

INTERMISSIONS

OCTOBER

2007

FEATURED INTERVIEW: DAVID TAYLOR

Assistant Concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

David Taylor, who holds both bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School in New York, has been assistant concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1979. He is also concertmaster of the Ars Viva Symphony, Las Vegas Festival, and Ravinia Festival Orchestras, as well as first violinist of the Chicago Ensemble, violinist of the Pressenda Trio, and is a faculty member at Moody Bible Institute. Among his former students are members of leading orchestras in the United States and Japan. He recently took time out of his busy schedule to speak with Intermissions.

INTERMISSIONS: How did you begin to study the violin?

DAVID TAYLOR: My father was an amateur violinist. He taught instrumental music at the high school level. He taught piano and viola, as well as saxophone, clarinet, flute, and double bass, especially jazz bass, but his main instrument was the violin. The story goes that when I was four years old, I found a one-eighth size violin in the attic, and brought it downstairs, and my father began teaching me how to play it. He taught me for the next five and a half years.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you first play in public?

DT: When I was five. At six, I won a toy fire engine at the Kiwanis competition. It was a really great fire engine, one of the old large metal ones. It had ladders and everything. I still have it. It's probably worth quite a bit today.

INTERMISSIONS: Who was your next teacher?

DT: At nine and a half, I entered the Cleveland Institute of Music as a student of Margaret Randall. We lived in Canton, Ohio, which is sixty-five miles from Cleveland. My very dedicated mother drove me there every week for years.

INTERMISSIONS: What was Margaret Randall like as a teacher?

DT: She was a very gracious lady, but she could also be very strict, and was a no-nonsense teacher. She was very traditional, not at all like a Suzuki teacher. She taught scales, arpeggios, the traditional etudes like Kreutzer, etc. I was her student through the Bruch and Mendelssohn concerti. I remember that after about half a year, the school was doing a play about Franz Schubert. I got to play Schubert as a child.



Photo courtesy of David Taylor

“STEVEN PALINCSAR
KNOWS MORE ABOUT
VIOLIN PLAYING THAN
ALMOST ANYBODY.”

- DAVID TAYLOR

FEATURED INTERVIEW: DAVID TAYLOR *continued from page 1*

I had to play in leather shorts. I played the Bee, which we now know was written by a completely different Schubert.

INTERMISSIONS: How long were you with Margaret Randall?

DT: Until I was about fifteen. Then she thought I should study with Rafael Druian, who was concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra, and taught at the Cleveland Institute of Music at the time.

INTERMISSIONS: What was Druian like?

DT: He was a terrific fiddle player. He was a very intelligent violinist. He had studied with Lea Luboschutz and Efrem Zimbalist at the Curtis Institute of Music and had been concertmaster of the Minneapolis Symphony before Cleveland.

2 He recorded Scheherazade with Minneapolis under Antal Dorati on Mercury Records, and later recorded the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra with principal violist Abraham Skernick for Columbia Records. Druian also recorded the Vaughan Williams piece, *The Lark Ascending*, and a couple of Mozart Violin Sonatas with Szell at the piano.

INTERMISSIONS: What did you learn from him?

DT: He made me aware of lots of new things. I studied the Paganini Caprices with him. He emphasized relaxation and the weight and balance of the bow.

INTERMISSIONS: How long were you with him?

DT: About two years. Around that time I went to a summer music camp called Indian Hill, which was in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. I began dating a girl there.

She invited me home to meet her family. She was from Darien, Connecticut, and her sister-in-law was a student of Dorothy DeLay. I remember playing for the sister-in-law, who arranged for me to meet Miss DeLay, whom I had not ever heard of at that point. Miss DeLay arranged for me to attend the Meadowmount School of Music on full scholarship.

INTERMISSIONS: So you went to Meadowmount?

DT: Yes, but by the time I got there, there was no place to stay on the campus, so I had to share a room in nearby Elizabethtown. Coincidentally, living next to me was a violinist whose name was Itzhak Perlman. You might've heard of him. He had already won the Leventritt Competition by that time. By the end of the summer he and Toby Friedlander (now Mrs. Itzhak Perlman) were already together, so I kind of got to know her too.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you start at Juilliard?

