

RPYO News of Note

July 2007

From the Podium

By Dr. David Harman

Thank you for a Remarkable Season!

What an amazing year of music we've enjoyed together! Four years are always special ones, but this season seemed especially magical in so many ways. The fact that our orchestra could perform at the level necessary to tackle some really demanding pieces is a credit to your dedication and determination. It's risky enough to perform pieces by American composers. *The Symphonic Dances from West Side Story* and *Candide* are both compositions that may sound easy to the average listener because they are in our cultural blood. However, they're still beastly hard to perform well. What's more, it's especially exciting to learn about other cultures through experiencing their own musical masterworks, and performing those pieces on their home turf. That's what can make a tour so educational and enriching. We get to learn about other cultures in very direct and special ways.

The Challenge of Learning Bartók

Selecting appropriate pieces for a tour season is tricky. We needed to bring some of our very best examples of American symphonic music and play local selections that were significant and worthy of our dedicated and extensive rehearsal. Poland, Slovakia and especially Hungary enjoy such distinct and strong musical traditions. In the history of Hungarian music, one masterwork looms over the other fine pieces from that culture: Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. It's also one of the most challenging pieces in the repertoire and, on the surface at least, it's 180 degrees away from the comfort zone of Bernstein's familiar, jazzy pieces.

It may seem like an eternity ago, but it was only in September that we had our first interaction with the masterwork by our good friend, Mr. Bartók. It was fascinating for me to observe how we reacted to the initial meeting. Some of you came to me and simply said something to the effect of, "Are you nuts?" The Bartók poses remarkable technical challenges for the

entire ensemble. It is called, after all, a Concerto for orchestra. Every instrument is part of that concerto approach both individually and collectively. The intervals often don't feel comfortable to our ears. Lots of seconds and tri-tones and sevenths, harmonic progressions that seem really hard to follow and, oh yes, there are lots of really goofy rhythms and shifting meters. All that confusion made for tough going in our initial rehearsals. Even when we got it close to correct, it still might have seemed incoherent.

In a way it was like learning a foreign language that doesn't have much obvious connection to English. It's just plain hard work. To succeed you have to believe that eventually, the fog of confusion will lift and you'll be able to understand those new sounds that initially seemed to be just frustrating gibberish. To your great credit, you took the challenge seriously and got the piece to the level necessary to give a very good performance of it in November at our first concert. Yes, it was a bit scary, but the result was certainly impressive, and the concentration necessary to make that first public performance a success was wonderful training for the rest of the year. That success also meant that we could grow into the piece in a very special way as we prepared for the experience of the tour.

I hope that by now in your musical life you've been able to play a favorite solo piece many times in performance. After a while, if the piece is really solid and has musical depth, it becomes like a really trusted and good friend whom you look forward to seeing as often as you can. Beethoven, Mozart and Brahms pieces often feel like that. You can always find something interesting each and every time you prepare the piece.

The Joy of Performing Bartók in His Hungary

We got to experience that special feeling with the Bartók. After re-heating it before the tour, it started to really seem secure. I could tell that as an orchestra we knew the piece well enough to begin to be flexible with it. After the concerts in Opola and Košice, I knew that we had a really clear grasp of the piece. The music was beginning to speak in a natural and confident way.

Then came Hungary. The sound of the language, the gypsy music at lunch, the look and feel of the countryside all began to have a noticeable effect. The real moment of transformation may have come during the morning folkdance presentation. To try our hands (and feet!) at that style of physical movement seemed to be very meaningful entry point into the culture. You simply had to do accents and rhythms in a different way for the dance to make musical and physical sense. And, oh yes, it was fun!

The concert that evening in Bartók Hall was amazing for so many reasons, but especially because of how the *Concerto for Orchestra* felt at that moment. We knew the notes, rhythms and dynamics to a degree that we did not have to concentrate on them. We simply experienced the music that exists beyond the notes. Did we sound “Hungarian?” That’s hard to say for sure. The local audience was certainly delighted. What I do know is that we sounded really more informed in our performance than we did in September, November or even three days earlier. For me, that’s the crux of the magic that your dedication, talent and focus created. Some of the same folks who expressed exasperation and confusion in September, told me that it was difficult to “say goodbye” to the Bartók. They had bonded with the piece and in a way with the culture as a result. That’s the magic of music. Bravo to you all for creating it!

