Finland 10th International Violin Competition "Jean Sibelius"

Prague, Czech Republic 62nd Prague Spring International Music Competition

Montreal, Canada Montreal International Musical Competition (MIMC), Violin

Oslo, Norway <http://www.menuhincompetition.org/index.html>

## **Concert Calendar**

Our Annual Anniversary Concert will be held on Sunday, February 7 as usual on premises of Pro-Music, Conservatory of Music at: 5051 Hwy 7 East in Markham.

### **Here are the details of some Toronto concerts for November:**

#### **Beethoven Emperor Concerto**

TSO Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis returns for a programme of audience favourites. Also sprach Zarathustra contains one of the most recognizable music themes ever written, and was featured in the films 2001: A Space Odyssey and Wall-E.

The "Emperor" , Beethoven's final and grandest piano concerto, is performed by one of Canada's greatest pianists, André Laplante.

Programme: Berlioz: Les Francs-Juges R. Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5, "Emperor"

Nov. 4 & Nov. 5 @ 8:00 PM Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. | Tickets: \$29 - \$128

Phone 416 597-7840 or order online at <http://www.tso.on.ca/>

### **Classical Favourites**

Favourite classical music, played live by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, in a programme that includes selections from Carnival of the Animals, The Marriage of Figaro, The Firebird, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7.

John Morris Russell is the guest conductor.

Nov. 7 @ 7:30 PM Nov. 8 @ 3:00 PM Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. | Tickets: \$28 - \$74

Phone 416 597-7840 or order online at <http://www.tso.on.ca/>

### **Britten War Requiem**

The TSO commemorates Remembrance Day with Britten's expressive War Requiem, a choral masterpiece that mourns the loss of life in the Great War. It blends the traditional Latin funeral mass with the shocking, realistic poetry of Wilfred Owen's experience in the War to End All Wars.

On November 11 at 7:15pm, join Rick Phillips for a relaxed and enlightening discussion about the performance, with a Pre-Concert Chat in the lobby.

Nov. 11 & Nov. 12 @ 8:00 PM Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. | Tickets: \$29 - \$128

Phone 416 597-7840 or order online at <http://www.tso.on.ca/>

### **The Nightingale and Other Short Fables**

Dramatically changing the traditional opera landscape, the COC's fall season continues with the highly anticipated world-premiere of a program of Igor Stravinsky's works directed by Canadian visionary Robert Lepage collectively titled The Nightingale and Other Short Fables.

Drawing on storytelling traditions from ancient and contemporary culture and incorporating the charm and mystery of Southeast Asian puppetry, The Nightingale and Other Short Fables is a visually arresting program designed to delight audience members of all ages.

Making its debut on the Four Seasons Centre stage, this new production includes the short operas, The Nightingale, inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, and The Fox , and also features other short vocal and orchestral pieces by Stravinsky.

The cast is led by award-winning Russian soprano Olga Peretyatko, and includes German tenor Lothar Odinius, Russian bass Ilya Bannik, German contralto Maria Radner, with Ensemble bass Michael Uloth, Ensemble tenor Adam Luther, Canadian baritone Peter Barrett and Canadian bass-baritone Robert Pomakov. Oct. 17 @ 4:30 PM Oct. 20, 22, 24, 30, Nov. 4, 5 @ 7:30 PM and Nov. 1 @ 2:00 PM Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. (at University Avenue) Tickets: \$62 - \$292 per person and can be purchased online at <http://www.coc.ca/> or by calling 416 363-8231.

## **Living Dances - An Evening of Contemporary Kudelka**

Wednesday, November 4 - Saturday, November 7, 2009

Presented by Coleman Lemieux & Compagnie.

Fleck Dance Theatre, 207 Queens Quay West, Harbourfront Centre

[www.colemanlemieux.com](http://www.colemanlemieux.com) and [www.harbourfrontcentre.com](http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com)

## **National Ballet of Canada - The Sleeping Beauty**

November 13-22

"The Sleeping Beauty is a ballet that epitomizes, perhaps better than any other, the meaning of classical ballet. Never simply a retelling of the well-known fairy tale, the ballet is conceivably the greatest of the Tchaikovsky - Petipa collaborations."

