



PERFORMER CORNER

Carolyn Boulay

by Mary Sorlie

Minneapolis native Carolyn Boulay is a violinist whose playing styles are as varied as her talents. She has played everything from heavy metal to soloing with orchestras. Her recent summer performing schedule included country and klezmer gigs, the Renaissance Festival, weddings and funerals, as well as a few classical concerts.

Carolyn grew up in south Minneapolis and began violin in the public schools in fourth grade. Her music teacher strongly encouraged her to take private lessons. As luck would have it, the closest teacher to where she lived was Mary West. Carolyn says that her motivation for practicing was twofold: her teacher was so encouraging to her, and she wanted to play louder and better than the trumpeter across the street! She recalls that as she was becoming more serious about the violin, her parents had to make the financial choice of braces for her teeth or a Dahl violin. The violin won out!

Growing up in the Twin Cities provided her with many musical opportunities. She performed in school and youth orchestras, as well as competed in the National Federation of Music Clubs and Thursday Musical. She pursued her musical studies at the University of Minnesota and studied with John Tartaglia, Shirley Thomson Santoro and Lea Foli. It was while she was at the University that she realized that music was an enjoyable way to make a living. She continued free-lancing while working on her studies at the University. It was soon after that she ended up in San Antonio performing with the symphony there. She spent three years in San Antonio.

She and her husband Patrick wanted to be closer to their families, which were both in the Twin Cities. Upon returning to the Twin Cities, she jumped right back into the

free-lance scene. She always enjoyed alternative styles of music and found that there was plenty of variety in free-lancing. Some of the first jobs back in the Twin Cities took her to the Carlton Room, Rupert's and Gatlin's. She remembers some of those jobs as being great fun, but little pay. On some of those jobs, she not only played violin, but also sang back up vocals and played keyboard.

Carolyn is probably best known these days for her work with Lorie Line and her Pop Chamber Orchestra. She loves this type of playing, as it provides the visual element

brought to a place by her teacher to see so much artistic beauty and so many opportunities.

Carolyn's advice to anyone in the free-lance world is: *be flexible!* Things may happen that you are not prepared for. Things aren't always perfect or planned for. You also need to love your audience. There is no place for an elitist attitude. Some of what she considers hallmarks of a free-lance player include dress appropriately, be pleasant, have a great attitude and don't be hard to work with.

Carolyn would love if there were the impromptu musical gatherings that were common only a generation or two ago. Her desire is that both amateur and expert musicians be appreciated. She has currently added the concertina to her instrument collection and is in fact a member of the Czech Area Concertina Club. We can look forward to hearing more of her, whether it be on the violin or concertina, in the concert hall or campground!



Carolyn Boulay and her husband Patrick

of performing, as well as the interaction with the audience. She also plays for Cliff Brunzell and the Golden Strings.

As for her current practice routine, Carolyn describes it as somewhat erratic. She would like it to be similar to a fitness routine. She believes that no matter who or what you are playing for, it is your job to be in shape to play it well. As for lessons today, she still studies with Mary West. She believes that a good teacher brings you to a point where you can see what your possibilities are. She is thankful to have been

Mary Sorlie is an active free-lance violinist. She has played with the Lexington Symphony, Minnesota Opera, Minneapolis Chamber Symphony, Lyra Concert, Bach Society and Minnesota Sinfonia. She has played with the San Francisco and Joffrey Ballet Companies, Harry Connick, Jr., Luciano Pavarotti, and Vince Gill. Mary is a frequent guest conductor and string clinician in the Midwest. She has been on the conducting staff of the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies and is currently the conductor for the MacPhail Suzuki Chamber Orchestra. Mary was on the faculty of Northwestern College for 18 years where she taught violin, string methods and founded and directed the Northwestern College Orchestra. She serves on the MNSOTA board as secretary. †