

Cornucopia

News and articles for anyone interested in the horn

January 2007



Kay Hooper

Cornucopia

is published four or five times a season. It is free, although contributions are welcome.

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Alexander Technique and the Horn

by Kay S. Hooper

Look at your Northeast Horn Workshop schedule and be surprised! You have the opportunity to learn something about horn playing from a pianist.

After ten years of suffering from tendonitis linked to piano playing, I thought my piano playing days were over. Then I had the good fortune to study Alexander Technique (AT), a hundred-year-old process for changing movement and habits in activity.

Performers around the world find this subtle but powerful work to be the technique supporting all other techniques. By learning how the mind/body integrates for free and easy movement, I was able to free myself from pain, improve my technique, and eventually become a certified Alexander Technique Teacher.

When F.M. Alexander's acting career was threatened by hoarseness, he had fears similar to mine. He found no help through traditional approaches. But he studied himself and learned that his own habits of poor balance and co-ordination were causing his problem.

Alexander came up with these basic principles:

- The head leads and the body follows.
- The whole body responds dynamically to any decision to move.
- Balanced effort is a combination of support and movement resulting in an appropriate amount of effort for a task.
- Changing habits requires conscious, active choice.
- Learning to sense in activity enhances performance.

AT is taught through gentle hands-on contact by trained teachers. This guidance presents students with movement and balance choices that may not be part of their habitual patterns. Alexander lessons usually include useful information on how the body works. By studying models, palpating structures, and experimenting with movement options, students learn to separate confusing images about movement from the truth of the body. Having an accurate body map decreases the chances of being injured or limited in practice and performance.

Some of the benefits of AT to musicians are:

- Improved respiration
- Increased facility, stamina, and poise
- Injury avoidance and recovery
- Reduced performance anxiety
- Increased inclusive awareness
- Improved use of all the senses
- Increased clarity of intention in performance

Because of the universal benefits of AT, even a pianist can help a horn player. This conference includes a group presentation and time for individual sessions. For more about me and my publication, *Sensory Tune-ups*, see www.allsensepress.com. ❖

Kay presents workshops on AT and sensory training. She maintains a piano and AT studio in Selinsgrove PA and is artist in residence at Bucknell University and an adjunct instructor at Susquehanna University.

Osbourne McConathy (1908-2005)

Osbourne (Oz) McConathy, who died in Dec. 2005, was an important figure in the Boston musical scene, playing horn in the Boston Symphony (1944-66) and conducting Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company productions for decades. "Of all the people around me," said Caldwell, "Osbourne McConathy was the most helpful, the most knowledgeable, and also the funniest."

McConathy was born in Chelsea MA but grew up in Illinois. He had a few lessons in high school, but didn't take up the horn seriously until after he had finished college (NY University) and had a conducting fellowship at Juilliard. There he studied with Anton Horner and Josef Franzl. He played in the NJ, Chautauqua, National, and Rochester orchestras before being invited to the BSO.

McConathy was involved in opera early, serving as an usher for opera performances while still a teenager. He organized Gilbert and Sullivan productions while studying at Juilliard, and later conducted for the WPA.

McConathy's duties with Caldwell's opera company were comprehensive: he served as a musical and dramatic advisor, conducted several productions, and did a lot of

the musicological legwork.

The opera company's former manager, James T. Morgan, said, "Ozzie was a serious student of opera, with a thorough professional knowledge of all the musical and dramatic issues, but he was also a rabid fan; he loved the singers, the ladies especially." Caldwell said, "He was very critical of everything we did because he wanted to make sure that everything was done properly. He was an excellent conductor and a very good mentor and teacher. He was so generous, affirmative, and well-versed in just about anything you could think of."

McConathy was always interested in the history of the horn and wrote "Great Horn Virtuosi of the Past" and a horn column called "Fanfare" for *Symphony* magazine. His article "Virtuosity" appeared in the *Horn Call* in Nov. 1971 and was reprinted in Aug. 2000. ❖

Material in this article appeared in the October 2006 issue of the Horn Call and was taken from Richard Dyer of the Boston Globe and Norman Schweikert, IHS Honorary Member.



News and Events

Trudy Cole-Servier (Marshfield, 781-837-3171 tcolesev@verizon.net) is looking for someone with whom to carpool to the Northeast Workshop. Anyone else wanting to carpool can contact the editor (see masthead).

University of New Hampshire Scholarship Competition for High School Seniors, February 24, 2007. \$50,000 prize for out-of-state, \$28,000 for in-state, applied to tuition at UNH. Application deadline: Feb. 1, 2007. E-mail music.info@unh.edu for requirements and to schedule.

