

Seattle Flute Society

Volume 2 Number 9 May, 1981

From the President

Believe it or not, we managed to complete our first annual Recital and Masterclass Series with a slight excess of receipts over expenses; an auspicious sign for our initial venture into the quicksands of concert management. Through astute selection and shrewd negotiation, plus a number of favorable circumstances, your SFS Officers and Board were able to put together a most instructive and rewarding season. Are we ready to try again? The Officers and Board will address the question in fuller detail when next we meet in September. In the meantime, we would like to hear from the membership about preferences or suggestions for visiting artists for next season. Also, shall we consider a number of names as this past year, or go for one or two blockbuster names for our budget?

Speaking of blockbusters, our main efforts must now be turned to support of Julius Baker's visit July 16-18. We're going out on a limb for this one, and I would hope we could avoid the ignominious distinction of being the first place in recorded history that failed to come out ahead on a Baker Recital and Masterclass appearance! The answer lies in the promotion of this event, both officially and via word-of-mouth by our membership. Brochures and announcements have been sent out, and more information is available from Karen Gozinsky-Lenke (325-5054), coordinator for the presentation.

A casualty of the above plans was the proposed party for jazz flutist Bud Shank and our membership, scheduled for May 24. The Officers and Board felt that the projected expense for such an extravaganza did not represent fiscal responsibility in light of the early expenses being encountered in promotion of the Baker visit. Too bad; we had a nice locale scouted out and everything, but maybe we can try again later. Shank, by the way, along with pianist Bill Mays will be appearing at Parnell's May 22-24.

In closing, it's been quite a year, and I hope we can all look forward to one as equally eventful. I will be attending and performing at the NFA Convention in Detroit in August, and the groundwork will be laid there for the 1982 Convention here in Seattle. As the host organization, the SFS will be called upon to participate heavily, but more of that later. In the meantime, here's wishing everyone a pleasant and sunny summer, and may your embouchures always be at the ready!

Minutes

The vice-president thanked all members who have performed this year and requested that anyone who is interested in being on the program committee or who has ideas for programs next year please contact her (Rae Terpenning, 248-1798).

It was announced that the winners of the Flute Division of the Washington State Solo and Ensemble Competition which was held on April 25th are: 1st, Katie Alverson; 2nd, Sabrina Saul; 3rd, Beth Garden.

Seattle Young Artists Festival awarded Certificates of Recognition to flute contestants Lisa Koppel who played a complete program and Beth Garden in the concerto division.

The Eastside Music Festival awarded Certificates of Recognition to Katie Alverson and Cheryl Thiel who played a flute duet and to Laura Hamm. Kristi Hoornbeek received an honorable mention certificate.

The treasurer reported that there was a profit of \$187 from the Masterclass and Recital Series. He also reported that there is \$800 in the treasury.

A suggestion was made that the format of the Sunday ensembles, pre-program, meeting and program be changed. Perhaps the pre-program could be held first followed by the meeting and program with those interested in playing in ensembles participating last. It was also suggested that the pre-program start at 3:00.

Minutes prepared by Joanne Jonsson, Secretary

Moe Koffman at Meany

By Felix Skowronek

A dozen or so of our members took advantage of the ticket discount offered to the SFS by the Public Performing Arts office at the UW in order to attend the performance of jazz flutist Moe Koffman and his quintet at Meany Theater the evening of May 4. While the entire audience was not numerous, whether due to a lack of name-recognition or some other factor, it was most responsive and was treated to a most impressive concert.

Koffman, a native of Toronto and widely-known across Canada as a jazz-flutist and studio musician, received international renown in the late 1950's with the recording of his "Swinging Shepherd Blues"--a tune that has since been released some 250 times. Koffman's subsequent recordings have mostly remained north of the border however, but it is hoped that he and his albums will become more available in the U.S., as he has much to say.

