

All-State: Baroque Bowings — Presented by Cindy Marvin

by Janie Maly

Cindy Marvin's presentation was not surprisingly like a performance of Baroque music. Her spoken gestures were as deep and as light as Baroque phrases as she spoke of her interest in performance of Baroque music on period instruments with the Lyra Concert. The source of our information about Baroque performance is Geminiani's *The Art of Playing the Violin*. The orientation of the *Preface* indicates that the art of playing violin consists in rivaling the human voice and aiming at a style that is exact, shows propriety and is delicate of expression. Given this intent, it is helpful not only to see a Baroque instrument and bow, but to play with the short, differently shaped and tensioned bow. It does take some time to become

These are punctuated by a light space between eighth notes and quarter notes. The arrangement we used grouped four sixteenth note patterns showing the important first sixteenth with the remaining three notes as ornamentation. First we listened to someone play the opening sections without thinking about Baroque phrasing particularly. The idea was that after we became aware of the sighing quality of the downbeat and of the tied eighth-sixteenth over the bar line together with the stepping lightly over the eighth-note gestures, we would play in the Baroque style, holding the instrument on the front of the chest with a loose and flowing feel and sound.

As we began to discuss ornamenta-

Geminiani described the Baroque concept of performance in his 1751 book, *The Art of Playing the Violin*:

"The Intention of Musick is not only to please the Ear, but to express Sentiments, strike the Imagination, affect the Mind, and command the Passions. The Art of playing the Violin consists in giving that Instrument a Tone that shall in a Manner rival the most perfect human Voice, and in executing every Piece with Exactness, Propriety, and delicacy of Expression according to the true Intention of Musick."

point was much less so and should be played more softly. The same holds true for ornamentation. Whether mordents, prallers, grupetti or trills, the emphasis is on the notes which are important to the musical line and the ornaments should reflect their secondary importance in being played lightly.

Ms. Marvin distinguished between the German and Italian bow direction of down, up, up and the French (Muffat) of down, down, up to play groups of three. In general, Ms. Marvin suggested carving up the phrases to let the distinct parts be heard. Baroque music will be interpreted differently by different performers as the composers did not give stylistic suggestions. Therefore, the recordings available to us from St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Musica Antiqua Koln, the Lyra Concert and others will reveal their own performing style from lyrical to quite energetic. This was illustrated with a delicately warm recording of Telemann by Andrew Manz.

What I gleaned from the presentation was not only a challenge to learn more Baroque compositions but to put greater emphasis on more stylistically correct rendering of musical gestures and phrases to convey the sense of the different voices within the sonatas and concertos. I look forward to hearing more Baroque music played on period instruments.

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Diane Wright (left) gets pointers in Baroque technique from Cindy Marvin

accustomed to position the instrument relative to the shoulder and the bow relative to the drooping instrument. (The idea of playing with completely relaxed arms, is a personal goal.)

First, we examined the Bach *a minor Concerto* for gestures within phrases. The gestures derived from the vocal gestures that bloom at the beginning of the sound, rather than at the end, and then taper.

tion we looked at the Telemann *Sonata in e minor*, first as the written skeleton and then with an ornamentation. Though I was most concerned about playing the correct notes in tune, I did notice a difference in the playing of the best players after several attempts. As we considered the Vivace movement Ms. Marvin indicated that the logic of the downbeat note was important and the repeated pedal