

# **Twin Cities Bass Club**

Wednesday, September 26, 2007, 7:00pm

Meeting started late due to spectacular thunderstorm. John Casey called the meeting to order at 7:21pm.

## ***Introductions***

Vladimir Zabezhinsky – owner of All Strings Attached

John Casey – private bass instructor, Bloomington Symphony, South Dakota Symphony

Marian Casey – Bloomington Symphony, South Dakota Symphony

Connie Martin – Minnesota Opera Orchestra, Minneapolis Pops Orchestra, teaches bass at Carleton College

Ian Sinclair – Minnesota Youth Symphonies, attends Perpich HS, student of John Casey

John Bulger – private bass instructor, Bloomington Symphony

Michael Van Ryn – U of M senior, student of Pete Lloyd

Dylan Woodman – student of Dave Williamson, playing for 3 years

Marcia Laningham – Dylan's mom

Nathan Christensen – playing bass 2 years, student of John Bulger

Mark Christensen – Nathan's dad

Marty Kapsch – MYS, student of John Bulger

Cheryl Nordquist – student of John Casey, 3<sup>rd</sup> season with Northeast Orchestra

Michael Bromer – playing bass for 56 years

Nadja Gale – freelancer, taking orchestra auditions, temporarily in Mpls for coaching with Pete Lloyd

Natalie Zabezhinsky – All Strings Attached

Jennifer Rubin – freelancer and private bass instructor

## ***Program***

### **Nadja Gale**

Nadja led an informal talk/demonstration/discussion/Q&A about tuning in 5ths for bass. She is a strong proponent of tuning in fifths, and thinks that people should consider it for several reasons:

1. Opens up the sound of the instrument due to sympathetic vibrations, more perfect interval.
2. Gets low C without needing extension.
3. Most people who try it love it immediately.

Nadja played bass tuned in 4ths for 12 years, and has now been tuning in 5ths for 17 years and "never looked back". She was initially exposed to tuning in fifths by a player she met at an orchestra audition. After one audition that went badly, she stopped playing for a few months, and then tried tuning in fifths when she started playing again. During

the first couple of years tuning in 5ths, she was freelancing in Philadelphia area and had to REALLY prepare for every gig while retraining her habits. Nadja is included in the New History of the Double Bass by Paul Brun, page 152, discussing fingering adjustments and advantages of tuning in fifths.

In this century, re-emergence of tuning in 5ths happened when Red Mitchell and Gary Karr were messing around with a cello and discovered that tuning in fourths reduced the sound of the cello, so they tried going the other way with a bass and it really opened up the sound. Joel Quarrington of National Arts Center Orchestra in Ottawa, formerly of Toronto Symphony, is probably the most prominent bassist currently playing in fifths professionally. He waited until he had tenure in Toronto Symphony before tuning in fifths in orchestra, because the tuning is not always accepted by other players. Nadja's experience is that reactions of other players in a section are mixed – some think it's cool, some are negative, some don't even notice.

Q: What is your bass?

A: 200-year-old Mirecourt bass, 5/8-size, ~39" string length. She hastens to add that it's not cause-and-effect, she didn't get into playing in fifths because of having a smaller bass, she was playing in fifths on a larger bass well before she got this particular bass.

Q: Is the tuned-in-fifths sound improvement due to that particular bass having a more violin-like shape/proportions?

A: Nadja's experience is that it has improved the sound of every bass she's tried it on. She's had four basses now that she's tuned in 5ths, different sizes and shapes, and it worked well on all of them.

Q: What strings do you use?

A: She is currently using Velvets, but doesn't like the Velvet low C on her bass. Velvet makes a tuned-in-fifths set. Thomastik makes a "Red Mitchell" tuned-in-fifths set. Could also use a regular 5<sup>th</sup>-string low B tuned up to C, regular solo F# tuned up to G, standard D, regular solo A.

Q: Do you use cello fingerings with 3<sup>rd</sup> finger?

A: No, learned traditional 1-2-4 fingering technique on bass and has continued to use it, just with different shifting and pivoting. (Demonstrated with a few scales and a bit of a Bottesini concerto.)

Q: Does it give you better thumb position agility?

A: Can reach wider range without shifting, but she thinks of the fingering as just "different" rather than "easier".

Q: What about Bach Suites?

A: With tuned-in-fifths bass, the Bach Suites work better untransposed (at cello pitch or octave lower) rather than in the transposed-for-bass keys. That said, Bach isn't really her thing, her heart is more in Shostakovich – will be playing Shostakovich Cello Concerto on bass this December with the UMD orchestra.

Q: Did Joel Quarrington play cello first?

A: Doesn't know.

Q: What materials are there for learning to play bass tuned in fifths, recommended fingerings on standard rep, etc.?

A: Dennis M???? has a method out for bass tuned in fifths. Also check out Joel Quarrington's website ([www.joelquarrington.com](http://www.joelquarrington.com)) for tuned-in-fifths resources.

## **Michael van Ryn**

Michael is a senior bass major at the U of M, preparing for grad school auditions and a recital in the spring. He started on violin in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, switched to bass in high school, studied with Jim Clute then Pete Lloyd. His bass is a new (2004) Guadagnini copy made by Yuri Povolny(sp?) of the Czech Republic in cooperation with Kolstein. Fir top, poplar sides and back, the rest is maple. Fingered extension with four tunable gates by Mike Smith.

- Michael played a couple of pieces that he's working on for his upcoming grad school auditions
  - Bach: First Unaccompanied Cello Suite, Allemande movement
  - Koussevitsky: Concerto, first movement

## **Announcements**

- Upcoming meeting dates:
  - Wed. October 24, 7:00pm
    - Location: All Strings Attached
    - Program coordinator: Jennifer Rubin
    - Bringing treats: Dylan and Marcia
  - Wed. November 28, 7:00pm
- Twin Cities Bass Club website is up
  - [www.twincitiesbassclub.org](http://www.twincitiesbassclub.org)
  - already has resulted in some new inquiries/contacts
  - includes calendar of upcoming bass performances/events
    - Vecchione/Erdahl bass/oboe duo recital last night in Lakeville was on the calendar
    - Let us know if you hear of any upcoming bass happenings!

## **Refreshments and "playtime"**

- Coffee, juice, cookies, two wonderful homemade cakes from Michael Bromer.
- Vladimir introduced a new 1/10<sup>th</sup>-sized bass from Concorde.
- Nadja encouraged everybody to try her bass and experience tuning in fifths.
- Many players got out their basses and bows and passed them around for others to try, as well as trying out basses for sale at All Strings Attached.

- Sightreading bass ensemble transcriptions with 2-3 players on a part, most people playing on somebody else's instrument (a handy disclaimer if anything is less-than-perfect)
  - Prokofiev – March from "Love for Three Oranges"
  - Elgar – Salut d'Amour
  - Brahms – Hungarian Dance #5
  - Tchaikovsky – Dance of the Mirlitons from "Nutcracker"
  - Bach – Allegro Moderato from the first gamba sonata
  - Mendelssohn – Nocturne from "Midsummer Night's Dream"

– notes submitted by Marian Casey, 9/26/07