



# VIOLA

## Finding Inspiration

by Annette Caruthers

What keeps you going? How do you find the resources inside yourself to keep giving to students? Recently I attended a recital by Yuri Merzhevsky, whom I have known for years but had not heard as a soloist except when my attention was divided because I was in the orchestra accompanying him. He had such command of the instrument, coupled with a sincere ability to connect with his audience, that I was literally spellbound. The performance was a source of inspiration I will remember for quite some time.

What else works? What can you find at home? I love starting my days with favorite CDs playing while I have coffee in my sunny kitchen.... And I love reading. In the spring I promised I'd write about more resources among my books: these are for inspiration, rather than for technical information.

For the first, I am grateful to Jorja Fleezanis for her recommendation. It is *Old Wicked Songs* by Jon Marans. A play nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, it "weaves beautiful music and song with a journey of self-discovery undertaken by two men." For all of us, music is a journey of self-discovery, which is why it is so important to pass our passion and know-how along to students. I love this book! At only 108 pages, it is a quick read. Published by The Fireside Theater, Garden City, New York, 1996.

*Music, The Brain, and Ecstasy*, by Robert Jourdain, is subtitled: *How Music Captures Our Imagination*, and it actually does explain the subject in readable fashion. I have always been interested in how our brains and perceptions work, and Jourdain takes this one step farther to explain how we come to understand and enjoy music. Research on this is by no means finished, but there is enough here to fascinate. 377 pp., published by Quill, first released in 1997 in hardback, but now available in paperback — I found it at a used bookstore.

*Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, by David Blum, is not a new

book. Originally published in 1977, now available in paperback from University of California Press, this book of just over 200 pages is great at making expression and interpretation accessible. Casals was such an inspiring figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century music, and Blum quotes him over and over in ways that make clear that his music came from the heart.

*The Art of Practicing* by Madeline Bruser, published in 1997 by Bell Tower, NYC, is subtitled *A Guide to Making Music From the Heart*. It lives up to its promise. In the words of Richard Stoltzman, clarinetist, "It gently and joyfully reminds us of the beautiful reasons we love music and become musicians in the first place." This volume also contains references for further reading.... Which will keep me busy for some time to come.

*With Your Own Two Hands, Self-Discovery Through Music* is by Seymour Bernstein. He gives more psychological explanations than the other writers, and also addresses issues like: *Why Don't You Practice?*, *Try-Outs*, *The Day of a Performance*, and *The Day After a Performance*. I find him very readable and just a bit different from the others — a good resource. 296 pp, G. Schirmer, NYC.

Last, but certainly not least, I love *Teaching Genius* by Barbara Sand — the biography of Dorothy DeLay. She challenged her students, and nurtured them in so many ways. Her teaching style reminds me of Mary West's. According to Itzhak Perlman, "It is a different style of teaching that puts the student at ease." I get so many teaching ideas from this book! 240 pp, Amadeus Press, Portland, OR.

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