

# RPYO News of Note

Rochester Philharmonic **Youth** Orchestra

## Musical Friendships

by Dr. David Harman



Dr. David Harman  
Music Director, RPYO

Sometimes when we're meeting someone for the first time, we form a quick first impression based to some extent on what has already happened to us that day, that week or that year. We might think quickly, "Oh that's nice. This person is funny, interesting, reminds me of another friend of mine. . . ." You might also think, "Hum, I can't find much in common to talk about. I doubt that we'll become friends." Our first encounters with pieces of music can be like that too, especially if we've played in orchestras seriously for a year or two. We might think, "That's a nice melody. It sounds like the solo piece I played two years back. But it's not Beethoven, it might be . . ." "You might also think," "What was that sound? I could do without that in my ears."

Sometimes after we get to know a person more and interact with them, we develop opinions. We feel that we want to know more about them, spend more

time with them, can trust them to be a friend. That can happen even some of those people we didn't like initially. The same thing can happen with really great music. Even if we've worked hard to learn the notes and rhythms well and have played the piece in performance after working on it in rehearsals for a couple of months, we still discover things about it that keep us wanting to know more. If it's a really good piece, we might come to appreciate it after really learning it, even if we did not initially even like it.

### Making friends with music

Great music is really special in that regard. It can become like a wonderful, close friend. Over the years, of what I hope will be your fabulous, long and joyful musical life, you'll probably play the pieces we've done this season again and again. Maybe you liked all of them from the moment you first heard them. Or, perhaps you came to like them after working on them seriously for a while. Maybe you appreciate the beauty and special nature of a piece, even if you don't really love it.

The best music can be like a good group of friends. It can amuse you, comfort you, make you think, feel and help you to discover parts of yourself that you didn't know were there. This season we've enjoyed a terrific collection of pieces that I hope have developed from musical acquaintances into musical friends. The exuberance of *Ruslan*, the direct emotional appeal of *Romeo and Juliet*, the quintessential

### In this Issue

Season Ends .....	2
Snack Committee Thanks .....	3
Q&A with Charles Ross .....	3
Music from the Heart .....	5
Volunteer of the Year .....	6
Auditions and Competitions.....	7
Kudos.....	8

Editors: Peter Iglinski & Julia Figueras

French qualities of Bizet and Berlioz, the instant melodic appeal of Dvorak are all elements that most of you may have encountered for the first time this season. The solo performances by Mr. DeGlans and our Concerto Competition winners are also amazing collaborative experiences that have taught us a lot about how to support our friends and colleagues and the joys that we can enjoy as a result of giving them our best.

### **Rediscovering the music**

Friends, real ones, are those very special people that you keep close to your heart. If you're lucky, they can be part of your life for many, many years. Most of the music we share in RPYO can become rather like that type of friend. You'll probably play the pieces from this season again and again in the future. I hope that each time you do, you'll discover more wonderful qualities about these musical friends that you first met during your time with our orchestra and that you'll take a moment to remember that first encounter. It's been great fun getting to know them together. Thanks to everyone for a terrific year of musical friendship.

## **The Season Ends—and Begins Anew**

*by Susan Basu*

A great pleasure of our work with the RPYO is bringing one season to a close and watching the next one unfold. Listening to a season's final performance, I am as teary-eyed as our parents and students. We have all witnessed the tremendous musical growth of the orchestra since it first met in September, and we know this is a threshold moment for so many of our musicians. We embrace and say goodbye to students we have known for one to maybe seven years and whose families have become

important to us. It won't be the same, we think, without this flutist or that violist or the trombonist in the back or any of the other departing students.

### **Filling the openings**

Of course, it won't be, but it is always delightfully different, as we are almost immediately reminded when the auditions come around. Selecting new members is a joyous occasion, though also painful when we have to tell many eager and very able students they were not chosen, at least not this time. In September, the nervous, polite student we had met the year or two before at her entry audition comes back for the seating auditions, maybe still a little nervous, but now more relaxed and gaily talking about her summer activities and how glad she is that the RPYO is starting again. We do a double-take at the boy who has grown three inches over the summer and whose playing has a new confidence and depth. This is going to be exciting, we think—for the 17<sup>th</sup> year in a row. It never gets old, this combination of talented youth and the world's great music.