DT: After Meadowmount, Miss DeLay and the Perlmans thought that I should stay in New York. Itzhak even autographed a photo with the following inscription: "roses are red, violets are blue, when Galamian gets through, you will be too." So it was arranged that I would attend the Professional Children's School (PCS) as a high school senior, and study in Juilliard's pre-college division. Then I entered the regular (college) division the following year. I stayed until I graduated with a master's degree in 1974. Altogether it was seven years at Juilliard—one year pre-college, four years undergrad, and two years grad school.

INTERMISSIONS: And you studied with Dorothy DeLay and Ivan Galamian?

DT: Yes. I had lessons with Miss DeLay every week, and Galamian every other week, so she was really my main teacher. Then I also studied chamber music with Felix Galimir, William Lincer, Earl Carlyss, and the other members of the Juilliard Quartet.

INTERMISSIONS: What were your lessons with Dorothy DeLay like?

DT: She was like everybody's mother. Very caring. I guess because everyone was in New York—most of the students were very far from home. Miss DeLay taught mostly concerti and repertoire. Sometimes she said very little. She was a master of psychology. She was there to build everyone's ego. As a teacher, she was concerned with what you were doing violinistically with color, imagination, and how to get a big sound. She was a pretty good player, and occasionally would get out her Guaragnini and demonstrate. She emphasized accuracy, and especially beauty of sound. She also treated us as individuals. She thought we had a right to our own individual interpretations. She was true to her name, however. She had a real problem with time. Sometimes, after we had been waiting for her to arrive, I'd wait over half an hour and then just leave. So I missed out on some lessons. I also had the opportunity to serve as Miss DeLay's assistant for two summers at Meadowmount.

INTERMISSIONS: What about Galamian? What was he like at lessons?

DT: Galamian was not so interested in interpretation. He was interested in right-hand technique primarily. A broad approach, big sound, a soloistic sound.

INTERMISSIONS: After Juilliard, you joined the Cleveland Orchestra?



Sir Georg Solti, former Chicago Symphony music director, enjoyed a close working relationship with CSO assistant concertmaster David Taylor.

Photo courtesy of Chicago Symphony Orchestra

DT: Yes, under Lorin Maazel. I was there five years. Then I played for Sir Georg Solti, who appointed me to the post of assistant concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony. That was in 1979, and except for occasional time off to serve as acting concertmaster of the Saint Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin and as concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony under Zdenek Macal, I've been in Chicago ever since.

INTERMISSIONS: Do you have any special warm-ups?

DT: Heifetz said you have to get your hands in shape. Like an athlete—sort of. I always start with scales. I play all the major scales, and some of the minors. Then I play exercises from Schradieck Book One. I like to play the first position exercises in high velocity. I also like exercises from

Schradieck's book on double-stops. I especially like two silent exercises from Flesch's *Urstudien*. They are done without the bow, and stretch the left hand in almost painful ways. They involve finger lifting and pulling back the first finger. You know it doesn't take much strength at all to put the fingers down on the string. The strength is in lifting the fingers. After the Flesch exercises, I can virtually trill with the fourth finger. After this warm-up, I launch into repertoire.

INTERMISSIONS: You've recently performed the Lalo *Symphonie Espagnole*. Could you say a few words about the piece?

DT: Sure. I played all five movements. Sometimes the third movement is cut. Heifetz cut it, but I like it. It's almost my favorite movement. All of the movements

are full of Spanish style and romance. It can be an exhausting piece to play, but I love it.

INTERMISSIONS: Who are some of your favorite violinists?

DT: For me, Heifetz was king. Three violinists that would appear on almost anyone's list of favorites are Heifetz, Oistrakh, and Stern, but then there are others I admire like Milstein and Grumiaux. One would also have to mention Francescatti, Menuhin, Szeryng, Suk, and Rabin. The great violinists of the past were so individual. They each had their own style and sound. The last generation had so many great violinists. Perlman, Zukerman, Mutter, Kremer, Zimmermann, and Shaham are among today's best fiddlers.

