



VIOLIN

Music on the Lighter Side

by Ann Anderson

Greetings from the North.... well, not too far north, just to Duluth. I was the editor of the violin articles for *Strings 'n Stuff*...was that the name a while back?...several years ago. I thought when my friend Sally said, "Adieu," I would give it a try again. Maybe old ideas will be new again.

My father surprised me one day when he said, "It must be fun being a teacher working with your students to help them think and improve." I was surprised because my father was a civil engineer building roads and bridges in southern Minnesota. He was not a teacher, but he was a designer and problem solver. He always said, "Solving problems is the sign of intelligence, not memorizing someone else's thoughts."

And that's what we teachers are doing. We're solving or attempting to solve each student's problems so they can "take off and fly," playing beautiful music as a soloist, an orchestra member, a member of a string quartet, etc. Our journey, however, is not always so attractive to a student: scales, shifting, intonation, vibrato, bow control, elimination of tension; we all know the problems but balancing technique with beautiful literature that makes a student's heart sing is a very difficult task. We want to encourage them to move forward in their studies, but sometimes we're lucky if we can just keep them on an even keel.

Literature on the Lighter Side

I think finding the right literature for each student is primary. But choosing the "right" literature is a difficult problem. When do you select music within their reach and when do you select music beyond their reach to encourage raising the technical level? The Suzuki School with its progressive literature certainly makes the selections easy, but I suggest that additional material be selected in more varied styles.

Sometimes I select lighter solos and use them as teaching tools. For example, Severn's *Perpetual Motion*—bowing exercises at the tip, middle, frog, spiccato, staccato, ricochet, or Severn's *Polish Dance*—triple stops, left hand pizzicato, tone, vibrato. This literature is certainly not profound, but the

students enjoy including these easy pieces in their repertoire and they are attractive to casual programs in the community.

Finding music that is easily accessible for preparing a solo performance for the Woman's club, the Rotarians, or the Lions Club giving the students a chance to perfect a program of 20 minutes is not an easy task. These pieces can be learned in a short time and can give the student a sense of accomplishment while working on the Mendelssohn or Kabalevsky violin concerti for a year. Consider grouping violins together in twos or threes to perform. It makes a performance less formidable.

I used some of these pieces for a group I called "The Fiddlers" (just violins). The old violin book *Violin Pieces The Whole World Plays* (Whole World Series Number 5, Embassy Music Corporation) and Josef Gingold's *Solos for the Violin Player* (G. Schirmer) are good sources. The students memorized the pieces and were a sensation. *Millionaire's Hoedown* always was a grand finish.

One of those students, Jerry Jones, developed a great program at East High School with an entire string chamber orchestra memorizing and performing in the area (The Sterling Strings). Jerry worked with an arranger in the area, Carolyn Carver, and developed an exciting program every year. Carolyn has a library of light pieces that you might like to purchase for your string orchestra. She can be reached at 218-525-4031 or e-mail fiddleyd@charter.net.

Practice Smart—next article

I have developed a teaching package called *Practice Smart* to help me remember to cover my bases and I would like to share this package with you as we go along. Something like printing a chapter of a novel each month in a magazine.

I also find that students are practicing hours without taking a rest and are developing injuries. I cringe when our students ask guest artists how much they practice and the musician says, "Six hours a day." They never tell the students about the resting and care they take of their arms and back.

I've developed a half-hour practice routine that I will share with you next time. Galamian expected us to put in 4 to 6 hours of practice at Meadowmount, but only with 10-minute rests after 20 minutes of practice: study the music, count the rhythms, sing the melody, rest your arms, do some exercises.

Prepare a Student Repertoire List

My initial teaching project now is working with your students when they come to UMD. Finding out who they are, what their ambitions are, what they would like to play, their favorite composers (Vivaldi, Bach, Lalo, Mendelssohn, Brahms, etc.), checking their technical level, and recording the literature they have studied with you.

Before you send your students away to college or to another teacher, I urge you to help the students prepare a notebook with the literature they have studied. Some students who come to UMD have played in an orchestra without much private instruction. It is helpful to their next teacher to know what the orchestra literature was that they studied. They oftentimes can't remember what they played.

Send Your Ideas for These Articles

Please send me your ideas for these articles. I welcome your thoughts and your input. aanderso@d.umn.edu. Especially send titles, composers, and publishers of music on the lighter side for use as teaching tools with the result of building a workable repertoire and improving technical skills.

Professor Ann Anderson teaches at the University of Minnesota Duluth and plays in the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra as the Associate Concertmaster Emeritus. She received the Distinguished Service Award, Clinic Presenter, Master Teacher Award, and Orchestra Educator of the Year from the Minnesota Music Educators Association. She holds a Masters Degree in violin performance from Indiana University. Josef Gingold, Ivan Galamian and Norman Carol were her major teachers, with a master class with Yehudi Menuhin. ‡