David Harman

Welcome to Our New RPYO Members!

The RPYO welcomes forty-three new students to the orchestra and their families. These musicians, currently in grades seven through eleven, come from nineteen different schools throughout a large area stretching from Le Roy west of Rochester to Rushville and Dundee to the east.

It is always stimulating to hear the depth of musical talent and dedication displayed by the auditioning students. We congratulate the new members and their parents for their achievement. For many of you, playing in the RPYO has been a dream and a goal for many years. Others of you may have been recently inspired by teachers or friends—or by a newly discovered passion for music—to work hard and aim high for this distinction.

Over the next years you will be challenged, stretched, and rewarded for your efforts.

See you in September!

Bravo and Profound Thanks to Our Committed Parents

Saying goodbye to our forty seniors is hard enough, after seeing many of you every Sunday afternoon for three, four, even five years! For those of us working behind the scenes, saying goodbye to those parents who have given so much time, creative energy, and monetary support to the RPYO is, if anything, even more wrenching. We have come to depend upon your special talents, your generosity and caring, and your love of the orchestra. Each of you has left a mark. We are grateful not only for what you have done for the RPYO while your student has been a member but also for your friendship.

Several long-term and invaluable parent leaders are stepping down this year, some “graduating” with their students, others remaining involved but passing on the baton to their capable successors.

Jessica Schuster

Mother of graduated senior Sarah, a cellist, and sophomore bassist, Saul, Jessica has served as **RPYO Parent Advisory Chair** for the past three years. Before that she worked for two years editing the RPYO newsletter. Jessica brought to the RPYO her long experience as a committed community volunteer and her pleasure in taking on new challenges. She took it as a mission to discover new sources of financial support for the RPYO. She planned the drive to solicit business ads for our concert program books. To help students raise tour funds, she initiated the 2004 Italy Tour Colavita Basket Fundraiser and the 2007 Central Europe Tour Coffee Fundraisers. Her creative graphic skills added style to various RPYO items, from sweatshirts to fundraising brochures to raffle prizes.

The 2007 Tour to Central Europe became a major commitment of hers for the past two years. In addition to running the coffee fundraisers, Jessica took on two new jobs: organizing the Companion Tour to Central Europe for families and friends of the RPYO and putting together the Holocaust Awareness Group. This series of seven programs in the Schuster home brought RPYO students and families together to view Holocaust-related films, to listen to guest speakers, and to experience Jewish celebrations that had once been widely observed throughout the region we would be traveling in. In this way, Jessica believed, we could better understand what happened in Auschwitz and to

the lives of millions of people in Europe during the Holocaust of World War II.

Jessica will remain closely involved with the RPYO, developing new ways of developing the funds that are needed to keep the RPYO flourishing. Our thanks to **Mary Ellen Womack** and **Bonnie Kramer**, who already have served the RPYO well in various ways, for taking over as the new Parent Advisory Committee Co-Chairs.

Mike Laird

Father of Stewart, a violinist who graduated in 2006, Mike was the **RPYO Treasurer** for three years, making the big volunteer leap from Boutique candy purchaser to being the one in charge of budgets, financial reports, payments and day-to-day money matters. His former financial background at Kodak certainly helped, but more than that it was Mike's belief in the important work done for young people by the RPYO that inspired his deep involvement. Being Treasurer is such a critical job, one that is tied up with all aspects of the orchestra and requiring a huge amount of minute attention to both details and to the large picture. Mike was terrific at both, keeping a close eye on the never-ending details while always having the larger purpose of the RPYO in mind and thinking of ways to strengthen the organization.

Like so many of our involved parents, Mike decided that one volunteer job was not enough, so he agreed to take on the role of Tour Treasurer as well—a huge job in itself spread over eighteen months. He developed the tour payment plans, worked with families on individual payment schedules, devised spreadsheets of fundraising credits as well as tour payments, sent out payments reminders, followed the currency exchange markets, wrote the big checks to ACFEA, and made sure that the accounts balanced. Thanks in part to his eye on the state of the dollar and to some well-timed tour payments, our tour costs remained stable in a period of currency fluctuations.

Mike is handing over the spreadsheets to **Kevin Ryck** so that he can devote more time to becoming a jazz violinist.

