

Banff 2002: Master Classes, Lectures, and Voices from Little Notes

Terry B. Ewell
Towson, Maryland

The IDRS 2002 Conference in Banff was marvelous for many reasons not the least of which were the wonderful master classes and lectures. Below are highlights from my notes and comments about the sessions that I was able to attend. Only statements contained in quotation marks “ ” are direct quotes. All the presenters gave wonderful contributions and I thank them for sharing their expertise with us.

STEPHEN MAXYM, MASTER CLASS (BASSOON), 07 AUGUST

Mr. Maxym started the master class by explaining the difference between a good conductor and a bad conductor. A bad conductor says you need to get from one point to the next and will tell you how to take every step. A good conductor will say we need to get from here to there, let's walk together. He characterized his approach as one that walked beside the student. His teaching method allows for the musical potential of each student to develop uniquely.

This master class was devoted to orchestral solos. **Eduardo Sirtori** (Argentina) started with the solo in the first movement of Ravel's *Piano Concerto*. They worked on slur from C#5 (high C#) to E5 (high E). Mr. Maxym suggested another fingering for E5 that made a smoother slur. To clarify the 3rd movement 16th-note passage Mr. Maxym noted that Ravel was a jazz enthusiast. He recommended bringing out eighth-note pulses: emphasize notes on the beat and between beats. This gives the passage a jazzier character. Mr. Sirtori continued with the opening solo to the *Rite of Spring*. Mr. Maxym noted that the title speaks to a primitive situation, not sophistication. The ballet concerns animal and human sacrifice. Think of one of the primitives walking with a sense of fear. Mr. Maxym went on to talk about “canceling the resistance.” “Support brings you to the embouchure.” When you cancel the resistance you enter at your pleasure. Mr. Maxym put his wallet under Mr. Sirtori's left arm, told him to squeeze slightly and the first C5 (high C) came out perfectly. Mr. Maxym explained that each high note can be facilitated by proper use of the back muscles. Different degrees of pressure give different tone colors. For a lighter sound, “take out a dollar” from wallet! (I hope that some day Mr. Maxym will donate his magic wallet to the IDRS; it is sure to be a collectable item.)

Sarah S. from Oberlin performed the opening

solo from *Scheherazade*. Mr. Maxym noted the need for a mental image of the piece and gave an overview of the character of *Scheherazade*. When she tells the story you get the sense of invitation and denial. In the cadenza he noted the need to provide a sense of progress in each of the three sections. The statement D4, E4, F4 should be lengthened and more dramatic each time. Ms. S. next performed the opening solo to Tchaikovsky's *6th Symphony*. Mr. Maxym suggested shaping the notes by starting louder and then giving a diminuendo on the G2 (low G) to the F#2. Once again out came the wallet--placed under the left arm--and the “resistance was cancelled.” Ms. S. was told to squeeze the wallet before playing the E2 (low E). When all worked well, Mr. Maxym took back his wallet stating, “I want my money back.”

Carrie S. from Queens, New York played the opening of the last movement of Tschaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony*. They discussed the problem of a long crescendo up to C#5 (high C#). Mr. Maxym suggested creating an illusion. Diminuendo each phrase prior to the next gesture. Make a crescendo by stepping up each phrase not by a long crescendo through each note. This will create the illusion of a long crescendo. Ms. S. later performed the staccato eighth-note solo from Beethoven's 6th symphony in the 1st movement. Mr. Maxym discussed achieving maximum resonance points on each note. It was fascinating to watch him demonstrate his idea. He played C4 (C above open F) above and below the resonance point while using the right hand to visually show the changes in voicing. Later Ms. S. performed the bassoon solo from *Bolero*. Mr. Maxym suggested playing C5 (high C) with the left hand index finger and the D and C flick (or left thumb) keys. He stated “get your support up higher and your fingers will be better.” Mr. Maxym also suggested using the left hand only fingering for A4 (high A). This was to eliminate as many cross fingerings as possible.

Kathy (Cathy?) D. of Montreal concluded the master class with a performance of the famous bassoon solo from Stravinsky's *Firebird*. For the last Bb3 he recommended using the forked right hand fingering (x o x) with the right thumb Bb key. It gives you a lighter note that is not sharp. Throughout the master class Mr. Maxym demonstrated a great ability to affirm students.

