

INTERMISSIONS

JANUARY–FEBRUARY

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FEATURED INTERVIEW: HANS JØRGEN JENSEN

Professor of Cello at Northwestern University, Meadowmount School of Music, National Arts Centre Young Artists' Program, and Music Institute of Chicago.

Hans Jørgen Jensen received a Soloist Diploma from the Royal Academy of Music in Denmark as a cello student of Asger Lund Christiansen of the Copenhagen Quartet, and studied cello with Leonard Rose and Channing Robbins at The Juilliard School, where he also studied chamber music with Robert Mann and Earl Carlyss of the Juilliard String Quartet. In addition, he studied cello with Pierre Fournier in Geneva, Switzerland. He has performed in the US, Canada, Europe, and Japan, both as recitalist and as soloist with the Basel Symphony, Copenhagen Symphony, Danish Radio, and Irish Radio Orchestras. Hans Jørgen Jensen was awarded the Copenhagen Music Critics' Prize, Jacob Gades Prize, and Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs Grant for Musicians, and was the winner of the Artist International Competition that resulted in three New York recitals. From 1979 to 1987, he was Professor of Cello at the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston, where he served as cellist of the resident Lyric Arts Quartet. He has been Visiting Professor of Cello at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and at both the Tokyo College of Music and Musashino Academy of Music in Japan. In January of

2009, Hans Jensen presented a series of master classes at the Australian String Academy held at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He is currently Professor of Cello at Northwestern University, Meadowmount School of Music, Music Institute of Chicago, and at the National Arts Centre Young Artists' Program in Ottawa, Canada, which he joined at the invitation of Pinchas Zukerman. He has presented workshops and master classes throughout the US, Canada, and Japan. His former students are members of major orchestras throughout the US and Canada, and include top prize winners in both national and international competitions. In 1998, he was named the outstanding teacher of the year at Northwestern University, and in 1999, received the Outstanding Studio Teacher of the Year Award from the Illinois Chapter of the American String Teachers Association. In 2001, he was awarded the U.S. Presidential Scholar Teacher Recognition Award by the U.S. Department of Education. E.C. Shirmer, Boston, publishes his transcription of the Galamian Scale System for Cello and Shar Products Company publishes his cello method book, Fun in Thumb Position. Recently, Hans Jensen spoke with INTERMISSIONS.



HANS JENSEN IS THE
QUINTESSENTIAL CELLO
TEACHER EMPHASIZING
BOTH TECHNIQUE AND
MUSICALITY IN EACH OF
HIS STUDENTS.

– STEVEN PALINCSAR

INTERMISSIONS: Where were you born?

HANS JØRGEN JENSEN: I was born in Aalborg, Denmark. That's the fourth biggest city in Denmark. My father was the concertmaster of the symphony orchestra, and my mother was a violinist in the violin section. From a very early age I was always taken to the orchestra so I often had the feeling that I was growing up with the orchestra as my friend. When I was seven, I saw an opera for the first time. It was *Tosca*. People were so impressed that I was going to the opera at such an early age. I still remember the scene in the castle and I was totally wrapped up in the whole opera.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you begin your cello studies?

HJJ: Well, since my parents were violinists, originally they gave me violin lessons for many years until I was fifteen years old, but I didn't really love it. It didn't fit me either character-wise or physically.

My arms are very long. So I had given up on music until one day when my parents were playing string quartets in my home, and I remember sitting there and watching the cellist, and I simply fell in love with the cello. When they were finished, it was something like ten o'clock at night, and I said to my father, "You know, I want to be a professional cellist." Two days later, I had a cello teacher.

INTERMISSIONS: Who was your first cello teacher?

HJJ: His name was Peter Doberitch. He was principal cellist in the orchestra my parents played in and was from Germany. I studied with him for about six or seven months, and after that I started studying cello with Asger Lund Christiansen. He was the cellist in the Copenhagen String Quartet

and was also a prominent cello teacher in Denmark. Christiansen was a pupil of Gaspar Cassado and studied with him for a number of summers in Siena. I studied with Christiansen through college at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus, Denmark, and he was a wonderful teacher and musician—very knowledgeable and very inspiring.

INTERMISSIONS: Can you describe the Royal Academy's program of study?

