

# 2010

## December

December 23, 2010

- The women of the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center were assembled promptly at 6PM. Several of the women had heard us before as they were repeat visitors to the center. As we were tuning, these women enthusiastically assured the others that "these girls can play".
- I explained we would be playing a Christmas program, but not the kind of music we hear incessantly from the radio at this time of year. Some of the music we would perform will be representing classical composer's interpretations of the mystery and sorrowful foreshadowing inherent in the happy celebration of the birth at Christmastime.
- Here are some of the comments from the women after we played:
  - No matter how terrible or intense things get, music can calm me down. Your music made me feel better. I know this about music and I listen to it when things are bad.
  - The music was soothing and peaceful. It made me feel like I was in church and I liked that.
  - Singing Joy to the World reminded me of my grandmother. We always went to her house for Christmas and she would sing a lot, she was so cute when she sang. The whole family liked it.
  - I used to dance so when I hear music, my whole body feels good.
  - Three of the women came to tell us, after the concert, that they used to play the violin. One even said she wanted to get back to it.
  - The most remarkable comment from the entire evening came from a perky woman who had piped up several times. Her final comment was: I never listened to classical music before, I didn't know anything about it and I thought it would be boring or I wouldn't understand it, but it is so beautiful and makes me feel so good. It's good to know an addict can listen to this music and like it and feel things in the music.
  - One of the regular guests in the Emergency Shelter insisted on "decorating" the spot we would stand in to perform. He carefully placed two poinsettias and one tiny Christmas tree in front of the music stands.
  - Joseph, the man who had not spoken much at all before we started playing in the shelter, rushed right in as soon as we started tuning our instruments, announced to us that No, he would not be going home with any one of us tonight (!) and wanted to tell us that this music of intelligent people was elegant.
  - The atmosphere in the Emergency Shelter was somber and a bit tense on this evening two nights before Christmas. We brought a small concert of lovely music that expressed peace, joy, exuberance, and perhaps hope.
  - After we played an elderly lady, who has been living in the shelter for several years, with her two adult sons, thanked us and told us that the music made her feel happy.
  - Those who listened to the concert were very grateful and made sure we received a card addressed to "Classical Music Volunteers" signed: "From all of your fans in the Shelter".

## November

November 30, 2010

- The women in the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center were pin drop silent as they listened to the pyrotechnics of the Ysaye Sonata Cindy played with panache. Afterwards, one of them said it reminded her of Tom and Jerry! There were quite a few comments this evening about the music reminding women of images from TV.
- After our performance in the Emergency Shelter a woman came forward to thank us. She

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explained she is deaf and she felt the music through the vibrations of a chair she placed her hands upon, set up near where we played. She could tell that the first piece we played was by Mozart because of the feel of the vibrations. She asked Rebecca if she could put her hand on the viola while Rebecca played, which Rebecca obliged. The woman's face brightened with an enormous smile as she felt the back of the instrument vibrating under her hand.

-Interestingly, there was also a comment in the Emergency Shelter, about the Ysaye reminding that listener of the music in Tom and Jerry. We wondered if the producers of that cartoon had indeed used the complex music of Ysaye to accompany the antics of the critters?

## October

October 20, 2010

These are the notes I used to introduce the music on the Halloween Program. The shelter guests enjoyed these stories about the music

Tartini: April 8, 1692 - February 26, 1770

The story behind "Devil's Trill" starts with a dream. Tartini allegedly told the French astronomer Jérôme Lalande that he dreamed that The Devil appeared to him and asked to be his servant and teacher. At the end of their lessons Tartini handed the devil his violin to test his skill—the devil immediately began to play with such virtuosity that Tartini felt his breath taken away. When the composer awoke he immediately jotted down the sonata, desperately trying to recapture what he had heard in the dream. Despite the sonata being successful with his audiences, Tartini lamented that the piece was still far from what he had heard in his dream. What he had written was, in his own words: "so inferior to what I had heard, that if I could have subsisted on other means, I would have broken my violin and abandoned music forever."

Mozart: 1756-1791

Here is the story of the aria "Il Mio Tesoro"

Sure that Don Giovanni was the person who killed his fiancée's father, Don Ottavio swears that he will make sure Donna Anna gets her revenge on Don Giovanni. He sings of this in this aria.

