

INTERVIEW

by
Liz
Smith

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Joseph Pach was the subject of On Campus last week. The other three members of the String Quartet are the subjects this week: Ifan Williams, cello; James Pataki, viola; and Andrew Brenac, violin.

The UNB Resident Musicians play today and every Friday at Memorial Hall (next to the Old Student Centre) from 12:30 to 2:00. Admission is free, and you are welcome to bring your lunch and to come and go as classes permit.

IFAN WILLIAMS

Ifan Williams is a Maritimer, but it was a series of orchestral positions in Europe that led to his current place as resident musician at the University of New Brunswick.

His father was the director of the Maritime Conservatory of Music in Halifax and played the violin. Although Mr. Williams gave each of his three daughters a violin, and each of his three sons a cello, he advised them not to go into music professionally because it is too difficult. Ifan was at the age when advice was not readily accepted, and at thirteen he began to study the cello seriously.

Sailing is another interest Ifan Williams developed at this time which he still retains today. At that time he spent holidays crewing on other people's boats, but recently he bought a thirty-three foot sloop which he plans to use for coastal cruising in the spring. Mr. Williams is also designing a fifty-three foot sailboat with bilge keels-two outward slanting keels which give the boat more speed and stability.

At the age of eighteen he moved to New York to attend the Manhattan School of Music. He lived on the top floor of a tenement in Spanish Harlem in a three room apartment costing \$54 a month.

Spanish Harlem is a rough section of New York - so rough that the police never parole on foot. Ifan Williams particularly remembers one incident of his two year stay in New York.

"One morning, at about 11:00, I was practicing and looked out the window to see a Puerto Rican youth on the fire escape trying to break into an apartment in the opposite building. I went to the window and made my presence known, thinking he'd run away. But he just swore under his breath and started to climb back up to the roof. As I turned away a brick came flying through the kitchen window. I cleared out of the way as a knife came soaring in after it."

After two years Mr. Williams decided that a degree was not what he needed. He went back to Nova Scotia and worked with the Halifax Symphony Orchestra to make money to go to England.

He and his new bride, Heather, a non-musician, left for Europe with a working visa, but no job prospects. In England they found that job applications are formally written, rather than the North American method of telephone interviews, so it is a much slower process. But in a few weeks he found a position with provincial orchestra in Bournemouth.

Shortly after this a back row position became available in the London Philharmonia and Mr. Williams auditioned and was accepted. But he was only with the Philharmonia short while when he was noticed by the London Symphony Orchestra and asked to audition for a better position. He won the audition and spent the next two years with that orchestra.

During the first seven weeks with the London Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Williams had two evenings off. But he found his experiences with them enjoyable, partially because the relationship between the members and the management was so good. The London Symphony Orchestra is a company that the musicians must buy their way into, and it is they who hire the management, not vice-versa.

The Williams felt their future was in Canada, particularly the Maritimes, and when Mr. Williams was offered the position of principle cellist with the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra they realized it was a good opportunity to get back to Canada. Mr. Williams has little to say about his time with the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, other than to say he was relieved to leave it, for the position at UNB.

Joseph Pach approached Ifan Williams last spring about forming the string quartet on the UNB campus. He had first played with the Pachs in a concert the year before, and the position as musician in residence with the String Quartet seemed to be just what he had been looking for.

Ifan Williams believes that the quartet is a long term undertaking, that may take several years to get in good shape. The quartet, consisting of Joseph Pach, Ifan Williams, James Pataki and Andrew Joseph Pach and Andrew Benac on violins, James Pataki on viola and Ifan Williams on cello are presently practicing a classical repertoire to establish a quartet sound.

JAMES PATAKI

James Pataki first played with Andrew Benac and Joseph Pach when they formed a quartet while they were all studying at the Senior School of the Royal Conservatory in Toronto.

It was because of the formation of this early quartet that he first began to play the viola. The viola has a small repertoire, but in a chamber music quartet, it is definitely needed. Mr. Pataki was the tallest member, with the largest hands, and so he was elected to play the viola for the group.

When Mr. Pataki entered the Senior School of Music it offered a two year course, but once he was enrolled it was lengthened to three years. He decided that he would prefer to continue his study of the viola in Europe and so left the school after two years without a diploma.

Although James Pataki grew up in Toronto, he was born in Rumania to Hungarian parents. He decided to continue his study of music at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary. He finished his artist's diploma, but "as bad luck has it, politics came in" and Mr. Pataki was not allowed to leave to return to Canada. The officials claimed that because his parents were Hungarian, Mr. Pataki was also a Hungarian citizen.

When the Hungarian Revolution broke out, Mr. Pataki was stranded in Moscow after touring China with a quartet.

Finally he was allowed to return to Prague and thence to Budapest. After two days Mr. Pataki got an opportunity to leave Hungary, and so he crossed the border into Austria without extra clothes, or even his instrument, and carrying a stranger's child on his back.

Since James Pataki could speak both English and Hungarian, he worked as a middleman for awhile in the Danish Red Cross Camp in Austria. A member of the Red Cross suggested that he go to Denmark and attempt to re-enter Canada

from there.

So after nine years in Europe, Mr. Pataki was able to return to Canada.

He worked for three years in Toronto, and then went to Germany to join an orchestra formed by Hungarian refugees, called the Philharmonia Hungarian. It was from this orchestra Mr. Pataki came to the UNB campus.

In Germany he met his wife, and they now have three children: Germaine, 6; Dennis, 5; and Giselè, 2. The Philharmonia toured all over Europe and made three American tours.

Mr. Pataki discourages his children from studying music. Although he thinks music practice can develop concentration, he believes that as a profession it is underestimated and un-respected to a great degree.

He says, "People come up to me and ask, 'What do you do?' I answer, 'I play the viola.' 'But what do you do for a living?'"

Europeans get a greater exposure to classical music than North Americans, and this is in large part the reason why they also have a greater appreciation for it, Mr. Pataki believes.

An example he cites are Canadian radio broadcasts. He complains that the complete works, or the little known works of composers are seldom played. "Music on the radio is generally played by selection. Just to have a show popular, they play popular things repeatedly. They don't realize that an audience can become over-exposed to a piece. That by trying to develop interest in the music, they can get the opposite effect by overdoing it."

Here in Fredericton, Mr. Pataki thinks the audience is still at the stage where they have to be encouraged to attend concerts, they are not yet asking for them.

This may be because of a lack of exposure, particularly in schools. In German schools, students learn a few basic principles about particular instruments and attend concerts. "My wife is a great music appreciator, James Pataki says, "and she learned it in school."

Of the quartet Mr. Pataki says, "I wasn't unhappy before, but this is a much brighter medium. Since all the composers thought this was the highest medium they could write in, we should respect it accordingly."

"My parents were not going to have their son working hard for a living like they did. They tucked the fiddle under my chin when I was about nine."

ANDREW BENAC

Andrew Benac's parents were not particularly musical. They came from the Dalmatian Coast in Yugoslavia to a work camp in the Canadian west in the 20's. After their year in the work camp was finished they remained in Winnipeg, where Andrew Benac was born. While he was still young the family moved to Toronto, and Mr. Benac lived there until moving to Fredericton last fall to join the String Quartet.

Like the other resident musicians, Mr. Benac has theories on why classical music does not have more of a following in Canada.

"When times are hard, and the going is really tough because of lack of food, lack of material things, the one thing people look for is culture - good books, good music," he believes. "When times are good, people spend their money on restaurants, travel. They don't really need music."

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