JASCHA HEIFETZ, *The violinist of the century.*

Photo courtesy of Röhnert

HOW TO GET TO CARNEGIE HALL

It Helps to Have the Right Violin Teacher

On Saturday, June 10, 2006 at 2:00 p.m., the violin students of Steven Palincsar were invited to perform at New York's famed Carnegie Hall as part of the New York Regional Suzuki Festival, sponsored by the School for Strings in New York. Students from throughout the East Coast, Canada, and Puerto Rico performed at the festival.

The students of the Steven Palincsar Violin Studio have been invited to perform at this year's upcoming New York Regional Suzuki Festival to be held in June of 2008

at the Manhattan School of Music, 120 Claremont Avenue, in New York City.

The School for Strings, now celebrating its thirty-fifth anniversary, was founded by director Louise Behrend, as one of the first U.S. schools based in the teachings of Shinichi Suzuki, and was originally organized as a Suzuki teacher-training program. Louise Behrend, a fellowship student of Louis Persinger at the Juilliard Graduate School, worked directly with Dr. Suzuki in Japan.

IN CONCERT

A Selection of Upcoming String Programs at Chicago's Symphony Center.

Julia Fischer, violin, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Yuri Temirkanov, conductor, program includes Beethoven Violin Concerto, November 6th (Tuesday), 8:00 p.m., phone: 312-294-3000; website: www.cso.org.

CONSERVATORY AUDITIONS

A listing so that students can begin their application process now.

FRITZ KREISLER, the great Viennese violin virtuoso, is best known today for his *Liebesfreud*, *Liebesleid*, and *Schon Rosmarin*.

CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC. Auditions in February, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007, but apply by September or October. Contact: Admissions Office, Cleveland Institute of Music, 11021 East Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106; telephone: 216-795-3107; website: www.cim.edu; theory test in addition to audition.

CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC. Auditions in February and March of 2008. Application deadline is December 11, 2007. Contact: Admissions Office, Curtis Institute of Music, 1726 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19103; telephone: 215-893-5262; website: www.curtis.edu.

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC. Auditions in February of 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: Admissions Office, Eastman School of Music, 26 Gibbs St., Rochester, NY 14604-2599; telephone: 800-388-9695; website: www.esm.rochester.edu.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC. Auditions from January—March, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: Office of Music Admissions, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Merrill Hall Room 101, Bloomington, IN 47405; telephone: 812-855-1583; website: music.indiana.edu.

THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL. Auditions: March, 2008. Application deadline is December 1, 2007. Contact: Office of Admissions, The Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023; telephone: 212-799-5000; website: www.juilliard.edu.



IN CONVERSATION

STEVEN PALINCSAR ON VIOLIN TEACHING

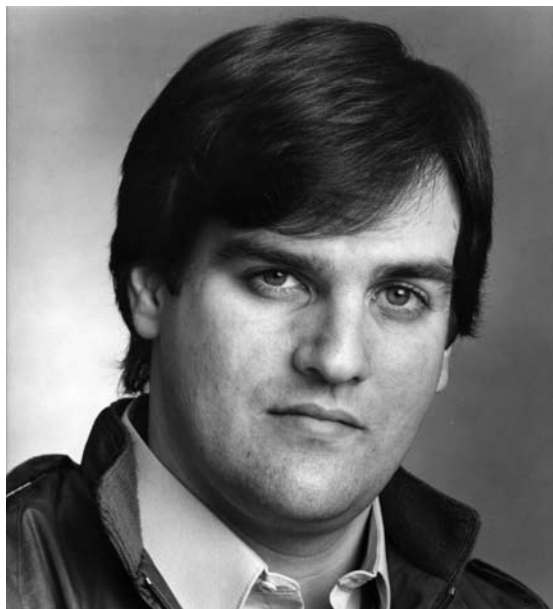


Photo courtesy of Tom Fezzey

QUESTION: It was said that Ivan Galamian could teach a table to play the violin, and that you also have that ability.

6 STEVEN PALINCSAR: Really? Who would want to hear a table play the violin? A table has no soul. It is from the soul that great artistry comes. I suppose that really it's a compliment in the sense that I can teach anyone to play the violin. I am the eternal optimist. I always believe that I can teach anyone if only I can find the right approach. I still believe that. The approach must fit the student like a glove. I instantly adapt my approach to fit each student.

QUESTION: As a violin teacher, who are your greatest influences?

