

Cornucopia

News and articles for anyone interested in the horn

May 2008



Frøydis Ree Wekre

Cornucopia

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

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Horn playing and the inevitable aging

by Frøydis Ree Wekre

I have to admit it - as I get older I am always looking more eagerly for the new voodooos of horn playing, stuff that will make my performance better, my tone more centred, stable, and brilliant, my low range more rich sounding, my high range easier, my staccato more effortless, my intonation impeccable, and my rhythm completely perfect.

What else - oh yes, a lightweight horn that is easy to hold, with some extra weight on the valves and mouthpiece to avoid cracking up in fortissimo, the new stick arrangement to hold the horn up while playing, frequent visits to the health club to strengthen my arms, a little practice device that encourages less pressure on the upper lip, another one which gives me the Super Power Embouchure, and plenty of stuff for enhancing my breathing capacity and air speed and thus projection.

It is not uncommon to discuss the differences between the lives of brass players and string players. I think it could be compared with buying a house - or renting one - for the rest of your life. When you buy a house (or decide to become a string player) you have to invest a lot in the beginning. Lots of money (hours and hours of practice) for the interest and the principal of the loans. As time

goes by, the monthly costs of living in this house (playing this string instrument) normally decrease. Maybe you even get to the point here you are close to debt-free (where you can go away for a week or two without your instrument and still be okay on it when you come back...).

When you decide to become a brass player (or rent a place to live) the initial investment is not as large as that of the string players (or the house buyers). If you practice more than four hours a day, you might just get bruised and destroyed instead of becoming a better player. However - *warning* - the rent always goes up with time! Try going away without your instrument for a couple of weeks and come back - and not just your self-confidence might be at risk, but your job as well.

Back to the voodooos of horn playing - the best one is probably to get smarter at practicing, and, I am sorry to report, do more of it - rather than less - as the years go by. That is, according to my experience, if you really want to stay in your best playing shape! ❖

Frøydis is a professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music and a featured artist at the Nordic Horn Seminar in Iceland in June 2008.

The horn in Iceland

by Joseph Ognibene



Iceland's history of settlement began before 1000 AD, but instrumental music not until the 20th century. Now the Iceland Symphony Orchestra (ISO) and other ensembles are thriving, and the Icelandic Horn Club (HornIs) is hosting the Nordic Horn Seminar in June (see p. 2).

In the beginning of the 1900s, Iceland was one of Europe's poorest countries. As elsewhere in Europe, romantic national awaking was reflected in the arts. Music-making was limited to vocal tradition since the purchase of musical instruments was a luxury not many could afford.

Any serious musician would naturally have to make his career elsewhere, and so Jon Leifs, composer and conductor, settled in Germany. It was through his initiative that Otto Böttcher was sent to Iceland to teach horn.

Böttcher stayed for two years, leaving behind disciples Óskar Jónsson and Eggert Jóhannesson, the first Icelandic horn players. They were also influenced by a visit in 1926 by the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jon Leifs, the first time a symphony orchestra had been heard in Iceland. Their principal horn, Albert Döschler, was soloist. With the advent of World War II, musical development was once again a struggle.

In 1945, the Lanzky-Otto family moved to Iceland from Denmark. Wilhelm's students included Jon Sigurðsson, who became the first professional Icelandic horn player. Wilhelm's time in Iceland is remembered for solo

recitals, live recordings, and as the first principal horn of the ISO. Wilhelm's son Ib, also a horn player, grew up in Iceland and still has a command of the Icelandic language.

The founding of the ISO in 1950 was a catalyst for professional horn playing in the country. With only two local horn players available, players were imported from abroad: Alois Spach, Jörgen Jensen, Wolfgang Münchs, Friedrich Gabler, Vincenzo Zarzo, Rolf Bengtson, Herbert Hrieberscheck Ágústsson from Austria, and others.

Viðar Alfreðsson and Stefán Stephensen were the first Icelanders to join the ISO horn section; both trained in the UK. The next generation includes Thorkell Jólsson, Lilja Valdimarsdóttir, and me (Joseph Ognibene).

