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IDRS BANGKOK!

by Alan Greenlees

Bangkok IDRS ... into the heat we headed, nine hours from the Melbourne winter, along with quite a contingent from Australia.

It was, for us, a huge affair, with major performances galore, from the absolute cream of world Double Reeders. It began with drinks for oboists (I still just consider myself one) hosted by Cooper Wright at a riverside restaurant for about 20 people including a significant number from China and Hong Kong. This made for a very pleasant start, with meeting other international players.

On to Mahidol (pronounced, it seems, Mahidon), a large and elegant modern campus in a village just outside the city.

Two of us, Anne Gilby and I, had decided to try and live in Salaya village where we found the “Posh 41” accommodation pretty basic, so much so that one group came, looked and left. It was clean, with Thai paper-less toilets. It was reasonably handy to the event, (a two kilometre hike to the tram stop at the Uni), but handier than living in central Bangkok with the huge commute both ways.

After registration, we could peruse the huge array of performances and masterclasses which enabled a more concentrated dose of doublereederie than I had ever had before.

It was inspiring to hear such a range of brilliant performances, often with fascinating new music and including much Thai music



played by the local players. There was also a fascinating performance of classical Thai music on their traditional instrument, the Pi Nai, quite shawm-like.

The organisers had put together a terrific team of young students to help. One young man was especially helpful when I left my Baroque bassoon on one of the trams doing circuits around the Uni. The land of smiles was very much to the fore when he assisted to have it return safely.

I particularly enjoyed playing in the ensembles, the Baroque band, so ably led by the formidable Jeanine Krause, the Aussie pop-up band where the oboes outnumbered the bassoons 16 to four, Glenn Harman’s reading sessions and playing the 2nd Horn part for the Fireworks music in the combined ensemble.

I fancy I may have been the only bassoonist there playing French System this time on my old Buffet – we are contemporaries – it was put together in occupied France in 1940 and I was put together in Tasmania, also in 1940.

There was a great array in the Exhibitors’ Hall and it was great to meet again some of the manufacturers whom I have not seen for a while and whose machines I use. Special for me was also seeing my old friend John Armstrong.

John and I first met at the IDRS Conference in Melbourne in 2004 and he knew that I had played in the first opera in the Sydney Opera House in 1973 (2nd Oboe). Just as they were all packing up in Mahidol, John grabbed me, put a microphone on my chest and asked me what the opera that we had played was. The answer of course was Prokofiev’s “War and Peace” – an important recollection in light of the 50th anniversary of the Sydney Opera House.

What have I taken away from the conference? The stunning performances by many of the world’s best double reed players with much fascinating music; meeting so many like-minded people, especially some of the senior players like me; and participating in the ensembles with many players whom I have not seen for some time.

Also the ambience, the gorgeous concert hall, the canals full of carp with those huge lizards floating around, the tropical climate with lush vegetation all around, the long catwalks between the venues.

Finally, the well-known Thai food in the Uni restaurant, and the camaraderie that went with it. The organisers deserve the IDRS medal for the fantastic job they did!

Then, seven hours back to wintery Melbourne. ■

The Pedagogy



MUSICAL BEGINNINGS

THE OBOE MOBILE FOUNDATION'S KINDER OBOE PROGRAM

By Vimari Colón-León, Ph.D.

The Oboe Mobile Foundation

Established in 2009, under the guidance of the visionary Dr. Frances Colón, the Oboe Mobile Foundation functions as a nonprofit corporation and takes pride in being the leading provider of accessible educational programs centered around the oboe on the island of Puerto Rico.

Over the past 14 years, the Foundation has consistently set the standard for excellence in oboe performance through a diverse range of programs.

These include nationwide services provided through an oboe bank, annual workshops, master classes conducted in schools lacking oboe specialists, entrepreneurship courses, and innovative performances aimed at both educating and delighting the general public.



At the core of this multifaceted approach is the oboe bank, a pivotal initiative that embodies the organisation's core values.

