

WORKSHOP DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mills College, October 3-4, 2015

by Elizabeth Morrison

For this year's fall workshop at Mills, a famous women's college and champion of women artists, CMNC decided to celebrate the work of women composers. This was our first themed workshop, and it added an element of anticipation, then discovery, to our always high level of



Orientation meeting

chamber music fun. The theme was inspired by a Bay Area Rainbow Symphony concert where all three of the pieces performed were by women. "I'll see your three pieces!" I thought to myself at the time, wondering what it would be like if all 28 groups at a CMNC workshop could play music by women. It began to seem possible when I realized that the CMNC library owns more than



Carolyn Lowenthal, Bill Horne, Dorothy Lee and Doug Slaton receive Kathryn Bates' coaching

40 such works, and that many of them had never even been assigned. Well, now many of them have been assigned, played and (mostly) enjoyed.

We welcomed a total of 169 attendees, from 182 applications (both numbers up slightly from October 2014), after cancellations and a few people regretfully waitlisted for instrument balance. There was a good mix of strings and winds, and on Saturday we were able to assign a to-

tal of 22 groups: eight groups with piano, six all-string groups, three all-wind groups, and five groups of mixed strings and winds, including Louise Farrenc's Nonetto. On the preformed side we had four string quartets, one piano quartet and a woodwind quintet, for a total of 28 groups. In all, 122 people attended on Saturday.



Cynthia Darby helps Ann Hershey and Ralph Morrison with their Zwilich quartet

Astonishingly, all the Saturday assigned groups, and all but one of the preformed groups, did play music by women. Coming preformed was the opt-out from the theme, as preformed groups always choose their own music, but only one group that really wanted coaching on a late Beethoven quartet (and who could blame them?) actually took this option. The composers assigned ranged from the earliest, Louise Farrenc, 1804-1875, and Fanny Mendelssohn, 1805-1847, to the most recent, Caroline Shaw, born in 1982. There were classical, romantic and very contemporary works. Several composers had more than one of their pieces played: Farrenc's trio for clarinet, cello and piano as well as her Nonetto, a wind trio and a woodwind quintet by Claude Arrieu (a woman, who knew!), and Ethel Smyth's string quartet and a trio called "Bonny Sweet Robin," for flute, oboe and piano (Smyth's cello quintet was also played



Nothing can stop Amy Kahn from making music with Susan Hodgson, Art Ungar, Susan Marvin and Jim Engelman

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on Sunday). Three pieces were played by more than one group: a piano quartet by Dora Pejacevic, Fanny Mendelssohn's string quartet, and a clarinet quintet by Elizabeth Maconchy. In total, we played the works of 21 different women composers. I prepared thumbnail biographies of these women, which you can find [here](#) on our web site.

Of course, out of so many pieces, some turned out to be more successful than others. Happy finds, which will likely become part of our regular assignment rotation, include the Lyric Sonata for string quartet, flute, clarinet, and bassoon by Harriet Bolz; the quartets of Grazyna Bacewicz; a Divertimento for flute, clarinet, violin and

unfamiliar music at the master classes. We were then treated to an absolutely amazing concert by the Del Sol Quartet, in Mills' beautiful Littlefield Concert Hall. Talk about unfamiliar music! They played pieces by Mohammed Fairouz, Gabriela Lena Frank, Ruth Crawford, Mason Bates and Elena Kats-Chernin (note the strong representation of women composers!) It was unforgettable.



New pianist Naomi Feldman bonds with Arlene Suda

Sunday was another fine warm autumn day. We welcomed 103 participants (the same number as last year) in 26 groups, 19 assigned and seven preformed. We again had nine piano groups, along with six string-only groups, six groups of mixed strings and winds, and five groups of winds only. There was no theme for Sunday, but we still had six works by women. Women composers are not going away! There's just too much good music to be explored.

