

GREEN MOUNTAIN YOUTH SYMPHONY
"the music is just the beginning . . ."

NOTES FROM GMYS

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2 MARCH 2013

NOTES FROM THE MAESTRO

BY BOB BLAIS



Happy Spring, Everybody!

Hopefully, by the time you're reading this the first crocuses will be popping out of the ground. Or, maybe not; you may be shoveling out from the most recent snowstorm. Let me tell you, it's hard to write these articles ahead of time!

This last year, I've been thinking a lot about the benefits of music and music education in our society. As any graduating senior who asks my opinion about their options will tell you, I am not a strong proponent of students going directly from high school into a specialized, mostly very expensive, music program. I think it's a better investment for students to get a well-rounded education, so they can learn skills that will enable them to be flexible in the changes that happen in our rapidly evolving world. Things like writing at a high level, being very competent with computers, and higher-order critical thinking are all necessary in many fields, and people who are able to do these things will have many more options than those who don't. At a conservatory, you practice your instrument a lot, and get really good at it, but it's at the expense of the other aspects of a person's development. There was a very sobering article a couple of years back in the New York Times regarding recent graduates from the prestigious Juilliard School. Approximately half of the graduating students are not professional musicians, and many don't play their instruments at all!

So, why do I spend so much time teaching music? What's the point? Well, even though going into music as a profession is an iffy proposition, playing, performing, and practicing music have huge benefits in and of themselves. For example:

- Dr. James Catterall of UCLA performed a study in which he analyzed the school records of 25,000 students as they moved from grade 8 to grade 10. He found that students who studied music and the arts had higher grades, scored better on standardized tests, had better attendance records and were more active in community affairs than other students. He also found that students from poorer families who studied the arts improved overall school performance more rapidly than all other students.
- Students of lower socioeconomic status who took music lessons in grades 8–12 increased their math scores significantly as compared to non-music students. But just as important, reading, history, geography and even social skills soared by 40%.
—*From Nature; Gardiner, Fox, Jeffrey and Knowles*
- Students of music continue to outperform their non-arts peers on the SAT, according to reports by the College Entrance Examination Board. In 2006, SAT takers with coursework/experience in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and 43 points higher on the math portion than

(Continued on page 5)

SAVE THESE DATES!

MARCH 17, 2013

SENIOR ORCHESTRA GUEST
PERFORMANCE WITH VPO
BARRE OPERA HOUSE, 2PM

APRIL 14, 2013

SPRING CONCERTS
(DETAILS ON BACK COVER)

APRIL 20 & 21, 2013

MAY 4 & 5, 2013

AUDITIONS

JULY 3, 2013

GMYS PLAYS ON THE
VT STATEHOUSE LAWN

AUGUST 4-10, 2013

GMYS RESIDENTIAL SUMMER
MUSIC PROGRAM AT JSC

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PERLEY'S PERSPECTIVE

BY PAUL PERLEY



In Repertory Orchestra this semester, the theme is drama. Four original pieces (not arrangements) are all evocative of dramatic, cinematic events. *March of the Shadows*, and *The Lost Tomb* certainly tap into the current craze for paranormal events. *Mechanisms*, while ostensibly written to remind us of production machines doing manufacturing jobs, would make a terrific soundtrack for a film. And, in Vermont, you can't get much

more dramatic than a *Nor'easter*.

In addition to introducing B-flats and E-flats to our advancing group, we've had the musicians create stories about what is happening in the music and we talk about some of these stories when we rehearse the pieces.

Key an eye out at the concert — there may be some shadow figures sitting near you.

Stay tuned!

Paul

This year GMYS added two Music Theory/Eurhythmics classes to supplement our three orchestral ensembles. Led by Peter Cressy, the course is designed to enhance our young musicians' understanding of rhythm and musicality. Two sessions are offered each week so that students from all three orchestras can participate before or after their Saturday morning rehearsals.

27 young musicians have participated in one or both semesters of this enrichment experience and the responses have been very positive. It has been exciting to extend a summer program favorite into the regular program year so students can explore the intricacies of music beyond rehearsals in more depth than our week-long summer program allows.