### **Feeling the brass and percussion**

During rehearsals we relive once more our young musicians' first enthralled experiences of hearing themselves play a major Tchaikovsky work or a great symphony like the Dvořák *New World*. There are wind players who have never before sat surrounded by a glorious, rich string sound and violinists who marvel at the courage of the flute and oboe players with their demanding solo passages. There is that amazing sensation of feeling one's own body vibrate to the sonorous sounds of low brass or pulsing percussion. For many, the RPYO is also the first time they've played music with harps, and they are enchanted to learn how clearly delicate harp notes float over the orchestra. They begin to feel physically part of an organic, living entity that, when all mu-

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Thank you  
parents who  
baked and  
shopped

sicians are equally absorbed, seems to have an existence of its own.

### **Making sense of it all**

Starting in a youth orchestra can be sort of like learning a language by the immersion method. You are dropped into a new culture and are expected to start right off speaking. At first all is a jumble. Then, bit by bit, you learn to make sense of the sounds around you. In time you suddenly realize you can understand not just the words but also how the words fit together to express meaning. So it is in the orchestra when you begin to grasp how all the parts from the various sections combine to create an entire musical world. You know then that you have achieved a new relationship to the music, to the orchestra, and perhaps to yourself.

Watching this process as it moves forward each season is always a great satisfaction. By the time we say our good-byes to graduating seniors, they have experienced playing a lot of wonderful music. But most important, that music has become a lasting part of them and has changed how they see themselves and the world.

Warmest good wishes to those who are moving on. A hearty welcome to our newest musicians.

### **Thanks from the Snack Committee**

*by Kathy Whalen*

Many thanks to everyone for all your help in making the rehearsal breaks fun and enjoyable for our musicians.

Thank you parents who brought generous quantities of food, drinks and paper goods each week.

Thank you parent servers (and those who helped out even when it wasn't their turn) for making sure that our mu-

sicians had plenty to eat and drink and a place to socialize.

Thank you parents who baked and shopped and put so much effort into making the sectional rehearsal breaks both delicious and special.

A special thanks to Mickie Minster for letting the RPO mentors know how much we appreciate them and all they do for our children at the sectional rehearsals. Mickie always made sure that they had a warm drink, some of her fantastic baking and a nice place to relax.

Next year, Dorothy Maiorana and Lisa Smith will co-chair the food committees. Please sign up in September to help them and make next year as successful and as much fun as this year was.

### **Ten Questions for RPO Timpanist Charles Ross**

*by Peter Iglinski*

1. *What attracted you to the timpani?*

I started playing drums and basic percussion when I was 8. I was also playing cello which I began at around 5 years old, and continued on both through high school. I was around 14 when I first became intrigued by the timpani. I think what attracted me to the instrument was its deep resonant sound and I believe that came from my appreciation of that quality in the cello.

2. *What do people least understand about timpanists?*

I think it's that we're really ok people. Just kidding.

Seriously, I think the question should be, "What do people least understand about the role of a timpanist (or the timpani) in an orchestra?"



(Photo courtesy of RPO)  
Charles Ross  
Timpanist, RPO

I think we  
develop our  
personal  
integrity  
over time

Well, over time, composer's points of view about how to use the timpani in the texture of a piece, evolved. Back in the baroque and early classical periods, most timpani parts consisted of 2 notes; usually the bass notes of the Tonic and Dominant harmonies. And to keep it somewhat interesting, these notes would be played in a slightly rhythmic way; mostly in duet with the trumpet. Then more and more, composers came to realize that there was a much greater harmonic, rhythmic, dynamic, and even melodic potential with the timpani.