Bill Munch

Father of RPYO harpist Liz, who graduated in 2004, and bassist Jim, who graduated this June, was in charge of our Retreat for six years (!). While he preferred to use the term "**Retreat Coordinator**," it was Bill who really ran the show, and flawlessly. It's

not easy task to bring together over one hundred teenagers and forty or fifty parents for two nights, four meals (and lots of snacks), four rehearsals, some fun, and contingency plans in case of rain or insects in the cabins. Bill started his planning the spring before the Retreat and during the summer created spreadsheets that covered every aspect of the weekend event so nothing was left to chance. The result each time was a wonderful weekend in which the ensemble took musical shape, the students made new friends, and the parents felt connected in deeper ways to the RPYO.

After the Retreat was over. Bill remained active on the Parent Advisory Committee, always willing to help out in other ways and to share his insights and expertise. He has passed on the "keys" to the Retreat to the new Coordinators, **Randy and Tina Curren**.

Brenda Munch

The Munch home for the past six years was the repository not only of Retreat plans, but also of tote boxes filled with supplies and refreshments for RPYO rehearsals. **Brenda, co-Chair of the Special Events Committee** (along with, most recently, **Sonya Zingo**) made sure that every Sunday there were snacks for the students. That took considerable effort, coordinating the volunteers who come each Sunday to set up the refreshments, but also the refreshments that are provided in rotation by RPYO families. In addition to the weekly snacks, Brenda, with her co-chairs, has planned the refreshments for concert dress rehearsals and arranged the lovely end-of-season receptions following our May concerts. This is essential behind-the-scenes work that contributes a great deal to the caring and supportive environment the RPYO is known for.

Thank you, Bill and Brenda, for making the RPYO a major part of your lives. We have all benefited so much from your involvement.

Kevin Ryck

Our **2007 Tour Committee Chair**, Kevin Ryck, is another example of RPYO parents who give more and more to the youth orchestra. After two years of working on the Tour, he has volunteered to take over the Treasurer's account books, and all the work that goes along with them. Kevin is the father of Elena, a violinist who graduated in 2006, of Stephen, now a 12th grade cellist, and of junior Angela, also a violinist. More than two years ago the Tour Committee first met to discuss where we should go. From those first wide-ranging discussions through the

actual Tour itself, Kevin was personally deeply involved in a great many of the planning, fundraising, and implementation details. The Tour not only brings our students more closely together. It also energizes a number of parents to come forward to help. Kevin very ably worked with these parents, coordinating their activities and sharing his boundless enthusiasm for the tour. The RPYO is very grateful for Kevin's substantial contribution to the success of this 2007 Tour.

Maureen Placilla

Mother of cellist D'Arcy, Maureen is handing over **editorship of the RPYO News of Note** to Ann Pillman. For the past three years, Maureen has put out three issues of the Newsletter each year. The newsletter celebrates the achievements of our students and informs our families and others about the RPYO. It is an important way of connecting with the RPYO and the larger community. We congratulate Maureen for her excellent work, and not the least for her tactful way of keeping us all to publication deadlines.

Impressions from an Extraordinary Tour

We left Rochester with snow on the ground. We returned to news of a possible snowstorm here in western New York. But for us in Central Europe, springtime blossomed, along with our students' musical performances, their new understanding of this part of Europe and its often tormented history, and their friendships that deepened with their RPYO colleagues.

So many fine impressions fill our memories from our ten days in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. Some of these from our students, chaperones, and staff will be shared in a special Tour Newsletter this summer. We want to thank here **Becky Loy**, for her nightly reports during the trip, and **Ann Pillman**, who immediately posted them so that our parents, and even grandparents across the country, we have learned, could almost feel that they were along with us. You can see a travelogue and photos from the tour on the RPYO web site (www.rpyo.org).

For most students the strongest impressions of our tour seem to have been these two events:

Our concert in Debrecen, Hungary, in Béla Bartók Hall and the superb performance there of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* that profoundly moved musicians and audience members alike.

Our visit to Auschwitz that brought home in ways books, speakers, and even films can never do the horrors inflicted on most of Europe by the Nazis during World War II and the suffering experienced by millions of people.

One of our students was moved to write the following reflection on visiting Auschwitz. She prefers not to give her name here. But in her anonymity, she speaks for us all.

