



Winter Score

February 2009

***In this issue:* From the President, 2009 Convention Preview, IMTF, College Faculty Forum, Collegiate Chapters, SHS/Playathon, Louisiana~A Pianist's Journey, Transcribing Works for Viola, New Orleans Piano Competition**

Please make sure we have your current e-mail address. If any of your contact information has changed, or if you are not sure your e-mail address on file is correct, contact VP/Publicity Judy McGehee.

To receive a paper copy of the SCORE, send your request to VP/Publicity David Easley along with a check for \$10, payable to LMTA, to cover printing and mailing costs for one year.

From the President Katherine Tobey



With this issue, the SCORE enters its second year as an electronic publication. I hope you have enjoyed being able to read the SCORE online, and I hope the links have helped you take full advantage of our expanded website, also in its second year. Thank you for helping LMTA save money and preserve natural resources. In this edition you'll find current news as well as articles by our IMTF, College Faculty Forum and SHS/Playathon chairs, a convention preview, and several additional articles by members and student members. Results of the MTNA South Central Division Competitions are included as well. New on our website is a page especially for busy teachers: "Food for Thought". Please enjoy visiting this page, browsing the library page for articles that will help you in your teaching, and checking out the photo gallery.

The LMTA Board

Due to personal circumstances, **Linda Manes** has had to resign as VP/Certification. We are very grateful to Linda for all the work she has done and for her dedication to LMTA. We will miss having her on the board. The Executive Committee, with the approval of the full LMTA Board, has appointed **Sue Steck-Turner as our new VP/Certification**. We can't thank Sue enough for agreeing to take over this position. Her knowledge, experience as a past VP/Certification, and her commitment to LMTA ensure a smooth transition.

Convention News

The 2008 Convention in Shreveport was really exceptional. The sessions and special events (banquet and luncheons, faculty recital) were wonderful, and attendance was a whopping 106! **Melody Bober, Carolyn Setliff** and all our presenters were outstanding.

A huge "thank you" to **President-elect Donna Toney** who spent countless hours planning, organizing and overseeing the convention. We are truly grateful to **Ross Smith, Martha Bordelon, Janet Colbert, LaWanda Blakeney and all the GSMTA members and student helpers** who worked so hard to make everything run smoothly.

Our **Commissioned Composer for 2008 was Dr. Dinos Constantinides**, Boyd Professor and head of the composition area at Louisiana State University, and director of the Louisiana Sinfonietta. His opera **Rosanna** was premiered at the October Convention for a very appreciative audience. **Dr. Al Benner**, instructor of music and philosophy at Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, is our **2009 Commissioned Composer**. We can't wait to hear his composition for piano duo.

The 2008 convention will be a hard act to follow, but **Susie Garcia and Chan Kiat Lim of UL-L and LAMTA President Sarah Roy** are already hard at work, along with **Donna Toney**, planning a fabulous **2009 Convention, to be held October 15-16 at University of Louisiana-Lafayette**. See Donna's [Convention Preview](#) for details and visit our website [convention page](#), where information will be posted and updated frequently.

Congratulations

We have some very exciting news! **Lafayette Area Music Teachers Association (LAMTA)** has been selected as the **2009 MTNA Local Association of the Year**. This is a tremendous honor. **LAMTA President Sarah Roy** will accept the award, which includes a plaque and a check for \$1000, at the National Conference in Atlanta. **MTNA Executive Director Gary Ingle** wrote to Sarah, "Your local and its membership exemplify the very best in MTNA through your local activities, participation in state and national programs, and membership growth." Bravo, LAMTA, we're so proud of you!

Hilda Beth and John Dupaquier were honored at the LMTA Convention banquet as **LMTA Outstanding Teachers for 2008**. It was a festive evening and we were so happy to celebrate with Beth and John and some of their family members. Click here to read about [John and Beth](#) on our website.

Sarah Roy and **Nikie Oechsle** recently earned their National Certification. Congratulations, Sarah and Nikie!