This endeavor ensures the provision of high-quality instruments to developing Puerto Rican oboe players, granting them the opportunity to engage with their passion for the instrument.

By eliminating financial barriers to education and fostering a supportive ecosystem, the Oboe Mobile Foundation guarantees that talent is recognized and cultivated irrespective of economic constraints.

By utilising music education as a catalyst for social change, the Foundation empowers, transforms, and inspires every individual who comes into contact with the oboe.

Impact

The Oboe Mobile Foundation has been instrumental in nurturing a vibrant oboe community, making substantial contributions to the growth of proficient musicians.

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These individuals actively participate in the realm of oboe performance, making impactful contributions both locally in Puerto Rico and on a broader scale.

The wealth of networking and mentorship opportunities, generously provided to students without cost, has been pivotal in strategically positioning and preparing its beneficiaries for a variety of careers.

These encompass roles as educators, internationally acclaimed musicians, graduate scholars, and community-oriented players.



New Program

While the Foundation has achieved noteworthy milestones, it embraces the spirit of continuous innovation and growth. In this pursuit, the Oboe Mobile Foundation has recently introduced the Kinder Oboe Program, a groundbreaking initiative that transcends conventional boundaries.

Recognising the transformative power of early musical exposure, this project signifies the foundation's persevering dedication to not only deepen its roots in the community but also sow the seeds for a future generation of music enthusiasts.

As the Kinder Oboe Program takes root, the Oboe Mobile Foundation propels itself into a future where the resonance of the oboe becomes a cherished part of every child's musical journey.

Structure

The Kinder Oboe initiative delivers 30-minute presentations tailored to accommodate various stages of development. Classes are carefully designed to promote inclusivity,

inviting participants of diverse ages ranging from birth to eight years old, along with a family member.

By emphasising the significance of family involvement, this approach not only provides an opportunity for participants and their families to learn about the oboe but also envisions a more extensive positive influence.

The shared musical experience enhances family connections, nurtures a greater appreciation for the arts, and generates lasting memories for all involved. Recognizing the unique needs of early learners, Kinder Oboe incorporates age-appropriate singing games, interactive musical pieces, storytelling, and movement activities that cater to the developmental stages of children.

By infusing elements of play into the learning process and aligning the curriculum with the cognitive and motor skills of young participants, the initiative fosters a positive and enjoyable environment that provides a solid foundation for their musical journey.

The Kinder Oboe program also enriches the learning experience by incorporating elements of Puerto Rican culture as in each presentation children explore music that holds significance within the local cultural tapestry.

Cultural Relevance

Incorporating oboe pedagogy into the realm of children's culture is highly significant, as it presents relevant experiences that establish meaningful connections within a familiar context.

This approach not only acknowledges but also celebrates the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the participants, fostering an inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment.

When musical concepts are related to children's own cultural experiences, they become more engaged and better understand the intricacies of music.

The Oboe Mobile Foundation once again showcases a dedication that exceeds mere technical proficiency.

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Through its innovative methods, participants not only cultivate oboe skills but also forge profound connections to the arts, gaining an appreciation for the cultural richness woven into music.

This holistic perspective reinforces the Foundation's mission to craft a comprehensive and culturally resonant educational experience for young musicians.

Conclusion

The Oboe Mobile Foundation stands as an example of innovation and dedication in the realm of music education, particularly with its groundbreaking Kinder Oboe program.

With each note, the Foundation paves the way for a generation that not only carries the torch of musical excellence but also acts as custodians of cultural richness, ensuring a vibrant and harmonious future for the world of music.

Witnessing the Foundation's tireless efforts to instill a genuine love for music within the hearts of the next generation is a testament to its visionary approach. ■



Above: Elvis Terán, Geralis Colón and Dr Frances Colón

Opposite page: Dr. Frances Colón plays to an engaged audience of Kinder Oboe Program attendees.



Find out more about the Oboe Mobile Foundation at www.oboemobile.org