I am originally from California, came to help on a tour, and ended up staying as principal since 1981. I teach at the Reykjavik College of Music, where I have taught the most recent recruits to the ISO: Emil Friðfinnsson, Stefán Jón Bernharðsson, Anna Sigurbjörnsdóttir, Sturlaugur Björnsson, and Ella Vala Ármannsdóttir.

The focus of horn activity in Iceland is the Icelandic Horn Club, founded in 1995. Its core is the horn section of the ISO, but its members include all professional, amateur, and student horn players in Iceland. This broad inclusiveness has led to an impressively consistent membership. The horn club cordially invites all to the Nordic Horn Seminar in June. ❖

News and Events

The **Northeast Horn Workshop** will be held in March 2009 at Ithaca College (host: Alexander Shuhan), in 2010 in conjunction with the Southeast Horn Workshop at the University of Delaware (host: John David Smith), and in 2011 at the University of New Hampshire (host: Kendall Betts). See NortheastHornWorkshop.org for a report on the successful 2008 workshop at Skidmore, thanks to Patrice Malatestinic and others.

John Bourne (Natick) is moving to Tennessee to be near family. John has been teaching at Olin College in Needham and will be running a non-profit, The Sloan Consortium. He grew up in Nashville.

Gerald Darling (Willingboro NJ) reports that the New Jersey Horn Day was very successful. "We all had a great time. It was like a mini-regional clinic and we hope to make it bigger next time."

Pauny Yancich (Ocala FL) writes, "I was so sorry to read about Abe Kniaz. I was in the Columbus Orchestra when he was there and have fond memories of those days. I was so happy to play next to Boomie. I remember a tour to New England by train and all of the fun we had. He was a joy to play with. We were all young then and full of life."

Emory Waters (Midlothian VA, NewCenturyMusic@aol.com) has music for horn for sale, which he exhibited at NHW. He and his wife, Mary Ann, have written and produced three operas over the years.

Kate Reynolds (Vassalboro ME), a junior at Erskine Academy in China ME, was featured in the Kennebec *Sentinel*. She described starting horn in fourth grade and playing in the Mid-Maine Youth Orchestra.

Karen Traxel (Rockport ME) is remarried and now named Mundo. "I don't play much horn these days... I conduct a pretty good community band. Why be a passenger when you can drive the bus? (PS. I mostly leave the horn players alone, since they are clearly superior beings!)"

Eric Brummitt (eric.brummitt75@gmail.com 860-633-6953 Hartford area) is learning natural horn and would like to get together with others.

Bob Osmun (Osmun Music), **Glenn Dalrymple** (Omaha), **Ginger Culpepper** (Cornish Flat NH), and **Emory Waters** (Midlothian VA) have sent contributions. Ginger writes, "Keep up your good work; the hornists out here need you." Ginger was honored at NHW as a teacher.

Lost: Barbara Benson (Fort Smith AK).

New members: **Karen Nevers**, Portland ME; **Michael Thornton**, Colorado Symphony; **Katie Dunn**, Troy NY, friend of Char Kasprzak; **Eric Brummitt**, recently moved from WI to CT; **Dorea Ruggles**, a PhD candidate in biomechanical engineering at BU; **Barbara Oldham**, horn faculty of Brooklyn (NY) College; **Ronald Patrick**, Schenectady, a retired teacher and chamber musician who was a student at IU with your editor; and **Anya Brodrick**, a librarian in Derby Line VT. ❖



Esprit de Cor

Friday, June 6, 12 noon, First Parish Church, Lexington. Free.

Rehearsals Thursday evenings. Multiple horn works.

Contact Erik Svenson 781-862-3396 erik.svenson@microsoft.com



Elliott Carter Horn Concerto

Thursday, July 24, Tanglewood, Lenox MA

Festival of Contemporary Music, celebrating Carter's 100th birthday
James Sommerville and the BSO. 888-266-1492 www.bso.org



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Featured artists: Hans Clebsch, Alan DeMattia, Lisa Ford
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Nordic Horn Seminar

June 18-22, 2008, Reykjavik, Iceland

Host: Joe Ognibene and Icelandic Horn Club (see page 1)

Featured artists from all Nordic countries

Reykjavik Chamber Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra
with Radovan Vlatkovic. Direct flights from Boston via IcelandAir.

Post-seminar tours. www.nordhornfest2008.com

