

# Cornucopia

News and articles for anyone interested in the horn

November 2016



James Sommerville

## It's Not Just about Excerpts

by James Sommerville

These are times of high anxiety for young orchestral musicians. Rumours and statistics of decline seem to multiply every year; strikes seem longer and more fraught, salaries less adequate. The fields at all auditions are said to be bigger and stronger, and the jobs fewer. (I feel compelled to mention that, as a horn student in the early 1980's, we heard the same dire warnings: the failing orchestras; the declining, aging audiences; the hundreds of hornists at major auditions; the incredible talents of the people who won the jobs).

I am not pollyannaish about the state of the American orchestra, but I do believe that the opportunities and options are not significantly less than they were 30 years ago; and certainly not compared to generations before that, when players in major orchestras regularly took summer jobs to make ends meet.

But this is not exactly my subject. As a teacher and performer, I come into contact with the most talented young horn players in the country. The present state of preparation, experience, and professionalism among college and high school players continues to amaze me. By the standards of the students I meet now at NEC or Tanglewood, I was a feckless rube. My own first experience of playing in an orchestra was my first week of undergraduate study; applicants now show up to conservatory auditions with repertoire lists as long as my arm.

And yet ... perhaps more often than in the past, much is also lacking. There is a grave danger that accompanies the anxiety of employment, the utilitarian view. As teachers, we can too easily honour the notion that excerpts are the alpha and omega; that drilling a deep but narrow well of musicality and technique, to tap the purest renditions of a few dozen bars of standard repertoire, is the one true source of success for our students (and by extension, for our own reputations).

I believe that in terms of producing creative artists and strong contributors to the orchestral community, we do a disservice in our too-narrow focus on the orchestral audition. A great orchestra needs to be filled with great musicians. Great musicians are curious and broad-minded, literate in all styles; possessing of unshakeable basic musical skills (ear, rhythm, melody, rhetoric). We need to love our entire culture – how can we hope to comprehend the great composers without knowing what they themselves loved, read, thought? We need a love of the natural world, which is the wellspring of the great music we perform. And above all, we need an ineluctable, indomitable passion for what we do – without that, professional success is possible, but joy, generosity, and fulfillment are not. ❖

*Jamie is principal horn of the Boston Symphony and featured artist at the 2017 NHW (see page 2).*

### Cornucopia

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## The Rich Land of the Nile

by Amr Selim



After moving from Egypt to the United States, I realized that the majority of Western musicians have had little or no exposure to the Arab music style despite some Western string and wind instruments, with the exception of the horn, being used in the Arab music tradition. After researching several ways to interpret this style of music on the horn, I have created a Book of Etudes that presents techniques to practice the Arab vocal characteristics on the horn.

Although many Western composers have written for the horn as a solo or part of an ensemble using the microtonal technique, it is hard to perform a piece of music in the traditional Arabic style with the same technique you would perform György Ligeti's horn concerto. Using the microtonal technique in Western compositions is usually more technical than musical. Examples of questions regarding technique that one would likely ask when learning Ligeti's concerto are: How far is this partial from the other?

Questions usually asked when on the subject of performing traditional Arabic music are: What maqam (melodic mode) is this piece in? And how is this microtone related to the following pitch in the maqam?

The East and the West have developed different styles of music. The West has evolved a harmonic-polyphonic system that was, until recently, quite alien to the East, while the East has explored subtleties of melo-

dy and rhythm unknown to the West. Yet the musical culture of Egypt has achieved something like a synthesis of these two aspects.

Besides the quarter tone, which is perhaps the most distinct feature of Arabic music, Arabic music values the emotional interpretation the musician brings to an established piece, and the individuality of interpretation. Not that Western music does not value individuality, but in Arabic music (as well as other folkloric music), improvisation is a big part of the tradition, whereas in Western music, typically (with the exception of cadenzas which still enhance and not take over the original composition meaning) improvisation is absent.

Similar to Western music history, in the Arab world, early poetry, and music, including song, were passed down by oral communication through generations. However, the emphasis on personal expression makes this music different from the fixed precision and dense polyphony found in European textures. Traditional Middle Eastern music is heterophonic, and values a performer's emotional interpretation of an established piece and the individuality of the musician's interpretation versus showing an interpretation of a score based on a composer's intentions. ❖

*Amr, a graduate of Cairo Conservatory and SUNY Stony Brook, is on the faculty of the Lebanese American University in Beirut.*

TEMP – RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



### 2017 Northeast Horn Workshop

March 24-26, Hartt School Community Division  
200 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford CT

Featured artist: BSO principal Jamie Sommerville

Host: Barbara Hill [bahill@hartford.edu](mailto:bahill@hartford.edu) 860-768-4451