The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen Street West

[www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca)

## **National Ballet of Canada - World Premiere by Aszure Barton & The Four Temperaments & Glass Pieces**

November 25-29

"Aszure Barton's energetic, often riotously complex and utterly uncategorizable dances, commissioned by, among others, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Martha Graham Dance Company and Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, have drawn praise and superlatives from all quarters."

The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen Street West

[www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca)

## **National Ballet of Canada - The Nutcracker**

December 12, 2009 - January 3, 2010

James Kudelka's version of the perennial classic.

The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen Street West

[www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca)

## **Shanghai Symphony Orchestra**

Formed in 1879, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra is the oldest orchestra in Asia. Since the 1970s it has toured extensively forging musical bonds between East and West. The orchestra made its Carnegie Hall debut in 1990, returned in 2003 for an extensive US tour, and toured Europe in 2004 to celebrate the Sino-French Cultural Year.

This performance is part of an 11-city North American tour commemorating the orchestra's 130th Anniversary.

"At 20, Yuja Wang has both the energetic, fearless imagination of youth and the probing sensitivity that in most artists comes only with maturity..." --San Francisco Chronicle

Nov. 16 @ 8:00 PM Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. | Tickets: \$30 - \$128 Phone: 416 872 4255

### **Esprit Orchestra - Take The Dog Sled**

Two highly evocative, musically graphic depictions draw our attention to the magnitude of Canada's northern frontier and what goes on there. Louie's work, combining Inuit throat singing with Western musical language, provides insight into Inuit life and its relationship to nature in the Arctic.

Schafer's North/White is the composer's highly personal statement on how industrial forces impact on Canada's Northern mythology.

Ligeti's Atmosphères, made famous in the soundtrack of the film 2001 - A Space Odyssey, draws us into the listening environment of this concert which includes Takemitsu's Green, a dream evoking the music of Debussy as well as the opulence of a mountain forest and garden.

Sun. Nov. 15 @ 8:00 PM (pre-concert talk @ 7:30 PM) Koerner Hall at The Royal Conservatory, 273 Bloor Street W. | Tickets: \$15 - \$43 Phone: 416 366-7723 or 1-800-708-6754

### **Gryphon Trio with Valdine Anderson, soprano**

The Gryphon Trio are local treasures, based in Toronto and playing around the world. At this concert they will explore Spanish composer Turina and the great Romantic composer Brahms.

Also, a new work of Toronto composer Gary Kulesha, written for the Trio and soprano Valdine Anderson.

Programme: Joaquin Turina: Piano Trio No. 2 in B Minor, Op. 76 Gary Kulesha: New work for voice and piano trio, (world premiere) Brahms: Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8

Thurs. Nov. 5 @ 8:00 PM St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Jane Mallett Theatre; 27 Front Street E. | Tickets: \$41 - \$45 Phone: 416 366-7723

### **Some funny stories**

- *Why do people tremble with fear when someone comes into a bank carrying a violin case?*  
They think he's carrying a machine gun and might be about to use it.  
*Why do people tremble with fear when someone comes into a bank carrying a viola case?*  
They think he's carrying a viola and might be about to use it.
- *What is the main requirement at the "International Viola Competition?"*  
Hold the viola from memory.
- *Why do you always bury a viola player three feet under?*  
Because deep down they are all very nice people.