MTNA South Central Division Competitions

Congratulations to all the students and teachers who represented Louisiana at the **MTNA South Central Division Competitions** in Fayetteville, Arkansas on January 10. Best of luck at the National Competitions in Atlanta to **Division Winners:**

- **Christiano Cruz** (Young Artist String-Violin), **student of James Alexander**

- **John Henry Crawford** (Senior String-Cello), **student of Andres Diaz and Hans Jensen**
- **Sean Nathan** (Junior String-Violin), **student of Laura Crawford**
- **Darell Haynes** (Young Artist Voice- Baritone), **student of Stephen Rushing**
- **Christopher Aubert** (Elementary Level-Composition), **student of Sue Steck-Turner**

In addition to the above winners, awards were also presented to:

- **Sarah Rushing** (Alternate- Senior Piano), **student of Willis Delony**
- **Darell Haynes** (Honorable Mention-Young Artist Brass), **student of Andrew Larson**
- **James Kelley** (Honorable Mention-Young Artist Piano), **student of Faina Lushtak**

Mark Your Calendar

MTNA National Conference

1 April - 28 March Atlanta

Swanzy Competition -Torgimson

6 June Ruston

State Convention LMTA

16 - 15 October Lafayette

Louisiana MTNA Competitions

17 October Lafayette

LMTA Playathon

17 October Lafayette

Fundraising

Thanks to the hard work of our **Foundation Chair Sarah Roy** and the generosity of LMTA members, \$1704 was collected during the convention (Silent Auction, Recycled Music Sale, and donations) for the [MTNA Foundation](#). As a result, we were able to fund a new [MTNA Foundation Fellow, Fred Sahlmann](#). The MTNA Fellow program offers a meaningful method for honoring deserving individuals while supporting the efforts of the [MTNA Foundation Fund](#) through a donation to the Foundation Fund in an individual's name. Since the establishment of the MTNA Foundation in 1989, many thousands of dollars have been provided in grants and awards to students, gifted composers, outstanding teachers and performers, and to local associations. We are very pleased to see this distinction go to Fred, a long-time member and past-president of LMTA. Fred is highly respected by his colleagues for his musical accomplishments and continuing involvement as a performer, mentor and

exceptional role-model. Fred will be honored at the MTNA Conference Gala in Atlanta.

We will now begin working towards the funding of our next **Foundation Fellow**. The Executive Committee has selected **Ernestine Durrett** for this honor. Ernestine is a past-president of LMTA and was recipient of LMTA's Outstanding Teacher Award in 2003. As soon as LMTA members have donated a total of \$1000 to the Foundation Fund in Ernestine's name, we will complete the nomination process. Donations may be sent to the MTNA Foundation at any time. *If you make a donation along with your MTNA dues renewal, please attach a note to indicate that your contribution is to go to the Foundation Fellow Fund in the name of Ernestine Durrett.*

[The Students Helping Students Fund](#) received over \$3500 in donations through **Playathons** held in Baton Rouge, Denham Springs and Lake Charles the weekend before convention, and the second annual **LMTA Playathon** held in Shreveport the Saturday after convention. We thank all the students, parents and teachers who participated, and we are very grateful

to **Chair Sue Steck-Turner** for her diligent work on behalf of **SHS** (please see [Sue's article](#) in this issue).

2009 Convention

Donna Toney, President-elect

I hope 2009 is going well for you; and as we look ahead to the exciting events in our state this year, rest assured our 2009 LMTA Convention will be at the top of the list! Susie Garcia and Chan Kiat Lim will be our collegiate hosts on the lovely campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Sarah Roy, Lafayette Area Music Teachers Association President, is already planning to make this a great event.

We will welcome the dynamic Ingrid Clarfield as our featured clinician, offering several pedagogy sessions as well as a master class and an Alfred Showcase. We are thrilled that William Chapman Nyaho will be our convention artist, presenting an evening recital and a session featuring his newly published works from Oxford Press, Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora. Welcome back to Lafayette, Nyaho!

Following last year's success, LMTA String Chair Paul Christopher is planning several strings sessions. If you are interested in this area, please contact Paul directly at pchriscello@yahoo.com.

We are accepting proposals for sessions at this time, and I invite you to contact me as soon as possible if you are interested. (Sessions are generally 60 minutes in length.) I also welcome any ideas, comments or questions that you might have. The deadline for submitting proposals is April 1.

