



## IN MEMORIAM

Esther Chester, beloved wife of 50 years to Dr. Samuel Chester, died February 16, 2012 at 94 years of age. She was an honorary and active member of Chopin Club many years and president for six years. Esther was an active, accomplished pianist performing in duets, trios and quartets for the musicales. She possessed a great appreciation for the waltzes and nocturnes of Chopin.

Esther was a RISD alumna and prominent artist locally and nationally who won many awards for her artwork. Her painting of a violin, *Cadenza*, is in the RISD collection. Recently the Chesters donated much of her art work to the Warwick public schools, establishing the Esther Chester Art Center at Toll Gate High School. Curriculum Developer Anne Siesel and teachers created lesson plans making use of her prints. For example, art students studied her use of color and music students composed a piece, *The Color of Music*, based on her work. A black-and-white image of one painting is shown here, the harp nicely foreshadowing our Presidents Day concert. The colorful originals are on display at the foyer to the auditorium of Toll Gate High School. *Photo credit: Warwick Public Schools*

Contributions in her memory may be made to Chopin Club, 130 Wheeler Avenue, Unit 1, Cranston, RI, 02905 or Temple Am David, 40 Gardiner St., Warwick, RI, 02888.

## MUSICAL EVENTS AND MEMBER NEWS

The Resources page on our website <<http://chopinclub.org/resources.html>> contains information about upcoming concerts and other musical opportunities of interest our members. To have an event listed there, send information about it to [joan.lusk@gmail.com](mailto:joan.lusk@gmail.com). A new link has been added, to [operalovers-ri.com](http://operalovers-ri.com), a site with much information about vocal concerts, live, broadcast and streamed.

### Newsletter Notes:

If you have news of members, please notify your editor, preferably by e-mail or by letter—The next deadline is **September 1, 2012**.

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## Chopin Club Newsletter

March 2012

### GUEST ARTISTS FOR PRESIDENT'S DAY: SUNDAY, MAY 20

The guest artists for President's Day will be Susan Miron, harp; Burton Fine, violin and viola; Jorge Gardos, violin. The three musicians met at Barbara Speer's Providence music studio for a rehearsal of an upcoming concert. The same program will be presented on President's Day, Sunday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2 pm, at the Mary K. Hail Music Mansion in Providence. Ms. Speer, who will be playing the piano accompaniment for the Mozart, took the opportunity to interview the three performers about the works they will be performing in May:

- Domenico Scarlatti: *Sonatas in G minor and F minor* (transcribed for harp by Ms. Miron)
- Camille Saint-Saëns: *Fantasie for Violin and Harp, Op. 124*
- W.A. Mozart: *Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K. 364*.

Susan Miron discussed her involvement with the Scarlatti Sonatas. Originally composed for harpsichord, these 555 sonatas were brought to the fore by renowned harpsichord Ralph Kirkpatrick in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Since then, they have been adopted by every harpsichordist as well as legendary pianists like Vladimir Horowitz, as concert pieces. Ms. Miron chose enough sonatas to fill 2 CD's, a 3-year project that she describes as "fabulously fulfilling". She noted, in discussing the difficulties that the harp poses in transcribing virtuoso harpsichord writing, that she only chose those sonatas that lent themselves to transcription. She changed nothing in the original works.

Burton Fine started out life as a violinist, a student of the acclaimed violin pedagogue Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute. While summering in Galamian's music camp at Meadowmount, NY, he became interested in playing viola, picking up the instrument that lay on the piano for anyone to play, in string quartet and quintet performances. "There are those who play viola full-time, and then there are those of us who switch back and forth," he commented. In later years, he joined the Boston Symphony as a violinist, but just for three months. In 1964, he auditioned for the principal viola chair, succeeding Joseph DePasquale, who left for the Philadelphia Orchestra. He is married to harpist Susan Miron and they perform together in duo concerts. For thirty years they played in the Mélisande Trio with BSO flutist Fenwick Smith. The Saint-Saëns *Fantasie for Violin and Harp* is one of the best-known duos for that combination, a late work of ample grace, virtuosity and elegance for both instruments.