I wish we had played Gorécki after going to Auschwitz. It's impossible to imagine the grief of the families who didn't have a chance to grow up and grow old together. That piece gives a tiny glimpse into the sorrow and wrenching pain of waiting for something that might not be there, but also the glimmer of hope that won't leave – can't leave. It's in human nature to hope. Some people call that God. Other people don't have a name for it. And others try to kill it in the name of something else, believing on the surface that they're doing the right thing but knowing deep down that suffocating hope can never be right. The worst part of the visit wasn't the gas chambers, as I expected it to be. That place was already so lost and so hopelessly dead that all I could do was pray. The hope there had already died. But when we saw the shoes, and the suitcases with names on them, and especially the baby clothes, I still felt a connection to the people who had come, some of them believing they would have a better life. Many of them were full of hope for the future, so many mothers with hopes for their children, so many parents watching their babies grow up. They thought they still had years left to grow up. I couldn't help thinking of how I've watched my own sister grow up, and how we'll keep growing up together until we're both ancient, and I can't imagine having that hope die.

Alumni News

Ward Stare, RPYO '99

Former RPYO Trombonist to Conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

At the invitation of Los Angeles Philharmonic Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen, Ward Stare, Principal

New RPYO Policy on Private Lessons

Trombonist of the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra from 1996 to 1999, has been appointed American Symphony Orchestra League Conducting Fellow at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He is one of five conductors selected this year for the prestigious American Conducting Fellows Program of the ASOL, a professional development program designed to place promising young conductors with American orchestras for in-depth residencies aimed at preparing them for the rigors of American music directorships.

Ward graduated from Pittsford Mendon High School in 1999 and played trombone in the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra starting in 1994. He studied trombone with George Osborn at the Eastman School of Music's Community Education Division. While a sophomore at the Juilliard School of Music in New York City, Ward was appointed in 2001, at the age of eighteen, principal trombonist of the Chicago Lyric Opera, under the musical direction of Sir Andrew Davis.

As a trombonist Ward has also performed with the Chicago Symphony and the New York Philharmonic. He has studied conducting with David Zinman, Janos Furst, and Jorma Panula and made his conducting debut in 2004 leading the Concertante di Chicago ensemble. Ward was invited last summer to study with David Zinman at the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen, Colorado. At the end of the festival he was awarded the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize. This prize includes an invitation to return to the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen in 2007 as an Academy Conductor on fellowship, along with a booking to share the podium with Maestro Zinman this August to conduct The Cleveland Orchestra in concert at its summer home at the Blossom Music Center.

His recent conducting engagements have included four concerts with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, in the United States as part of its 2007 North American Tour and in Moscow. Ward was also chosen as a cover conductor for the superstar Russian conductor Valery Gergiev, rehearsing Maestro Gergiev's Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra with famed pianist Emmanuel Ax in the Brahms' First Piano Concerto.

Taking a leave of absence from the Chicago Lyric Opera, Ward will conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic on its series of Toyota Symphonies for Youth and Neighborhood Concerts.

The RPYO Handbook has not stated up to now that private instrumental lessons are required of RPYO musicians throughout their tenure in the youth orchestra. In fact, it is a rare RPYO student who does not take private lessons, both from a personal desire to progress musically and from a wish to be able to contribute fully to the ensemble and its musical stature.

In recent years, the RPYO has taken on new challenges, such as this past season's *Concerto for Orchestra* by Bartók, that bring the orchestra up to a new and exciting musical level and create a tremendous feeling of accomplishment and pride among our musicians. In order to continue this musical growth that defines RPYO excellence in our community, the RPYO Board of Directors has decided to require private lessons from all its student musicians.

We understand that special circumstances may arise that can lead to temporary interruptions in lessons, such as transitions between teachers, altered family circumstances, or school or health issues. We ask families to let us know about special situations like these so together we can work out appropriate interim arrangements.

This new policy will be stated as follows in the 2007-2008 Handbook:

RPYO musicians are required to take private lessons on the instrument they play in the youth orchestra for the duration of their RPYO membership, unless excused for a limited period of time by the RPYO Music Director and Manager. Students with concerns about this should contact the RPYO Manager.

