

Monday, June 2

Editor's Summary

Monday featured a wide variety of sessions including the traditional warm up hour, master classes, chamber music, solo recitals, lectures, the Orchestral Excerpts Competition, and the evening concert that featured the Italian Wonderbrass Quintet and a big band concert paying tribute to Doc Severinsen. I know that you'll enjoy the conference reports that document the wonderful variety of the day's activities. Any worries about attendance at this year's conference have been totally laid to rest with the large number of people in attendance. Indeed one of the biggest challenges this first day has been getting to sessions early enough to secure a seat as many of the venues are overflowing as we all scamper for the best seats in the various performance locations.

- Gary Mortenson

Orchestral Excerpts Competition

The Orchestral Excerpts Competition yielded exciting performances from this year's finalists (Huw Morgan from the Royal Academy of Music, Jeffrey Northman from Grand Valley State University, and Joseph Brown from Ithaca College). Excerpts were from the standard repertoire including Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8*, Stravinsky's *Petroushka*, Bach's *Magnificat*, Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*, and Gershwin's *American in Paris*. All of the finalists were well prepared and gave strong performances that provided varying interpretations displaying their individual strengths. Congratulations to the finalists for their hard work and determination in presenting the excerpts and to all of their teachers (James Watson at the Royal Academy of Music, Richard Stoelzel at Grand Valley State University, and Kim Dunnick at Ithaca College) for their guidance to each of these students.

- Mark Boren

Allen Vizzutti

As he explained in the first couple of minutes, Allen Vizzutti had not planned a script for his talk "The Elegance of Effusive, Efflorescent, Effectual and Effortless Efficiency in Trumpet Playing." However, as someone with many years' experience in performing, composing and presenting, he had no trouble in delivering an hour and a quarter of interesting and clearly communicated insights into how to improve as a trumpet player.

Throughout the session the focus flitted from technique pointers about air flow to forays into scientific string theory, to anecdotes that had the whole room laughing. A dazzling performance of *Carnival of Venice* saw Vizzutti putting his own advice into action, and

questions from the floor touched on issues of pressure, pivoting, and pedals, before the over-capacity audience left, enlivened by Vizzutti's energy and good-humour.

- Lottie Young

Chris Martin

It was standing room only for Chris Martin's performance/seminar. Accompanied by Jennifer Snow, Martin opened with the first movement of the Fasch *Concerto*. Martin played with the utmost delicacy and sensitivity on his prototype Yamaha rotary piccolo trumpet. He then spoke about life as an orchestral musician in the United States and the intellectual demands of his current position, while stressing to keep an open mind, to perform a wide variety of music (including jazz), and to avoid the monotony of routine. He also held a question and answer session. After playing the offstage solo from Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and the opening solo to Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, Martin spoke about preparing six weeks in advance for concerts. Vital to his consistent playing is keeping his morning warm-up intact no matter what. He also played the second movement of Tomasi's *Concerto*, and closed with the final movement of the Fasch.

- Louie Eckhardt

Dean McNeill/Brian O'Kane

Canadian trumpeters Dean McNeill and Brian O'Kane gave a combination lecture/performance demonstrating a variety of jazz sounds with the House Jazz Trio. They discussed the kind of versatility needed to thrive in today's music scene. Both men agreed on the importance of putting in the extra effort needed early in a player's development to ensure mastery of the instrument. McNeill was particularly candid about the many demands being made on today's working musician, and his own need for occasional "bingeing" – working on one particular technical skill or stylistic element until it was comfortably mastered. Versatility is something born of enjoyment, not of need. The versatile musician learns many skills because there is satisfaction in the processes, and these musicians conveyed joy and satisfaction in their performance. This was a very encouraging program for musicians at all stages of their respective careers.

- Tim Swensen

Ryan Anthony/Paul Merkelo

Ryan Anthony started at the back of the hall with the Reiche *Abblasen* mutating, as he walked forward, into the *Prince of Denmark's March* and a couple of incredibly virtuosic variations thereon, just to perk our ears up. He and pianist Jennifer Snow went on to perform two scintillating, effortless movements from the Albinoni *Concerto St Marc*. Having praised the use of vocal transcriptions, feeling that the human voice is one of the purest things you can aspire to approach, Anthony made his point well with stunning performances of Fauré's *Après un Rêve* and Mozart's *Der Hölle Rache*. The soloist then

recommended Starer's *Invocation* as an excellent piece for recitals and showed us why in a performance full of mystery, passion and commitment.

