

## **Gallucci String Studio news December 2005**

### **Special note:**

Studio fees for December are due starting Thursday. Please be sure to include the appropriate recital fee. Thank you for paying on time.

Reminder, December recital date is Sat., December 17 at 12 noon.

If you will be away for your lesson the week of December 19, please notify me as soon as possible so you can be credited for a make up lesson.

### **Weather:**

The studio is not necessarily closed if school is! Be sure to visit the website <http://www.lauragallucci.com> if the weather is questionable. I will post weather cancellations on the site no later than 2pm that day.

### **Telephone:**

If you need to reach me please use my cell phone number, 299-5862. I have it with me always. If you call during teaching hours (M-F, 2pm-9pm) I cannot usually pick up or return a call, but I try to check my messages in between lessons. I will almost always get a voicemail message.

### **Closings:**

The studio will be closed December 24 through January 1.

### **Make up lessons:**

I anticipate a lot of absences the week of December 19. If you wish to schedule a make up lesson this week, please contact me to confirm a lesson time.

### **Sheet music exchange:**

If you have violin or viola music books that you no longer use, bring them to the sheet music exchange. Students donating a study book may take one they need in its place. Look for the big box by the piano.

### **Sneak preview:**

Anything goes coffeehouse concert, March, date TBA: Students and their families are invited to participate in this informal concert. Play a fiddle tune with your dad, a classical piece you recently learned (accompanied by your mom, dad, or sibling, on guitar, piano, or any other instrument), or improvise to the 12 bar blues in a group setting. Original compositions are welcome and encouraged. More after the holidays . . .

### **Fiddle Club**

Fiddle club will not meet in December.

### **December Recital**

Saturday, December 17, 12 noon, Bangor Public Library. Details have already been sent via e-mail under separate cover. Paper copies of the e-mail are available in the studio.

### **Local competitions and auditions:**

#### **Bangor Symphony Youth Orchestra Auditions**

Sunday, January 8, 1-3:30, University of Maine, Class of 1944 Hall

If your child is interested in participating in the BSYO, please contact David Iverson at e-mail: [cme1@tdstelme.net](mailto:cme1@tdstelme.net) for more details. The orchestra accepts students on the intermediate to advanced levels. Qualifying students should be \*well\* into Suzuki Book 2 and up. The audition is fast approaching, so don't wait to wait too long to decide!

#### **Bangor Symphony Concerto Competition**

Saturday, March 18, Minsky auditorium

High school aged students are invited to participate. If you are interested, please see me as soon as possible. Applications are due January 1, 2006

#### **Arcady's Melba Wilson Youth Competition**

Saturday, May 6, Minsky Auditorium

Any age student is eligible to participate in this competition. If you are interested, please see me as soon as possible. Applications are due April 6, 2006

### **Concert Opportunities:**

Bangor Symphony Orchestra and Robinson Ballet perform

#### **The Nutcracker**

Saturday, December 3 and Sunday, December 4

The performances just keep getting better. Treat your kids to a great show with live music from Tchaikovsky. Come visit Mrs. G in "the pit" during intermission.

#### **Kneisel Hall's Young Maine Musicians Master Classes**

Saturday, December 3, Blue Hill

Kneisel Hall is sponsoring master classes for violin and viola players, as well as a winter chamber music series for students on February 11. All students are invited to attend and observe. For those who have never seen one, a master class is like a lesson, only the teacher teaches the student in front of an audience.

This month's article:

### **Don't stand like Paganini: the truth about Paganini's performance posture**

Many of my students hear me comment, "Don't stand like Paganini" when they assume what I consider a sloppy playing posture in lessons. Good playing posture for the violin or viola is essential to good health and strong technique. My statements have been

challenged recently. If Paganini was one of the greatest violinists who ever lived, why can't I stand like he did?

There is a lot of lore about this great violinist. The truth about his posture is that he stood with his right foot forward and his right knee bent. He held his bow arm very close to his side and only raised it to play chords. Note the following information from a well researched CD liner by Mark O'Conner, compliments of Sony Classical.com:

“Paganini's good friend Schottky wrote, "When playing, his right foot is well advanced, and with it he beats time when the music becomes more animated, in a manner that borders on the comic." (Most violinists were trained back in Paganini's time, as is the case now, that the left foot should be forward.) A newspaper also reported that his right foot was planted well out in front of his body with its knee bent. Charles Gurh was a violinist and conductor who attended many of Paganini's concerts. He wrote about Paganini's posture and that the right upper arm was close to the body and almost never moved, but that the wrist was very mobile. Only when he vigorously attacked a chord with the lower part of his bow did he raise his elbow and forearm a little by moving them away from the body. Essentially, he used only the top half of the bow, just the amount of bow necessary to vibrate the string, except when playing chords or legato. He also used a flatter bridge, with strings so low to the fingerboard that they almost rubbed. These characteristics are also a trademark for many American fiddlers -- like Benny Thomasson -- throughout the South. “

Paganini was also sickly. The website <http://www.paganini.com/nicolo/nicindex.htm> reports, "According to Philip Sandblom in his book *Creativity and Disease* few geniuses have experienced such lucky agonies as Paganini, bedeviled by a host of chronic complaints, including Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, marked by excessive flexibility of the joints. "This enabled Paganini to perform the astonishing double-stoppings and roulades for which he was famous", Sandblom writes. "His wrist was so loose that he could move and twist it in all directions. Although his hand was not disproportional he could thus double its reach and play in the first three positions without shifting."

If you could do this, you would not need good posture either!

The mandolin was likely Paganini's first instrument, probably because his father was a mandolin player. A small, guitar like instrument, the mandolin is strung the same way as the violin, but with eight strings (each string is doubled). Part of Paganini's harmonic (chord-like) use of the violin could be explained by this early experience. Solid harmonic training is essential for improvisation, obviously part of the foundation for his amazing abilities.

Paganini allowed many myths about his "relations" with the supernatural to perpetuate to increase ticket sales to his concerts. After seeing him play many people thought that he had made a pact with the devil in order to acquire such amazing technique. To reinforce the aura, he made grandiose stage entrances, left his hair long and haggard looking, and wore all black. Early in his 20's he lost most of his teeth, giving

his face a strange sunken appearance. The diseases he suffered from made his skin very pale. Later in life he tried to dispel these myths but was unable to do so.

The myths continued after his death. When he refused last rites upon his deathbed, he was not permitted burial! Some argue that he was ungodly, hence the reason for the refusal. Others claim that he thought he would recover from the illness. Either way, His body was kept in a basement for five years, until his family petitioned and won the right to bury him.

We should be thankful that we were not born like Paganini. Although his greatness is legendary, he suffered terribly. It is much easier to stand with the left foot forward, back straight and elbows up, than to deal with the maladies that made Paganini great.

-Laura Gallucci

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