### **...and not so funny:**

Ana María Martínez' tumble into the orchestra pit at Glyndebourne shows that opera singing is becoming increasingly perilous

It's cruel to put it thus, but it must have been quite a sight: on Friday, the entirely delightful soprano Ana María Martínez, singing the title role in Rusalka at Glyndebourne, lost her footing during a duet towards the end of act one and fell head first into the pit, breaking her fall on an unfortunate cellist. According to one eyewitness, describing the incident in a blog for the Economist: "The cry went up for a doctor, and for several minutes the wonderful and unfortunate singer didn't seem to move. After a panicked pause the audience was ushered out. Its members stood around awkwardly in the bar, wondering whether it would be improper to drink the Pimm's

they had pre-ordered for the interval." Mercifully the Puerto Rican Martínez is now in fine fettle, though her understudy took on the role for the rest of the evening. The same cannot be said for the cello, which requires repairs.

Martínez's tumble is not surprising, for life on the operatic stage is increasingly perilous. No longer required simply to stand in the centre of the stage and exercise their lungs, opera singers are now expected to be multitalented actors, dancers, even acrobats; and to negotiate more and more elaborate sets for the entertainment of the audience. In *Rusalka*, the least dangerous thing Martínez did was to sing a duet on the edge of a stage, given that she also spent some time airborne on wires mimicking the aquatic existence of Dvorák's water nymph. Last year, at a performance of Peter Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons* at Glyndebourne, I and the rest of a horrified audience watched as one of Jean Rigby's fingers was crushed beneath a large scaffolding cage. It was the anguished howls of audience members that stopped the performance. She gamely reappeared – with a bandage.



Last month, American mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato slipped and fell during a performance of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Royal Opera House. She carried on, valiantly, it turns out, since she had in fact broken her fibula just above the ankle. Later performances saw her variously in a wheelchair and hobbling in her cast. And back in 2002 Simon Keenlyside, the British baritone – known for his athletic, energetic performances – came a cropper during rehearsals at Covent Garden for *Die Zauberflöte*. Reportedly taking a fall through a trapdoor (ouch) he injured an arm so badly he needed surgery. Papageno the birdcatcher wore an unpremeditated sling for that production.

Keenlyside has juggled on stage; I've seen Matthias Goerne submerged in a tank of water (though not, amazingly, required to sing at the same time). In Glyndebourne's production of *Giulio Cesare*, I've seen Australian soprano Danielle de Niese perform an expert belly dance and this summer, Jonas Kaufmann built a house on stage in Munich for his debut role as Lohengrin. Divas? I don't think so. This lot are heroes.

(Classical music and opera Festivals Charlotte Higginsguardian.co.uk © Guardian News & Media Limited 2009)

## This month's birthdays

### OCTOBER

Daphne	11
Jonathan	12
Lauren	14
Matthew	16
Michelle	10
Stephanie	17

### NOVEMBER

Anthony	16
Julia	13
Sean	19

Happy birthday to all of you! Have lots of fun with Music!

## Featured Artist

Nathan Mironovich Milstein (January 13, 1904 - December 21, 1992) was a virtuoso violinist born in Russia. He died in London just weeks before his 89th birthday.

Widely considered one of the finest violinists of the 20th century, Milstein was known for his interpretations of Bach's solo violin works and for works from the Romantic period. He was also known for his long career: he performed at a high level into his mid 80s, retiring only after suffering a broken hand.



Milstein started violin studies with the eminent violin pedagogue Piotr Stolyarsky. Among Milstein's other teachers were two celebrated violinists, Leopold Auer in St. Petersburg and Eugène Ysaÿe in Belgium. He told filmmaker Christopher Nupen, director of *Nathan Milstein – A Portrait*, that he learned almost nothing from Ysaÿe but enjoyed his company enormously. In a 1977 interview printed in *High Fidelity*, he said, "I went to Ysaÿe in 1926 but he never paid any attention to me. I think it might have been better this way. I had to think for myself." He was obsessed with articulating each note perfectly and would often spend long periods of time working out fingerings which would make passages sound more articulated.