We welcome *all* young musicians to join us for these classes, no matter their instrument (including voice!). If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Leah Wilhjem, Orchestra Manager, at (802) 888-4470 or by email at leah@gmys-vt.org

PITCHES & PULSES

BY PETER CRESSY



Hello everyone,

In our Saturday morning sessions we've continued to explore a variety of things including familiar activities such as conducted rhythmic canons, dictations of pitch

or rhythm, polyrhythmic machines and sight-singing. We've also tried stranger activities such as notating a curious 6/8 drum set groove and listening to Beethoven's 6th Symphony with an eye/ear toward how many minutes can go by without hearing anything but I-IV-V (tonic/subdominant/dominant) chords.

For those of you who were not in attendance for the session where I was quite ill and somewhat delirious, I think you missed something special.

These classes are designed to augment the students' musical reality in such a way that playing their instruments in GMYS and elsewhere becomes more meaningful. If any of you ever wish to pose a random musical question you're reluctant to discuss in class, or would like to follow up on anything about music that doesn't quite make sense to you, I'd invite you to contact me at peter@gmys-vt.org.

Clap pulses at home!

Peter

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT GMYS MUSICIANS

Help GMYS when you search or shop online. Visit www.iGive.com/GMYS to sign up for the free iGive or iSearch tools. There is also a link to iGive on our home page www.gmys-vt.org.

Make a donation online. There is a link to JustGive right on our home page www.gmys-vt.org.

Make a donation directly to GMYS. Rehearsals, music, concerts and financial aid are all costly. Your tax deductible gift will help us continue our programs for young musicians throughout the year.

To make a gift, please send your check payable to *Green Mountain Youth Symphony* to: **GMYS, P.O. Box 384, Montpelier, VT 05602.**

AUDITION TIPS

Scales

First of all, be “conversant” in your scales. Think of scales as a means to introduce yourself to the conductor. They need to be played with confidence, with a big, full tone, and played well in-tune. Don’t ever take scales for granted! Competence in scales gives one a foundation for being able to play music skillfully. Scales are the vehicles for conquering the technical demands of your music and for conquering sight-reading, which will be addressed later.

Solo

The next part of your audition is your solo. Are the conductors interested in technical solos? Yes, BUT not if MUSIC is sacrificed! We would prefer to hear something played with beauty and expression, with style and a lovely tone, and with excellent tuning, rather than a technical piece that sacrifices any of those qualities. Technique for technique’s sake is not music to us. Until you are playing expressively and in tune, lots of notes are not going to impress us. If you play fast and sloppy on your prepared piece, we must consider that your practice habits need improvement. Since musicians generally work on their solos over a long period of time, it is important to us that you display thorough preparation, especially considering the fact that GMYS orchestras rehearse only once a week, and there are only a few rehearsals before each concert. We must have confidence that you can prepare well.

Sight-reading

Sight-reading! You might say, ugh! But its importance cannot be emphasized enough. The first two aspects of sight-reading that are important are: (1) recognition of the key of the piece (scale knowledge!) and (2) good reading of rhythms. Not only the correct execution of rhythms, but the proper counting of note values is essential. Our orchestras are large in size in order to emulate the symphony orchestra setting. Can you imagine a large group trying to play together without the fundamentals of good counting skills? One might say, “I can’t sight-read well, but I can take the music home and work it

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out.” Included in learning to play one’s instrument well are good sight-reading skills, especially for the orchestra setting. Again, with so few rehearsals to prepare for concerts, it is essential that we sight-read music well so we can start work right way. Time is of the essence. We do expect you to take your music home to work on details, but that does not change the importance of skillful sight-reading.

Sight-reading skills are developed just as normal reading skills are developed. As in every learned skill, there is a process. You learn your ABC’s (scales) and you start by reading easy music. You read more and more to build your “musical vocabulary.” As you advance, you read with greater fluency and knowledge. To reach a high level of proficiency in sight-reading one must have an advanced vocabulary (scale knowledge, key signature and rhythmic recognition), and one must have the ability to include expressive qualities. This would put an advanced musician’s sight-reading near a performance level.

