

## Musical Treasure Chest #6

One of the unexpected pleasures of being a performer is the friendships you form with audience members over the years. During my nearly forty years (yikes!) as a professional musician, there has been a cadre of concert-goers that have been “regulars,” fellow music lovers that are just on the other side of the stage. You learn to look for them, to see if they are responding to the music, if they are involved in the performance. If you are lucky, they come to introduce themselves at some point, and you find a person who shares your musical passion. I have met wonderful people over my life, and I want to share with you a few very special ones and the music we bonded over.

Early on, when I first returned to the area after college, I co-founded with several other musicians a string ensemble called the BRANT Quintet. We played throughout the Capital Region and up at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls. We had a fairly nice following for a new group, and we were young and tireless, willing to pursue any opportunity. I look back quite nostalgically on those days—we played some wonderful repertory and had some great adventures. The bass player in the group, David Scott Allen, was a wonderful cook and loved hosting parties. After one of our performances he threw a party and invited some of the audience who had stayed after the concert to talk with us. I ended up speaking with two of them at length at the party. One person was Bob Scher and the other Susan Thompson. From that night on they have both been friends and important people in my musical circle.

**Bob Scher**, and many of you probably know him, is a fixture at concerts (not just mine) throughout the northeast. He loves music, listens intently (he even will wait to eat until after the concert so he completely focused on the performance), and has great musical ears. His passion for music covers all genres and periods. You can usually find Bob near the front row of the hall, extremely focused. After the concert he will give a great analysis of what he heard. From this first night I met Bob all those years ago, he has been a great friend. He served on the MofM board

for several years and has been a great supporter. We have wonderful conversations, and I always appreciate his comments. When Bob is not at one of our concerts, I miss him. For his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday a wonderful concert was planned by his first (late) wife Audrey (he has another equally musical second wife Emalie), and she asked me to play the **Grieg 3<sup>rd</sup> violin sonata**. I was thrilled and honored to be asked, it was part of a long program that included other chamber music, featuring pianist Findlay Cockrell. The party was a great success, Bob was truly surprised and loved it. So I share with you the Grieg, which is not all that well-known, but it's a wonderful piece. A stormy first movement, with lyrical interjections, is followed by a very romantic and Norwegian, song-like second movement with scherzo-like interruptions, and a mysterious, turbulent final movement that has rays of melodic gentleness, and a virtuosic coda. This exciting performance is by violinist Julia Fischer and pianist Milana Chernyavska <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdYP790fAzM>

I mentioned the other person I met at that party, **Susan Thompson**. Like Bob, she is an avid concert-goer, you can find her at the Albany Symphony, Glimmerglass Opera and any chamber music concert. She too loves music and values the artists tremendously. In normal times when Glimmerglass Opera is on, she will always come find me during intermission and talk about the singers and the production. It's a delight to hear what she has to say, and I look forward to seeing her. She is also fantastic about calling or writing me after MofM performances and sharing her thoughts and her appreciation. Her words mean a lot, you cannot perform music in a vacuum and knowing that someone enjoys it so much matters. One of the big pieces BRANT Quintet performed during our first season was **Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night***. I talked with Susan and her husband Al after the performance of it at Hyde Hall. They were so enthusiastic and positive; I still remember glowing from the conversation. *Transfigured Night* is truly one of my favorite pieces of chamber music—it is absolutely gripping from the opening descending bass line to the luminescence of the high violin writing. Gorgeously crafted, unfolding a powerful musical narrative and stunningly beautiful, if you don't know this piece you are missing out on an incredible experience. The first performance I heard of it was a broadcast with the Emerson String Quartet (and guests), I was transfixed. Here is one of the Emerson String Quartets final performances with Paul Neubauer, viola 2, and Colin Carr,

cello. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3x8siY2yKw>

I have another special “audience” member I want to mention this week: **Louise Marshall**. I met Louise first in a class setting. For many years I have taught music seminars for HILL in Delmar. I will probably tell you more about these classes in later Musical Treasure Chests, as they are one of my favorite musical sidelines. Louise took several of my courses back in the early 2000s. An elegant and sophisticated woman, she would often come and speak with me after class. Her comments were relevant, thought-provoking and intelligent. She would come to my concerts as well. We became friends, and would occasionally have lunch. She invited Musicians of Ma’alwyck to perform at Beverwyck, a gesture we greatly appreciated. As I got to know her, she told me of her fascinating life working as one of the first female meteorologists on WRGB and later living in Spain. I lost touch with her over the last few years, she wasn’t able to attend concerts or classes any more. This week I read with great sadness that she recently passed away. One of the last classes she took of mine was on **Robert Schumann**. One of the pieces I introduced her to was his **Violin Concerto**. She particularly liked it, I do too. One of my favorite sections is the bridge from the second movement to the jaunty polonaise finale, slightly past 19 minutes. Here is a performance with Frank Peter Zimmerman. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLod6Ra6f08>