SP: I have many influences. Dorothy DeLay and Josef Gingold certainly. They were both great teachers. Then there were the great virtuosos of my youth, especially Heifetz, Oistrakh, Kogan, Grumiaux, Stern, and Szeryng. I heard Leonid Kogan play the Shostakovich Concerto No. 1 in concert. I walked out in a daze—so magnificent, so powerful was his playing. This remains my standard. This was great artistry.

QUESTION: How important would you say talent is in establishing a solo career?

SP: It's important to a certain extent, but what's more important is what you do with your talent and how you develop it. Hard work, diligence, excellent training, intelligence, luck, and talent are all equally important.

QUESTION: What do you look for in a new student?

SP: Nothing less than the next Itzhak Perlman of course. Seriously, I am looking to see how much the student has already achieved, both technically and artistically, and how much work I will need to do. In addition to hearing each prospective student play scales, etudes, a fast and slow movement of a concerto, a move-

ment of unaccompanied Bach, and a solo piece, I must try to gauge a young person's love for both music and the violin. I also interview the parents to see if the support for what the child will have to do is there, and whether there is a loving, nurturing home environment. Finally, I ask myself if I really want to teach this young person. You must remember that I am not inexpensive, and that I don't teach beginners, but prefer to dedicate myself to students who are planning to pursue a life in music. Such students will need all my dedication and support.

QUESTION: How do you begin to work with a new student?

SP: I begin by imagining what this student would need to sound like in order to impress artists such as Jascha Heifetz, Arthur Grumiaux, David Oistrakh, Leonid Kogan, Sir Georg Solti, Herbert Von Karajan, Isaac Stern, etc., etc. I then begin to assess every aspect of the student's abilities (without ever letting the student know what I am doing of course). Each student must believe that they have my absolute faith and support at all times. Of course, some students are great talents, but the average pupil must never be treated as if they are any less important to me.

Next I formulate a plan to eliminate every weakness in each student. I don't follow

one specific method, nor am I a cover-to-cover teacher. By that I mean that I don't go through an etude book from start to finish. I choose specific etudes and practice methods based on each individual student's present technical and musical needs.

QUESTION: If a student has faulty intonation, what do you do to correct the problem?

SP: There are many causes of faulty intonation: lack of training, violin hold, left-hand position, stage fright, and not concentrating, to name a few. Often poor intonation comes from a previous teacher's inattention to intonation.

I must first determine whether or not a pupil can actually distinguish if a note is sharp, flat, or in tune. Once I've done that, I can design a course of study. I insist that the student purchase a software-based solfège course with workbook. Some students may need a private ear-training teacher as well.

QUESTION: What do you do to improve a student's rhythm?

SP: I start by having the student count out loud while playing. The student should speak the subdivided rhythms. Not just "one, two, three, four," (unless of course the measure contains only quarter-notes), but "one and two and three and four and..., etc."

Second, I like students to use a metronome. This is especially good for a student with poor rhythmic skills. However, there is no substitute for a student doing his/her own counting.

QUESTION: How much do you demonstrate in private lessons?

SP: As little as possible. A private lesson is not a performance opportunity for the teacher. I don't want my students to copy what I'm doing interpretatively. I believe that demonstration should be of technique only, but of course there are grey areas such as vibrato. When I do demonstrate, I carefully explain what I will be doing and what the pupil should watch for and listen for. I always use the pupil's violin, not mine,

Steven Palincsar with violinist Chee-Yun, a pupil of Dorothy DeLay, is now a teacher herself on the faculty of Southern Methodist University.

because I'm not teaching him/her to play my instrument.

QUESTION: Would you discuss vibrato?

SP: Certainly. There are a number of challenges in teaching vibrato, beyond the basics of how it is produced. The first is developing the speed and width of the vibrato. I use Dorothy DeLay's exercises. I also like a student to develop different kinds of vibrato (i.e. hand, arm, and finger, as well as different combinations). The next challenge is to learn to vibrate through the whole phrase rather than just emphasize isolated notes. To me, this is vital.

QUESTION: What is your position on shoulder pads?