Mark the dates - October 15-16, 2009 - for an energizing and informative time of sharing.

SEND PROPOSALS BY APRIL 1 TO:

Donna Toney

donna_toney@hotmail.com

482 Castle Kirk Drive Baton Rouge, LA 70808

225-767-6897

IMTF

Patti Misita

Maintaining High Standards when Students Don't Practice

Lately I have been so frustrated by students who come in week after week without having practiced. It's always the same old story. Just fill in the blank: "basketball, volleyball, homework, Grandma came to visit," or just "we were really busy last week." How do you maintain high standards when students don't practice? I believe that most of my students love to play, like their lessons and have supportive parents. But yet sometimes they seem to make little or no progress. Even when they practice it is not productive. I find myself in an endless loop of correcting the same mistakes and renewing the same goals. Before long half the year is gone and it seems little or nothing has really been accomplished. Actually I had decided that the world had changed and that my students were just too busy to reach my standards.

Then I had an epiphany! Perhaps I was measuring success in the wrong way. Perhaps I needed to measure progress and success based on what the student learned instead of how many pieces she had managed to play flawlessly. It occurred to me that my lessons revolved around my needs and not the needs of my students. I felt a need to accomplish certain goals or tasks at a certain point in time. My thought process was that children needed goals to keep motivated, and that accepting less than the stated goal was a failure on my part. Here's where the epiphany occurred: I remembered that my real job was to motivate and excite them about playing the piano. Yes, I want them to build a repertoire, establish an effortless technique and develop solid reading and rhythm skills. But if it becomes a chore for the student the process has failed.

I recently purchased a copy of Beth Gigante Klingenstein's new book "The Independent Piano Teachers Studio Handbook." Immediately upon scanning the contents I turned to the chapter titled The Studio Atmosphere. The first thing she addressed was what she calls BSE: Boredom, Stress and Exhaustion. BSE was the perfect encapsulation of what was happening in my studio. I have been doing the same things, basically the same way, for years. The things I do in lessons are old hat to me. No wonder students are not responding, I have lost my sparkle and probably some of my intensity. I have become bored with the process. Instead of being excited about the music, I am expressing frustration and disappointment.

I was exhausting myself by setting the same old goals, assigning the same old pieces, and then becoming frustrated when the poor unsuspecting student failed to respond like I expected him to. "Franz L. Piano" did it so much better years ago! I find myself caught in a circle. The students are not responding to corrections and I am tired of repeating myself, they are tired of playing the same piece and encountering the same frustrations, they don't practice, so I repeat myself.....lessons are spent fixing notes and correcting rhythms instead of making music. And so I bemoan the lack of commitment. I fret about how the world has become so watered down. I wonder "where is the commitment to excellence?" I find myself in a cycle of repetitious harping on the values of hard work and commitment and correction of repeated mistakes.

And so it is time to make a change. These are my resolutions:

I will offer a variety of performance events that are not judged.

This fall we held a Playathon where students played mostly ensemble music. Music included favorites such as Pachelbel's Canon, Disney tunes and Broadway tunes. We also held a Christmas Musicale for a local retirement home. Both of these events were very well received by students and parents. The students liked playing familiar pieces. The parents liked the idea of service to the community and also liked hearing music that they know. I think sometimes we forget that our mission is to lead students to a broader and deeper appreciation of all musical styles. To accomplish that goal we must start from where they are.

I will shift the focus of lessons to the mastery of skills.

Group lessons focused on improving rhythm and counting skills last fall. Games included Rhythm Bingo and Tappin Termites. Every student has improved by working on these skills together.

I will be selective about judged events.

Too often when students do not practice lessons are consumed with learning and preparing for the next judged event and everything else falls by the wayside. I am taking a new approach. Rather than expecting that students will be prepared for and participate in every judged event I am going to move through the repertoire and expect only a few things to be polished. I am allowing students more choice and giving them more responsibility for preparing for this type of event. The age range in my studio has shifted more toward middle and high school. I will give these students more say in the direction and content of their lessons.

I will choose and introduce new music on a regular basis.

After all, variety is the spice of life. I never keep young beginners on the same piece for months. We study lots of little pieces and choose a few favorites to memorize and polish. Why is it suddenly so different for intermediate level students?