## Biography

He was born in Odessa, Russian Empire, (now part of Ukraine), the fourth child of seven, to a middle-class Jewish family with virtually no musical background. It was a concert by the 11-year-old Jascha Heifetz that inspired his parents to make a violinist out of Milstein. As a child (of seven years old), he started violin studies (as suggested by his parents, to keep out of mischief) with the eminent violin pedagogue Piotr Stolyarsky, also the teacher of renowned violinist David Oistrakh. When Milstein was 11, Leopold Auer invited him to become one of his students at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Milstein reminisced:

Every little boy who had the dream of playing better than the other boy wanted to go to Auer. He was a very gifted man and a good teacher. I used to go to the Conservatory twice a week for classes. I played every lesson with forty or fifty people sitting and listening. Two pianos were in the classroom and a pianist accompanied us. When Auer was sick, he would ask me to come to his home.

Milstein may in fact have been the last of the great Russian violinists to have had personal contact with Auer. Auer did not name Milstein in his memoirs but mentions "two boys from Odessa ... both of whom disappeared after I left St. Petersburg in June 1917." Neither is Milstein's name in the registry of the St Petersburg Conservatory.

When Auer went to Norway in 1917, Milstein went back to Odessa. He met Vladimir Horowitz and his pianist sister Regina in 1921 when he played a recital in Kiev. They invited him for tea at their parents' home. Milstein later said, "I came for tea and stayed three years." Milstein and Horowitz performed together, as "children of the revolution," throughout the Soviet Union and struck up a life-long friendship. In 1925, they went on a concert tour of Western Europe together.

Milstein made his American debut in 1929 with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. He eventually settled in New York and became an American citizen. He continued to tour repeatedly throughout Europe, maintaining residences in London and Paris.

A transcriber and composer, Milstein arranged many works for violin and writing his own cadenzas for many concertos. One of his best-known compositions is Paganiniana, a set of variations on various themes from the works of Niccolò Paganini.

In 1948, his recording of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, with Bruno Walter conducting the New York Philharmonic, had the distinction of being the first catalogue item in Columbia's newly introduced long-playing twelve-inch 33 rpm vinyl records, Columbia ML 4001.

He received a Grammy Award in 1975 for his recording of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas, and was awarded the Legion of Honour by France in 1968. He was also awarded Kennedy Center honors by President Ronald Reagan.

A recital he gave in Stockholm in July 1986 proved to be his final performance. An accident shortly afterwards ended his career.

For most of his career he performed on the "Milstein (Maria Teresa), Goldman" Stradivarius of 1716 and for a short period the "Dancla" Stradivarius of 1710.

During the late 1980s, Milstein published his memoirs, *From Russia to the West*, in which he discussed his life of constant performance and socializing. Milstein discusses the personalities of important composers such as Alexander Glazunov, Sergei Prokofiev, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Igor Stravinsky and conductors such as Arturo Toscanini and Leopold Stokowski, all of whom he knew personally. He also discusses his best friends, pianist Vladimir Horowitz, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and ballet director George Balanchine, as well as other violinists such as Fritz Kreisler and David Oistrakh. Milstein also expressed his generally conservative, strongly anti-communist and anti-Soviet political beliefs. Milstein said that President Kennedy was a weak leader, admired President Reagan, and stated that he refused to return to the Soviet Union, even for a tour sponsored by the United States.

Milstein was married twice, remaining married to his second wife, Therese, until his death.

*(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)*

## Recommended listening

Nathan Milstein 'Paganiniana'

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQjzKVkFqag>

... and of course Heifetz!

Jascha Heifetz plays Melodie (from Orfeo ed Euridice) by Christoph Willibald von Gluck (Transcribed by Heifetz). Accompanist: Emanuel Bay

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tenI\\_FyFeZ0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tenI_FyFeZ0)

## Finale

You can download this edition of JLNotes with direct links to various sites referred above from our websites:

[www.Lakirovich.com](http://www.Lakirovich.com) and [www.MusicInSummer.com](http://www.MusicInSummer.com)

Should you have any comments or suggestions please send me e-mail at:  
[jvl@lakirovich.com](mailto:jvl@lakirovich.com) or call on: 905-882-7499 • 416-735-7499