**WAYNE RAPIER,
MASTER CLASS (OBOE), "CONTINUING THE
TABUTEAU TRADITION," 08 AUGUST**

Mr. Rapier stated that M. Tabuteau was "the teacher of the twentieth century." Tabuteau's teaching was characterized by placing students in difficult situations, he did not hand you the solution on a silver platter. For instance, he would find the lowest note in the key, ask you to play it pianissimo, crescendo then decrescendo. Mr. Rapier stated, "He taught by kicking you in the right direction." Robert Bloom said, "We learned in self defense."

Tabuteau added sound motion to the scales: dynamics with "ups" and "downs." "Ups" added more tension; "downs," relaxation. The "downs" always coincide with harmonic movement. On the down inflections Mr. Rapier drops the jaw at the end in order to slow motion in the tone. Mr. Rapier also played with a more active vibrato on the "ups."

The number system tests your outer limits. If you mastered these scalings you could play dynamics, control timber, etc. Mr. Rapier related this to airplane flying. Skills as a pilot are gained by years of practice and acrobatics. Tabuteau spoke of the numbers as a protection for the "lesser days." They were for when you were in your 200th concert, for when you would rather be digging ditches. The numbers ensured that you still gave inflections even if you did not feel musical.

Mr. Rapier suggested that a serious student practice three hours a day and divide their practice into 1/3 basics of scales and intervals, 1/3 studies such as Barret or Gillet, and 1/3 recital or other music. At Curtis the students worked mostly on scales, intervals and oboe studies.

Mr. Rapier developed a wonderful rapport with both students at the master class. His method of instruction is quite supportive and amply peppered with analogies and demonstrations.

**ARTHUR WEISBERG,
MASTER CLASS (BASSOON), 08 AUGUST**

This master class was devoted to the *Sarabandes* of the Bach *Cello Suites*. I came late to the master class and missed some of the opening comments. Mr. Weisberg recommends taking all first repeats. He noted, however, that you can never be criticized for taking all repeats. Of the 20 editions of the suites he prefers the publication by Bärenreiter. It has no dynamics and hardly any articulations and is the cleanest edition.

Mr. Weisberg went on to say that in Baroque music we must play with ornamentation. However, Bach wrote out his own ornaments so Mr. Weisberg recommended only sparsely adding ornaments, if at all. The trills should not be played too fast but similar to other subdivisions in the music. He then performed

the *Sarabandes* from suites 2, 5, and 6 playing on his Fox 201 with the non-flicking system.

The first participant in the master class was Harvey Fleet. They discussed whether or not to approach trills from above. Mr. Weisberg adheres to no single rule, although he approaches trills from the upper note about 80 to 90 percent of the time. A discussion of vibrato then came up. Mr. Weisberg does use vibrato in performances of the *Suites*, but in deference to the open strings on the cello he does not vibrate low C and low G. He advocates some adjustments to the music to take advantage of the range of the bassoon. He prefers to avoid the broken thirds and instead transposes some notes down an octave.

Ben from Texas (now studying at Oberlin) performed the *Sarabande* from the *Third Suite*. Mr. Weisberg noted the difficulty with finding places to breathe in the movement. He talked about the need for quick breaths in this movement. You can breathe almost anywhere if you do it quickly enough and place it correctly. Mr. Weisberg spoke to the need for a smoother upper melodic line between B3 (B above open F) at the end of measure 1 to Bb3 in the down-beat of measure 2 by holding B3 as long as possible before C2 (low C). He prefers playing a low F (F2) instead of open F (F3) in measure 2. There is also an opportunity for a low B (B1) in the opening. Ganon from Australia (now studying at Indiana University) also performed and elicited comments about rubato from Mr. Weisberg.

The following day at lunch Mr. Weisberg asked me if I thought a bassoon edition of the cello suites edited by him would be worthwhile. I said, "Yes." In hindsight what I really meant to say is "Are you kidding? We are always ready for a publication from you."

