

# Cornucopia

News and articles for anyone interested in the horn

November 2007



Elliott Carter

## Cornucopia

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

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## Elliott Carter Horn Concerto Premiere

by James Sommerville

It is a rare honor to be able to introduce a new horn concerto to the musical world; when the concerto is the product of the energetic mind of 98-year-old Elliott Carter, one feels a sense of privilege that is both humbling and exhilarating.

Boston Symphony Music Director, James Levine, should have much of the credit for this major addition to the repertoire. He is a great advocate for Carter's music. After a premiere in 2005, Jimmy gave the composer carte blanche to write another work, and over the course of their discussions, they settled on a horn concerto, an idea that apparently had already intrigued Carter.

Elliott Carter, born in NY in 1908, is the doyen of American composers. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, has won the Pulitzer Prize twice and the US National Medal of Arts, and has been recognized by several foreign governments.

Carter's early works are mainly neoclassical. After 1950, the structures and textures of his music grow increasingly complex. While Carter's tonal vocabulary bears a resemblance to that of the serialists, he does not employ their techniques. In his latest period, his approach to musical language has become less systematized; nonetheless, I hear in his recent oeuvre that same rigorous voice and ferocious intellect, the uncanny ear for textural beauty, the sly wit.

During the spring of 2006, rumpled envelopes would appear periodically in my mailbox, stuffed with pages of handwritten sketches and questions. By mid-August, Carter had substantially completed the concerto. During this process, I drove down to Manhattan and played through the sketches for him. Carter was gracious, and unusually collaborative for such an august figure. He took my timorous suggestions seriously, though his understanding of the horn was encyclopedic. Much of our dialogue dealt with stopped horn vs. half-stopped, and how these timbres could be exploited effectively. He was curious about alternate fingerings, and uses these to great effect in the work. (I will play the premiere on a triple horn, in part to make these clearer since a greater palette of sounds is available with the low- and high-F sides.)

The solo part actually presents fewer technical challenges than his orchestral horn parts, which tend to be quite angular and "jumpy." The concerto, though it has some virtuosic passage-work, is very lyrical and exploits the horn's natural strengths while presenting new challenges to the performer. I am looking forward to the premiere with enormous anticipation, and hope all you New England horn players will attend! ❖

*Jamie is principal horn of the BSO and artistic director of the Hamilton Philharmonic. See p. 2 for schedule.*

## Power Practicing

When we practice, we become our own teachers. We need to become the kind of teacher we would most like to have: positive, helpful, challenging but gentle (not overly critical, dull, and repetitive). Most of us have been practicing the horn from an early age but have never really considered the issue of work habits and attitudes. Yet our work habits are what shape us as musicians.

When we practice, we're developing muscular memory. Our minds constantly need new angles to stay interested and attentive. The traditional idea of practice is to repeat and repeat until you get it right, and the mind rebels, but when we find new angles, the mind pays close attention. Some techniques to achieve high quality work are:

- Unwind before practicing.
- Play passages in slow motion the first time through.
- Sing passages with vowels and expression first.
- Focus on where your tongue is striking.
- Analyze what happened.
- Learn from your mistakes.
- Use a metronome (and really pay attention to it!).
- Change the rhythm.
- Stop on notes that feel unsure.
- Play loud passages quietly until they are secure.
- Practice with eyes open, then eyes closed.



by Eli Epstein

- Work sdrawkcab.
- Use a tuner regularly.
- Record thyself.
- Practice opposites; for example, when playing high all the time in performance, balance it with low horn practice, and vice versa.
- Exercise! Being physically fit and toned in the abdominal area makes breath support more natural.
- Always warm up and cool down..
- Seek out a room that is comfortable to play in.
- Practice regularly.
- Practice when you are physically and mentally rested.
- Stop practicing before your face gets overtired.
- Involve the artist side of your brain.
- Emulate great singers and string players.
- Be encouraging and positive.
- Build the foundation brick by brick. ❖

*This article is an excerpt from a chapter in Eli's forthcoming book. See [www.eliepstein.com](http://www.eliepstein.com) to view the full chapter. Eli will talk at the 2008 Northeast Horn Workshop. Formerly a member of the Cleveland Orchestra, Eli is now on the faculty of the Boston Conservatory and Aspen Festival and an active chamber musician.*

## News and Events

**Bob Watt** (bobwatt@pacbell.net 213-621-3122) won his job as assistant first with the LA Phil in 1970 before completing his degree at NEC and will retire from that position at the end of January 2008, then be available for other playing, clinics, and lectures.

**Amy Daigle Dresser** (amydaigs@gmail.com) is now married, mother of a daughter, and finishing a BME, vocal major, at U Southern Maine.