Susan LaFever (susanlaf@optonline.net) performed the Romanza and Rondo of Mozart's Concerto No. 4 with the St. Elizabeth Festival Choral and Orchestra in Wyckoff NJ in October for Mozart's anniversary.

Paul Harrison (Sea Cliff NY) writes, "I continue to play with the Brooklyn Symphony in a very active concert program. This spring our principal horn Rachel Drehmann will be up front performing Strauss #1."

Joseph Schwantner, who wrote a horn concerto for Greg Huston (Dallas Symphony), has taught at Eastman and Yale, but now lives in NH and concentrates on composing. He was in Boston in November for a performance of his setting of a Rilke poem for Boston Musica Viva.

Jim Decker (deckerhorn1@aol.com) offers 14 IVASI "The Video Conductor" systems at a wholesale cost of \$49.50 each to IHS members and teachers. Email Jim for information on the contents of each system.

Kathy Nyer (kathynyer@comcast.net) writes, "Thanks for keeping me updated with the horn world. I'm always happy when I receive the newsletter. I appreciate your hard work, which must be a labor of love!"

Cynthia Brown (Baileycyn@aol.com) writes by email, "How I wish I could have heard or known Xiao-Ming Xie. The tribute by Eric Ruske was very moving and heartfelt."

Colleen Perry (colleenmarieperry@yahoo.com) has changed her name to Shaffer and moved to New Haven.

Luther Leake has moved to Ohio for a new job (he is a food scientist) and writes, "We really miss the Southcoast [of Mass.] and hope to have the opportunity to visit often. My new job is with a Swiss-based flavor company, and I hope to get the chance to play an Alphorn during my next trip to Zurich! I've found a couple of community bands and a brass quintet. Thanks for all your work for the horn community!"

Bruce Richards (Liege Quartet) writes, "I appreciate your publication. It is interesting to read about what is happening in the Northeast as well as the articles. Thank you for your hard work and the passionate investment of your time."

Chris Leuba (Seattle), **Polly Dunn** (Gwynedd PA), and **Greg Hustis** (Dallas) have sent contributions. Chris, a loyal supporter, writes, "Again, a fine Cornucopia, especially the tribute to Xiao-Ming Xie. Indeed, I

2007 Northeast Horn Workshop

February 17-18, 2007, Mansfield University, Mansfield PA

Host: Dr. Rebecca Dodson-Webster, 18 Campus Drive,
Butler Music Center, Mansfield University, Mansfield PA 16933
570-662-4713 rdodsonw@mansfield.edu

Thomas Bacon, Pat Hughes, Kelly Driftmeyer, Tim Thompson
Exhibits, mass choir, solo competitions, yoga, Alexander
Website: faculty.mansfield.edu/rdodsonw/nehw/

NEC Brass Bash

March 4, 2007, 7 p.m., Jordan Hall, Boston

The NEC Brass Bash features the entire brass department, including its BSO horn faculty, in a variety of settings and combinations. Free. See concerts.newenglandconservatory.edu

2007 IHS International Symposium

July 8-14, 2007, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland

Host: Bruno Schneider, Professor in Geneva and Freiburg.
Horn sections of Berlin Philharmonic, Zurich Tonhalle,
and the Swiss Romand Orchestras in addition to soloists, etc.
Daily amateur sessions. www.ihs2007.com

wish that I had become aware of this influential player-teacher during his lifetime." Polly writes, "I continue to enjoy reading Cornucopia."

Lost: Andy Hardin (Los Osos CA), Shannon Hahn (Apex NC).

New members: **Jacek Muzyk**, principal horn, Buffalo Philharmonic, and students of Jim Mosher: **Garth Greimann**, Wellesley, Rivers Symphony; **Ben Wulfman**, 7th grade in Belmont, Mass. Youth Wind Ensemble; and **Leah Meyer**, 5th grade in Belmont, GBYSO JRO. ❖

Gail Williams in Boston

Feb. 3, 2007, 8 p.m. Cary Hall, Lexington

Plog Nocturne & Strauss No. 1 with Lexington Symphony
lexingtonsymphony.org 781-863-9581

NEC, Master class, open to public, Feb. 2, 4-6 p.m.

St. Botolph Bldg (241 St. Botolph St.), Rm 118, 617-585-1101

Radovan Vlatkovic in New York

March 30, 2007, 8 p.m. at MMA

Brahms & Harbison Trios with Musicians from Marlboro.

Horn players, mention this newsletter for a generous discount.
Contact Julia Lin at 212-581-5197 x12 jlin@marlboromusic.org