HJJ: The program at the Royal Academy of Music is very similar to getting a bachelor's degree in music here in the USA. The highest degree is the Soloist Diploma. When I was in the third year of that program, I went to Juilliard to study with Leonard Rose, because you could take one year off to study somewhere else. I actually studied two years abroad with grants from the Danish government as well as the Jacob Gades Prize. As part of earning the Soloist Diploma you get sponsored in a debut recital in Copenhagen, where music critics from about five or six newspapers come to the concert, so you get a lot of exposure.

INTERMISSIONS: What did you play for your debut?

HJJ: At the recital, I played the Francœur Sonata, Beethoven's *Magic Flute* Variations, Brahms E minor Sonata, a work by Luporini called *Musica per Violoncello e Pianoforte*, the Debussy Cello Sonata, and the Chopin Polonaise Brilliant. I got great reviews, and after that was invited to play with all of the Danish orchestras as a soloist.

INTERMISSIONS: What was Leonard Rose like as a teacher?

HJJ: Oh, Leonard Rose has always been my idol—at least through his many recordings including those with the Isaac Stern trio.

He was the perfect cellist with wonderful form. The way he would hold the bow and the way he would sit—you can't see a more perfect cellist anywhere than him. His style was noble and his sound big, beautiful, and warm. As a teacher, he was very inspiring. In the beginning, we worked a lot on flexibility of the bow arm; later on developing a palette of tone colors.

INTERMISSIONS: What about your studies with Rose's assistant, Channing Robbins?

HJJ: Channing Robbins was wonderful. I would have lessons with Robbins when Rose was on tour. Robbins sometimes would work on very specific smaller details. I remember that he explained the sautillé to me so that I totally understood how it works. He would just say a few little hints, and then suddenly something would work very well.

INTERMISSIONS: You also had the opportunity to study with Pierre Fournier, didn't you?

HJJ: Yes, Pierre Fournier was of course one of the great cellists, and I first experienced his greatness through his recordings. One of my first favorite cello recordings was the Beethoven Cello Sonatas that Fournier recorded live with the great German pianist Wilhelm Kempff. That recording will always live in my memory whenever I am teaching the Beethoven sonatas. As a teacher, Fournier stressed the importance of really knowing your scales and arpeggios. From a musical aspect, he was always stressing the refinement of music-making and the desire to create a most colorful and beautiful sound.

INTERMISSIONS: After two years, you completed your studies and then earned the Soloist Diploma from the Royal Academy in Denmark. What did you do then?

Ivan Galamian had an important influence on the teaching method of Leonard Rose. Hans Jensen has transcribed Galamian's *Contemporary Violin Technique* for the cello.



HJJ: Well, I was living in New York, and going back to Europe to give concerts. I then had to decide whether to continue living in New York or move back to Denmark. I was looking for either a teaching job or an orchestra job, and I was offered a teaching job at the Congress of Strings in Cincinnati working with twenty high school cellists for eight weeks during the summer. That summer I started reading every book about cello playing that I could find.

INTERMISSIONS: Had you ever taught before?

HJJ: I actually had quite a bit of teaching experience in Denmark when I was in my third year at the Royal Academy. Asger Lund Christiansen went on a concert tour to the USA with the Copenhagen String Quartet, and he had me teach (as his assistant) all the other cellists (some much older than me) while he was away. Actually, my teacher had me teach a young man who had a big problem with his vibrato. He challenged me to work with him, and after two months, I told my teacher that his vibrato was now perfect. He didn't want to believe it, but it was true. That student and I are still friends, and he still has a good vibrato.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you start teaching full-time?

HJJ: I was offered a permanent cello position as assistant professor of cello and artist-in-residence at the University of Houston, playing in the string quartet and serving as cello professor. It was called the Lyric Arts Quartet and the first violinist is Fredell Lack, and she's a wonderful violinist and is still there. The second violinist was Albert Muenzer (whose brother Edgar played violin in the Chicago Symphony) and the violist was Larry Wheeler. Those were excellent

players, and I was very excited to play with them. We had several regular concert series and did regular weekly rehearsals. I was there from 1979-87, then Northwestern University contacted me, and I came here to Northwestern.

By the way, after several years at the Congress of Strings, I taught at the Idyllwild School of Music, and then joined the faculty at Meadowmount.

INTERMISSIONS: You also have held a number of visiting professorships, haven't you?

HJJ: Yes. I taught for 6 months at the University of Southern California and at the Oberlin Conservatory for one year.

INTERMISSIONS: You also teach at Pinchas Zukerman's summer program in Ottawa, Canada, don't you?