This policy will be put into effect in this way:

Beginning in the 2007-2008 RPYO season, all new Orchestra members will be required to take regular private lessons. Private lessons will be required of all Orchestra members beginning in the 2008-2009 RPYO season.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RPYO's 2007 SENIORS

Our Seniors will soon scatter throughout the country, following new and varied paths. We hope these paths can converge from time to time back here in Rochester and with your musical colleagues and with us at the RPYO. Best wishes from the RPYO!

<i>Evan Antes</i>	Viola	<i>Cleveland Institute of Music Viola Performance</i>	<i>Annie Lewek</i>	Cello	<i>Villanova University Business Program</i>
<i>Siobhán Ball</i>	Oboe	<i>Baldwin-Wallace College Music Therapy and Oboe</i>	<i>Laura Lindsay</i>	Violin	<i>Rochester Institute of Technology, Physician's Assistant Program</i>
<i>Andrew Boynton</i>	Percussion	<i>Ithaca College Music Ed. and Percussion</i>	<i>Jeffrey Ling</i>	Violin	<i>Boston College Biochemistry</i>
<i>Mike Capone</i>	Viola	<i>Ithaca College Music</i>	<i>Carena Liptak</i>	Violin	<i>Bard College English Lit & Writing</i>
<i>Elbert Chang</i>	Viola	<i>Cornell University Chemical Engineering</i>	<i>Alex Lo</i>	Violin	<i>Johns Hopkins University Biomedical engineering</i>
<i>Jennifer Chen</i>	Cello	<i>SUNY Binghamton Major undecided</i>	<i>Sean Lourette</i>	Cello	<i>Washington University Physics</i>
<i>Melody Chen</i>	Violin	<i>Boston University Major undecided</i>	<i>Alex Micciche</i>	Tuba	<i>SUNY Geneseo Major undecided</i>
<i>Glenna Curren</i>	Cello	<i>Oberlin Conservatory Cello Performance</i>	<i>Jim Munch</i>	String Bass	<i>Case Western University Mathematics and Physics</i>
<i>Ansel Eklund</i>	Violin	<i>Arizona State University Violin Performance</i>	<i>John Roberts</i>	Trumpet	<i>Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam Music Education</i>
<i>Ian Fields</i>	Cello	<i>Brown University following a gap year</i>	<i>Sarah Schuster</i>	Cello	<i>Brown University Physics and Philosophy</i>
<i>Jennifer Fox</i>	Trumpet	<i>Ithaca College Trumpet Performance</i>	<i>Carey Sleeman</i>	Violin	<i>Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam Music Education & Violin</i>
<i>Dan Goldowitz</i>	Horn	<i>University of Pennsylvania Biology and Pre-Med</i>	<i>Michael Sparhuber</i>	Percussion	<i>Curtis Institute of Music Percussion Performance</i>
<i>Andrew Harrison</i>	Trumpet	<i>Carnegie Mellon University School of Fine Arts Trumpet Performance</i>	<i>Jared Steinmiller</i>	Percussion	<i>Baldwin Wallace College Music Education</i>
<i>Rachel Hatch</i>	Viola	<i>Cornell University Animal Science</i>	<i>Isaac Tayrien</i>	Cello	<i>SUNY Fredonia School of Music Music Education & Cello</i>
<i>Lina Horwitz</i>	Violin	<i>Eastman School of Music Violin Performance</i>	<i>Kirstin Teall</i>	Viola	<i>Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam Music Education & Viola</i>
<i>Valerie Jordan</i>	Violin	<i>Carnegie Mellon University Tepper School of Business</i>	<i>Addison Teng</i>	Violin	<i>Oberlin Conservatory Violin Performance</i>
<i>Michael Kaiser</i>	Clarinet	<i>Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam Music Education</i>	<i>Allison Thurnherr</i>	Horn	<i>Mercyhurst College Math Education & Music</i>
<i>Julie Langmann</i>	Cello	<i>McGill University Sciences</i>	<i>Sara Turnbull</i>	Oboe	<i>Syracuse University Setnor School of Music Music Education</i>
<i>Adam Lee</i>	Cello	<i>Williams College Major undecided</i>	<i>Emily Wesson</i>	Violin	<i>Dartmouth College Major undecided</i>
			<i>Malcolm Williamson</i>	Trombone	<i>Eastman School of Music Trombone Performance</i>
			<i>Elizabeth Wu</i>	Violin	<i>University of Rochester Modern Cultures and Languages</i>