You *can* practice for sight-reading! Just do it! Start by reading something easy. Be sure you observe the key signature, count carefully, watch for accidentals and rhythmic changes, observe your dynamics, play at a tempo where you feel you can get through the music without stopping (slower is better), and try your best to be expressive! Look up the words at the beginnings of your music, like “andante”, “allegro”, “maestoso”, “giocoso”, etc., since they are clues about the speed and/or style of the music. Include sight-reading in your daily practice so you can be fluent in your music reading! Above all, *be expressive*.

Think of your audition as an interview. Know that you will have competition. You want to appear confident and knowledgeable, and you want to convince the conductors that you are just the right person for their orchestra! First impressions are important. Preparation should be thorough. Prove yourself technically and above all, be expressive!

GMYS auditions are coming up on April 20-21 and May 4-5!

Use the tips above to help you prepare. To schedule your audition, contact Leah Wilhjelms, Orchestra Manager, at (802) 888-4470 or by email at leah@gmys-vt.org.

GMYS welcomes students of ALL AGES, ALL LEVELS, & ALL ORCHESTRAL INSTRUMENTS.

Like us on Facebook to follow our ‘doings’ - serious and silly. [Facebook.com/GreenMountainYouthSymphony](https://www.facebook.com/GreenMountainYouthSymphony)

MEET SENIOR SOLOIST: CHANTILLY LAROSE, CLARINET

Why did you choose this piece? Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A* is one of the best known pieces of clarinet literature. In fact, I remember hearing the Spanish clarinet player at the Eurochestreries festival playing the piece as part of her warm up routine. At first I shied away from it because I knew that it would be difficult to live up to the legacy of the piece. But, I just couldn't get the melody out of my head! I love the way the piece is both playful and mysterious, telling a story through the exchanges in different voices. I hope that everyone finds the piece just as playful and catchy as I do.

When did you join GMYS? I attended the GMYS summer program the summer of my freshman year and fell in love with the people. I had never really experienced music beyond band and jazz repertoire, so orchestra was something new and very exciting for me. I hadn't actually intended to stick with it during the school year, but the people and the music got me hooked!

What is your favorite thing about playing with GMYS? I love how comfortable I am sitting in orchestra. Even if I mess up, sure it may be embarrassing, but it's not a big deal. We have a few laughs and just try again. Everyone is extremely understanding and supportive of each other.

Do you have a favorite memory? There is not a single

favorite memory for me. I particularly remember silliness during rehearsals: loosening each other's ligatures, playing dissonant notes during tuning, moving each other's chairs, games of hangman during long rests, Bob's crazy stories. But camp and the week in Quebec City was pretty amazing too. I certainly will never forget any of that.

When you're not playing in GMYS, what do you like to do? Well, sleeping is always nice, but I love to dance too. I dance with a group at school that performs at football games and local schools, as well as in recitals and competitions. Like music, dance is a great outlet and way to express myself.

Any suggestions for younger orchestra members? Don't compare yourself to anyone else. I sometimes catch myself doing that, especially in music when it's so easy to see yourself and your abilities as a chair or rank. Where you are placed in the orchestra doesn't make you a bad musician. As long as you love what you do, it doesn't matter if you can't play an A minor scale at a tempo of 210.

Do you have any plans for life after GMYS? After graduation I hope to attend college and study music education. I'm excited to share my passion for music with other students later in my life.

MEET SENIOR SOLOIST: DAVID FICKES, VIOLIN

Why did you choose this piece? On a very basic level, the Saint-Saëns' *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* has a lot of technique that I needed to either learn or master. In terms of why this piece in particular, I chose it because it's simply a lot of fun. It's a very enjoyable piece to listen to and is equally fun to play.

When did you join GMYS? I joined the summer before my freshman year of high school. The first time I played in GMYS was at the summer program, and I absolutely loved it. Before GMYS I had played with the Northeast Kingdom Community Orchestra, and it was an interesting change to go from an orchestra that was a mix of adult and student players to one that was all students.

