

INTERMISSIONS

NOVEMBER

2007

FEATURED INTERVIEW: GERARDO RIBEIRO

Professor of Violin at Northwestern University and Meadowmount School of Music

Gerardo Ribeiro is both professor of violin and coordinator of the String Division at Northwestern University, and a member of the violin faculty at the Meadowmount School of Music in upstate New York, where he is violinist of the Meadowmount Trio. A native of Oporto, Portugal, he earned the Soloist Diploma from the Lucerne Conservatory before completing his studies with Ivan Galamian at The Juilliard School. First Prize winner of both the prestigious Vianna da Motta and Maria Canals international violin competitions, he also won top prizes in the Montreal and Paganini international competitions, and has performed with many orchestras and in recitals throughout the US, Canada, Europe, and South America. In addition, he has recorded both for EMI and RCA Victor. He continues to concertize on the roster of Parsons Artists Management. He recently took time out of his busy teaching schedule to speak with Intermissions.

INTERMISSIONS: How did you begin to study the violin?

GERARDO RIBEIRO: My parents were amateur musicians. We lived in a very large house and my grandparents also lived there. It was good because my grandfather had a good business, and my father had plenty of time, and was able to help me a lot. Under

his tutelage, I was already reading at age five. He started me on the violin, and discovered that I had perfect pitch. So my father looked for a good teacher for me. At that time, Portugal had many outstanding musicians living there after World War II. Among them, was Ivan Galamian's former assistant in Paris, a very fine French violinist. He recommended one of his own students, Carlos Fontes, to be my next teacher.

INTERMISSIONS: What did you learn from him?

GR: He gave me a very good foundation, and when later I went to Galamian, Galamian said that my left hand was very well trained. And this was no wonder because my teacher had studied with Galamian's former assistant. But I never really learned the right hand technique from him. That came later at Juilliard.

INTERMISSIONS: Who was your next teacher?

GR: Walter Prystawski, who later became concertmaster of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada. In those days, when I was studying at the Lucerne Conservatory in Switzerland, Prystawski was a wonderful violinist and teacher.



Photo courtesy of Leonard Lewis

“STEVEN PALINCSAR’S
PATIENCE AND
DEDICATION SERVES
HIS STUDENTS WELL.”

- GERARDO RIBEIRO



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Photo courtesy of Röhnert

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I also studied with Rudolf Baumgartner, the director of the Lucerne Conservatory, who had been a top prize-winner at the Geneva Competition, and who was conductor of the Lucerne Festival Strings. So at the ages of fifteen and sixteen, I played violin in the orchestra on tour. Among the artists who toured with the Festival Strings were Mstislav Rostropovich, Henryk Szeryng, Arthur Grumiaux, and Zino Francescatti. I got to know them all pretty well. In fact, Francescatti gave me lessons during the tour.

INTERMISSIONS: That's wonderful. How many lessons did you have?

GR: Quite a few. Every day of the tour in fact. He used to call me "mon petit." At the end of the lesson, he gave me cigarettes as a reward. I didn't smoke, but for many years I kept the packs of cigarettes because Francescatti had given them to me.

INTERMISSIONS: By the time you came to Juilliard, you already had a diploma, didn't you?

GR: Yes, I had a diploma from the Oporto Conservatory in Portugal, and I also had the Soloist Diploma from the Lucerne Conservatory in Switzerland. You know, the Soloist Diploma is like a competition. I had to play two concertos with the Lucerne orchestra. Judges were invited to determine whether I should get the diploma. Four judges were invited. They were Hans Schneeberger (he was the best Swiss violinist in those days), Prystawski, Baumgartner, and Peter Rybar (who recorded the Bach Double

Concerto with Szeryng). They gave me the highest possible score, so I got the Soloist Diploma at age 17.

INTERMISSIONS: You had also entered competitions by this time too hadn't you?

GR: Yes, I was a semi-finalist in the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud International Violin Competition in Paris at age 15.

INTERMISSIONS: What made you decide to come to Juilliard?