[hartford.edu/hcd/music/workshops-master-classes/northeast-horn-workshop.aspx](http://hartford.edu/hcd/music/workshops-master-classes/northeast-horn-workshop.aspx)

### Gus Sebring at Plymouth Philharmonic

Nov. 5 at 8 p.m. Plymouth North High School  
Mozart 3rd, Beethoven Eroica [plymouthphil.org](http://plymouthphil.org)

### 2017 International Horn Symposium

June 26-30, Natal, Brazil

Federal University of Rio Grande de Norte

Host: Radequndis Tavares Feitosa

Artists: Abel Pereira, Adalto Soares, Frank Lloyd  
Ignatio Garcia, Jeff Nelson, Kristina Mascher-Turner  
Philip Doyle, Luiz Garcia, Marie-Luise Neunecker  
Miklós Nagy, Nobuaki Fukukawa, Waleska Beltrami  
[ihs2017natal.wordpress.com](http://ihs2017natal.wordpress.com)



### News and Events

**Re: An American Horn Player in China: Randall Faust** (Western Illinois University): "... a great reminder of the International nature of our art!" ... **Carol Hamilton** (Sarasota FL): "Your newsletter is much appreciated, especially the image of being picked up for a gig in China while practicing in a hotel room. My husband howled."

**Re: Guide to the Solo Horn Repertoire by Dempf and Seraphinoff: Randall Faust:** "There have been some great standard references in the past; however, many of those books predate the explosion of horn literature stimulated, at least in part, by the activity of the IHS. This new guide will be a very welcome update!"

**Natalie Douglass** (Vineyard UT) is back from her Fulbright year in Budapest, Hungary, and is now teaching at Utah Valley University.

**Susan LaFever** (NYC) will be teaching chamber music and horn in August 2017 at the InterHarmony International Music Festival in Sulzbach-Rosenberg, Bavaria, Germany.

**John P. Little, Jr.** (Louisville KY), now professor of horn at Centre College in Danville KY, has written a treatise "Ear and Air."

**Seann Trull** (Palos Verdes CA) is now Seann Avery and living in Boston.

**Aimee Page** (Oakdale CT) is retiring from the Coast Guard Band in November and moving back to Indiana.

**Jennifer Montone** (Philadelphia Orchestra) has a new solo CD and new website ([jenmontone.com](http://jenmontone.com)).

**Kendall Betts** (1947-2016), former principal horn of the Minnesota Orchestra and founder and director of the Kendall Betts Horn Camp, died in August. The October issue of *The Horn Call* has an obituary.

**Arlene Kies** (1950-2016), pianist at the University of New Hampshire and the Kendall Betts Horn Camp, died in May.

**Ernest Vance Lenzi** (1941-2015), who lived in Portsmouth RI and played in the Newport Concert Band and Narragansett Brass Ensemble, died in December.

**Carol Hamilton** (Sarasota FL) writes, "After thinking that I'd never find a group in Florida, I stumbled across The First Brass of Sarasota just in time to catch their summer finale concert – an impressive 11 horns! Lots of retired professional, teachers, and so on."

**Yoni Kahn** has moved from MIT to Princeton to further his career as a physicist, but is living in Philadelphia with his fiancée and trying to bring more natural horn to the city!

**Shelagh Abate** (NYC) is playing *Tristan and Isolde* with the MET Opera this season, a dream come true for a Wagner fan.

**Anne Howarth** (Somerville) on November 19 at 8 p.m. is performing the Boston premier of Augusta Read Thomas's *Avian Escapades* for woodwind quintet with Radius Ensemble; also on the program are Copland's Sextet, Shirish Korde's *Tenderness of Cranes*, and duets for violin and bassoon by Paganini. <http://radiusensemble.org/>

**Eli Epstein** (NEC, Boston Conservatory) is concert guide at a free Inside Out Concert on November 6 at 3 p.m., Arlington Street Church, 351 Boylston Street, Boston, with violinist Sharon Leventhal performing Kurtag and Bach. [elikepstein@gmail.com](mailto:elikepstein@gmail.com)

**Lost:** Gloria Jean Simpson (Bradenton FL); Emily Whelehan (Madisonville KY), Stephen Christen (Jersey City NJ), Jennifer Hyde (Gordon College), Mark Boren (Minot ND).

**New members:** **Linda Dempf**, Trenton NJ, College of New Jersey; **Matthew Haislip**, Mississippi State, IHS Area Representative; **Denny McGinn**, Afton MN, retired software engineer, introduced by composer David Evans Thomas; **Laura Brenes**, LA player, Yorba Linda CA, sent her CD "a time and a place"; **David Jewell**, Binghamton NY, a returning member; **Kate Sheeran**, Dean of the San Francisco Conservatory; **Tomás Henriques**, SUNY Buffalo State, trombone, theory, computer music, and music education. ❖

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