

Northeast Horn Workshop 2009

March 11-15, Ithaca College, Ithaca NY

Host: Alexander Shuhan

Featuring: Horn music by composer Dana Wilson

Featured artists: Gail Williams, Adam Unsworth, American Horn Quartet

Regional artists: Alexander Shuhan, Janine Gaboury, Josh Phillips, Nathan Koci, Lydia Busler-Blais, Laura Klock

Assisting artists: Hank Roberts, cello; John Stetch, piano; Miles Brown, bass; Tom Killian, drums; Jennifer Hayghe, piano; Linda Case, violin; Elizabeth Shuhan, flute; Mary Ann Miller, piano; Lynn Klock, soprano sax; Gregory Hayes, piano

Lecturers: Ellie Phillips-Burdge, Linda Case

Guided warm-ups: Rebecca Dodson-Webster, Janine Gaboury

Exhibitors: Atkinson Brass, Cimarron Music Press, Hickey's Music Center, Inside Output, IVASI, Kendall Betts/Lawson Horns, New Century Music, Pope Instrument Repair, Spindrift Music Company, Siegfried's Call

Concerts

We heard wonderful works, many of them new or nearly new or improvised. The highlight was a concert of music by Dana Wilson, but every concert had much to offer. Ken Pope (one of the exhibitors, a leading free-lance player in Boston, and a stalwart supporter the workshops) recently lost his 12-year-old son Hunter to flu; two works were composed in Hunter's memory.

In the Friday evening concert by regional artists, Alex with his wife on flute and Mary Ann Miller on piano performed his transcription of *Three Watercolors* by Philippe Gaubert, evocative, descriptive music. The original was for cello.

Janine Gaboury (Michigan State University) performed *Monoceros* for solo horn by Wolfgang Plagge and Etude #3 by her teacher, Verne Reynolds (Alex also studied with Reynolds).

Josh Phillips (Charleston SC) and Nathan Koci (West Point) performed *Accord Pedrus* by Gerard Grisey, an astonishing work involving bended notes, beats, and clashes of sound.

Lydia Busler-Blais improvised a solo as a memorial to Ken Pope's son who died recently. She didn't want it to be sad, but it came out that way.

Laura Klock (UMass Amherst) planned to perform a world premier of *The Age of Assassins* by Jeff Myers, a Meir Rimmon Commission. However, the scheduled tenor was ill. Fortunately, Laura's husband, Lynn (professor of saxophone at UMass), is a quick study and performed the tenor voice part in three of the five movements on soprano sax with Laura and Gregory Hayes, piano.

On Saturday afternoon, Adam Unsworth (University of Michigan) played a jazz concert with cello, piano, bass, and drums. When Alex introduced the group, he made a point that we were hearing jazz in a concert hall in the afternoon – as opposed to in a club at night. Horn and cello as jazz solo instruments was a bit unusual and fascinating.

The American Horn Quartet (David Johnson, Kerry Turner, Charles Putnam, and Geoffrey Winter) put on their usual spectacular fireworks with music of James Langley, Bach, Kazimerz Machala, and arrangements and a composition by Kerry Turner.

The Saturday evening concert found all the featured artists in a concert of music for horn by Dana Wilson, a composer on the faculty of Ithaca College. The American Horn Quartet began from the four corners of the concert hall in an antiphonal work, *Antico*, a world premiere. Gail Williams

(Northwestern University) has commissioned six works from Dana and performed two of them on this concert: *Musings: An Ode to the Greek Muses* (horn and piano) and *Shallow Streams, Deep Rivers* for violin (Linda Case), horn, and piano (Jennifer Hayghe). (Gail recorded *Musings* after everyone left on Sunday afternoon.) Adam Unsworth performed *Graham's Crackers*, for horn alone, which he commissioned. Graham is Adam's son, who was born at the time the composition was being written. The two outer movements are written out, but the middle movement starts with a tune that Adam then improvised on. The concert displayed a wide range of styles from this one composer.

The final concert on Sunday afternoon included a quartet from Eastman (the Horn Belles), an octet from Ithaca College, and a work written by Alex that weekend in memory of Hunter Pope. Adam Unsworth was the soloist, backed by eight horns, bass (Alex's son), and piano, with Alex conducting. The concert and the workshop ended with the mass horn choir. Janine conducted the *Horn Players' Retreat and Pumping Song* and Alex conducted two movements of Brahms (arranged by Verne Reynolds) and *Leid* by Reynolds. The choir had rehearsed Friday afternoon and Sunday morning. Several of the featured artists joined the students and amateurs in the choir.

Guided Warm-ups

Rebecca Dodson-Webster (Mansfield PA University and NHW 2007 host) and Janine Gaboury led guided warm-ups on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Both had a fairly gentle approach. Rebecca started with breathing exercises. Janine recounted her battle with focal dystonia (from overuse and lack of proper warm-up). She described going to her former teacher, Verne Reynolds, and getting his advice on how to recover, which involved the slow, easy warm-up in his book. The book had not been published when Janine studied with Reynolds, and since she was a graduate student, they had not discussed such basics as warm-ups. The guided warm-up came from the Reynolds book, *The Horn Handbook*, which is now out of print and going for large sums on eBay.

Master Classes

All the featured artists gave master classes, and they all engaged the audience in activities. Gail Williams had everyone doing breathing exercises before she heard students play. Adam had everyone playing *I Got Rhythm* with Band-in-a-Box accompaniment. Adam discussed the harmonic changes, and several students went up front to try jazz solos. The American Horn Quartet (with Kerry Turner as spokesperson) talked about and demonstrated principles of playing together (the "Machine") before working with several student quartets.

Lectures

Two interesting lectures took place on Friday afternoon: a physical therapy perspective on embouchure dystonia, and Brain Gym. Both involved methods for being aware of and using the body effectively to improve physical health.

Exhibits

Lots of horns, accessories, and music. Conveniently located.

Organizational Meeting

Alex provided sandwiches so everyone could attend the organizational meeting and give their feedback. Janine, Lydia (who organized the exhibitors), Kendall Betts (who will be host in 2011 at University of New Hampshire), and several members of AHQ attended along with students and amateurs. The results of the meeting are in a separate report.

Food

Lunch was available on campus on Saturday, and it was an excellent buffet. Some of us had cookbooks from the Moosewood Restaurant and were surprised to learn that the restaurant is in Ithaca. Some of us ate there two nights in a row, and one of us bought a cookbook for his wife (under orders). ☺

Friday evening concert

Photos from Laura Klock



Liz & Alex Shuhan



Janine Gaboury



Lydia Busler-Blais



Liz, Mary Ann Miller, Alex



Josh Phillips, Nathan Koci



Gregory Hayes, Lynn & Laura Klock

Other photos

(Sorry for the lack of photo quality – the performers were all great!)



Josh and Nathan



After the concert



Lynn, Laura, Greg



Adam Unsworth with jazz group



American Horn Quartet



Dana Wilson



Jennifer Hayghe, Linda Case, Dana Wilson, Gail Williams



Adam Unsworth



Artists for Dana Wilson concert. Front: Gail Williams, Linda Case, Jennifer Hayghe; Back: David Johnson, Charles Putnam, Adam Unsworth, Alex Shuhan, Dana Wilson, Kerry Turner, Geoffrey Winter