GR: In Switzerland, I still knew that I needed further training, but in a place where the competition among students was very tough. Isaac Stern used to come to Portugal and I got to know him there. Stern was instrumental in getting scholarships for me from the Gulbenkian Foundation so that I could study in New York. My teacher in Switzerland, Walter Prystawski, knew very well someone who had studied with Galamian, and that was how I was accepted as a Galamian student without an audition.

INTERMISSIONS: What was your first year with Galamian like?

GR: It was very difficult because Galamian wanted me to change my bowhold to the Franco-Belgian from the Russian. I had a very hard time until one day after I had been in New York for about four months. I remember I was in a restaurant where a lot of musicians went. I heard people talking about me at the next table. "Oh I heard that Galamian said that Ribeiro plays *detache* with the full arm," they said. I was so embarrassed that I didn't even finish my meal. I went home and decided that I was going to fix my bow arm. I worked very, very hard, but was pretty depressed. Galamian hardly ever said whether or not he thought you were doing well. I wrote to my parents

that I thought I should come home. They wrote back that they thought I was probably doing better than I thought and that I should stay. So I stayed. Later, on a vacation home, I found a letter that Galamian had written to my parents. In it he said, "your son is doing very well. In due time, he should have a very promising career as a soloist." My parents never told me. You see, they knew that I would not have worked as hard.

INTERMISSIONS: What do you think you learned from Galamian?

GR: After my studies with Galamian for four-five years, I felt my bow arm was really what I had focused on and was what I really mastered, and was able to play at competitions and do very well, and play at really important international events, and really go the top. I could also really play as naturally as possible.

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INTERMISSIONS: Who were some of the other students that you knew?

GR: I got to know Glenn Dicterow, who is now concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. Glenn Dicterow I met when I first moved to New York. We are still good friends today. I was supposed to stay with the Istomins (Eugene Istomin's parents lodged people with them), but Glenn decided to study an extra year, so the Istomins arranged with their neighbor to have me move in with her. Glenn used to hear me practicing through the wall, and was impressed by my playing of the three octave scales, and wanted to meet me. We used to go out to a movie sometimes or have dinner together while we were both studying.

I also got to know Kyung-Wha Chung and Pinchas Zukerman. Kyung-Wha Chung had the lesson time before me with Galamian, and Pinchas Zukerman, the lesson after me.

The great French violin virtuoso, Zino Francescatti, had studied only with his father, who was a pupil of Camillo Sivori, the only official student of the legendary Niccolò Paganini.

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I got to hear their lessons, and I thought well if these are the worst students Galamian has, I'm in a lot of trouble. So I went home and practiced really, really hard.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you start entering competitions?

GR: One day I asked Galamian if I could enter a competition, and he said, "no, you're not ready." After about four more attempts, I stopped asking, and just told him very forcefully, but very politely, that I would really like to enter the Concert Artists Guild Award Competition. Galamian told me that he didn't think I was ready, but if I wanted to go, then I should go. He signed the application form. I went to the competition, and won. Then I entered the Emma Feldman Competition in Philadelphia, where Galamian's arch rival Joseph Fuchs

4 was on the jury, as well as Jaime Laredo and Michael Rabin.

INTERMISSIONS: What happened?

GR: I got first prize. I came back from Philadelphia on the train with Joseph Fuchs, and I got to know him very well. Actually, Fuchs called Galamian on the phone, and said that I played very well. Galamian was very pleased and said, "next time you want to go to a competition, just bring me the form and I will sign it."

INTERMISSIONS: What international competitions did you win?

GR: In 1971, I won fourth prize in the Montreal International Competition. Then in 1972, I won third prize in the Paganini International Competition. Next, I won first prize at the Maria Canals International Competition in Barcelona. In 1973, I won the Vianna da Motta International Competition. This was a very prestigious

competition. Later, I served on the jury for this competition in 1988. In the 1975 Sibelius International Competition, I won the prize for best interpretation of the required piece commissioned especially for the competition.

INTERMISSIONS: What are some of the orchestras that you've performed as soloist with?

GR: I was soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Robin Hood Dell, the Montreal Symphony, and then I have been soloist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. I have recorded with both the NDR Philharmonic in Hannover, Germany and the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra.