Its role in the musical fabric became really vital to their sculpting of a piece. The instrument can be heard heightening a dynamic climax, as in the storm of Beethoven's 6th Symphony, depicting a dying heartbeat in Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet Overture, leading the crazed rhythmic "panic" at the end of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, or stating the melody yet to come, in Richard Strauss' Burlesque or Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

*3. Tell us about your most influential mentor?*

I can't say I have a "most influential" mentor. They were all so important to me along the way, and each one's influence on me was pivotal through that process of my musical growth.

So, here's a list of them all:

My father in the beginning, Ken Belding and Francesca Church (my early drum and cello teachers, respectively), David Fein and Jerome Carrington (my percussion and cello teachers at the Julliard School Pre-college), my college and professional mentors: Fred Hinger, Gerald Carlyss, Michael Bookspan, Saul Goodman, Cloyd Duff, Alan Abel, and Don Liuzzi

*4. I understand you market your own kettledrum mallets. How are they different?*

As I mentioned earlier, the color potentials of the timpani are really vast and I'm always trying to optimize these according to what the music is requiring of my instrument. So, a player's mallets are his primary tools to achieve these colors; just as a painter might use different brush types to achieve various effects. One does alter his or her stroke on the timpani to change the sound quality, but having the proper mallet is extremely important. My particular mallets evolved over a long period of time and produce a certain quality that resonates with the type of sound that I like. There are many different mallet manufacturers and what it really comes down to is personal preference. The important thing, though, is that a player remains conscious of what color the music is asking for, and go for it.

*5. How did you find your own voice on the timpani?*

Well, I'm not sure that I've found it yet. Have you seen it anywhere? :- ) LOL

I think we all develop our personal integrity (or "voice") over time, whatever that sounds or looks like. There were times in my development that I wanted to play like this person or that, but it was frustrating. I couldn't quite achieve it. But then I realized that this was futile. They sound that way due to their personal history and playing style, and even their physical constitution. I might have been studying a certain technique with a particular teacher and not sound like him, but the fact was, he's got huge muscular hands and mine are small and thin. The result would never be identical. So, I learned as best as I could from everyone, and ultimately made music on my instrument the way it felt best for me. The objective is always the same no matter how you do it; "To get the ball over the plate and strike the guy out".

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lot of time  
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6. *Besides classical, what music do you listen to in your spare time?*

I really like and listen to many different styles of music, as long as it is played with honesty and integrity; Jazz, Pop, Rock and Roll, Gospel, World Music, New Age.

And students that only listen to one style are really limiting their musical growth. Look at all the different genres that Yo-Yo Ma has been a part of. Versatile musicians are so inspiring to me.

7. *How do you approach your lessons with students?*

I basically try to instill in my students a confidence that, whether they be at college level, playing timpani in an orchestra, or an 11 year old playing drum set in a rock band, what they are contributing to the ensemble is *relevant*.

There's the old joke, Who's someone who hangs out with musicians? The Drummer.

In other words, we're often not respected as one of the musicians.

But, the fact is, we're the ones who've given ourselves this reputation by not being really conscious of how percussion fits into the musical "story"; again, whether it be a symphony or a rock n' roll song. We get all of our technical tools together but don't know how to apply them musically.

So, in lessons we spend a lot of time discussing and applying the principal of letting the music determine the technique; not the technique determining the music.

8. *What separates a good from a great musician?*

Someone who channels as much honesty and true "giving" to the art of music making as they can. Sometimes that's hard to do, but one should really strive to have this intention in, not just your musicianship, but in everything

that you do.

9. *How should musicians respond to burnout?*

Balance!

I remember well a time in my life when all I knew myself to be, was a musician. And when music wasn't there, I felt really empty and disconnected. Then, over time, I came to realize that who I am in my spirit, is so much more than a 24/7 musician.

So, I did everything I could (and still do) to bring other activities and passions into my life experience.

Then, when I do play, I'm able to bring much more of a sense of wholeness and joy to my music making.

