

# KIDS KORNER

## On Vacation with Vivaldi: An Exploratory Workshop for Kids

BY HILARY FIELD

Kids ages seven to 11 are in for a special treat this spring break, with a chance to travel to 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice, complete with fencing, dancing, music, games, period costumes, and art projects. Shulamit Kleinerman, teacher, musician, dancer, and historian, has a passion for bringing the arts to children, with interactive activities that give them an up close and personal visit to the world surrounding the culture of earlier times. From April 10-14, the Seattle schools vacation week, she will lead an exploratory workshop called "On Vacation with Vivaldi." Presented by the Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and featuring several special guests, this program will transform the Phinney Neighborhood Center to the courtly baroque era, breathing life into music and history that might otherwise feel inaccessible. Participants can also attend the SBO "Virtuosic Vivaldi" concert on April 21-23 for free, and are invited on a backstage tour of Benaroya Hall.

Kleinerman, who plays Renaissance violin and dances with Seattle Early Dance, also teaches pre-school, and is the librarian and pre-concert lecturer for the Seattle Baroque Orchestra. She enjoys integrating her academic and artistic skills with her love for learning and for teaching, opening up a world of discovery for all ages. "I really enjoy giving the pre-concert lectures for Seattle Baroque Orchestra because it's a chance to keep learning, both in the sense of discovering or rediscovering background facts about the music and in the sense of deepening my understanding and curiosity" says Shulamit. "One of the reasons that I decided not to go into academic musicology after college was that I wanted to be able to write and speak to a wider community than the university-based one." When she gives pre-concert lectures, she is interested in talking about the history and culture behind the music, especially, as she says, "how the music articulates cultural attitudes and experiences." Here are excerpts from an interview about her teaching programs, and what inspired her to bring the world of classical music to a level that is engaging and loved by children.

*Please describe your cultural and arts enrichment pre-school program.*

In addition to my regular daily shift with the kids, I come in once a month with some kind of enrichment project. The first one I ever did was a costume workshop because the kids were really interested in a picture book I was reading them about a family of mice who put on an at-home production of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. We danced around to parts of the opera and had a great time. This year I've been bringing in some of the Renaissance living-history people in costume, so the kids are hearing and trying out different instruments and learning a small repertoire of dances and songs. The other half of the projects are centered around multicultural experiences; I try to focus on traditions that are representative of this area, so we've done a lot of art and stories from Northwest Coast Native traditions, and this year's four-year-olds are still begging to do a Japanese tea ceremony project again—they remember it from when they were three. I also try to include holidays that some of the kids celebrate at home but that are less visible in mainstream culture—Persian New Year for a girl with a grandfather from Iran, Chinese New Year for a family that's adopting a Chinese baby.

*What inspired you to bring history and performing arts to children?*

For my early elementary years I went to a generally underprivileged school that had some extra arts enrichment sent in by the state (Massachusetts)—we had residencies from illustrators, musicians, storytellers. In the small town where I lived, it made a huge impression on me. Here in Seattle there is so much more available for everyone to experience, but I think that really working closely with artists in person is an opportunity that many kids don't get.

I want to let kids meet some of these people so that then they can go to their shows and understand the process and the human beings behind the performances.

*Have you offered this or similar workshops for children in the past?*

Last spring I did a 3-class workshop on the *Magic Flute* for 5-7 year olds. It grew out of the

pre-schoolers' fascination with that opera—they were still pretending to be the Queen of the Night in their playtime several months later. One of the kids, from a musical family, was hooked before I did the project—her favorite movie, at age 5, was the Ingmar Bergman film. Then I heard of another five-year-old who was so obsessed with the opera that she was asking to learn German. So I offered a class. We danced, made curly white wigs, made model theater sets, met a flute player and a dancer and a puppeteer, and mostly just enjoyed being interested in something together. I scheduled it to precede the Northwest Puppet Center's *Magic Flute* production, so the kids would be able to attend and feel like "insiders."