Following the coaching day, groups had the opportunity to take part in an optional performance sampler, organized this year by Amy Apel. Seven groups chose to



Bruce Belton, Maria Reeves and Peter Bedrossian perform the Gunther Rafael trio

cello by Ellen Taafe Zwilich; and the aforementioned Pejacevic piano quartet. Others are already assigned regularly, such as the Clara Schumann and Madeline Dring piano trios, the pieces by Ethel Smyth and the pieces by Claude Arrieu. Others such as Nancy Dalberg, Fanny Mendelssohn, and even Caroline Shaw's string quartets will surely pop up from time to time. Others, nameless here, will probably disappear without a trace, other than the one left on the traumatized brains of the players. Even in such pieces, though, good will and attitude went a long way. Carol Masinter commented, "The piece was difficult, but the day spent working on it turned out to be interesting and fun, thanks to the participants and our coach." Her attitude and that of others was much appreciated and completely in the spirit of CMNC.

At the end of Saturday's coaching sessions there were seven master classes of four groups each. Many people commented how interesting it was to hear so much



Diane Egli, Lucy Phenix, Harry Bernstein, Sharon Greene and Brian Colfer play Ethel Smyth under the direction of Charlton Lee

perform, so there were two samplers of three and four groups. By the way, out of the seven groups, three played Brahms! The samplers have proven a great addition to the workshop. I took part and thoroughly enjoyed hear-

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ing the other groups, and welcomed the opportunity to play the fourth quartet of Grazyna Bacewicz for others.

Our coaches were, as usual, excellent. Amy Apel was coach coordinator for this workshop, and hired 14 top musicians for this workshop. These included the members of the Del Sol Quartet, Benjamin Kreith and Rick Shinozaki, violins, Charlton Lee, viola, and Kathryn Bates, cello; joined by Randy Fisher and new coach Veronica Salas, viola; Burke Schuchmann and Tom Stauffer, cello; Cynthia Darby and Jeffrey Sykes, piano; Yael Ronen, flute; Patricia Shands, clarinet; Karla Ekholm, bassoon; and Alicia Telford, horn. We are so fortunate to have these musicians to help us; they are a big part of why we all keep coming back year after year.

As always, many people work together to make our workshops happen. First, Eugene Turitz deserves much praise for taking on the task of coordinating facilities and catering. He is the first non-Board volunteer to do this, and we all appreciated his work greatly. He did so much to make our experience go smoothly. The few glitches, such as the fact that we had coffee, but no coffee cups, on Saturday morning, or the locked rooms on Sunday, were in no way attributable to him. Eugene was responsible for organizing the student helpers, distributing the much-appreciated signage, getting lights out



Jeff Chan, Jane Cox and Elizabeth Olson perform Brahms in the Sunday Performance Sampler

where needed, and much more, including buying the great trail mix packets from Costco. Thank you Eugene!

Susan Kates did the wind assignments, with help from Karen Wright, Bob Goldstein and Alan Kingsley; Maria Reeves worked with the pianists and was freelance coordinator at the workshop; Carolyn Lowenthal and Miriam Blatt helped with string assignments (Miriam doing so although she was not able to attend the



Valerie Suzawa, Julie Erickson, David Allen, Alan Copeland and Claire Wilson perform the Bax oboe quintet

workshop herself), and all were reviewed by the rest of the workshop committee: Amy Apel, Bill Horne, Bob Nesbet, Harriet Spiegel and Marion Taylor. I must admit I chose most of the Saturday music myself, because of the women composers angle, but received many suggestions from participants of works they wanted to try. This was one of the best parts for me, but it made putting the right number of people into the right number of groups more complicated than usual. We also sent out a lot of scores and parts; the wind, piano and string gurus did a lot of this, as did Marion Taylor from her post as music librarian.