Insistent and contemporary, yet not far-out or unintelligible, Koffman's approach to the flute as a jazz instrument is obviously one of respect and immediately commands attention. For starters, I would say that his basic flute tone is perhaps the clearest and most classically-oriented of all the jazz flutists I've heard in person, and his control of shadings and dynamics is akin to a fine recitalist in its sensitivity.

(When questioned about his flute tone, he replied simply, "I work at it!"). In a brief experiment with "Greensleeves", Koffman played acoustic-solo before moving to amplification with the rest of the ensemble, explaining that the louder setting is the norm since the flute sound can't compete with the other instruments on its own. Perhaps this attitude should be questioned in concert performance (as opposed to a noisy club or lounge), since the clarity of the natural flute tone is lost to a great extent with the electronic magnification. Certainly in as fine an acoustical setting as Meany Theater, the array of expensive sonic gadgetry onstage brought a certain touch of overkill.

Although originally a saxophonist (amply displayed in two be-bop numbers on the program), Koffman plays most of his concerts on the flute; in this instance, a gold Haynes, B-foot, open-hole mechanism. He studied in New York with the famed Harold Bennett,

former principal with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and a highly-regarded teacher among commercial players who adopted his instructional system to good advantage in building flute tones of depth and fullness. As with many jazz flutists, Koffman draws from classic or baroque composers for subject material, using in this concert J.S. Bach's "Siciliano" from the Eb Sonata and Vivaldi's "Winter" from The Seasons as points of departure for his own compositions in this vein. It may be that we'll have the opportunity to bring him to the special attention of the SFS before too long--Koffman appears frequently in Vancouver, B.C. and if our corporate luck holds, perhaps we'll be able to talk him into a quick foray in our direction.

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Listening

By Scott Goff

The art of listening to others while playing in a symphony orchestra is too seldom understood by many players even on a professional level, yet such listening techniques are basic if any reliable sense of ensemble is to be reached. One basic misconception is that of the function of the conductor. On the amateur orchestra level, the sense of time is laid down by the conductor's baton, i.e. the rhythm emanates from the conductor's beat and "good" ensemble is achieved by following it with hawk-like vigilance. The better orchestras get the less they depend on the conductor for rhythm and the more they play by listening to themselves. A group of 50 to 100 capable musicians playing together creates its own collective sense of rhythmic momentum, the basic rhythm of the ensemble. A sensitive leader will mold and shape expression within this momentum taking care not to disturb the ensemble it creates. Sensitive leaders respect the integrity of ensemble as much as sensitive musicians. For them to be relieved of the necessity of becoming the group's metronome frees them for higher artistic purposes. Many inexperienced musicians are often confused by this when first playing in professional orchestras. Professional conductors are often purposely vague with their beat in order to encourage and even force the musicians to listen to each other with greater attention. Some, such as Steinberg and Klemperer, would not even conduct a traditional beat pattern once the downbeat was given.

At first the achievement of such ensemble seems a prodigious feat and on the level of the great precision ensembles such as Cleveland or Chicago it is. Yet if such groups represent the ultimate, the first 30% could easily be accomplished by most amateur ensembles given competent leadership. Pierre Monteaux used to delight in taking guest conducting stints with obviously inferior orchestras and have them playing well after a few rehearsals. Orchestras by themselves can play most of the standard repertoire without a conductor excepting a few critical spots. Pieces such as the Rite of Spring, of course, demand greater conductor involvement but Brahms, Beethoven etc. go

best when rhythmic dictation from the podium is at a minimum. Good conductors can then inspire really marvelous music making and be truly deserving of the term "Maestro".

Unfortunately, few amateur and too few professional conductors fully understand this approach. Yet the musician who knows how to play accurately in ensemble by ear rather than by eye is always at an advantage as he will be able to understand what is happening when the conductor and the orchestra are at odds. Such savvy is the essence of the experienced musician's competence and is valued by conductors and colleagues alike.

