

All-State: Galamian, Dounis, Suzuki, Rolland and YOU!

presented by Kirk Moss — reported by Betsy Neil

This session, taught by Kirk Moss, was one of my favorites this year at the MSOTA All-State Workshop. It was informative and inspiring to watch videos, hear stories, and get to know some of the master teachers in our past. I have had the good fortune of being in the company of incredible teachers. My experience throughout high school with GTCYS (my first year it was the St. Paul Youth Symphony) had me under the direction of Russell Alan Davies, Henry Smith, Aaron Copland, Dr. Jones, and more. Being exposed to some of the best is inspiring, motivating, thought provoking and informational. Being able to watch historical videos of past master teachers is the next best thing!

The session began with watching a film that included 750 students playing the Bach *Double Violin Concerto* in a large gym. Very young students playing what would be thought of as impossible. The video showed conversations about Shinichi Suzuki's Talent Education theory of teaching. I also have had the great honor of attending Suzuki training with Dr. Suzuki as a guest speaker! He has given the world of string education methods and repertoire that never before existed. Part of his Talent Education includes parent involvement, $\frac{2}{3}$ of learning should be listening, all children can learn, and children should imitate and learn from the masters. In this philosophy, copying others is a good thing. Unfortunately today's models of assessment are looking at repetition as a negative thing; Suzuki says learning doesn't happen without it! Japanese teach reading of music with a fixed do solfege, and so early note reading isn't as necessary. On the negative side, Suzuki students have been criticized for being too mechanical.

Urgent news from Kirk Moss: buy the Paul Rolland books *Basic Principles of Violin Playing* and *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*, both republished in 2000! Paul Rolland started the Urbana Champagne Project. Paul Rolland's greatest advice and focus is playing with no tension. He gave to the world of string teaching many great methods of teaching beginning students. One of my college professors taught string methods using Paul Rolland's method. Many teachers today still refer to some of his strategies for teaching posture such as the Statue of Liberty, foot position (just like Suzuki's), etc. His efforts were to promote balance to avoid tension. He also used the Stanly Fletcher book. Sadly, Paul Rolland's methods are used everywhere, but his books didn't sell well.

D.C. Dounis, 1886–1994, mostly taught as opposed to performing. He was born in Athens, became a doctor, served in the Greek Army, and treated musicians from major symphonies. He developed exercises to address their problems and was known to provide brilliant diagnosis for what a musician needed. He believed mastery of the fundamentals was necessary for any progress. His mantra was to return the player to his natural instinct and intuition. He worked with mostly gifted prodigies, and called his method, "The Science of Expressive Technique." His biggest contribution and most widely used is his *Daily Dozen*. He settled in New York and taught most lessons from his home. To hide their identity, students often snuck

in and out via the fire escape for their lesson that would often last the whole day. Ads can still be seen in the early *String Teacher* editions. Kirk offered us a bit of a pedagogical tree: Phyllis Young created *Playing the String Game*, in which she gives credit to George Neikrug. Bob Gillespie and Donald Hamann created *Strategies for Teaching Strings*, which traces back to Dounis. It was recommended this is a must-have purchase!

Ivan Galamian was from Persia and settled in Moscow. He studied violin at Julliard. He and his wife Judith Johnson founded the summer school, Meadowmount. Ivan died in 1981 and Judith continued running Meadowmount. Galamian was known for his great dedication and patience; always available 365 days of the year and had stamina without equal. He taught many great artists of great talent including Itzhak Perlman, Michael Rabin, Pinchas Zukerman and Joshua Bell. He was known to give 100% of his attention to students. We were fortunate to watch an old video of Galamian teaching Joshua Bell when Joshua was a young boy. It was insightful to observe this lesson and note that Galamian indeed was nothing but focused on young Joshua as he worked with him. I do like his way of having students perform a major scale such as the G starting G B A then back to the G and on up the scale.

And the pedagogy tree continues with Dorothy Delay who studied with Galamian and later became an assistant to him. Josef Gingold taught at IU until 1995 and Joshua Bell was a student of his. Mimi Zweig currently teaches at IU and definitely taught Joshua Bell. I had the best time studying teaching violin last summer at the University of Milwaukee with Mimi as one of the lead teachers. She taught using many Galamian methods as well as some Paul Rolland. Mimi founded the University String Academy at IU and continues teaching students, teachers and providing videos and string instruction available to all. Had I attended IU like I intended, I too would have had the opportunity to study with Gingold!

Other names mentioned by Kirk, which I'll have to look into, are Mark Schmidt, Stephen Shipps – Meadowmount, Capay [sp. ?] for his precise use of bow, and Simon Fischer and his *Basics*.

I'm grateful to all these great teachers, who have contributed to how we all teach string instruments. So much more is available through the technology we now have, although studying directly with a master can never be replaced.

I'm also grateful to the wonderful teachers who thought of organizing string teacher workshops during All-State Orchestra week. Most everyone in the classes seemed dedicated and willing to share their best practices and solutions for nuts and bolts type questions. I left the workshop with pages full of new ideas; lesson plans that will add more excitement and fun for the students as well as assessment tools, teaching posture tricks, repertoire, and motivation for being the best teacher I can be.

Betsy Neil teaches in Winona. †