10. *If not for music, what profession would you have pursued?*

I've done a variety of things in my life, but didn't really think about pursuing any other profession until maybe 15 years ago when, through my wife, I became exposed to health foods, alternative medicine, and holistic healing. And since then, these life practices have become vital ingredients in the sustenance of my family.

Who knows? Perhaps one day I may find myself living out a whole different aspect of my soul's purpose. That would be just fine.

## Music from the Heart

by Anne Brown Scott  
School No. 19 Principal

Thirty-two students at Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School 19 are building a string program. The program began in 2008 when the Robert G. Boehmler Community Foundation gave 10 instruments to the school. Starting in 2009, the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra have volunteered their time and

The RPYO  
is grateful  
for Kevin's  
generous ser-  
vice.

provided monthly performances at the school. These performances have greatly increased student interest in the program.

The School 19 String Ensemble performed for the first time in December for their school family. Since then they have performed at the Eastman Theater and the Lilac Festival, and plan to perform at the end-of-the-year school concert and at the Rochester International Jazz Festival.

**Many thanks to go around**

Special thanks to the following people for their collective efforts in helping the program to blossom: Gretchen Judge, Lee Byrne, Louisa Womack, Rosie Curran and Dr. Patty Yarmel. Dr. Yarmel has proven responsible for communication, transportation, appropriation of volunteers and has worked collectively with School 19 in establishing the program.

Local physicians have already donated some instruments for our growing program. However, our goal for next year is to double the program size thereby needing additional violins. If you feel led to be part of this work, please contact Mr. Faulknor (328-7454) or Dr. Patty Yarmel.

The students have demonstrated great skill and commitment to this new endeavor. This is not just a program; it is indeed *Music from the Heart!*

**RPYO Volunteer 2009:  
Kevin Ryck**

*by Susan Basu*

Retiring Treasurer Kevin Ryck has been named the RPYO Volunteer of the Year. The RPO honored Kevin at its 2009 Volunteer Recognition Night.

Kevin is a father of three who knows that to offer his children the best oppor-

tunities for their growth he needs to get involved. And involved he gets. Perhaps because he and his wife, Terry, both work for non-profit organizations, they understand that the success of these organizations depends upon people willing to offer what they can of their time and energy.

Terry is a school music teacher and violinist who is a member of the Penfield Symphony Orchestra.

**Kevin takes on more...and more**

For the first couple of years in the RPYO, he focused on carpooling, but in 2004 he jumped right in, offering to be a Tour Chaperone, possibly as the best way to get to Italy half-price. Since he has three children, it may not have been (as was the case for some) the most intense 10 days he's known. But the experience must have been positive enough to bring him back as Chair of the 2007 Tour Committee. It may have been entirely a coincidence that the RPYO ended up going to Central Europe, including Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, the region where Kevin's family originated—but there were definitely a few nudges from him in that direction. The tour was one of the RPYO's most memorable, helped by Kevin's calmness, solid good sense about teenagers, and his irrepressible sense of humor. It probably helped also that he was taller and bigger than most of the students.

**With much gratitude**

Perhaps realizing he had gotten in too deep to back out, he next took on the job of RPYO Treasurer for two years. Maybe less fun than tours, this money job is essential for the secure functioning of the youth orchestra. We know that Kevin and Terry place a high value on what each of their children received from the RPYO. We want them to know that the RPYO is very grateful for Kevin's generous service to the youth orchestra over these past five

years. His work goes far to ensure that the RPYO will continue to enrich the lives of countless other young musicians and their families.

## Auditions and Competitions: Career Necessity or Just Necessary Evil

by James VanDemark  
Co-Chair, String Department  
Eastman School of Music



(Photo by Gary Heard)

James VanDemark  
String Dept. Co-Chair,  
Eastman School  
of Music

Auditions  
are lost  
more than  
they are won.

Love 'em or hate 'em, auditions and competitions are a mainstay of most high school musicians' careers. They may provide needed advancement in an orchestra, entrance to a college or conservatory, or acceptance to a summer festival. Yet too often young performers are either baffled by what's really expected of them in a given competitive setting, or find the competitive environment too overwhelming. What should an aspiring young performer—and their parents—do to shine in these difficult circumstances?