Carolyn Lowenthal worked her usual magic with the workshop planner software. Alan Kingsley, in his first turn as treasurer, took excellent care of all financial arrangements. Karen Wright coordinated the volunteers. Sue Fowle handled the web site, applications, mailings and evaluation forms from far-off Eureka, and Harry Chomsky kept an expert eye on the database. We always appreciate having Mike Irvine as workshop librarian. Miriam Blatt, the evaluations coordinator, does another huge job after the workshop, compiling the evaluation forms and organizing them for the board so they can be used to improve every detail. Many volunteers helped with everything from registration to putting up and taking down the great



Alicia Breen, Bill Horne and Brian Lloyd in The Memory Palace by Ann Calloway

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signs to taking photographs to pouring wine at dinner. Susan Wilson deserves special mention for her constant attention to all our printed materials. Every workshop, Susan creates the entire registration packet, including the program and your nametags, and makes the beauti-



Alan Kingsley, Chris Carr, Karen Wright, and Chris Farrell play a Bitsch quartet

ful concert programs as well.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks for the help I received on the women composers' theme from Terrie Baune, whose knowledge of women's music is unparalleled; from Carol Mukhopadhyay, whose enthusiasm and commitment to research were with me every step of the way; from Bill Horne, Carolyn Lowenthal, Marion Taylor and Sue Fowle, who played through

I truly felt that we were giving honor to the great women artists who have written for us over the years.

many pieces or freelanced them at Humboldt last summer; and from Harry Bernstein and Asher Davison, both of whom sent me many suggestions and brought several local women composers to our attention. Thank you all. You might also be interested to know that Inge Kjemtrup, a violist friend of many of us who

writes for *Strings Magazine*, attended the workshop as an observer; we look forward to a possible article there about our project.

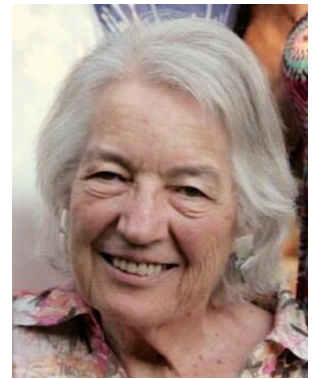
And finally, thanks to everyone for coming and for taking part. I truly felt that we were giving honor to the great women artists who have written for us over the years, and that they were supporting us in turn. It was a very exciting workshop for me, and, as always, it was an honor to be workshop director. ☺

Marion Taylor Retires as Music Librarian

By Elizabeth Morrison

Marion Taylor has been admirably in charge of CMNC's music library since joining the board in 2006. When she told us that the October 2015 workshop at Mills College would be her last as librarian, we all caught our collective breath to marvel at how fortunate we have been to have her for these nine years. I hereby invite all CMNC members to do the same. Marion's contribution to our enjoyment of chamber music has been enormous, and this is our chance to appreciate her and to thank for all she has done.

Recruiting Marion to the board was definitely one of my most rewarding acts as a CMNC board member. At the time Bill Horne, our founding librarian, felt ready to hand off his duties, it seemed perfect to have Marion, a professional librarian who had recently retired from the University of California at Santa Cruz, take over. I remember her telling me that she would try it for a year and then decide if she wanted to continue. Marion, where did those nine years go!



Marion Taylor

Bill published a report on the state of the library in the [April 2007 edition of *The Chamber Musician*](#). It's worth reading to appreciate Bill's amazing 13 years as librarian as well. Bill was (and is) a tireless collector with a wide appreciation for unusual pieces, especially ones that include piano. He handed over a library with many interesting and unusual works, as well as most standards of the repertoire. The origin of the library was a collection we purchased in the early '90s from Henry James, a chamber music devotee who was no longer able to play, and it had grown greatly under Bill's stewardship. Today, the library fills 45 plastic file boxes. These were stored at CSU East Bay, and have since been moved to a storage facility in Oakland.

One of Marion's first decisions was to move away from copying scores or parts when the works were available for sale, and only making copies if she could

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