Jorge Gardos, who plays the solo violin part in the Mozart, described the *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra* as “one of the most beloved pieces in music.” The public is not often aware that Mozart also wrote string concertos for himself as well as the twenty-seven piano concertos. Among them are the five violin concertos and the *Sinfonia Concertante*. Mozart, who loved the viola, chose to play the viola part in the first performance. The violin concertos are early works, but the violin/viola concerto is mature, magnificent Mozart and an unarguable masterpiece from any period in music. What Mozart did that was extraordinary and revolutionary was to write for the viola as a solo instrument, combining the violin and viola as equal partners throughout the *Concertante*. No one in classical Vienna had done this before and, interestingly enough, few after Mozart adopted the genre. Mr. Gardos explained the unusual choice of *scordatura* tuning, the viola being tuned ½ step higher than normal, by saying that that Mozart felt it was necessary, in order to compete with the higher and more brilliant sound of the violin. To the question “why didn’t Mozart write the entire piece in D Major, one of the most popular keys for violin concertos?” Mr. Gardos stressed the importance of choice of key to Mozart. Or, as he put it, “The key is not transportable.” The key of E-flat Major had a special character for Mozart: majestic, heroic, powerful. We know, for example, that Beethoven also shared similar feelings for that same key.

*Barbara Speer, President*

## **NEW SCHOLARSHIP**

The Board is very pleased to announce that the Sarah and Harold Libby Scholarship Fund of the Chopin Club has been endowed in her parents' names by Patricia Libby of Boston.

Sarah Libby traveled from Omaha in 1923 to study at The New England Conservatory; she left to marry and raise a family in Providence. She remained dedicated to her piano and to the Chopin Club throughout her lifetime, and served as President of the Club for several years. Harold Libby, M.D., was always supportive of her interests and of the advancement of scholarship of all kinds.

The endowment will be managed by the Rhode Island Foundation. The Chopin Club will receive annual grants from the Sarah and Harold Libby Scholarship Fund to be distributed as scholarships to college or graduate students who demonstrate financial need, are pursuing music as a profession, and were active members of the Chopin Student Musicians while in high school or are now active members of the Chopin Club. The Libby Scholarship complements the existing scholarship funds of the Chopin Club which have been designated preferentially as merit scholarships for graduating high school senior members of the Student

Musicians who plan to major in music in college or conservatory. In the past, if funds were available after the merit scholarships were awarded, former members of the Chopin Student Musicians or current members of the Chopin Club were invited to apply for scholarship aid if they were in college or graduate school, pursuing music as a profession, and could demonstrate financial need. The Sarah and Harold Libby Scholarship Endowment will now ensure that funds will be available for the college and graduate music students. For more information please contact Susan Kelley, Chopin Scholarship chair, 401-421-4076.

## **ACTIONS OF THE BOARD**

Margaret D. Gidley is now our Membership Chair, and the Nominations Committee is comprised of Elizabeth Jane Berberian and Deborah Concannon. Some applications for associate membership are being kept in the cabinet at the back of the music room, to encourage listeners to join.

## **DUES AND DONATIONS**

Please also consider contributing to the Chopin Club over and above the dues, so that we can maintain our various programs and activities.

Donations to the Scholarship funds can be made at any time. Many thanks to all you donors for your support. The Scholarship Treasurer is **Elizabeth Reardon**, 56 Harwood Road, East Greenwich, RI 02818.

## **CHOPIN STUDENT MUSICIANS**

Counselor Karen Dingley reports that the Chopin Student Musicians will celebrate the graduation of seniors with a concert on May 6th, Sunday night, at 6:30 at the Music Mansion. All are welcome. The talent of the students is remarkable and inspiring.

## **CHOPIN YOUNG MUSICIANS**

As of our March meeting, we have twenty three members in the Chopin Young Musicians Club. Twenty of our young musicians are pianists, including three who perform on both the piano and the violin. We have enjoyed some variety among our musicians this season, including another violinist, a cellist, and a flutist. Members were encouraged to play pieces by American composers for our February meeting and ensemble pieces for our March meeting.

We are actively seeking a counselor for our group for the coming year. Faye Maris will be involved with the Chopin Student Musicians Club, and Brienne Brown will be accompanying her husband to Oxford for a sabbatical leave. Please contact either Faye Maris (401-245-1260 or faye\_maris@yahoo.com) or an officer of the senior Chopin Club if you are interested in the position or if you would like to suggest someone. Faye and Brienne can assure you that it is extremely rewarding to work with these musical young people.