### Be prepared

First, there is no substitute for both committed and timely preparation. Having a fixed and manageable practice schedule, with clearly established musical goals, is the foundation of any musician's progress. Knowing what the specific competition or audition requires, and if the student is actually ready to ascend to the anticipated level of playing in that venue, is equally important. The role of the student's teacher, and to some extent the parents, is significant here. Good communication between all parties of dates, repertoire, and playing expectations saves last minute stress in preparation.

And of course, the teacher and parents should ask themselves if the student is actually ready for the competition or audition. If it is a student's first competition, be gentle and encouraging, and

try to give the student an opportunity to try the program in a friendly and supportive environment. The more young students have a real enjoyment rather than a fear of performance, the more likely they will be to succeed in any musical endeavor.

### Have a plan

Secondly, teacher and student should have an "action plan" that the student buys into. Practice technique, musical direction, concepts of phrasing, the emotions of the piece—all these elements ultimately comprise the young artist that the teacher hopes the student will become. When the student senses some level of ownership of this shared plan, rather than "my parents and teacher want me to do this and this," the student develops a more mature and ultimately more resilient attitude towards what is potentially a frustrating endeavor. Each teacher—student relationship is unique, but those in which the student senses trust and personal interest on the part of the teacher are the relationships that more frequently produce great performers. Fear is usually a very ineffective motivation in the performing arts. Most performers (young and old) have some level of fear anyway—why pay a teacher to exaggerate it? Auditions and competitions are usually "lost" more than they are "won." It is critical for the student—and parents and teacher—to retain a positive attitude. If the student worked hard in preparation and learned a great deal, that in itself is a significant "win," and may give the student positive direction to tackle the next audition or competition.

### It's audition day

Thirdly, the day of the actual audition or competition is important. Most younger musicians—like most young people—may have a greater sense of invincibility than is realistic, so suggesting a good night's sleep, a decent

Encourage  
the student  
to have fun.

meal, and downplaying stress is critical. Establishing a routine is something that most performers find comforting, even though this seems quite alien to most teenagers. Teachers often play a great role here, as this advice is often taken far better from an instrumental teacher than parents. Parents can help the day of an event by "being cool," and not getting flustered even though their child might. Besides, it's the kid in the competition, not the parents.

And lastly, encourage the student to try to have fun. Meeting new people, going somewhere new, learning new music—auditions and competitions can and should be viewed as an enjoyable musical adventure rather than an obligatory musical torment. The outcome of a competition can never be guaranteed, but if all the competitors have loved the music, they've learned and advanced their playing in the process; there surely are no "losers."

## Kudos

**Nadine Dyskant Miller** won The 2009 Howard Hanson's Young Composer Competition Award (High School Division), sponsored by Chamber Music Rochester and the Howard Hanson Institute for American Music of the Eastman School of Music. Her Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello (3 movements) will be performed by the Chamber Music Rochester at future date.

WROC-TV recognized five RPYO seniors with 2008-2009 Scholastic Arts Awards. They are: trombonist **Luke Perry**, trumpet players **Brianne Borden** and **Eliza Minster**, oboist **Ginny Dodge**, and string bassist **Kim Lourette**. Each musician was interviewed by Channel 8 and all are highlighted on WROC's website.

The Rochester Philharmonic League's Young Artist Competition awarded

RPYO violinist **Christen Greer** the Albright Award for Strings and the Aldridge-Tinker Scholarship. RPYO bassist **Louisa Womack** was a runner-up for the Albright Award. RPYO harpist **Sarah Kramer** won the Greer Award for Instrumental Performance; RPYO flutist **Melissa Mashner** was the runner-up.

RPYO Alumna cellist **Emily Grissing** performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in April as one of four national winners of the VSA 2009 Arts International Young Soloists Award. Emily is currently a Cello Performance major at SUNY Fredonia.