What are your favorite things about playing with GMYS? All of the pieces we played. It was so exciting to be able to play some of the major symphonies, such as Dvorak's Ninth, that are such a huge part of the music world. Playing these huge pieces was just so much fun!

How has playing violin enriched or changed your life? Playing the violin has made a huge impact on my life. It gives me a goal to work towards that is not mandatory. Unlike school work, there is nobody forcing me to practice, so it has

helped to teach me discipline without having someone constantly watching over my shoulder (besides my mom always bugging me to practice when I inevitably didn't). Beyond that it has given me an avenue to meet many people that I have a lot in common with, and I have found that the people who play music are some of the most interesting people I know.

Any suggestions for younger orchestra members? Practice, practice, practice. Everyone says it and nobody ever listens, but it's the only way to get better. Practice more, practice better, and practice longer. Beyond that, make sure that you enjoy playing music: find the pieces you love and find a way to play them. I love Shostakovich's compositions, and a few years ago I played his *7th Symphony* with the Green Mountain Mahler Society, which was a blast and really inspired me to practice more (does this sound familiar?).

Do you have plans for life after GMYS? I'm not entirely sure of what I want to do after GMYS. I am going to go to college and try to find what I am interested in pursuing as a career, although I never intend to give up music. I hope to play in a college orchestra, as well as play in chamber groups in or outside of school.

NOTES FROM THE MAESTRO *(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*

students with no coursework or experience in the arts. Scores for those with coursework in music appreciation were 62 points higher on the verbal and 41 points higher on the math portion.

— *The College Board, Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report for 2006*

Evidence of these effects can be seen looking at the schools where our graduates enroll. Take a look at the top students at your local schools; chances are, many of them are serious music students. These are smart kids, and their brains are more effective because they play music! Beyond all these cognitive benefits, I think there is a huge social benefit. Much of the motivation for getting up on Saturday morning and coming to GMYS is playing awesome music, but, more than that, is playing awesome music *together*. In a world where social interaction can be more frequently from behind a monitor, there is something very healthy and gratifying about working together to make beauty. Music for adults leads to a healthier brain as well: in a recent study at Emory University School of Medicine, it was shown that older folks (ages 60-85) who studied music had significantly higher cognitive test

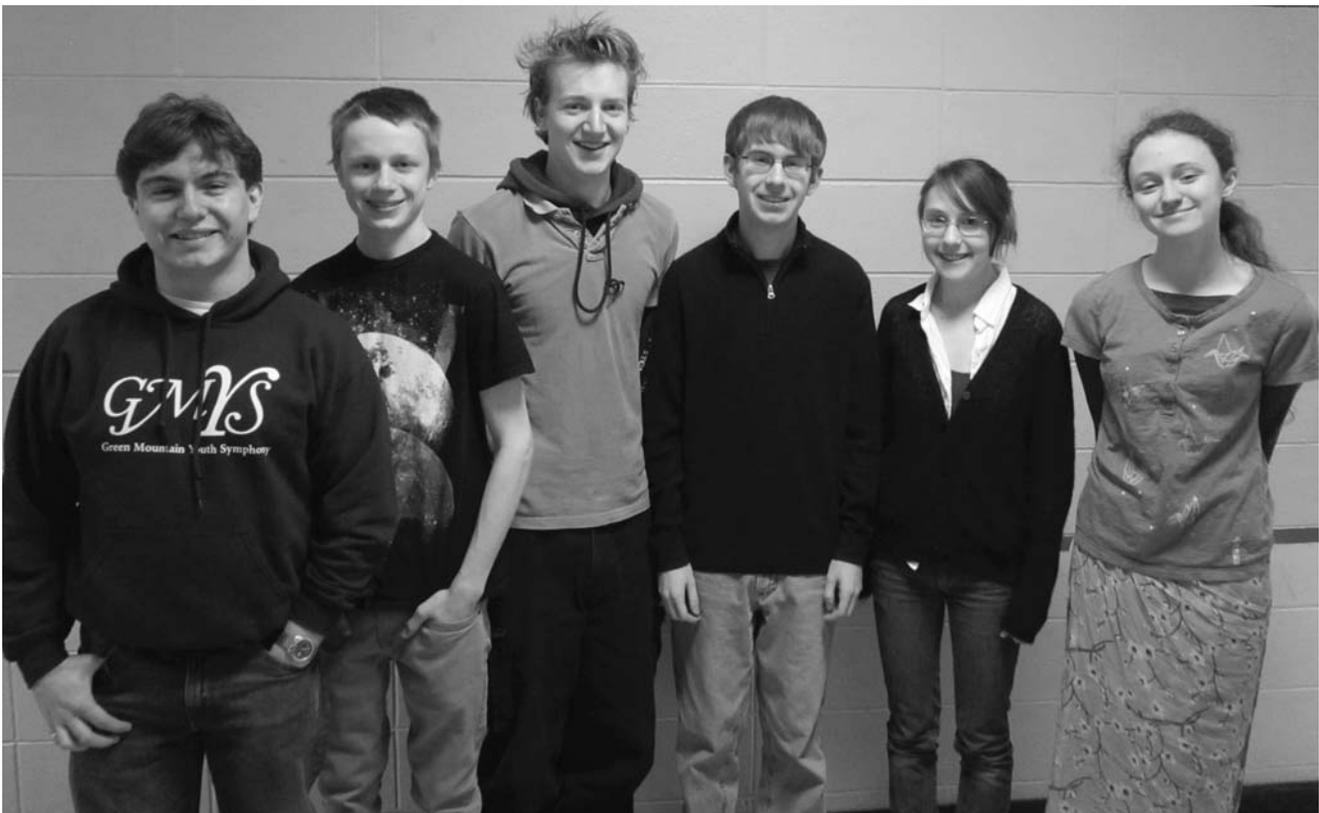
scores, especially in cognitive flexibility, the ability to respond to new information. There is even a study mentioned in the *British Medical Journal* in 1996 that says people who participate in the arts live longer!