**David Amram**, a featured artist at the 2008 NHW, performed at the 50th anniversary celebration in Lowell of his friend Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Several of David's compositions were performed.

**Danny Katzen** (dkatzen@email.arizona.edu) will be leaving his position as BSO second horn at the end of Tanglewood 2008 to be Associate Professor at the University of Arizona at Tucson. "I am very happy to be settling once again in the Southwest," he writes. He performed the Brahms Trio with Ikuko Mizuno and Sheila Kibbe on the BSO Community Concert Series in October in Worcester.

**Richard West** (hornfella@comcast.net) writes that he plays in two community orchestras in the Seattle area, plus participating in the summer Bach Fest in Lake Chelan WA. "A few years ago, I visited Germany and interviewed Christian Knopf in [instrument-making center] Markneukirchen, which resulted in a *Horn Call* article on the history of Knopf family."

**Frøydis Ree Wekre** (Oslo, Norway) was in Boston in October with a delegation from her university on a mission to make connections with music schools in the US with a view to include exchanges in both directions as part of the schools' regular curricula. She gave a copy of her book, *On Playing the Horn Well*, and several CDs to the NEC library in addition to leading a superb master class. \@()

**Anne Howarth** (Somerville) was planning to attend the premiere of the Carter concerto with the BSO, but now she is playing extra in Mahler No. 1 for that concert, so she gets to listen up close!

**Br. Nate Reese** (Orleans, brothers@communityofjesus.org 508-255-6204) reports that the Society of Jesus band has participated in World Band Competitions in Banff, Australia, and Korea and conducted workshops as part of the tours. For Korea, they created a wind opera using Korean mythology and instruments as characters. They continue to give marching band workshops around the Northeastern US, and their brass quintet, Gabriel Five, has produced its first CD. The Society is looking for a double horn for a home-schooled 9th grade student who now plays mellophone in the band.

**Hadley Reynolds** (Dover), **Patricia Bolen** (Abbeville SC), **Frøydis Ree Wekre** (Oslo, Norway), **Pamela Marshall** (Lexington), and **Kathy Farnier** (Vachon WA) have sent contributions. Patricia writes, "I really enjoy keeping up with horn news. I'm a prosecutor (Violence Against



### Horn, Viola, Cello, Piano - a New Leaf

November 2, 2007, 7 p.m., Norwich VT Congregational Church  
Free. New compositions by Lydia Busler-Blais, Erik Nielsen  
Dennis Bathory-Kitsz, and Kathy Wonson Eddy  
Lydia Busler-Blais, horn, Elizabeth Reid, viola  
Robert Blais, cello, Elizabeth Metcalfe, piano

### Handel & Haydn Society

March 7 & 9, 2008, Symphony Hall  
Jamie Sommerville in Mozart and Haydn Concertos

### Kenneth Fuchs Concerto Premiere

April 29 & 30, 2008, 8 p.m., Bushnell Center, Hartford CT  
Hartford Symphony conducted by Edward Cumming  
Timothy Jones, principal horn of the London Symphony  
Kenneth Fuchs is Professor of Composition, University of Connecticut  
*Canticle to the Sun*. See [www.hartfordsymphony.org](http://www.hartfordsymphony.org)

### 2008 IHS International Symposium

July 22-27, 2008, Denver CO USA  
Host: Susan McCullough, Professor, University of Denver  
40th Anniversary Celebration, [www.ihs40.com](http://www.ihs40.com)

Women cases) and play in the Anderson Symphony and occasional gigs in Greenville. My husband teaches music history and theory. We attended the Historical Brass Society meeting here in SC - it was fantastic!" Kathy writes, "The enclosed [\$41] will buy a roll of stamps."

**Lost:** Stephanie Page (Swanton OH), Anthony Corbo (Norwalk CT), Charles Mayhood (St. Albans VT), Erin Paul (West Hartford CT), Melissa Clinton (Iowa City).

**New members:** Rachel Hockenberry, Boston Conservatory; Charley Pipes, Dardanelle AR, a high school girl interested in both music and engineering for college; and Stephen Fox, Hanson, Harvard U. ❖

### Elliott Carter Concerto Premiere

November 15, 17, 20, 2007, Jamie Sommerville, Boston Symphony  
World premiere, commissioned by BSO, [www.bso.org](http://www.bso.org)  
January 12, 2008, Concertgebouw Hall, Amsterdam  
European premiere, Jamie and Radio Filhamonish Orkest

### 2008 Northeast Horn Workshop

March 14-16, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs NY  
Patrice Malatestinic 518-587-9365 [nehc08@gmail.com](mailto:nehc08@gmail.com)  
Peter Kurau, Julie Landsman, Eli Epstein, David Amram  
[www.NortheastHornWorkshop.org](http://www.NortheastHornWorkshop.org)

James Levine & Elliott Carter