INTERMISSIONS: How many recordings have you done?

GR: I have recorded more than half a dozen albums. Some were recorded on EMI and the rest for RCA Victor. I have recorded the Brahms, Mendelssohn D minor, Schumann, and Richard Strauss concerti, as well as the Beethoven Triple, Brahms Double, and Mendelssohn Double concerti, and the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante, as well as sonatas of Beethoven and Brahms.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you first become interested in teaching?

GR: Well, initially my goals were just to perform. To study at Juilliard. To enter and win competitions, and to perform. Never in my life at that time did I ever think that I wanted to teach.

I was under New York management, and supported myself very well for several years. One day, my manager received a call from a university that wanted a soloist to teach for just one semester. I told them I don't think

so, but my manager convinced me to do it for the experience, so I did.

INTERMISSIONS: Where was that?

GR: At Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, which is actually the third largest university in Michigan, just after the University of Michigan and Michigan State University. I actually stayed the whole year (1977-78). Then I went to Florida State University, where I taught from 1978-83.

INTERMISSIONS: Did you find that you really liked teaching?

GR: Well I thought it was really a very personal challenge to help make each student play much better. I succeeded so much that Florida State asked me to teach there. At the time former Boston Symphony concertmaster Richard Burgin taught there, as well as his wife Ruth Posselt. I had good students, and the university was very supportive of my concertizing as well. While I was there, I toured Europe, Russia, and Yugoslavia, for example.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you go to Eastman?

GR: Well there was an opening there, and I knew someone at Eastman who thought I should apply, and so I did, and got the job over eight or nine other people. I stayed at Eastman for three years (1983-86), and then went to Northwestern.

Initially, there was a big difference in the quality of students between Eastman and Northwestern, but now after many years, I find there is no longer any difference between the two schools in terms of quality.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you start teaching at Meadowmount?

GR: I was there for one summer in 1986 between leaving Eastman and beginning at Northwestern. Although I had been invited to teach there again the next summer, I resisted because I was doing so many concerts in the summer.

INTERMISSIONS: Why did you rejoin the faculty?

GR: Well, first of all I was invited to join the Meadowmount Trio in 2004, which I did, and have managed to also adjust my concert schedule. Now of course, I try to do as many concerts as possible before and after Meadowmount, which makes my schedule very hectic.

INTERMISSIONS: How long does it take to make up your mind at an audition?

GR: I can really judge a student very quickly. So five seconds at the most. I can tell if a student has the level of quality that we're looking for, then the rest of the audition is a confirmation of my decision. It's very seldom that I would change my mind. We want to make sure the students we accept will have the capability to complete the program and graduate.

INTERMISSIONS: Where are some of your former students today?

GR: I have some students playing in the Hong Kong Philharmonic, many in German orchestras, some in Scandinavia, quite a number in Spain, and of course, I have former students here. One of my students is in the Houston Symphony. The violist and second violinist of the Fry Street Quartet, in residence at Utah State University, were my students. Another is in the Montreal Symphony in Canada. They are literally all over the world.

AUDITION PRESS RELEASE

Two of America's leading violin teachers, Steven Palincsar and Margaret Pressley, have been invited to present a workshop entitled "College/University/Conservatory Audition Preparation" at the 2008 American String Teachers Association National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Their program will be held during the conference, which meets from February 28 to March 1, 2008, and will cover research, preparation, performance anxiety, practice auditions, and the audition itself.

Steven Palincsar, who draws on the teachings of Dorothy DeLay, Ivan Galamian, and Josef Gingold in achieving his mission of preparing the advancing young violin student for a career in music, is based in Chicago's North Shore suburbs. He is dedicated to the successful preparation of students for auditions to America's top music schools, and for national and international violin competitions. A native Chicagoan, he had his first piano lessons at age seven, and began violin studies shortly thereafter, making his debut at the age of twelve. Ultimately, Steven Palincsar studied at some of the nation's top music schools, including the Eastman School of Music, Indiana University, and The Juilliard School, as well as at the Meadowmount School of Music. He graduated from the School for Strings' Two-Year Suzuki Violin Teacher Training Program in New York, and has been a member of the violin faculty at the School for Strings' prestigious Start-Up Program, which provides full-scholarship studies for minority and underprivileged pupils. His students have been invited to perform at New York's famed Carnegie Hall.