SP: Let me quote Dorothy DeLay. She once said, "shoulder pads are like shoes, one size doesn't fit all." Every student's needs are different. Some kids don't need any shoulder pads, others do. A teacher needs to have a collection of pads for the pupil to try. What's important is the student. In general, however, I prefer that the pad not touch the back of the violin (except at the edges of course) so that no sound is sacrificed. I will also say that I played successfully for over thirty years without one, and now use the Mach One, which affords me the same position as not having one.

QUESTION: You said that every student's needs are different. Could you elaborate?

SP: I have an adage that I live by: teach the student, not the method. Like the great teachers of the past, I value individuality.

I like to talk about the Square Peg through the Round Hole Theory. When most teachers come across a kid who's kind of a square peg, and doesn't fit neatly through the round hole of their methods, they take a hacksaw to the kid—destroying any of the student's creativity or individuality in the process. I value square pegs, so I take a hacksaw to these teachers' methods. Can you imagine that if Heifetz had studied with such a teacher, that teacher would have completely changed Heifetz' bowhold? I think that's dreadful. Josef Gingold, for example, had no problem teaching a student who played completely



Photo courtesy of Suzanne Fushi

different from himself and neither have I.

QUESTION: What specific materials do you give your students to play?

SP: It always depends on the individual, and on what I'm trying to achieve with each particular student. In the beginning I emphasize technique rather than repertoire. But I am aware that kids need a lot of music to break up the somewhat monotonous exercises. So I usually use repertoire that may be somewhat on the obscure side. Anything that's beautiful musically, but not too difficult to master, so that the pupil can spend the necessary time on building technique, but never feel as if they are being led back to the beginning. A pupil's ego is very fragile and must be handled with great care.

I divide each student's practice time into six to eight practice sessions, each built around a specific goal or focus. Initially, one session may take two hours, but might ultimately be reduced to about twenty minutes. It depends on what that student needs to accomplish.

QUESTION: What are some of your pet peeves?

SP: My biggest one is people who claim to teach the Suzuki Method, but who have not gone through the training. Using the Suzuki books as material for traditional private violin lessons is not at all the same thing. The books are not the Method. Many traditional violin teachers use the books for convenience sake, because they contain good pieces in a well-thought-out

order. That's fine, as long as they don't claim to teach the Suzuki Method or claim to be Suzuki teachers. Being a Suzuki violin teacher involves so much more. I am a graduate of the School for Strings' Two-Year Suzuki Violin Teacher Training Program in New York. I studied Suzuki violin pedagogy with Louise Behrend, Edward Kreitman, and Doris Preucil, among others. In addition, I am a Registered Suzuki Violin Teacher (with the Suzuki Association of the Americas) through Level 8, as well as a Life Member of the Association.

QUESTION: How do you prepare a student for auditions to top music schools such as Curtis or Juilliard?

SP: That's a whole article unto itself. In general, I believe that the audition must be completely prepared by June of the year preceding the year of the audition. This would be the junior year in high school if the student goes all four years.

QUESTION: You've taught the violin for a long time. How did you learn to teach?

SP: I'm still learning. I hope I always will be.

QUESTION: What do you find most satisfying about teaching the violin?

SP: I am helping to turn a young person's dream of a life in music into reality. Along the way I am leading that young person to love the violin and music as much as I do. Music is the greatest gift that you can ever give to a student.

DAVID OISTRAKH, the phenomenal Russian master, who inspired such composers as Khachaturian, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich, numbered Gidon Kremer among his pupils.

SHEET MUSIC WEBSITES

A listing so that students can order all required sheet music as soon as possible.

BOOSEY & HAWKES, both a publisher and sheet music dealer, has a good catalog for both what they publish and what they don't. Website: www.boosey.com.

DI-AREZZO, based in Paris, France, has many violin pieces not available in the U.S. Website: www.di-arezzo.com.

HUTCHINS AND REA, based in Atlanta, has an excellent selection of violin music. Website: www.hutchinsandrea.com.

SHAR MUSIC COMPANY, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, also sells instruments and bows, as well as strings. Website: www.sharmusic.com.

SHEET MUSIC PLUS, an online dealer which has an extensive catalog, and can help get pretty obscure selections as well as common pieces. Website: www.sheetmusicplus.com

SOUTHWEST STRINGS has a good selection of the most common violin pieces plus strings etc. Website: www.swstrings.com.



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For further information, please visit the website:

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