HJJ: Yes, the Young Artists' Program in Ottawa is a great summer music program with a very high level of students.

INTERMISSIONS: Your wife Fumiko Tokunaga Jensen is a pianist, isn't she?

HJJ: Yes. We met in Denmark. Fumiko came from Japan to study at the Royal Academy of Music in Denmark. We used to play a lot of recitals together and we influenced each other in so many ways. When Fumiko works with the students, she is a great help not only as an accompanist but also as a coach.

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

HJJ: At Northwestern, I look for students that are not only really gifted cellists, musicians, and artists, but who also have academic interests and abilities to succeed and take advantage of all Northwestern has

to offer. In addition, I also very much like students that are interested in contributing to the world around them, and are not just focused on their own development. Musicians have to realize that we can play a very important part in society as we actively engage the world around us.

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

HJJ: In the beginning, I work on posture and the basics to help develop a strong technical foundation. It is of the utmost importance to have healthy playing habits so that there are no limitations to a student's growth and later development. Other aspects that I focus on first include great intonation and the ability to produce a warm, full, tone on the cello. Once I feel that the basics are working and under control, I start working on musicality—more sophisticated musical concepts and aspects.

INTERMISSIONS: How do you teach musicality?

HJJ: Musicality is a complex issue because it has to do with how people feel, perceive and react emotionally to the music. Some people do that in a very natural intuitive way and other people can be more reserved in their musical expression. As a teacher, I try to awaken the student's innermost musical soul and emotion which are sometimes hidden. I think however, that the important part to remember is that we as musicians have to play and perform in such a way that the musical and emotional aspect gets projected to the audience.

INTERMISSIONS: Could we talk a bit about teaching intonation?

HJJ: Intonation can be very simple or very complex. The most important aspect is to

help develop the student's inner ear and sense of relative pitch. The human mind and ear is an amazing machine, able to perceive so many degrees of nuances. A few people have a perfect sense of intonation, and for them it is quite simple. Perfect pitch does not always guarantee a great ear for intonation. I have had quite a few students with perfect pitch that also had problems with intonation. However, when a student's ear is not quite developed it can take a lot of work and training to develop that ability.

INTERMISSIONS: Could you be a little more specific about how to do this?

HJJ: Without getting too detailed here I can say that I divide intonation into two aspects:

1. The inner ear (the perceived pitch or perceived group of pitches)
2. The sound (the pitch being played on the cello)

I use many different exercises for helping develop the inner ear. At the highest level, intonation is subjective, and the important part is for players to have a system of hearing and playing that is consistent.

INTERMISSION: Are there specific exercises that you give to the students?

HJJ: Yes, there are many aspects that influence intonation, but the most basic are the overtones and sympathetic vibrations of the strings. People with great intonation use that in a most intuitive way. So it is important to really be able to know and hear all the notes on the cello that make the harmonics of the other strings ring along. It is mostly the harmonic of the same fundamental or the first or second overtone. The first overtone is the octave above the original pitch, and the second overtone is the fifth above that.

It is also important to help train the mind to perceive intonation in a harmonic sense and also as part of tonality. The role and function of each individual pitch in relation to the keys being played is very important.

INTERMISSIONS: What is the most important aspect about intonation?

HJJ: It is most important to make sure that what you hear in your mind is the right thing. Very often students think the problem is in the left hand's ability to hit the right pitch, but the problem is really that they are not 100% sure what pitch they really hear in their mind. So separating the mind and the concept of the pitch from playing is really important in a practicing situation. Of course in a concert situation, there is only one thing to do and that is to play the pitch that is perceived—right or wrong. If the hand is off, adjust immediately. Great intonation is actually adjusting the hand to the ear so fast that nobody even realizes that the pitch was slightly off.

INTERMISSIONS: What about rhythm?

HJJ: Rhythm is even more important. If you have a person in an ensemble, and if the intonation is a little off, it's okay, but if the rhythm is off, forget it. Of course at the highest level, it's different—all aspects have to be perfect. I always tell students that if they're sight-reading, stay with the rhythm, that's the most important.

If people don't have an innate sense of rhythm, it takes a long time to develop that. It is also important to have a sense of rhythm for technical reasons. Technique is movement in time. If a gymnast, for example, doesn't have a great sense of timing, their movements and physical motions will not be beautiful and controlled. Very often, inexperienced players tend to rush when passages are hard

instead of taking the necessary time. Students need to also understand complex rhythmic relationships, and that should be developed away from the instrument in solfège classes.