The act of listening is simple. How can one sit on a stage with 50 to 100 other musicians and not listen? The very numbers involved are the problem—there is just too much to listen to all at once. What you select as pertinent is the crux of the question. The answer to this question is one you will collect over a lifetime. I can't remember how many times I've played Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, but the last time we did a spot that had troubled me for years was solved simply by listening to the 'celli rather than the 1st violins. This kind of thing happens constantly to an alert and conscientious musician. One must search first for solutions from within the ensemble and from the conductor only as a last resort.

A principal flute player's attention should be directed toward those whom he plays with most of the time. 1st oboe and 1st clarinet are most important. As these players sit close by you probably are in touch with this situation already. More problematic are players at a distance—particularly the strings. If you look at almost any orchestral score with the idea of determining who has the lead voice most often you would be surprised how much of the time the lead is given to the 1st violins. Yet they sit in a position isolated from much of the rest of the orchestra and to hear them one must make a conscious effort. The most effective single thing you can do to improve your ensemble is to train yourself to listen to the 1sts—as a flute player you play together with them more than anyone else in the wind section. Be careful to try to listen to the front desks as the back of the section often

lags behind the front. Next focus on the 'celli-particularly in waltzes and similar music with strong accompanying patterns. You can be following any part but many times when the 1st trumpet comes in if you don't go with him you'll end up like Napoleon at Waterloo. But now we're getting more obscure. This is the challenge: flexibility. You have to be constantly aware of changing situations; there is not a player from tuba to piccolo who you won't play with eventually. If you think flute and 1st violins is a challenge, try alto flute and Eb clarinet (Rite of Spring) or flute and tympani (Carmina Burana) or flute, celeste, and glockenspiel (Rosenkavalier) or ...

What kind of parts should you look for? Moving parts often give a point of reference to the whole orchestra and a "weather ear" should remain on the alert to the appearance of such parts in various sections of the ensemble. When playing solo parts, one should listen to the accompaniment. For a soli part, say with the oboe, you should listen to each other as well as the accompaniment. If there's trouble, check with the oboist and make sure you are listening to the same instruments. If you are soli with the 1st violins, you must match them-if the soli passage isn't with the accompaniment, a matter involving that many people must be solved by the conductor. When you are accompaniment, know who you are accompanying and who else is with you. The accompaniment must follow the soloist-but the soloist must respect the momentum of the accompanying ensemble. When playing 2nd or 3rd parts you must follow the principal player, but if you know what he's listening to you will both make adjustments together better. The section player has actually more to do-he should listen to all the 1st player does and then in addition adjust to him.

With all this listening one important point can not be overlooked: you must continue to count. When following another play-eryou must count along with him (just like you were solving a problem in dictation-maybe that's what they were trying to teach you in that awful class?). To try to out guess is suicide-you must maintain your rhythm while using him as your metronome.

A lot of things to do. But music is a constant challenge. Even the very finest orchestras seldom get through pieces without lapses. The world's finest musicians produce more clinkers than they would care to admit. Go ahead and smirk at your colleagues' mistakes-it won't be long until they can return the favor.

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Calendar

- June 5, 1981 James Galway/Cleo Laine. Opera House.
8:00 P.M. Tickets: \$15.75, \$13.25, \$10.75.
- June 6, 1981 Same as above.
- June 7, 1981 First concert in a series given by Erin Adair,
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- June 21, 1981 French-Salon works for flute and keyboard.
- June 28, 1981 Baroque and Rococo works for flute and key-
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- July 5, 1981 Contemporary pieces by Martinu, Copland,
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- July 16, 1981 JULIUS BAKER in a flute recital. Meany
Hall at UW. 8:00 P.M. Ticket price: \$5.00.
- July 17, 1981 Masterclass with Julius Baker. Demaray Hall
at SPU. 9 A.M.-noon and 7 P.M.-10 P.M.
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- July 18, 1981 Masterclass with Julius Baker. Same place
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