*How do these workshops enrich a child's musical experiences in school, at home, and as concert attendees?*

The mom of one of the kids in that workshop told me afterwards that her son had been withdrawn since starting kindergarten, and that after the workshop he had opened up again, that he was singing around the house. This is the most inspiring & rewarding thing I could hear back about what I do with the kids. It's not quantifiable—funders tend to want numbers and to see very tangible things, but I think the really powerful work that we do as teachers is not necessarily flashy and easily seen; it's about just making space to quietly honor the kids' interest and curiosity, and then letting them take it where they will.

Another parent also said her five-year-old daughter came home singing, and when I ran into the girl at the puppet opera performance during intermission, she was on the edge of her seat, just totally thrilled. She told me, "I'm waiting for the Queen of the Night aria in Act 2!" This wasn't a production for children; it was two hours long and sung in German. But I find again & again that children are totally capable of engaging with adult art if the context in which it's presented doesn't alienate them (which, alas, much of the performing arts does)—if they're offered an active experience of it for themselves.

*What can children and families do at home to continue these enriching experiences?*

I think the main thing is to get away from being only passive consumers of the arts—doing something actively, whether it's theater

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or dance or music or something else, regardless of whether it's ever going to be a professional skill—just finding something to love doing. To be committed to making something beautiful oneself, rather than just buying things (CDs, concert tickets), seems to me still a pretty special thing in our society. And I don't think it's enough for parents to make their kids do it; I love to see children who are growing up around adults who are learning or practicing the arts.

And then the other part has to do with finding out more about the background—what else was going on in the world where this art form happened.

*What is special about Vivaldi's music and 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice that will appeal to children?*

The music has such colorful stuff going on in it—it's easy to feel like it's telling stories, and it has such a great engaging energy. And it's fun to think of Vivaldi's life, working at the girls' orphanage in Venice where the children were trained in music. I've never been to Venice but I'm fascinated by the canals and I hope the kids will be too. I want to do some things with maps and those great huge Canaletto paintings. Hopefully we'll make up some stories to set there.

For more information on the workshop "On Vacation with Vivaldi", please contact (206) 550-2565 or shulamitk@yahoo.com.

*(Hilary Field, classical guitarist, recording artist, and teacher, may be contacted at (206) 686-2201 or at: hilary@mulberrybushmusic.com)*

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Stell, Lissa Schneckenburger, and Corey Dimario are warm and energetic and feature a multitude of diverse styles including Contra, Folk, Celtic, Argentine Tango, Ragtime, Jazz and Bluegrass.

No security clearances are required to enjoy KGB from Seattle. Julie King, Claude Ginsburg and Dave Bartley create subversive music, lulling the unwary with traditional contra dance tunes, then jumping into Balkan modalities, tango riffs and bluesy jigs with fiddle, mandolin, guitar and piano. From Alaska to Atlanta, they've created memorable evenings from the first medley to the last waltz. Seth Tepfer, aka "Atlanta's Dance Magician," will be calling dances for adults and children. Known for his infectious energy, his short walk-thrus, Seth's warm enthusiasm is contagious and gets everyone moving, smiling and having a great time.

Whether it's squares, contras or other folk dances, you can be certain that all involved will amble away happy and eager to dance more! Clear directions and love of the dance will have everyone grinning as they effortlessly move with the music. From Portland, caller Erik Weberg brings dances that both feel good and are fun. Although he enjoys complex figures, complexity does not necessarily translate into dancing pleasure. Flow, interesting figures and connection with the music are what make dancing sublime. Erik strives to teach efficiently and clearly with a playful approach and a good sense of community cooperation. Eugene's own Vicki Ayers, dance teacher extraordinaire, will be with available on Saturday to share her love of Argentine Tango. Vicki's clear concise teaching will make Tango accessible to all those who have been wondering what Tango's all about.

Also on the docket for the weekend are a Sunday morning concert and big dance party finale. Polish up those shoes and check out [www.efn.org/~efs/cascadecontras](http://www.efn.org/~efs/cascadecontras)

*Janet Humphrey lives in Richland, WA and may be contacted at [humphrey@musician.org](mailto:humphrey@musician.org). She is half of the song writing duo "Humphrey and Hartman" and performs at festivals across the Northwest and Canada. For more information visit her on the web:*

*[www.humphreyandhartman.com](http://www.humphreyandhartman.com).*

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