

# Mandolins Gather in Big Apple: Carlo Aonzo's 9th Manhattan Workshop

by Barbara Conrad



Photo: James Conrad

Delightful music, played with 34 other classical mandolin devotees, under the direction of our gifted maestro, Carlo Aonzo, in fabulous New York City, added up to a most satisfying workshop. The ninth annual Carlo Aonzo Manhattan Workshop (CAMW) ran from Friday to Sunday, March 27 to 29.

Looking around the 26th Street Chelsea Studios rehearsal studio, it was a pleasure to find a mix of all the mandolin voices participating in the workshop. More than a few of the participants were friends from CMSA conventions and other workshops and camps. The community of classical mandolin is a growing and welcoming one. Events of this kind, including Marilyn Mair's AMGuSS and Mike Marshall and David Grisman's Mandolin Symposium, as well as our own convention, are points of entry into this wonderful world.

Friday started with a class on exercises and technique. Carlo asked the group what they wanted to know more about and then worked with us on exercises to help with speed and accuracy and eliminate wasted motions. This led to a look at the questions that had been raised regarding shifting positions and the theory of duo style.

Friday afternoon we had a first reading of most of the music that we had all received in advance. The next two days continued the process of refining the six selections for our final concert Sunday evening. Linda Binder,

whom many of you will remember from the Montreal convention, ably relieved Carlo as conductor for portions of the rehearsals.

Workshop organizer Chaim Caron commented that the level of music played at the annual workshop has become more advanced over the nine years. While this year's Manhattan workshop was the first for a number of people, many attendees were veterans of previous workshops; at least one person had been to all of them. The workshop is designed to attract players who are happy to put in the work, both in preparation and over the three days, to do justice to the music. And there can be no question that the workshops are helping participants to improve their own level of playing.

This year's repertoire consisted of:

- Six pieces of music by the sixteenth-century composer Anthony Holborne
- A Telemann sonata in G in four movements
- Preludio & Fuga by Claudio Mandonico, a modern Italian composer, inspired by Bach
- J.S. Bach's double violin concerto in D minor

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- The world premiere of Broadway '79, a piece with a fittingly Big Apple flavor written especially for CAMW by Victor Kioulaphides, who participated in the workshop
- Another Italian piece, Da un balcone ungherese (From a Hungarian Balcony) by Bruzzone in which Carlo played the elaborate solo part, with backing of the workshop orchestra. This was a piece specially rehearsed as a showcase of both the Maestro's mastery and the orchestra's ability to play a supporting role.

As usual, parts were assigned ahead of time, and every mandolinist played a mixture of parts. Beyond the assigned parts, the Bach and Kioulaphides pieces offered opportunities for mandolinists to volunteer for solo parts.

Friday evening many of the group trooped together through the subways of New York to attend a marvelous concert at Bargemusic, a regular classical concert venue in Brooklyn ([www.bargemusic.org](http://www.bargemusic.org)). This was the last date of the North American tour by Carlo with pianist/harpsichordist Elena Buttiero to present music from their wonderful recent CD, *Il Mandolino Italiano nel Settecento*.

After a full day's work on our orchestra material, Saturday evening offered an opportunity for participants to savor Manhattan. Your correspondent took the opportunity to see *33 Variations*, a play starring Jane Fonda, which explored the enigma of Beethoven's fascination with an obscure melody. New York always offers a visitor something to see and hear that provides an inspiring backdrop to the experience of a Carlo Aonzo Manhattan Workshop.

Following a last day of work to hone our concert program, Sunday afternoon's public presentation was enjoyed by a large group of family and friends, impressed as always by the results after only three days of working together. Carlo's solo piece, supported by all participants in the workshop, was a new innovation and a perfect coda to a successful workshop. Afterwards, a group dinner at a nearby Spanish restaurant, with paella and sangria, completed the weekend.

This workshop brought together participants from all over North America and from all levels, including professional musicians. The gathering even included our CMSA president and two directors. A little "company" business was done, taking advantage of the opportunity to promote our organization to a captive, and receptive, audience. The future of our music and our instrument is very much on the minds of all who attend this and similar workshops that form so important a part of the health of our passion.

And speaking of the future, CAMW 2010 will run March 19 to 21. At the time of writing, Carlo and Chaim have chosen the music, which no doubt includes something enjoyable by Bach. Registration will be open by the time you read this, and no doubt many of this year's class have already signed up and are starting to prepare their music. The earlier you sign up for this wonderful experience, the sooner you can start practicing!

You can get more details at [www.aonzo.com](http://www.aonzo.com), or email Chaim at [ccaron@earthlink.net](mailto:ccaron@earthlink.net).



Carlo Aonzo with duet partner Elena Buttiero  
Photo: courtesy of Carol Bloom