Margaret Pressley, Founder and Director of The Seattle Conservatory of Music and Starling Artistic Director of Violin Studies, is well known throughout the country as one of the foremost instructors of pedagogy for pre-college violinists. For the past 14 years, she has guided Conservatory students in a program designed for eighth grade through high school to strategically plan for college entry and auditions. The Conservatory's 100% collegiate acceptance rate has proven that, with a thoughtful and progressive approach to overall college planning, students can not only be accepted, but financially encouraged by institutions, to enroll in collegiate music schools of their dreams. She was a featured author in *American String Teacher* magazine with her article, "My Journey Toward Teaching Success." She was also a recipient of the Washington State Outstanding Studio Teacher of the Year Award.



Photo courtesy of Chris Lee

NOW ON CD

Joshua Bell performs world premiere of John Corigliano's Red Violin Concerto

Grammy Award-winner Joshua Bell, a pupil of Josef Gingold, most recently received the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.

Newly released on Sony Classics is Joshua Bell's world premiere recording of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Corigliano's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, *The Red Violin*. In addition, Bell plays Corigliano's earlier Sonata for Violin and Piano with his regular accompanist, Jeremy Denk.

The four-movement *Red Violin Concerto* was written for Joshua Bell and premiered by him with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop. They join Bell on this recording. The concerto, which uses music from the motion picture, *The Red Violin*, for which Corigliano wrote the score,

and Joshua Bell performed the violin solos, exploits those aspects of violin technique which Bell does best.

The first movement was the Chaconne which Corigliano wrote to coincide with the release of the motion picture. To it he has added three additional movements. The second movement, *Pianissimo Scherzo* is followed by two additional movements, *Andante flautando* and *Accelerando Finale*, which requires the violin to become as much a percussion instrument as an expressive one.

The Violin Sonata, although clearly a work of the early 1960's, is almost completely tonal.

Although not yet born when the Sonata was written, it almost sounds as if it could have been written for Joshua Bell and his pianist. The work has had quite a number of outstanding recordings over the years. Most recently, Corey Cerovsek, who like Bell, was a pupil of Gingold, has recorded it, for example. Glenn Dicterow, concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, also has an excellent recording of it available on CD.

The Violin-Piano score of the *Red Violin Concerto* was recently published by G. Schirmer.

CONSERVATORY AUDITIONS

A listing so that students can begin their application process now.

CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in February, 2008. Application deadline: December 1, 2007. Contact: Carnegie-Mellon University, School of Music-CFA108, 5000 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Phone: 412-268-4118. Website: cmu.edu.

THE COLBURN SCHOOL

Auditions in March, 2008. Application deadline is January 15, 2008. Contact: The Colburn School, Office of Admissions, 200 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Phone: 213-621-4534. Website: colburnschool.edu. Pre-screening DVD due with application.

DE PAUL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in February, 2008. Application deadline is January 15, 2008. Contact: De Paul University School of Music, Office of Admissions, 804 W. Belden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614. Website: music.depaul.edu.

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in February-March, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: Manhattan School of Music, Office of Admissions, 120 Claremont Avenue, New York, NY 10027. Phone: 212-749-2802. Website: msmnyc.edu. Pre-screening CD required. Apply online ONLY at www.unifiedapps.org.

MANNES COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Auditions in March, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: Mannes College-The New School for Music, 150 West 85th Street, New York, NY 10024. Phone: 212-580-0210 ext. 4862. Website: newschool.edu/mannes. Pre-screening CD required.

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Auditions in February-March, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: New England Conservatory, Office of Admission, 290 Huntington Avenue,

Boston, MA 02115. Phone: 617-585-1101. Website: newenglandconservatory.edu. Pre-screening CD required.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in February, 2008. Application deadline: January 1, 2008. Contact: Northwestern University School of Music, Office of Music Admission and Financial Aid, Room 1-Music Administration Building, 711 Elgin Road, Evanston, IL 60208-1200. Phone: 847-491-3141. Website: music.northwestern.edu.