Paul Merkelo and Rebecca Wilt gave us a superb group of works starting with a Peter Maxwell Davies' *Sonata* that was spiky and strident but lyrical in all the right places, though its essential hint of danger was never lost. A beautifully and appropriately vocal Andante from *Glière's Concerto for Coloratura Soprano* followed before Merkelo wrapped up his half of the recital with a sparkling Tartini *Concerto* that emphasized high energy and tasteful dynamics. Ryan Anthony joined Merkelo on stage for the last movement of the Vivaldi *Concerto for Two Trumpets*, a monstrously virtuosic crowd-pleaser that brought the house down. This was a memorable recital from two very fine trumpet and piano duos.

- Neville Young

True North

The True North Brass dazzled an overflow crowd with a versatile program of jazz and classical virtuosity. Originally a quintet, the group added an extra trumpet player, Bob Venebles, for the program and featured a number of guest soloists. Hornist Joan Watson aptly summed up the group's mission: "What drives us is the passion to create new works." The program began with a bracing *Ceremonial Fanfare* by True North tubist Scott Irvine whose arrangement of the "Aria" from Bach's *Goldberg Variations* was also performed. Trombonist, Alastair Kay contributed six fine arrangements to the program as well as an unbelievably sweet high solo on *Londonderry Air*. Trumpeters Chase Sanborn and Brian O'Kane made impressive solo appearances, and an original work by Jim McGrath ("Danse Macabre" from *Trois Hommages*) featured solotone mutes in a sardonic jazz waltz. True North trumpeters Ray Tizzard and Richard Sandals were in fine form throughout.

- Elisa Koehler

Walter White/Ingrid Jensen

Being a long-time advocate of long-setting exercises, this reporter looked forward to Walter White's session with eager anticipation. Starting as a way to keep in shape between road engagements, White produced a recorded accompaniment with which one can play long tones—long settings that can now be much more fun and interesting. White went on to demonstrate exercises that he later developed to go along with the CD and then had the entire audience participate in exercises with the CD playing in the background. The benefits of long tones include building endurance and stamina. One should concentrate on letting the air make the sound start and vibrate through a relaxed breath, a relaxed body, and a consistent blow. Ingrid Jensen spoke on the importance of drone pitches to help tonally center the pitch. White's CD offered the perfect basis for sonic excursions into her vivid imagination. More information on White's ideas can be viewed on his web site (walterwhite.com).

- John Irish

Mike Herriott/Ambrose Akinmusire

Multi-instrumentalist Mike Herriott along with 2007 Carmine Caruso Competition winner Ambrose Akinmusire offered up a truly remarkable afternoon of jazz. Assisted by the ITG House Jazz Trio, both artists lit up the Theater with fiery creativity. Herriott played double bass, trumpet, and trombone soloing on each instrument on three different selections. If trumpet alone wasn't enough, he made it look—and sound easy—to display such phenomenal talent on everything he touched.

Ambrose Akinmusire, joined by saxophonist Mike Murley and the House Trio performed all original compositions by Akinmusire. His warm, seductive tone and imaginative solos were thoroughly enjoyed by all. One can certainly see why he is so heralded a musician with his top-notch writing and playing. An original piece, newly written by pianist Catherine Toren (based on a favorite hymn of her grandmother who recently passed) provided a stirring, reflective conclusion to an extraordinary jazz performance.

- John Irish

Karen Donnelly/Frits Damrow

Karen Donnelly, with pianist Allison Gagnon, and Frits Damrow, with the indefatigable Rebecca Wilt, gave us a recital with the unusual programming and fabulous playing to wake even this late-afternoon audience and get people back on the edges of their seats. Both orchestral principals (National Arts Centre and Royal Concertgebouw) presented some lesser-known works making this a really interesting concert.