**JIM RODGERS,
LECTURE/MASTER CLASS (BASSOON),
"AUDITIONS," 07 AUGUST**

Jim Rodgers, contrabassoon and bassoonist with the Pittsburgh Symphony, spoke of training for an audition just as one prepares for an Olympic event. Olympians include cross training in their regimen not just practice on one event. Excerpts are analogous to the 100-meter dash, a single event. Working out in other ways (studies, scales, etc.) is important for conditioning and preparation for an audition.

He gave us seven suggestions for auditions:

- 1) Make a lot of reeds.
- 2) Practice your scales, intervals, and long tones. He suggested playing the Milde Scale and Chord Studies. "Beef yourself up by playing all 25 every day!"
- 3) Put all your excerpts together in one place (a bound collection).
- 4) Tape yourself and study the tape. Be very honest with yourself. Take notes on the sessions. He sug-

gested taping on Monday, for instance, and then listening on Wednesday or Thursday for more objectivity.

- 5) Play for your colleagues, particularly the ones who are very critical.
- 6) Make sure bassoon is oiled and keys do not clack.
- 7) Bring some food to the audition. You never know if there is a place to eat near the audition. You might be there all day. His favorite food for auditions is Kellogg's Nutrigrain bars.

The top three criteria for auditions are pitch, rhythm, and context. Context is imagining the orchestra or accompaniment sounding while you perform.

Mr. Rodgers encouraged participants **Ed Robert** and **Debbie T.** to develop a sense of underlying pulse by careful and repeated work with the metronome. Mr. Rodgers spoke to the entomological roots of rubato as a stealing from one beat to give to another. There is, however, still an underlying tempo. Mr. Rodgers concluded the master class by stating that he has taken forty auditions. When asked how many reeds he makes a week he replied, "Ten."

WILLIAM DAWSON AND MARGARET RUF, LECTURE, "PAIN IN THE PERFORMER: A MINI-COURSE IN SELF HELP," 9 AND 10 AUGUST

Each session began with a lecture by **Dr. Dawson**. He made the point that almost all musicians will experience some pain in their lives due to practice or performance. A quick poll of the audience revealed everyone in attendance had experienced some performance related pain or injury. His first lecture discussed the spine and its sources of pain. The second lecture centered on the upper extremity (shoulder to fingertips).

Most intriguing to me was Mr. Dawson's discussion in the second lecture. He gave credit to Hunter Fry, a pianist and plastic surgeon from Melbourne, for these causes for overuse of a muscle or tissue:

- 1) A change in time times intensity. A common example is a rapid change in the amount of exercise or practice. For example, an athlete conditioned to run 5 miles suddenly runs 12 miles and experiences muscle or tissue overuse. For musicians this can happen with a new instrument, a new teacher, a new job, or performing on additional instruments. All can create a problem unless the person gradually adjusts to the new demands.
- 2) Technical factors. This can occur from misuse or improper technique. For instance, abnormal fingerings or fingerings that are not ergonomic.
- 3) Genetic factors such as hypermobility or double jointedness. Loose ligaments allow the joints to move in excessive motion.
- 4) Muscle and tendons tighter than they should be. This is the opposite of hypermobility.

Ms. Ruf provided excellent exercises and demonstrations at both sessions. She distributed several handouts detailing ways to condition and stretch to avoid injury. In particular she gave detailed attention to proper posture and amply demonstrated balanced seating and standing positions. Both lectures were well attended, indicating great interest in the subject from those attending the conference.

GEORGE SAKAKEENY, MASTER CLASS (BASSOON), 10 AUGUST

The program notes promised that the master class would give, "a holistic look at how to play the bassoon." Indeed, there were ample indications of how **Mr. Sakakeeny** practiced this holistic approach. **Katherine** performed the 1st movement of the Saint-Saëns *Sonata for Bassoon and Piano*. Mr. Sakakeeny prefers a faster tempo to this movement with an emphasis on the allegretto tempo marking. He spoke of the piano opening as an image of heaven and a harp playing. "We are in the business of getting people in touch with their souls." A lesson with Mr. Sakakeeny is full of hand gestures to the music while the student plays. This is an aid to the student in musical phrasing and emotional portrayal in the music.