PEABODY CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Auditions in February, 2008. Application deadline: December 1, 2007. Contact: Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, Admissions Office, 1 E. Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore, MD 21202. Phone: 410-659-8100. Website: peabody.jhu.edu. Prefers online application.

RICE UNIVERSITY, SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in January-February, 2008. Application deadline: January 2, 2008. Contact: Shepherd School of Music-MS 532, Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-1892. Phone: 713-348-4854. Website: music.rice.edu.

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY, CHICAGO COLLEGE OF PERFORMING ARTS

Auditions in January-March, 2008. Application deadline: January 15, 2008. Contact: Chicago College of Performing Arts, Roosevelt University, Office of Enrollment-Room 918, 430 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605. Phone: 312-341-3500. Website: ccpa.roosevelt.edu.

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Auditions in January-February, 2008. Application deadline: January 15, 2008. Contact: Tommy Newton, Recruitment Director, Meadows School of the Arts,

Southern Methodist University, P.O. Box 750356, Dallas, TX 75275-0356. Phone: 214-768-4067. Website: smu.edu/meadows.

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI, COLLEGE-CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Auditions in January-February, 2008. Application deadline: December 1, 2007. Contact: CCM Admissions, College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, P.O. Box 210003, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0003. Phone: 513-556-5463. Website: ccm.uc.edu. Regional auditions in Chicago on January 29, 2008.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in January-February, 2008. Application deadline: January 2, 2008. Contact: Admissions, The School of Music, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1114 W. Nevada Street, Urbana, IL 61801. Phone: 217-244-7899. Website: music.uiuc.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

Auditions in February-March, 2008. Application deadline: December 1, 2007. Contact: University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, E.V. Moore Building, 1100 Baits Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2085. Phone: 734-764-0583. Website: music.umich.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Auditions in January, 2008. Application deadline: December 1, 2007. Contact: University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music, Office of Admission, University Park-UUC 218, Los Angeles, CA 90089-2991. Phone: 800-872-2213 or 213-740-8986. Website: usc.edu. Pre-screening DVD required.

IN CONVERSATION

STEVEN PALINCSAR ON VIOLIN TEACHING

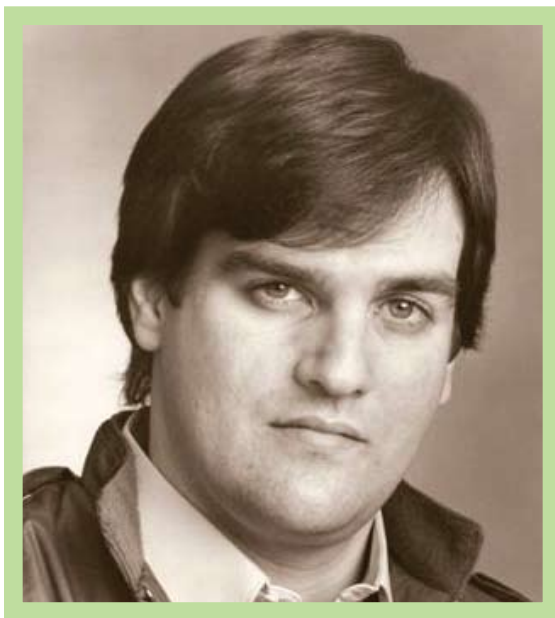


Photo courtesy of Tom Fezzey

QUESTION: In the October issue of *INTERMISSIONS*, you mentioned that you

8 try to demonstrate as little as possible in a private lesson, but I have noticed that you play much more at some lessons than at others. Could you comment?