I will look for tangible and immediate ways to motivate and excite students about practice.

I will try to engage my students in the learning process by offering incentives to accomplish weekly goals. I was having trouble getting 5th and 6th grade students to learn two-octave scales hands together. The solution is an in-house "technique tournament" as an incentive to meet this goal. Charts are posted on the wall and stickers are awarded as each keyboard skill is mastered. Measuring progress as a group has had a big impact on individual success.

There will always be a few students who practice methodically and consistently and are prepared for every lesson. Most students however are juggling school and family obligations along with at least one other extracurricular activity in addition to piano. Increasingly younger children are participating in sports that consume several days a week. There is only so much time available to devote to good, effective practice. As teachers we need to be creative and inspiring to capture a student's attention. We want the child to leave the lesson excited about practicing. We must look for new ways to create that excitement in lessons and motivate children to practice effectively. We also have to understand that the student will make progress over time and that just because a few lessons do not go well, that does not mean all is lost.

Maintaining high standards means a daily commitment to excellence in teaching. It is a commitment to sharing a love for music with your students. It is not producing perfect minuets and sonatinas from every child. My standards are reflected in a studio environment that is warm and inviting. My standards are reflected in my love of music and the piano. I will create excitement about learning new skills by trying new things. I will foster a sense of community in the studio by working toward shared goals. I will teach my students to find joy in the learning process and to be proud of what they have accomplished. Piano lessons are a journey that teacher and student take together. I will remember to include my students' needs in the journey.

College Faculty Forum

Joni Jensen, CFF Chairman

LMTA 2008 State Convention College Faculty Forum Overview

It was my pleasure to moderate the College Faculty Forum on Friday, October 24, 2008 on the beautiful campus at Centenary College in Shreveport. It was titled "A Balancing Act-How to get it all done!" I came away from the session with great ideas that I would like to share with you. Thank you to my colleagues Christine Allen and Paul Christopher, Northwestern University, Ken Boulton, Southeastern University, and Ross Smith, Centenary College, for sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise.

Recruiting New Students

- Judge local competitions and get to know the local teachers in your area and state.
- Contact local high schools to obtain names of interested students and contact them individually and invite them to come and tour your school and audition.
- Give a faculty recital and send invitations to the high schools in your area.
- Offer summer camps on the campus so students will become familiar with the facilities and the campus.

How to balance teaching, practicing and performing

- When preparing a recital program use old material mixed with new repertoire.
- With limited practice time-organize your time and work on small power practice spots.
- Guard your office hours-use this time to practice.
- Prioritize- make a list and follow it.

What do we tell our students about careers in music?

- Be open to all career possibilities, not just performing and teaching. Invite colleagues who have positions as music librarians, music business management, arts administration, and arts advocacy to come and speak.
- Education should be as diverse as possible and should include theory, instrumental and choral instruction, conducting, arranging, music business and pedagogy.
- For pianists-learn to play the organ, be able to read a lead sheet, obtain accompanying and functional piano skills.

How do we motivate students to practice?

- Hold weekly student recital hours and require performance so many times per semester. Invite colleagues to give master classes and have your students perform.
- Have students keep a practice log-include how long they practice, what they worked on, keeping a list of what tools worked best for them.
- Instruct students how to utilize the smallest amount of time.

Ensemble playing!

- Include accompanying requirements for all scholarship recipients.
- Require ensemble participation, large and small.

Collaborative work between colleges.

- Invite colleagues to perform and give master classes regularly.

Collegiate Chapter News

Steele Moegle, Collegiate Chairman

The following articles were written by collegiate members Lana Carver at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, and Robin Bertucci at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

In October, I had the opportunity to attend the LMTA 56th Annual Convention at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana. As a new member to the Louisiana Tech chapter of MTNA, I was not quite sure what I would be in for at the convention, and I had no idea it would change the way I run my own private studio. I benefited immensely from attending an open forum which gave us students the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the inner workings of private studios. We were able to put our hands on syllabi written by teachers who have taught for twenty-plus years, and given advice on how to handle certain studio "situations."

