

PEDAGOGY TALK SESSION

presented by Lucinda Marvin

reported by Elizabeth Ericksen

Lucinda Marvin gave an interesting and fun pedagogy session last February. Much of her explanations were actually demonstration with a live student; I will try my best to convey what she did within the limitations of the written word. Cindy started violin lessons at the age of nine with Mary West. She studied with Mary through high school and then attended the University of Minnesota where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.F.A. in violin performance. While there she studied with Ruben Gonzalez, John Tartaglia and Lea Foli. She received her M.M. in violin performance at Indiana University where she studied with Franco Gulli and Serbian Rusu. In the summers she worked with Dorothy DeLay and Stephen Clapp. She has extensive chamber music experience with quartets, trios and piano quartets. She toured and recorded with Minnesota Orchestra, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Lyra Baroque Orchestra and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.



Early Bow Work

Cindy believes in getting the bow into students' hands early. She has them hold the bow so it is facing the child. Then she asks the child to make a "parrot" with the 2nd finger overlapping the thumb. She places the thumb under the frog with a corn pad to show where the thumb goes, and then places the ring finger around the bow so that it touches the circle on the frog. Next, she draws an animal on the side of the hand and has the child bow on the shoulder, "kissing" the animal every time the hand reaches the face.

Left Hand Pinky Strengthening

Cindy has students pluck with their left hand pinky the following exercises:

G D G stop G D G stop
GG DD G D G stop

Continuing Bow Work

Cindy emphasizes a relaxed upper arm and bent thumb. She gives the student the image of \blacksquare – Pull and ∇ – Push. One exercise she demonstrated was to have the

student grab the string, wiggling it without making a sound and pulling fast, then wiggling again and pushing fast. She continually worked to keep the student's thumb bent, curved and soft, telling the student that she would have more control with less tension. Cindy suggested the student use "mental stick-um" to keep the fingers down and around the bow.

Spiccato

Cindy guides the arm so that students are using an arm stroke not just the hand. The bow should make an arc not a V. She emphasizes relaxation of the arm and fingers and a "heavy" arm.

Ricochet

Cindy makes sure that the thumb is bent and the upper arm is loose. Then she has the student practice on one string at first. Dancila's *Air Varié #5* is a good piece to introduce ricochet because the ricochet is on one note that is repeated. Later, when the ricochet is

more developed, they can study de Beriot's *Scene de Ballet*.

Barriolage

This bowing is used in de Beriot's *Scene de Ballet*. The elbow has different levels for each string. One exercise she gave was to have the student hold his wrist above his hand and then throw \blacksquare – stop – throw – ∇ stop; etc. Then \blacksquare ∇ – stop.

Vibrato

Two exercises Cindy suggested were:

- Wave the fingers toward your face with curled fingers.
- Take a tissue and dust the violin with your fingers and hand.

Up Bow Staccato

Cindy has students start with large motions – the arm rather than the wrist.

Seitz, Concerto #5, 1st movement

The opening features an accent without

staccato. If this is done well, it is an excellent preparation for the *Praeludium* from Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro*. The E Major section can be improved by having the student play an E Major scale.

Monti, Csardas

Cindy emphasizes that this is Gypsy music and that it is important to play with a lush sound, fast fingers and bow, and creative freedom. She suggests practicing fast passages with rhythms, with the fast notes as fast as possible and the fingers light. Some of the rhythms she suggested were:

Long – Short – Long – Short
Short – Long – Short – Long
Long – Short – Short – Short
Short – Short – Short – Long

Bach

Cindy likes to point out the differences between Baroque and Modern approaches to Bach. Baroque emphasizes gestures and a sweeter sound. Modern emphasizes longer lines and a bigger sound. She lends her students a Baroque bow so they can learn the "feel" of it, then has them try to copy the feel and sound with a modern bow. In a $\frac{4}{4}$ measure the beats are in order of importance 1, 3, 2, 4.

Cindy uses many visual images to get her points across. She brings in a "helicopter" for bow circles with a soft landing; and talks of "Keeping the pigs in the pen" for someone who is using too much bow. She helps students find different characters in pieces calling a *Bourrée* a "happy dance" and finding the "slimy" sections in a Seitz *Concerto*. She showed us that the teacher and the student can "have a good time working toward the perfection point."

Elizabeth Ericksen, a teacher of violin and viola, is a Lecturer in Music at Carleton College and a faculty member at MacPhail Center for Music. She coaches string quartets in the Augsburg College Suzuki Talent Education program. In the summer, she is managing director and coach for the Sartory String Quartet Institute, a 2-week day camp sponsored by MacPhail Center for Music. †