INTERMISSIONS: Do you encourage the use of the metronome?

HJJ: Yes, the metronome can be very helpful. It is, however, important to understand that great musical rhythm does not have anything to do with a metronome. I recommend using the metronome for short amounts of time so that the students really are focused on following it. All too often the metronome is just clicking away without really being followed.

INTERMISSIONS: Could you talk about your transcription for cello of Ivan Galamian's book, *Contemporary Violin Technique*?

HJJ: In my first lesson at the Juilliard School, Leonard Rose taught me the Galamian scales with the turn. Galamian had an important influence on the teaching method of Leonard Rose. Rose taught together with Ivan Galamian at Meadowmount for a number of years. When I first started to teach I decided to transcribe the whole Galamian Scale System for the cello. Having the books makes it much easier to get the students to practice the scales.

INTERMISSIONS: What do you find most rewarding about teaching the cello?

HJJ: Definitely the uniqueness of each student. Since instrumental teaching takes place in a one to one situation, it creates a situation where the teaching can be 100% tailor-made to each student. The most inspiring part of teaching the cello is the luxury of being able to reinvent my teaching method with each individual student.

IN CONVERSATION

STEVEN PALINCSAR ON VIOLIN TEACHING

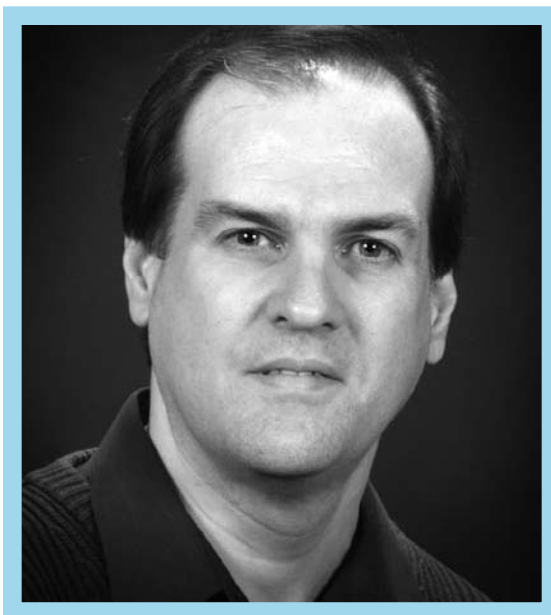
INTERMISSIONS: Every year, you prepare your students for competitions. Could you please say a few words about competitions?

SP: Certainly. Well, I think of competitions both as a necessary evil and as a stepping stone to a career in music. It takes a while to develop the skill to succeed at competitions. This is a different skill from performing, but is very similar to auditioning for schools, orchestras, etc.

INTERMISSIONS: You said that competitions are a necessary evil and a stepping stone. How many violinists have used competitions as a stepping stone to their careers?

SP: Almost all of today's soloists and those of my parents' generation. The great Russian virtuosi David Oistrakh and Leonid Kogan, for example, both won the gold medal at the Queen Elisabeth of Belgium Competition. Jaime Laredo, Miriam Fried, Vadim Repin, and Nikolaj Znaider also won gold medals at this competition. Salvatore Accardo and Ilya Gringolts both won the gold at the Paganini competition. Viktoria Mullova, Elmar Oliveira, and Viktor Tretyakov all won the gold at the Tchaikovsky competition. Locally, Ilya Kaler has won gold medals at the Paganini and Sibelius and Tchaikovsky competitions!

Kyung-Wha Chung, Itzhak Perlman, and Pinchas Zukerman have each won first prize at the Leventritt International Competition. Joshua Bell won the General Motors/Seventeen Magazine Competition, which brought his official debut as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at age fourteen. Locally, Rachel Barton Pine won the gold at the J.S. Bach competition in Leipzig, Germany. Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg won the first Naumburg International Violin



Competition. The list goes on and on.

INTERMISSIONS: Have any violinists established careers without competitions?

SP: Oh, certainly. Mischa Elman, Zino Francescatti, Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Nathan Milstein, and Isaac Stern, for example, went on to major international careers without competitions, which were largely non-existent in those days. Elman, Heifetz, and Menuhin were, of course, child prodigies, who managed to become mature soloists. In our time, Sarah Chang and Midori started their careers at the remarkably young ages of nine and ten respectively. In addition, there are violinists who established themselves as adults without the benefit of competitions. Robert McDuffie has an enviable career as does Shlomo Mintz or Nigel Kennedy—so it's certainly possible.