Before I attended the forum, I was undercharging, letting skipped lessons slide, and carrying unnecessary amounts of stress. Through our open discussion at the forum, I learned that I should charge what I am worth. I also gleaned from the conversation that every music teacher should pass out a syllabus explaining monthly payments, fees, attendance policy, make-up lesson policy, and recital policy.

Since October, my private studio has improved by leaps and bounds. I have changed my payment policy from lessons per month to a flat rate every month, which has given me more stability, less stress, and has improved student attendance. I added a music fee, which is paid once every semester. This fee has made it possible for me to purchase music and theory books for every one of my students. I have also put all of my studio policy into a syllabus format, and received signatures from all of my students' parents agreeing to the "new and improved" terms.

As much information and knowledge as I obtained through attending the LMTA 56th Annual Convention, I benefited most by discovering a supportive society of working music teachers. Being a member of Music Teachers National Association has provided me with a support group, and has given me the tools to begin a successful career as a music teacher.
Lana Carver, Louisiana Tech University

"You're majoring in music? Piano? Wow. Well... it's good that you're doing what you love." This is often the response I receive, accompanied by a skeptically raised eyebrow, when I discuss my major with a non-music friend. Some days I second-guess my decision to major in piano pedagogy as well. I ask myself, "Why in the world am I going to LSU to learn how to teach piano to students who, except for the occasionally diligent child, will probably not practice enough and will push my patience to its limits?" Everyone has "those days." I might think that "those days" made up a majority of teachers' lives if it were not for an inspiring group of people in our community. Fortunately, being involved in LSU's MTNA Collegiate Chapter has provided a link to local piano teachers who are my inspiration and living proof that teaching is fulfilling, rewarding and perhaps even a little fun.

When I agreed to be vice president of our MTNA student chapter, I had no idea what the job required. I thought it would be a nice outlet for college students to vent to each other about their piano students who always come to lessons without books and who refuse to practice scales. I was very mistaken. The first order of business was to discuss how we were going to fund our expenses to attend the annual LMTA convention as well as the national MTNA conference. We decided it would be appropriate to hold a benefit recital and ask for donations to send us to our conventions. Overcoming our performance anxieties, we gave our benefit recital not knowing who would come to see us. The audience consisted of more than just our parents and school friends; to our pleasant surprise, most of the local piano teachers came to support us, financially as well as personally. This was just the beginning of our chapter's relationship with these teachers.

The piano teachers in our community have been incredibly supportive of the music majors at LSU. They have opened their homes and studios to us while they teach so we can observe them for our classes. They also invite us to parties planned around many different schedules (including LSU's football schedule) in order to include us. It is difficult to feel discouraged while surrounded by so many encouraging role models who want nothing more than to see us succeed as piano teachers.

One teacher in particular has given me an opportunity that I wish every college student were able to have. This teacher offered me a job as a teaching assistant in her studio. Accepting this position was one of the best decisions I've ever made. There is only so much a college student can learn in pedagogy classes at school. Teaching in an established studio under the guidance of a teacher who, in my biased opinion, is one of the best around, has been an invaluable experience to me.

In the short year and a half I have taught at this studio, I've learned as much as, if not more, than my students. I've learned how to adequately help students prepare for competitions. I've learned that students will memorize ten pieces of their own accord if offered a huge chocolate bar as a reward. I've learned that if a teacher has high expectations for a student, the student is more likely to rise to the challenge. I've learned that it's alright for a student to not always meet those expectations. When I asked my seven-year-old student if he had his solo festival piece memorized yet, he answered, "Well Miss Robin, it's not perfect but I can try my best." I've learned that fostering this attitude in students is one of the most important roles of teaching.

So yes, everyone has bad days now and then. Sometimes a student just can't seem to remember that F# in the key signature, or remember to cross under finger 3 in a scale, or that when there's purple tape (and a star and a circle and highlighter) over a specific note that it means to change hand positions there. In the end, however, it's all worth it. Because when all is said and done, my non-music friend is right. I do love piano. I do love to teach. And it really is great that I can do what I love. Of course I still have much to learn, but fortunately I have no shortage of knowledgeable and inspiring role models who continue to help and encourage me at every opportunity.

