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The Newsletter for the
Cox Violin Community

FALL 2011

www.coxviolins.com

Dear Friends,

This past year has brought a convergence of ideas and experiences that have focused and developed my thinking about my work and its place in our community and in the larger world.

Each June, the Brattleboro community hosts the Strolling of the Heifers, a slower version of the Running of the Bulls, to celebrate our agricultural traditions and economic base. In conjunction with that event this year, I participated in the first Slow Living Summit by organizing a panel discussion: The Place of the Arts in Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Lives. My thinking was informed by my year-long participation in economic development strategy work for Windham County. Part of this involved thinking about what our new economy will look like as the dust settles from our financial and environmental upheavals.

As part of the Brattleboro-West Arts community, I am putting together a public forum on Craftsmanship in the 21st Century during American Crafts Week in October. This will focus on the place and value of the intuitive wisdom "from the hands" learning brings to society, and on the process of creating small-scale, organic solutions for our local and personal needs.

A recent visit to New Orleans – coinciding with the destruction caused by Hurricane Irene here in Vermont – deepened my thoughts about change and how we as individuals and communities respond to it. Resiliency through vibrant living traditions and strong relationships makes a difference and will be important in meeting the challenges that may lie ahead.

I feel very fortunate to have work and life patterns that feel like part of a new, healthier economy and community. I am optimistic about where we will end up. As we have to live with less, we can improve our lives by building greater value and meaning into what we do have. As we slow down, our relationships with each other and how we connect – including through music – will become richer and more fulfilling. We will

become happier in a world that is smarter about, and values more highly, those things and experiences that actually make us happy.

I am thankful for you, my violin family around the world, who take my labors with simple materials and use them with skill to tell your stories and share your emotions, and in doing so, make the world a happier, healthier place.

Douglas Cox



Photo © T. H. Smith



*New Orleans Second Line Parade, 2011
The next generation of music makers*

On the Inside

**From the Bench:
A Treasure Hunt**

**Blanche Moyse,
1909-2011: A Tribute**

Wine, Cheese & Violins

Photographs Wanted



From the Bench

Treasure Hunt

I continue to be fascinated by the unusual instruments that come my way. In recent months, I've studied and begun to make instruments inspired by some new treasures.

Montagnana 1723 Violin

I recently made a violin patterned after the 1717 "Gariel" Strad owned by Jaime Laredo, who lives nearby. He now plays on a Montagnana violin, a truly extraordinary instrument, and has been kind enough to let me study it. It is an elegant pattern from the Venetian tradition, which I have not worked in much. I have two versions of it on the bench, to be ready next year. It was played by Josef Roisman, longtime member of the Budapest Quartet.

Roisman also owned the cut-down Storioni viola now played by Arnold Steinhardt, which is the inspiration for another favorite model of mine: my "Steinhardt" Storioni.

Testore Viola 1735

I had the opportunity to study two almost identical violas attributed to Paolo Antonio Testore, a Milanese luthier who lived from 1700-1767. One was at Marlboro, played by Hsin-Yun Huang of Juilliard; the other at Yellow Barn with Maria Lambros of Peabody Conservatory. These very small instruments

(15 $\frac{5}{8}$ " are basic, no-frills, workmanlike. The purfling is painted on, the scrolls are simple, the wood is plain. It's unlikely that they have ever been copied, but those

who play on them love the sound and playability, the big voice in a small and manageable package. I am intrigued, and already at work.

Violas, large and small

I have on the bench a 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ " viola, modeled after the work of Gasparo da Salò, but modified to be more manageable. The demand for such large instruments is unpredictable. I continue to explore the different sound qualities in wood that is native to New England. I have recently finished four small violas, each with a different back wood. These are patterned after a 1789 viola of Lorenzo Storioni, a favorite maker of mine.

The first, my opus 700, has a White Birch back. The next three, numbers 725, 727 and 728, have Butternut, Cherry, and Slab Maple backs respectively. The Butternut and Cherry were harvested in nearby Athens, Vermont. The Maple is from Southern New Hampshire. By the time this newsletter reaches you, these small violas will be set up and ready to play.

The Lady Blunt Strad

In honor of the record-breaking sale at auction of the almost pristine "Lady Blunt" Stradivarius violin of 1721, I have started my second violin inspired by this extraordinary instrument.

Small Violins, Big Sound

Along with an increasing interest in small violas, I find there is more demand for small violins lately. I continue to make instruments measuring 352 mm in length and less and I have a 7/8 violin on the bench now.