There are so many opportunities for adult players — community orchestras, chamber groups, continued study, and even as an educated audience member; this is a lifetime activity.

In closing, if you want to study music seriously, do it! But, do it at a liberal arts school where you can learn other skills to expand your ability to make choices. You can always go to graduate school in music after you gain those skills. Regardless of your level of seriousness, keep playing; music is one of the only things that uses your entire being. It is physical, you think deeply about it, and it expresses emotions; your brain processes written, auditory, visual, and social information while playing music, and you interact socially with others. It's good for you, and it's fun!

Now, go practice!!

Bob



GMYS will graduate nine musicians this spring.

Left to right: Anthony Barrows, Teagan Bate, Liam O'Connor-Genereaux, David Fickes, Timnah Zimet and Mazie O'Connor. Not pictured: Chantilly Larose, Sophia Pellegrino and Josephina Sances. We'll miss them all and hope they stay in touch!



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GMYS SPRING 2013 CONCERTS

Sunday, April 14
 Barre Opera House in Barre, Vermont

1:00 pm

Robert Blais, *Artistic Director*
 Paul Perley, *Conductor*

Repertory & Concert Orchestras

Program includes a mixture of familiar favorites (*La Bamba* & *Over the Rainbow*) and other classic and contemporary pieces.

**Tickets available at the door:
 \$5 suggested donation for adults
 children under 18 free**

(4PM ticket holders are welcome to attend
 the 1PM concert at no additional charge)

4:00 pm

Robert Blais, *Artistic Director*

**GMYS
 Senior Orchestra**

Program includes music by Strauss (father and son), Mozart,
 Saint-Saëns, Actor and Sibelius.

**Tickets available for advance purchase
 through the Barre Opera House box office:**

\$15 Adults; \$10 children under 18
 (1PM ticket stubs will be honored for a
 \$5 discount off the 4PM door prices)

GMYS Residential Summer Music Program 2013

For intermediate and advanced young musicians

August 4th through 10th
 at Johnson State College



We welcome young musicians of
 all orchestral instruments.
 Placement is by audition.
 For information and registration
 forms, visit our website
www.gmys-vt.org ~OR~ email
 Leah at leah@gmys-vt.org.