STEVEN PALINCSAR: Sure. To demonstrate is merely one objective that I have in playing the violin at a lesson. There are others. Whereas for demonstration I always use the student's instrument, when my objective is to evaluate, to lead, to share, or to accompany, I use my own violin. For example, I may use my violin to evaluate a student's intonation or rhythmic sense by playing along with the student. I may also use my instrument to lead a student who is having difficulty with a particular rhythm. Sometimes I share a new composer's music with my students. Sometimes I accompany a student. I might play some of the orchestral parts to a concerto while the student plays

the solo violin part. I sometimes play the second violin parts to the Kreutzer etudes. For advanced students, there are Wieniawski's Etudes-Caprices where the teacher plays the second violin part.

Still, I am quite frugal about how much I do play at a lesson. You know, a lesson with Nathan Milstein was quite a different affair. You would come in and play about twenty minutes for Milstein, then he would spend the rest of the

time playing for you. Sometimes the lesson would last for two hours! But then Milstein accepted only students who had completely mastered the violin—at least technically.

I must also tell you that there are two objectives in a teacher's playing that I never use (although I find some of my colleagues continue to abuse them). A teacher must never use her/his violin to show off (as in "I'll show *her* how to play it!!") or to punish ("No, not that way, *this* way!!"). I find these two objectives totally unacceptable.

QUESTION: You previously mentioned one of your pet peeves, but I know you have another one.

SP: Which is?

QUESTION: The "g" word.

SP: Oh yes, the complete overuse by the incompetent teacher of the word "good." Yes, in their vain attempts to make violin

teaching as "fun" as possible, some teachers don't wish to criticize their students, so they say "oh that was very good, you're a wonderful young artist," even when the student's playing is just plain awful. These teachers do a tremendous disservice to their pupils. Dorothy DeLay was always very positive, but she never did this. Neither did Josef Gingold. Ivan Galamian certainly didn't. The student "learns" that there is no difference between good and bad playing. These kids come in to play for me and every note is either out of tune, out of rhythm, sounds scratchy and ugly, or is played with a vibrato that is way, way too slow! Of course, I do not accept these kids into my studio, and then the parents say, "but Ms. So-and-So says little Joshie is just wonderful." There are many, many other ways that I as a teacher can be upbeat and positive without lying to a student.

QUESTION: You mentioned "good" and "bad" playing.

SP: Yes, Ivan Galamian used to say that there is such a thing as "good" and "bad" violin playing. Whatever is beautiful is "good." Whatever is ugly is "bad." Although there are exceptions. In the second movement of the Shostakovich First Concerto, a rougher, uglier sound is desirable to serve the composer's intentions. After all, this is not Mozart, but Shostakovich.

QUESTION: Dorothy DeLay was a tremendous influence on your teaching.

Arthur Grumiaux, the great Belgian violin virtuoso, was renowned for his flawless technique, his brilliant tone, and his elegant musicianship.



Robert Shaw, former music director of the Atlanta Symphony, inscribed this photo to Steven Palincsar.



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Photo courtesy of Chicago Symphony Orchestra

IN CONVERSATION STEVEN PALINCSAR ON VIOLIN TEACHING *continued from page 8*

I know that she insisted her students practice five hours every day, but you disagree.

SP: Yes, we must always remember that each student is an individual with differing levels of ability. For example, I could always prepare a lesson or for a concert in less than three hours practice a day, and I had a terrible time coming up with things to do in the additional two hours. You see, I believe

the ultimate goal of practice is to master new pieces and to improve one's playing, (or much, much later to maintain the quality of it) not merely to fill up an arbitrary amount of time. I remember some of Ms. DeLay's students would practice seven or eight hours a day (more than double what I did), but they didn't sound any better, so what was the point? No, practicing without a specific goal or focus is worse than a waste of your

time. I prefer to base my students' practice on goal-oriented sessions, which actually take less and less time once the goal is nearly achieved. Then I congratulate them on their success (with a lot of fanfare), and we move on to the next challenge. Heifetz' teacher, Leopold Auer, once said to practice three hours a day if you're talented, four if you're not, and more than four means you should choose another profession.

Also, I once saw a television special on Itzhak Perlman, where he was practicing while watching a baseball game on TV. I must say that I completely disagree with this. I believe that it would be better just to watch the game, and practice later. You get far more from fifteen or twenty minutes of a focused practice session, than two hours of nothing but unfocused repetition.