Blanche Moyses, 1909-2011: A

Blanche Moyses was mentor, inspiration and formidable taskmistress to generations of musicians in Brattleboro and beyond. As a conductor and interpreter, she offered rare and profound insights into the music of J. S. Bach. As a passionate advocate for community participation, she pursued her vision with a tenacity that has made our town a Mecca for music.

Blanche Honegger Moyses, the founder of the Brattleboro Music Center and the New England Bach Festival, was a violinist and conductor. Born in Geneva, Switzerland, she made her home in Marlboro, Vermont, and later in Brattleboro.

Blanche began the study of violin at the age of eight. She went on to study with Adolf Busch, and made her debut at the age of sixteen, playing the Beethoven Violin Concerto with l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. She married the flutist and pianist Louis Moyses and, with Moyses's father, flutist Marcel Moyses, formed the award-winning Moyses Trio. Her violin career ended in 1966 with an injury to her bow arm. After 40 years, very late in her life, she began playing the violin again. A small woman to begin with, her stature had shrunk with age and she could no longer play comfortably on her full-size instrument. I was able to provide a 3/4 size violin, which she used for several years with great pleasure.

Blanche generously allowed me to study her 1610 Brothers Amati Violin, and I have made several violins on that pattern. My opus 730, to be ready this fall, is a tribute to Blanche and her legacy. This violin is made entirely of wood harvested here in Windham County.

Blanche communicated her love and understanding of good music and her belief that it should be a vital part of her community. The Marlboro Music Festival, which she helped found, and the New England Bach Festival attracted fine musicians and artists of all kinds to the area. Many have settled here permanently. She brought an old-world Swiss discipline to her work as director of the New England Bach Festival and as founder and artistic director of the Brattleboro Music Center. This created some interesting tensions with the more relaxed culture of America and particularly of Vermont in the 1960's and '70's. Her unflagging artistic energy, her impressively high standards, and her own love of music and the arts contributed to making our town a Mecca for music during an artistic renaissance that saw the founding of the Yellow Barn Music School and Festival, the Windham Orchestra, and the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, to name just a few institutions.

In 1949, the Moyses moved to Marlboro, Vermont and helped found the Marlboro Music Festival. Blanche chaired the music department at Marlboro College for the next 25 years, and founded the Brattleboro Music Center in 1952.

After Blanche's violin career

ended, she went on to become a much-admired conductor of the choral works of Bach, making her Carnegie Hall debut at the age of 78. She continued to conduct Bach's major choral works at annual



Blanche Moyses, Conducting in 1989, Photo ©NEBF

Wine, Cheese and Violins



Photo © Brattleboro Music Center

concerts of the New England Bach Festival in New England and beyond, well into her 90's.

Blanche was particularly admired for her devotion to the choral works of Johann Sebastian Bach and her ability to draw deeply moving performances from both amateur and professional musicians. Soprano Arleen Auger has said of her, "I've sung Bach all over the world, often with people who are considered the best, and in my opinion no one is performing Bach any better than Blanche Moyse is doing it in Brattleboro."

The writer Benjamin Ivry called her perhaps "classical music's best kept secret." Wall Street Journal critic Greg Sandow said of her performance of Bach's St. John Passion at the age of 89: "Sometimes you hear a concert that sticks with you. For months you think about it, keeping it alive in your mind, unable to banish it merely to memory."

Blanche Moyse's legacy lives on, and her vision will continue to enrich lives for generations to come. Blanche died at her home in Brattleboro on February 10, 2011, at the age of 101.

"Thanks so much for letting us have the 3/4 violin all this time. It made a huge difference in my mother's life as a transitional object to retirement and gave her countless hours of enjoyment."

*Dominique Steinberg,
daughter of Blanche Moyse*

Omaha, Nebraska: In April, the 2009 Cox Quartet was featured at the closing event of the A. Cavallo Violins annual exhibition. Quartets by four makers were played for a full-house audience of professional musicians, luthiers, students, and general public. Wine, hors d'œuvres, and desserts were served after each quartet was played, and the instruments were available to try afterwards. It was a delightful celebration of contemporary lutherie, made more wonderful by the presence of several of the makers.

Putney, Vermont: Inspired by this event, we invited some friends, some players, and some wine aficionados to a violin-sampling, wine-and-cheese-tasting event at the end of July. Our venue was Next Stage Arts, a converted church in downtown Putney, Vermont. Lisa Ferrigno, a violinist, teacher and friend, wanted to test violins in a venue large and resonant enough to hear what the violins would sound like in a concert hall, with an audience to listen and help her evaluate them. She agreed to play several very different instruments. So that Lisa could hear each violin played by someone else, Bob Hancock, a local violinist and concertmaster of the Windham Orchestra, agreed to assist.