Donnelly, emphasizing Canadian composers, began with Denis Gougeon's *Mars*, doing full and precise justice to its agile harmon-muted middle section as well as the bold, declamatory material surrounding it. Next was Lavallée's *Meditation*, which simple and pretty music was the perfect vehicle for Donnelly's fantastic cornet sound. We heard more of this in her fine performance of the Australian cornet legend Percy Code's *Caprice* from *Zelda*, which brought her half of the concert to a warm and impressive end.

Frits Damrow started his half of the concert with Ravel's *Pièce en Forme de Habañera*, treating us to a lush, passionate performance with gigantic warmth of tone. Next, Dokshizer's arrangement of Shchedrin's piano piece *In Imitation of Albeniz* showed Damrow's technical virtuosity as well as his commanding stage presence. Jan Koetsier's *Sonatine* followed. A delightful work in two movements, the first has a lovely pastoral theme (think *Brigg Fair*; perhaps) and a set of short, clever variations; the second movement is an optimistic, sunny-day tune with some very busy interjections. Damrow ended the concert with Hoch's *Nordische Fantasie*, a terrific celebration of traditional cornet virtuosity.

- Neville Young

Monday Evening Concert

Host Jens Lindemann, in his introduction for the **Big Band Heat and Italian Invasion** concert, told the audience to expect a “smorgasbord of music.” Four hours later, the audience left completely gorged.

The Italian Wonderbrass Quintet started the concert with the Canadian Brass arrangement of Bach’s *Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor*. The Italian Wonderbrass Quintet is made up of five young brass musicians who currently hold leading positions in some of the finest Italian and German orchestras. They will be featured in their own recital on Tuesday afternoon.

The evening’s concert was dedicated to trumpeter “**Doc**” **Severinsen**. Severinsen, who now lives in Mexico, joined Lindemann on stage and spoke of his childhood, his early musical career, and influences. Severinsen also praised ITG’s contributions to new generations of trumpet players through its conferences.

Ole Edvard Antonsen is not Italian (he is Norwegian); nor did he perform with a big band. His “set,” however, featured a wide range of music, from Tartini’s *Concerto* to numerous original works. Backed by a string orchestra and rhythm section, Antonsen’s “compositions are a journey through the spectrum of human emotion, through inner and outer landscapes.” (<http://www.oleedvardantonsen.com/>) Many of the works performed are from his newest recording, entitled *Landscapes*. Antonsen’s performance was stellar, and his CD should become a part of every trumpeter’s library.

Following intermission, a veritable gaggle of trumpet players was featured with the **Prime Time Big Band**. **Mike Herriott** (Canada), **Andrea Tofanelli** (Italy), **Adam Rapa** (U.S.), **Ingrid Jensen** (Canada), **Chris Jaudes** (U.S.), **Walter White** (Canada), **Sean Jones** (U.S.), and **Allen Vizzutti** (U.S.) were all part of this feast of trumpets. Also featured was trombonist **Wycliffe Gordon**. Anyone believing that his involvement was to provide equal opportunity to the bass clef was sorely disappointed, as Gordon’s solos were stratospheric. Lindemann quoted Mark Gould, who declared Gordon “a force of nature.” Any trombonist who can earn a standing ovation from an audience of trumpet players deserves special recognition!

The evening concert concluded with Tommy Dorsey’s *We’ll Get It*. Severinsen had explained earlier in the evening that he was twenty when he joined the Dorsey band, and that this piece held a special place in his heart. All of the evening’s soloists returned to the stage, along with **David Hickman**, **Maurice Murphy** (former principal trumpeter with the London Symphony Orchestra), **Mark Gould** (former principal trumpeter with the

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), and others, including Doc Severinsen. It doesn't get more gratuitous than this!

The audience staggered from the Eric Harvie Theatre, backsides tired, ears aching, but in awe of the magnitude of music performed in this single concert. At 81, Severinsen is still a commanding presence on stage. Virtually all of the evening's soloists credited Severinsen with being a major influence in their careers.

The Prime Time Big Band is to be commended for rehearsing with the soloists throughout the afternoon and then performing a marathon concert that same evening. In the words of Lindemann, this concert was truly "Herculean."

- Kevin Eisensmith