QUESTION: How do *you* practice?

SP: First of all, I would like to say that each musician needs to find what works for them individually. For me personally, I play through a piece from start to finish. When I come to a passage that I can't play, I slow the tempo down to a speed at which I can play it. Then I go back to the beginning of the piece and play the whole thing through at that tempo. Then gradually I work to increase the tempo little by little. I don't play around with rhythms. I just slow them down, master the technique at the slower tempo, then speed them up. Also, I don't believe in spending much time at all on what you've already mastered. For more ideas on practicing, the book I've been recommending lately is Burton Kaplan's *Practicing for Artistic Success*.

QUESTION: Do you practice scales?

SP: Yes, but not necessarily every day. I have only one book that I use nearly every day when I'm up to speed, and that is D.C. Dounis's *Violin Player's Daily Dozen*. Each of my students is assigned this as well. Virtually every advanced technique is in it. After that, I might practice scales using Louis

Kaufman's book. I also like Ruggiero Ricci's *Left-Hand Violin Technic* book.

QUESTION: I noticed that the other day you had nothing but praise for a student on his intonation when playing perfect fifths, but his intonation was terrible in almost everything else and you said nothing.

SP: Yes, well that's the problem with coming in to observe one isolated lesson. This was a

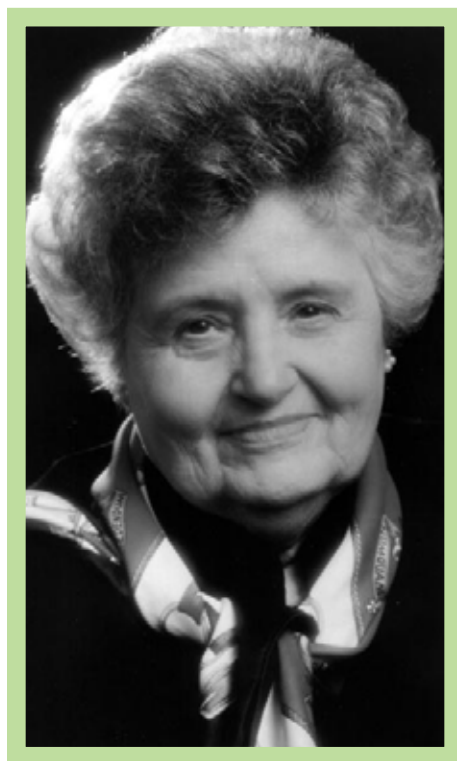


Photo courtesy of Christian Steiner

Dorothy DeLay was the beloved teacher of many of today's greatest violinists including Sarah Chang, Midori, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Gil Shaham, and Itzhak Perlman.

new student (since September). Obviously the student has a major intonation problem, and we have been working on it for over a month now. I started with him on perfect fifths. He can now play fifths in tune and quite regularly, so he was deserving of my praise. We'll spend all of the rest of the year

and probably much of the next year getting him to play all of the other intervals with what I call "bull's-eye" intonation as well. But right now, I must be completely patient with him, and I'm not going to do anything to squelch his progress, by stopping on every other interval. I'm just so thrilled he can now do fifths. Everything else will come too.

QUESTION: I've noticed that you're really wonderful at communicating with your students, and that they genuinely seem happy to be having a violin lesson with you.

SP: Thank you. Well you know, I like to try to create as not-threatening an environment as possible. Playing the violin at a lesson or studio class can be a very personally risky undertaking. It certainly was if you studied with Ivan Galamian or Jascha Heifetz.

So I try to be as upbeat as possible (without wrongfully using the "g" word). One of my models was Mr. Rogers of *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* fame. I remember how relaxed he made the viewer feel. This is my ideal.

I always think about how we speak to a pet cat or dog if we want them to come to us. If we yell, "GET OVER HERE!," the poor little thing will run for cover under the couch. But if we say, "come here sweetie, you cute little thing" in the sweetest possible voice, the favorite pet will come over wagging its tail. If we talk to pets this way, how can we not talk to our students the same way?

NEW ON CD-ROM

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