The Violins

With the help of Marty Ramsburg of Windham Wines in Brattleboro, we chose a wine to accompany each violin, and we served a selection of locally-made sheep, goat, and cow cheese to keep things a little sober.

Each violin was played by Lisa and then by Bob; each wine was served in between; we provided a response sheet so that folks could keep track of which they liked (both violins and wine; we did not rate the cheese), and whether or not they thought it was a good match. The violins and their matching wines were:

- Opus 654 "Gariel" Stradivarius ~ Leth, Grüner Veltliner, Steinagrund
- Opus 696 "Spohr" Stradivarius ~ Kraft, Vouvray
- Opus 707 "Leduc" Guarneri del Gesù ~ Coste Chaude, Côtes du Rhône
- Opus 695 "Steinhardt" Storioni ~ Walden, Côtes du Roussillon
- Opus 669 "Sullivan" Storioni 1774 ~ Louis Grenelle, Sparkling Saumur



The Cheese

Let us know of a pairing you find especially compelling with your instrument!

Creators and Their Tools



Photo © William Dixon

This year we had a visit from William Dixon, a local photographer who is doing a project with the Vermont Center for Photography for an exhibit in January, 2012. The theme of the exhibit centers on creators and their tools – including a jeweler, a sculptor, two potters, two painters, a pianist and of course, a violin maker.

Photographs Wanted

When we add players to the "Spotlight" section of the website, we ask them for photographs, with or without their Cox instruments. Some of the photos with instruments are so interesting that we are putting out the call: send us photos of you and your Cox instrument! We would love to see them, as well as a story to go along with them. You can see what we mean online at www.coxviolins.com. High resolution digital photos can be emailed to us, or printed photos sent by mail.

If you play on a Cox instrument, let us spotlight you. Send an email to info@coxviolins.com.



Michelle Liechti with student
Photo © Christine Triebert



Photo ©William Dixon

Instrument Showings

BOSTON, 2011-2012

I will be bringing instruments to monthly Saturday office hours in Boston, starting in September.

September 17	January 14, 2012
October 15	February 11
November 12	March 10
December 10	April 14
	May 12

These dates may be subject to change.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

My work can be seen at dealers of fine instruments in many cities. I travel occasionally and welcome the opportunity to meet people and show my work.

Visitors are always welcome at the studio in the hills of Southern Vermont. Call to be sure I will be available when you want to visit.

ON THE WEB

Visit us on facebook and twitter:
www.facebook.com/violinmaker
www.twitter.com/coxviolins

I produce an email newsletter, published quarterly on no definite schedule. You can opt in via the website, www.coxviolins.com.

The Scroll's purpose is to provide information and enjoyment to people interested in fine new instruments.

I welcome your inquiries and hope you'll tell me how I can be useful to you. There are a limited number of scholarships for exceptional students who cannot procure fine instruments in other ways. If you'd like more information about scholarships, let me know.

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Praise for Doug's Instruments

Thank you for the wonderful tour of your studio and for your kindness. When Tristan is playing your violin, the violin gives us more than the music he is playing, the violin tells us the story of its maker.

Oldat Lai, (mother) Violin #673

I am the happy owner of the violin you made in 1990, opus 165. In late 1992 I joined Amadeus Chamber Orchestra of Polish Radio, my most beloved ensemble. The violin is performing brilliantly, one of the best in our group. I treat this piece of art like a most precious item in my life.

Andrzej Hop, Violin #165

I just wanted to let you know how much I continue to be pleased with my viola. My teacher exclaimed that it is "the best new viola" he has ever heard. One of the coaches at a chamber music festival, overhearing me in the group, said, "Now that's how a viola should sound!"

Amy Selig, Viola #468

I still love my violin! I was remarking the other day that my violin is in its mid-20's now! The sound quality has only improved over the years, as has its power.

Darlene Pitt, Violin #135

It's like holding a songbird in my hands, so gentle and pure the movement and sound. It's a huge difference in sound and I'm in love with it all over again!

Marianne Fahs, Violin #399

I play your baroque Viola #79 since 1990. Recently a new colleague has joined us. When I saw his violin, I immediately wondered if it was related to mine – and it is! I wanted to let you know that we both adore the sound & playability of our voices. I cannot imagine playing baroque without my Viola.

Cheryl Zylla, Lyra Baroque, Viola #79

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