Music Dressed up in Ethnic Costumes: Bulgarian, American, and Mexican folk songs

Saint Saens: 9 October 1835 – 16 December 1921

The story of Danse Macabre:

According to legend, "Death" appears at midnight every year on Halloween. Death calls forth the dead from their graves to dance their dance of death for him while he plays his fiddle represented by a solo violin with its E-string tuned to an E-flat in an example of scordatura tuning. His skeletons dance for him until the rooster crows at dawn, when they must return to their graves until the next year.

## September

September 23, 2010

-After this performance the women in the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center wrote me a thank you note. This indicated to me that they had achieved a level of self confidence to express themselves in writing and were motivated enough to make sure I received their card, via US Mail. Here are some of their comments:

-I love the music, thank you SO much. Nicole

-Thank you for coming to play for us, it was wonderful. Alex

-Thank you so much for the wonderful music. You are so talented and it was so thoughtful of

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you. Love, Tara

-Thank you for magic! M.

-I've had the honor of listening to you play twice and I loved it both times. Thank you.

Vanessa

-A wonderful evening, thank you. Very soothing. Kat

-Good to listen to you. God bless you all.

-Thank you for coming, for God has sent you. Theresa

-You made my stay here. Becky

-It was water for my soul when it gets thirsty!

## August

August 20, 2010

-When the women entered the conference room they gave off tired, stressed, anxious, agitated, chaotic, frantic, distracted energy. After one movement of Haydn, they had calmed, spoke about feeling soothed. Slowly their attention shifted from their distress to the sound of the music. They were gathered together to share something positive that merely swept over them, they could respond in any way, they were free to experience the music without any sense of right or wrong response. By the end of the performance, they expressed feeling relaxed, even happy.

-The way you play so together, every note, made me feel comforted, relaxed.

-The music makes me feel like I want to cry, in a good way. The Haydn made me imagine I was in a dress with a huge skirt, in a fancy ballroom, everything very elegant. I felt elegant. It's so emotional around here all the time and this music was soothing, calming, relaxing.

-Women told us they had played: piano, violin, flute, harpsichord, bass guitar, drums, and a number of the women were singers. One woman said she went to singing school in CA.

-Standing ovation from the women in the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center.

-In the Emergency shelter there was a lot of agitated activity from the audience while we were playing, some of the shelter guests asking others to be quiet, to listen. But during the Corelli, two movements for solo violin, everyone became silent and rapt. It was as if the music was a magnet pulling them in more and more, calming them, focusing them, giving them something positive and creative to focus on as a community.

-When you play I know it ain't over; the music gives me hope. Your playing makes me feel alive.

-I'm having a lot of troubles with my wife (indicated he comes to the shelter when he can't stay at home with his wife) and this really made me happy when I've been so very sad.

-Shelter residents asked us how they could get violin lessons.

-Joseph attended the concert, came right up at the end to ask me if there is such a thing as an electric violin? Then he told me all about his electric guitar lessons, they cost \$15, too expensive, how could he have enough time to do that, eat, sleep, gotta work. He was very excited to talk more about the electric guitar.

-After we played a man pulled out a guitar, started playing and singing. A couple started to dance. I asked the man if he often pulled out his guitar? No, he responded, this is the first time, you inspired me! Dancing is such a sign of life; spontaneously erupting in dance in the homeless shelter is something very hopeful.

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## July

July 7, 2010

-After the first movement of the Martinu a woman said: I saw a story in my mind; it was a love story. I was running away from my abuser and then I found my true love.

-The music made me think of my mother.

-I felt like I was in a concert hall with a big orchestra playing.

-It takes so much discipline to play like that. You must be very disciplined to learn that.

-As we packed up many of the women came to thank us for taking the time to play for them. Most of them had been absolutely rapt the entire time we were playing. It is remarkable to have such an immediate impact with a performance.

-After hearing one movement of Martinu and one of Mozart, a man in the Emergency Shelter said: The Martinu sounded like there were a lot of different things going on, the music changed often. It was as if the person writing it had a lot of emotional ups and downs in his life. The Mozart was steady and even throughout. I liked the Mozart better and want to hear more Mozart.(And the man is correct: Martinu had fragile emotional health, suffered from depression.)

-A man who had left the shelter told us he came in tonight just to hear us play. Then he explained that the man sitting next to him during the concert is deaf. This man had folded a chair so that he could rest the feet of the chair on the floor and put the back against his belly. He could feel the vibrations of the music through the chair. He was seated next to a deaf woman who had written "Happy" on a note she passed to her deaf friend during the Mozart. The deaf man gave us a thumbs up after he saw his friend explain the scene to us.