INTERMISSIONS: Your students don't seem to win top prizes at events such as the ASTA or MTNA competitions. Why is that?

SP: For the simple reason, that they don't enter those events. I believe if you're going

to go to all the trouble of preparing for a competition, you should get more out of it than a prize.

INTERMISSIONS: What should you be able to get?

SP: Concert appearances either as soloist with major orchestras such as the Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minnesota, North Carolina or St. Louis orchestras, or important recitals at such venues as New York's Alice Tully Hall, Weill Hall, or the New York "Y." Contracts for a recording or performances on radio or television

also are good benefits. You need to choose which competitions to enter based on what kind of stepping stones they offer.

INTERMISSIONS: Should students enter just for the experience of entering?

SP: Absolutely not. Not under any circumstances. You have to go to win. Look, the experience of entering a competition is like dousing yourself with gasoline, handing lighted matches to the jury, and asking them to throw their matches at you while you're performing. Does that sound like a positive experience?

Also, if you don't go well-prepared to win—you won't. You'll lose. What value is that? None. No, do the necessary preparation, then set your mind to winning and you'll do much, much better.

INTERMISSIONS: Didn't Dorothy DeLay have a great dislike for competitions?

SP: Yes, that's true, but she had the pull to get management and even recording contracts for her students on her word alone. Not many of us have that kind of pull. Then



As winner of the *Seventeen Magazine*/General Motors National Violin Competition at age 14, Joshua Bell was presented in his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Riccardo Muti.

again, Zakhar Bron insists on sending his best students to competitions, Vadim Repin and Maxim Vengerov, for example. He believes that competitions are the supreme challenge for his students, and his pupils have done quite well at competitions.

INTERMISSIONS: How does a student go “to win?”

SP: First, they must have completely mastered the repertoire that they are to play. At whatever level the competition is on, the pieces must be completely mastered. If it’s the Mozart Third Concerto or the Paganini First, it makes no difference. Each work should be played as if the student is the next

Joshua Bell. There must be nothing tentative in the student’s performance.

All the basics must be mastered: intonation, rhythm, vibrato, shifting, bow technique, tonal quality, tone production—everything. There is a caveat however. A competition is not a performance. Juries don’t want to hear a unique interpretation, but rather a student coming up to a certain standard. This is not the time to put your own spin on a concerto. This is not the time to say something intimate. This is the time to outdo everyone else with your brilliant, powerful, virtuosity. Don’t play around with tempos. Follow the beat.

In my weekly studio class, students get experience, and over time they develop expertise in the kind of playing winning a prize demands. The student must become courageous, and must be completely at ease playing for a jury. It can take years for a student to develop this type of mastery. It takes planning, goal-setting, and goal-achieving. It takes diligence and patience, and it takes a supportive, and I believe, a completely dedicated teacher to lead the student in his or her development.

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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: boosey.com.

DI-AREZZO, based in Paris, France, has many violin pieces not available in the U.S. They now have an English website: di-arezzo.co.uk.

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

JUILLIARD SCHOOL BOOKSTORE is an excellent source for violin sheet music. Website: bookstore.juilliard.edu.

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

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

THEODORE PRESSER, both a publisher and distributor of sheet music by other publishers. It is an excellent source of some more obscure pieces. Website: presser.com.

Downloadable SHEET MUSIC WEBSITES

Another option is to download sheet music to a file which you save on your computer, and print out the music on your desktop printer. Usually there is a fee for this, but not always.

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC's Sibley Music Library has the largest music library in the U.S. Several obscure pieces are available by such composers as Ernst, Hubay, Lalo, Sauret, Vieuxtemps, and Ysaÿe, as well as Friedrich Herrmann's transcription of Mendelssohn's complete lieder for violin and piano. This is a free site, but downloading with a dial-up modem will take about a half-hour for some pieces. Website: urresearch.rochester.edu.

EVERYNOTE.COM is a website that has both readily available pieces as well as some more unusual works and transcriptions. The site is also quite reasonably priced. Website: everynote.com.



Without the interpreter the composition is a voice crying in the wilderness. The interpretative artist is the life-blood of music.
-Eugène Ysaÿe

INTERMISSIONS

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