I live for the days when I ask my student, "So what was the most exciting thing you did this weekend?" and she answers, "I learned my whole piece hands together and memorized it!" So bring on the skeptically raised eyebrows and pitying smiles. I've found what I love to do and I'm doing it wholeheartedly. And if I can be half as inspiring and successful as the piano teachers who have mentored me, I'll feel that all of my efforts have been well rewarded.

Robin Bertucci, Louisiana State University

Students Helping Students/Playathon

Sue Steck-Turner, SHS/Playathon Chairman

GO FOR THE GOLD GOOD SHS PLAYATHON OLYMPICS

And the winner is . . .



We extend our thanks to all the students and teachers who participated in the 2008 SHS Playathons—Go for the ~~Gold~~ Good. From your many efforts, \$3585 was added to make a grand total of \$5244 available to needy students. All funds raised at SHS Playathons augment the SHS Fund which assists students in need of financial aid to continue their music study.

SHS provides subsidies for tuition, music, instruments repair, fees, etc. Since the 2008 State Convention \$2475 has been dispersed,

including a donation to Texas students who were impacted by Hurricane Ike.

With the current economic situation, we anticipate that more students will be in need of help to continue their study. Please do not hesitate to send requests to SHS. To receive aid, teachers must submit a SHS Request Form, supplying information and justifying the need for assistance.

Remember that SHS Playathons can be held anytime by individual teachers and/or by affiliates. Information about Playathons and SHS Assistance may be found on the LMTA website or obtained from Sue Steck-Turner (steckturner@hotmail.com).

Piano Area

Louisiana - A Pianist's Journey

Dr. Kenneth O. Boulton
Associate Professor of Piano
Southeastern Louisiana University

It is my great pleasure to share with you some information about my latest recording, "Louisiana - A Pianist's Journey," that you might find enlightening for yourself and perhaps relevant for your own teaching. As a performing artist, teacher, and relative newcomer to Louisiana, I found this project particularly thrilling and engrossing. Not only did it "rescue" a body of splendid piano repertoire previously unknown, but also allowed me to promote an important aspect of Louisiana's classical music tradition. As someone who cares much for the cultural health of our state, I have been extremely pleased by how this recording has been received, highlighted by a 2007 Grammy® Award nomination.

The recording celebrates the fact that Louisiana and, in particular, New Orleans have always captivated the imaginations of musicians and composers around the world, whether or not they had any personal contact with the region. Presented are eight fascinating and

distinctive "reflections" of Louisiana for solo piano, written by composers who all came from the classical music world, but who also represent an array of backgrounds and traditions. The music encompasses a period from 1847 to 1949, and includes the following works: *Louisiana Suite*, Op. 97 by Walter Niemann; *Louisiana Nights, Valse Creole* by Roy Spaulding Stoughton; *New Orleans Miniatures* by John Parsons Beach; *Mississippi Suite* by Ferde Grofé; *La Savane, Ballade Creole*, Op. 3 by New Orleans native Louis Moreau Gottschalk; *Creole Sketches*, Op. 15 by Cedric Wilmont Lemont; *Sweet Louisiana* by Albert W. Ketelbey; *Louisiana Story* by Virgil Thomson. Without exception, the music is fresh, evocative, and deserving of repeated performances. From this list, I would like to underline and describe several works that some of your students may find intriguing and attractive for their own study, including Lemont's *Creole Sketches*, Grofé's *Mississippi Suite*, and Beach's *New Orleans Miniatures*.

Born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, Cedric Wilmont Lemont (1879-1954) was a prolific composer, publishing some 600 compositions. The majority of his works for piano were pedagogical in nature, such as his set of studies entitled *Facile Fingers*, a best-seller of the day. Although this music may have lacked expressive complexity, Lemont's pedagogical pieces did employ a diverse style of harmony and rhythm rare among teaching literature of that period. Dating from 1916, Lemont's piano suite, *Creole Sketches*, is a fanciful notion of everyday life in 19th-century Louisiana. It also illustrates Lemont's typical approach to producing clever, yet accessible music for upper intermediate piano students. Each of the suite's nine movements is in three-part form, balancing cozy and intimate lyricism with lively enthusiasm. There are also characteristic titles, such as "Magnolia Bloom," "Banjo Dance," and "On the Levee." The music is reminiscent of the salon style typical of the day, though the sixth movement, "Memories," contains meandering chromaticism and floating seventh chords alluding to the music of Robert Schumann and Claude Debussy. The entire set is quite lengthy, although clearly not dependent on a complete performance to be effective. Upper-intermediate to lower-advanced students should find this music technically accessible and unfailingly tuneful.