-A thin, tall, young man came up to me after the performance to tell me that he is a violinist, he knows how difficult it is to play well, and he really liked my playing, that I play well. He said he had a picture of himself with Itzhak Perlman; did I want to see it? Could I wait a moment while he ran to get his photos? He returned with an album and indeed he was in a photo, probably about 12 yrs old, with Perlman. The young man had attended Perlman's Fiddlefest. He also had a picture of himself with Roberta Guaspari, of Music from the Heart, as he had been a student in her very successful program in Harlem. This young man is about 20. I asked him where was his violin? He had left it with his recruiter upon joining the military; he wasn't sure the recruiter would be happy to see him due to how he left the army. Rebecca and I offered to help him get a violin. He said he really missed playing as it relaxed him; he could spend hours and hours playing his violin. I wondered how in the world he ended up in the shelter in Boston; he must have some family in New York where he had learned to play the violin.

-Another shelter guest told me how remarkable this young man was; the young man had been in some kind of a car accident and had to leave the army, he was "sharp as a tack" and had to put his life back together. This man also told me he played the Sousaphone in high school but he didn't want to march in the band every Saturday for the football games. He gave me a business card from the Boston Living Center, an agency working with the HIV/AIDS community, told me this place served excellent food and I should go for lunch.

-One woman commented on the way we moved when we played. We had a discussion about why our bodies move—moving to the rhythm and communicating with each other without words.

-A way of communicating the energy of the music with the audience. If we stayed totally still while we played it probably would not be as exciting to listen to by the audience.

-I believe the same women also noticed that we sometimes turned our bows and she wondered why we did that. We explained that we use just the side of the bow when we play softer and tend to use all the hair for louder passages. After we played, she came up to us and looked at our bows to see them in more detail.

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## May

(NOT POSTED:) May 3, 2010

First performances in the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center and the Emergency Shelter at Shattuck Hospital.

-After the performance, a woman told me a long story of attending a Boston Pops concert, on the Esplanade, with her children. She sighed and said, I guess there are some good memories in there somewhere. I've forgotten how much I like listening to music.

May 26, 2010

-It's like a melody to my heart.

-I am going to sleep well tonight; I had a stressful day and the music calmed me down.

-When you played, I imagined myself dancing on a stage; I used to be a dancer.

-Your music reminded me of dancing with my father, with my feet on his, when I was little.

-I played violin when I was a kid. I learned Twinkle Twinkle. My mom would have me play it when people would come over and they would all clap for me.

-I remember playing Pachelbel Canon with my school orchestra. I love that piece. When I am settled again, I would like to play the violin again.

-Your music was beautiful; peaceful for my heart and soul.

-I played the violin, cello, bass when I was little. My mother made me and my sister play; I liked it. I can play other instruments too.

-I only listen to rock and roll. I've never heard classical music before; it is so soothing. I'm going to listen to it on my radio after I leave here.

-(After the 2nd mvt of Mozart duo): I imagine I am at the opera, dressed in a beautiful gown. My hair is cut in a bob, it is red. I look down at my beautiful gown and think about how my life would be if I had no sins.

-The story of Joseph: a man diagnosed as psychotic. He has lost his parents, and sister, is in his 40's- early 50's. He has been in the shelter for more than two years. He never speaks to or interacts with other shelter guests. His only interaction is with the shelter staff, Kel, Elissa who address his mental health. After the first SMB concert, which he did not attend, though could hear from his bunk where he spends all of his time, he asked Kel what was going on, commented the music sounded like "the real deal." For the second SMB concert, this one, he placed himself in the front row, center seat. He asked questions, between pieces, sat rapt during all of the music. After the performance he told me a very complicated story about his mother and what she had said about the history of the violin. Kel later told me that since our first SMB performance he has started to talk, about classical music. Previously he would only rant to Kel about cigarettes, hamburger, and money. The classical music seems to have reached him in a way that nothing else has in the two years he has been living in the shelter. Kel hopes to get a donated CD player and some classical CD's for Joseph. I plan to give him CD's of the music we have played in the shelter.

-Very energetic, appreciative, and respectful thank you's from the women in the Kitty Dukakis Center and the people, mostly men, in the Emergency Shelter. A real sense of gratitude was communicated from them to us.

-Rebecca and I felt overwhelmed, with gratitude, by the positive effect of our music on all of our listeners this evening.