Mr. Sakakeeny addressed three other aspects of the movement. He spoke to the difficulty of sustaining a crescendo and building up the line for a minute or more to a climax. He suggested shaping within each phrase which each at a distinct dynamic level. This is "more like going up stairs than in an airplane." He also noted that the new Peters edition of the work does not indicate the ad lib portion at the end of the 1st movement. He prefers playing the low D (D2) and following notes instead of the passage as printed. To improve the intonation on the last high B (B4) he suggested leaving off the left hand little finger resonance key (Eb key).

Ben from Texas (a freshman at Oberlin) performed the Milde *Concert Study No. 3 in Ab*. Mr. Sakakeeny noted the difficult aspects of the study: a 9/8 time signature at a slow tempo. Mr. Sakakeeny spoke about emphasizing certain divisions of the beat and allowing decay in other divisions: ONE Two three, FOUR Five six, SEVEN, Eight, nine. They also worked on phrasing within dynamic terraces: piano, mezzo forte, forte, etc. He suggested six dynamic ranges, pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff. Mr. Sakakeeny went on to speak about the need for constant subdivisions. There are different reasons for subdivision:

- 1) so you can play rhythmically and
- 2) you need to know how much time it takes to shape something, to feel the beat deeply.

Ben performed from the Kovar edition of the etudes. Mr. Sakakeeny prefers the Kalmus edition,

which is “pretty much what the original looked like.”

Lindsey E. from Oregon (entering freshman at Oberlin) performed one of the Mignone *Waltzes* (D minor). Mr. Sakakeeny noted the importance of employing a tempo relationship that sounds like a waltz for these pieces and associating the rubato in the work to that underlying tempo. He stated that music by Villa Lobos and Mignone did not contain a lot of dynamic indications or other markings, the dynamics and other inflections need to be added by the performer. The end of the session was spent avoiding a wind shaping to each staccato note. He said that you should play the staccato notes like you are playing legato: avoid jaw bouncing and changes in the breath during the note. Instead “tongue the wind.”

**MARK EUBANKS,
LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION
(BASSOON REED MAKING), 09 AUGUST**

Mr. Eubanks opened the lecture by noting the challenge by **Arthur Grossman** to find a place on the bassoon reed to tune every note. This challenge still compels Mr. Eubanks toward new discoveries. The lecture, however, went well beyond a discussion of reed making. Mr. Eubanks shared his insights on conditions that impact the reed, bassoon, player, bocal selection, cane selection, and standards for professional bassoonists.

The lecture built upon and further developed his publication *Advanced Reed Design & Testing Procedures for Bassoon*. Mr. Eubanks’s method of reed making is highly unusual due to its interactive approach. His procedure is based upon a series of tests with the reed, most of which involve harmonics on the bassoon. Failed tests will prescribe certain scrapes or adjustments. Thus, each reed is scraped according to its own unique requirements and adjusted to the current performance conditions.

**JOHN MILLER,
MASTER CLASS (BASSOON), 09 AUGUST**

Mr. Miller’s master class was devoted to the *Concertino per Fagotto* by Michael Haydn, brother of Joseph Haydn. The piece was discovered in several libraries in Austria. In one collection it is copied as part of a symphony and in another as part of a serenade.

In response to **Debbie Torp’s** performance Mr. Miller spoke to several aspects of the work. He chooses not to ornament the work. He does, however, add articulations (slurs). He noted the expectation that the performer would change articulation as desired, which is also the case in the Mozart *Bassoon Concerto*. Grace notes are given a special emphasis, since they are not written as full notes. They can be longer or shorter. Mr. Miller brings out the grace notes by emphasizing the slur to the next note. In a later

section in the work with repeated trills he suggested making the trill less expressive the first time: no upper auxiliary, and different speed. More expressive trills are needed the second time, for instance in measures 98 and 100.