One of America's most versatile musicians, Ferdinand Rudolph von (Ferdé) Grofé (1892-1972) enjoyed an enormously successful and wide-ranging career as composer, conductor, arranger, pianist and violinist. He is best known for his original symphonic compositions such as *Death Valley Suite* and his most beloved work, *Grand Canyon Suite*. Grofé's evocative *Mississippi: A Journey in Tones*, or simply *Mississippi Suite*, was composed in 1925 (Grofé's revised piano version, entitled *Mississippi: A Tone Journey*, was published in 1926). Grofé's musical portrait of the magnificent Mississippi is divided into four sections, with each movement depicting the river's charm and the lands through which it flows. The first movement, "Father of Waters," is an impression in tone of the river itself, majestic and smooth flowing. There is also thematic reference to the earliest residents of the Mississippi's banks, the Native American tribes who gave the river its moniker, misi-zibi ("great river"). The impish second movement is entitled "Huckleberry Finn," and according to Grofé, paints a musical picture of "the haunts of the roguish boy of Mark Twain's famous story near the Mississippi." "Old Creole Days" sets a romantic mood that evokes moonlit Louisiana gardens, or as suggested by the composer, "a lullaby and cradle song." Completing the tonal portrait of the mighty river, "Mardi Gras," with its cakewalk opening and Gershwin-esque middle, depicts the bustle, jollity, and excitement of the famed New Orleans festival. The physical and tonal dimensions of this entire suite reflect its orchestral origins. Students having studied and performed Brahms and Liszt should be well-equipped to sweep this music off the page, and for anyone with a taste for the sumptuous Gershwin-esque jazz language, this wonderful suite is just the ticket.

Part of the American nationalist movement of the early 20th century, John Parsons Beach (1877-1953) had a particular affinity for all things Louisiana. Composed in 1906 while he

was living in New Orleans, Beach's suite, *New Orleans Miniatures*, is a leisurely and evocative promenade through the sights and sounds of New Orleans' historic *Vieux Carré*. Each of the six movements describes a note-worthy landmark or event in this most celebrated and colorful section of the city. The first movement, "Esplanade," has the relaxed grandeur of a stroll down Esplanade Avenue, which links the French Quarter with expansive City Park. A complete contrast emerges with the suite's second movement, "In an Ursuline Court," where subtle chromaticism suggests the courtyard of the Old Ursuline Convent (completed in 1753 for the Ursuline Nuns, this convent is believed to be the oldest French colonial building in the Mississippi valley). A richly robust melody shrouded by tender arpeggios marks the suite's third movement, "Balcony Lyric," which calls to mind the many ornate wrought iron balconies lining the narrow streets of the Quarter. The fourth movement, "Place d'Orleans," is distinguished by quietly resonating harmonies, echoing the contemplative reverence of St. Louis Cathedral, the heart and soul of old New Orleans. The gaiety and indulgence of New Orleans' most famous annual celebration, Mardi Gras, is the subject of the suite's fifth movement, "Masques." The music skips and leaps to a rollicking beat, placing the listener in the heart of this notable (if not notorious) party. Recalling themes from "Balcony Lyric," the final movement, "Envoi," bids a quiet farewell to the city. Beach's *New Orleans Miniatures* is possibly the most remarkable piece on the recording. Its use of color and tone is particularly French, utilizing a captivating combination of Claude Debussy's impressionistic language with Gabriel Fauré's tender lyricism.

If you have not yet acquired your own copy of this recording, please consider it for you and your students. You may purchase it through the Cambria Masterworks website (www.cambriamus.com).

If you would like to acquire a copy of any of the scores from the recording, email Kenneth.Boulton@selu.edu.