Singer/songwriter/fiddler and RPYO violinist **Kate Lee Gurnow** and her band No Strings Attached has been honored this spring with performances at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe & the Commodore Grill. She has also shared the stage with Rhonda Vincent, Jay Ungar & Sam Bush and won grand prize in a New York songwriting contest with her song "Beige".

On Sunday, May 31, **Christen Greer** (violin), **Kate Lee Gurnow** (vocal), **Sarah Kramer** (harp), and **Louisa Womack** (string bass) joined the other five winners of the RPO's "Search for a Star" competition on stage at Eastman Theatre to perform with the RPO.

Two RPYO musicians were winners of the 2009 Young Women of Distinction Awards. The awards were presented by the Greater Rochester Women's Council, affiliated with the Rochester Business Alliance. The top award, the ATHENA Scholar, went to Brighton High School's **Jing wen Hu**, a 4th year violinist with the RPYO. **Olivia Lee**, an RPYO violinist and a senior at Penfield High School, was one of two winners of the Scholar Award.

## ♪♪♪ RPYO 2009 Graduating Seniors' Plans ♪♪♪

Congratulations to our graduating Seniors!. Your dedication and love of music have made our times together memorable and inspiring. Thank you for all you have contributed to the RPYO and to music in our school and our community. Our very best wishes for you in the years to come.

<b>Nick Amering</b>	String Bass	University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music	Jazz Studies & Music Education
<b>Curtis Bloomer</b>	Clarinet	Wake Forest University	Mathematics & Pre-Med
<b>Brianne Borden</b>	Trumpet	Crane School of Music	Music Education
<b>Jessica Chen</b>	Violin	Ithaca College	Undeclared music field major
<b>Roren Choi</b>	Flute	American University	Major undecided
<b>Philip Cistrone</b>	Viola	University of Rochester	Biology or Biomed. Engineering
<b>Ian Colley</b>	Violin	Allegheny College	Psychology and Music
<b>Matt Confer</b>	Trombone	Ithaca College	Music Education
<b>Danica Cunningham</b>	Violin	St. Lawrence University	Major undecided
<b>Ginny Dodge</b>	Oboe	Ithaca College	Music Performance
<b>Laura Estephan</b>	Violin	Berklee College of Music	Film Composition
<b>Katherine Floriano</b>	Violin	Oberlin Conservatory of Music	Violin Performance
<b>Christen Greer</b>	Violin	Eastman School of Music	Violin Performance
<b>Jingwen Hu</b>	Violin	Duke University	Economics
<b>Rachel Kurchin</b>	Violin	Yale University	Sciences
<b>Josh Labman</b>	Viola	Ithaca College	Sound Recording Technology
<b>Olivia Lee</b>	Viola	Cornell University	Human Biology Health and Society
<b>Serena Lofftus</b>	Violin	Boston College	Biochemistry
<b>Kim Lourette</b>	String Bass	Northwestern University	String Bass Performance
<b>Eliza Minster</b>	Trumpet	Peabody Conservatory	Trumpet Performance
<b>Holden Oliver</b>	Cello	University of Buffalo	Marketing
<b>J.J. Pereira</b>	Percussion	Ithaca College	Music Education
<b>Luke Perry</b>	Trombone	Hartt School of Music	Trombone Performance & Music Education
<b>Katherine Rudman</b>	Horn	Nazareth College	Music Education & Music Therapy
<b>Angela Ryck</b>	Violin	University of Notre Dame	Sciences
<b>Celeste Schepp</b>	Cello	Bennington College	Liberal Arts
<b>Karis Schneider</b>	Violin & Percussion	Princeton University	English
<b>Elizabeth Stella</b>	Horn	Ithaca College	Music Education
<b>Sarah Whalen-Cohen</b>	Bassoon	Peabody Conservatory	Bassoon Performance
<b>Emma Zeger</b>	Trumpet	Conservatory of Music at Purchase	Trumpet Performance