The next participant was **Carrie** from Chicago (presently living in New York). They worked on places to breathe and spoke about the careful and well-paced termination of trills. Mr. Miller explained that trills have to sound inevitable and expressive. Mr. Miller always practices the ending of the trill first. The way you get out of the trill and land on the next note is most important. Later Mr. Miller recommended a faster tempo of to the middle section of the work. It has a bit of a Gypsy flavor with smaller value notes in a freer rhythm. Measures 51-52 should move in the accompaniment to prepare this. **Kerri** performed the printed cadenza, which Mr. Miller stated, “rambles around and has some weak harmonic movement. Otherwise it is good.” Mr. Miller uses portions of the beginning and ending, modifying it for his cadenza.

Many of the issues-articulation and grace notes—that Mr. Miller addressed in this session are more completely discussed in his forthcoming article, “John Miller’s Master Class on the Mozart Bassoon Concerto K191.” I encourage readers to watch for its appearance. John Miller has a well-studied approach to his performances. This study, however, never results in unmusical performances; rather they are performances well enlightened by his consideration of performance practice.

VOICES FROM LITTLE NOTES, A TINY TIRADE

It all started again in the John Miller master class. I hadn’t heard their voices for many years. Since I wrote the article in *The Double Reed* (1997, 20/1, pp. 85-90) and the letter of reply (*The Double Reed*, 1998, 21/1, p. 105) they had left me alone. I figured they must have gone on to pester some other soul since my penance by writing the article and letter seemed to appease them. They left me alone. Alone, that is, until John Miller’s master class. There again were those little notes talking to me from the page of Michael Haydn’s *Concertino*.

I don’t understand why, but those little notes—notes aborted before they live, meager dots in the womb of a score that never emerge—keep searching for me. Their pathetic little pleas spring forth: PLAY US, we want to live! Once again these musical Lilliputians have prodded me to be their champion, prophet, and spokesperson.

Most people call those little notes “cues” (Figure 1). In some editions the editor has even left out the little notes altogether: their tiny, pathetic existence not even acknowledged. In the autographs, copies, and scores from the Baroque and Classical period, however, there is nothing small about these notes. They are



Figure 1. Five Measures of “Little Notes” in the Opening of Karl Stamitz, *Concerto in F for Bassoon and Orchestra*, 2nd mov.

the same size as all the other notes on the page. Oddly enough, they appear to be treated with the same degree of care as the rest of the notes on the page.

These little notes keep asking questions of me:

- 1) Why did composers and copyists write thousands of notes that were not to be played? Surely they had something better to do with their time. Why did they write out so many notes and not just the measure or two prior to the entrance? Do they look anything like the other cues you see?
- 2) Why was so much ink and paper wasted? Was this due to the unionization of ink, quill, and paper mill workers?
- 3) Why are these “cues” given only in orchestral scores of concertos and not in other genres such as operas, chamber music, or symphonies? Did composers think that those playing concertos needed cues and those playing other genres didn’t?
- 4) Why does tutti mean “play together” in all other situations except when one performs a solo line in a concerto, where tutti becomes tacet?

5) Why are some “cues” lacking notes that look like places to breathe or places for the soloist to rest?

6) Why are there less “cues” for Vivaldi brass concertos than Vivaldi wind and string concertos? Were brass musicians smarter so that they needed less “cueing”?

7) Why are these little notes written in the range of the instrument? The solo bassoon does not, for instance, have violin cues. Likewise the violin part in a violin concerto does not receive cello cues.

- 8) Why don’t Weber or Strauss give “cues” in their scores but Mozart copies hundreds of “cueing” notes? Were musicians from the Romantic and later periods better trained to know when to enter so they didn’t need the cues?
- 9) Why are there no “cues” in most Mozart piano concertos? Doesn’t the pianist need cues as well?
- 10) Why does the composer write a “cues” after the soloist is finished playing? Is the composer afraid the performer might bow before the piece has ended? Is the composer concerned that the musician might walk off the stage early?

I am sure that if I can get those questions answered the little notes will leave me alone. But right now they are still talking to me. Can you hear them too?

Word has been received sadly of the death of IDRS Honorary Member **Stephen Maxym**, who passed away on Saturday October 12, 2002. The IDRS mourns his passing. We will have an article of tribute to Mr. Maxym in the next edition of the *Double Reed*.

The officers and members of IDRS extend their sincere sympathy to Alain de Gourdon on the passing of his wife, Dominique who died on September 9, 2002.