String Area

The Tradition of Transcription for Viola

By: Lianne Huff

Tradition is the cornerstone of classical music. There is a style for Beethoven that must be followed and everyone has an opinion as to how a violinist should play a Bach sonata. Violists, while being immersed in this atmosphere of tradition within the orchestra, have the advantage of paving their own paths when it comes to solo literature.

The great cellist, Janos Starker once said "the viola is an instrument without tradition." It is only in the past hundred years or so that the viola has come to be viewed as more than an ensemble instrument. Taking its place as a solo instrument has proved difficult, in one part due to the stigma attached to the instrument, as some consider it to be somewhat less important than the violin, and due to the lack of solo music written for the instrument. Thus, in the 1900's many violists commissioned works for the instrument, but more simply transcribed.

Transcriptions now make up a considerable portion of the violist's repertoire. Students and teachers examine violin and cello literature extensively looking for pieces that challenge the violist not only technically but musically. A transcription is more than simply transcribing the

piece into alto clef. It must consider the overall musical impression that the composer originally intended, as well as the differences in the range of the instruments.

Most often a cello composition will be transposed up an octave and a violin composition will be transposed down a fifth when preparing a viola transcription. These are simple logistics, the difficult part lies in adjusting passages so that they convey their original musical meaning in a way suited to the tone and range of the viola.

When I transcribe a composition I think of it as being a short story with each movement a different scene. Therefore to drastically alter the musical phrases would change the outcome of the story. Likewise to hold strictly to the original phrases may not be in the story's best interest, nor will it convey to the listener the distinct differences that the viola brings to the piece.

At present I am working on a transcription of Eugene Ysaÿe's *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 27 for violin solo (Obsession). Ysaÿe was a master of technique and his works are infused with a passion that spoke to me. When I first heard the piece I instantly knew that I would make a transcription for solo viola. In transcribing the piece which is decidedly programmatic, I first looked at the meaning of the movements.

Movement one, Obsession, begins with a quotation from J.S. Bach's *Violin Partita in E Major* which is obsessively referenced while the player rebels against its influence. Movement two, Malinconia, is a song of death. Quotations of the Dies Irae theme summon up images of darkness, while Ysaÿe's original melody is filled with regret. Movement three, Danse des Ombres, portrays a dance of the spirits and the work closes with Les Furies, the fourth movement, which depicts the Furies chasing the spirits back to Hades. Throughout the piece the Dies Irae theme reoccurs in a recurring monologue though never as distinctly as in the second movement.

A transcription of the Ysaÿe sonata presents interesting challenges for the viola. The prolonged passages of double and triple stops are difficult to execute and the fast, yet flowing string crossings challenge the player in ways rarely seen in viola literature. However, most of the passages are playable and, when successfully achieved, I believe that the performer will be a better violist after mastering the necessary techniques. The greatest difficulty presented is the hand span required for the composition. The larger size of the viola makes some of the passages extremely difficult to execute while maintaining tone quality. Most of these portions were rewritten using the same pitch in inverted intervals.

An additional problem is the high tessitura required in fast passage work where maintaining a beautiful clear sound on the viola is nearly impossible to achieve. When transcribing these passages I considered the overall phrasing and whether an alteration would help or hurt the musical effect. The overall character of this sonata is very dark and therefore dropping a passage down an octave or inverting the intervals of a section allows the performer to take advantage of the rich sound of the viola which is one of its greatest assets.

Every transcription should be looked at with a critical eye to make sure that it was done in a way that did not damage the compositional integrity of the piece and was not done solely to demonstrate the player's technical prowess. It should be undertaken because you feel inspired by the composition and want to be able to play something amazing on your instrument. A transcription should be played for love of the piece and with respect to the composer. I believe that Ysaÿe would not mind this sonata being played on the viola as he was very fond of the instrument and played it in many ensembles. Also, Ysaÿe taught William Primrose, a famous violist. It was actually Ysaÿe who encouraged Primrose to make his career on the viola instead of the violin.

Transcribing pieces for the viola is a passion of mine. When I hear a composition I know right away if I want to play it regardless of what instrument it was originally written for. I feel that to tell a person they can not play a piece of music because it was not written for their instrument is similar to banning books; it never works and just increases a person's curiosity of the subject matter. Therefore, I say a person should play what interests them, not what is just meant for them.

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