

# The Remarkable Mission of Nina Stern: Workshops in Austin Texas

On May 4, 2008 the recorder community of Austin had the rare pleasure to meet one of the most outstanding recorder educators, Nina Stern, and the equally remarkable percussionist, Mauricio Molina. They presented a recorder workshop, sponsored by the Austin chapter of the American Recorder Society, recorder and percussion workshops at Cedar Creek Elementary and Forest Trail Elementary in the Eanes ISD, and an evening concert sponsored by Texas Early Music Project. With the support of her school, Cedar Creek Elementary, Heidi Kaim, a young music teacher, helped bring this team to Austin, who with their professionalism, enthusiasm, and charm impressed teachers and children alike.

*Recorders without Borders* is the motto under which Nina depicts simple tunes from around the world. The tunes only employ three pitches (B, A, & G) thus teaching the child only the left



hand. The trick is that the three notes can vary greatly in rhythm and style, giving the tunes completely different characters. Her newly published book has Andean, Caribbean, Native American, Celtic, Hungarian, Greek, even Armenian tunes, and more. Embellishment and enrichment of these basic notes comes by way of

adding percussion. In her publication, Nina wrote all tunes and rhythmic accompaniments based on her research on traditional rhythms. She simplified these rhythms for the children where she thought them too complicated. Her book *Recorders without Borders*, published by Sweet Pipes Inc., is an inexpensive tool for any elementary music teacher.

During the workshops here in Austin, Mauricio brought charm and a solid ground to Renaissance Pavans and the many ancient and generally not well known tunes from around the world. He employed interesting drums and bells of various sizes, demonstrated them so that children as well as adults could follow quickly in the embellishment of the melodies.

## An Elementary Teacher's View

Nina Stern & Mauricio Molina were very well received at my school. They





presented three workshops to my fourth grade students as well as a beautiful and exciting concert for the entire Cedar Creek student body. In the workshops, Nina and Mauricio taught Samba Tune from *Recorders without Borders*, a Sweet Pipes publication by Nina Stern. Nina's compositions have musical integrity and genuinely reflect the character of the culture in their titles. During the workshops, my students felt comfortable and made quick music-making strides under Nina and Mauricio's teaching style; a method very similar to the Orff curriculum I use in my classroom. Nina started the lessons by teaching the recorder part by rote. She moved quickly and the excited children did not have time for distractions. Once the students sounded confident on the recorder part, Mauricio taught the drum and small percussion parts, also by rote. Nina & Mauricio were very good at determining which children could handle the harder parts and which needed to be on an easier part. Soon, the parts were combined and an entire class of ten-year-olds was playing a lively Samba

piece with complicated rhythms and a memorable melody.

*Heidi Kaim  
Cedar Creek Elementary*

#### A Music Publisher's View

Nina Stern and Mauricio Molina did an outstanding job working with the students at Cedar Creek Elementary School on May 5th. It was a special treat for me to observe Nina's workshop, who had her new publication just released by Sweet Pipes, *Recorders without Borders*. The students responded quickly to the directions of Nina and Mauricio with the result being an exciting performance of soprano recorders accompanied by hand percussion. In addition to being a most gifted and talented recorder player, Nina is also an excellent teacher. It was a special time for all those present to observe Nina share her unique gift of music with elementary students. The initial response in the marketplace to *Recorders without Borders* has been extremely good, to the point that Nina is currently working on a sequel to the

book that will include a play-a-long CD. Sweet Pipes plans to release the new package by Nina Stern this fall.

In addition to the workshops Nina and Mauricio presented at the schools, they each also conducted a workshop, she on recorder and he on percussion, for the Austin Chapter of the American Recorder Society.

*Bob Bergin  
Sweet Pipes, Inc.*

#### An ARS Workshop Review

On Sunday, May 4, the Austin chapter of the ARS had the pleasure of two back-to-back workshops with Nina Stern (recorder) and Mauricio Molina (percussion). They were in town to do some work in the schools with their Flutes and Drums around the World program, and offered to share it with us as well.

The first session was devoted to percussion for Renaissance dance music, particularly Pavans. Mauricio showed us how to hold and use a frame drum, and how to play some of the basic patterns that are found in Arbeau, as well as some more elaborate patterns and subdivisions. He has used period texts and illustrations to reconstruct Renaissance drum techniques – quite different from the more familiar Middle Eastern patterns. There were enough drums for all 23 of us to try; then some of us played recorders while others provided the percussion, as we looked at several sixteenth century Pavans.

In the second session, Nina and Mauricio introduced us to some rhythmically interesting music from around the world, including a Brazilian samba, an Egyptian piece, a Serbian dance in 9/8 meter (stressed 2-3-2-2), and a Greek Kalamatiano dance in 7/8, which one of our members danced for us as we played. Again some played



recorders and some percussion, and Mauricio was very creative in suggesting rhythmic patterns to the drummers. We all came away much enlightened about percussion technique, and with these catchy melodies and beats in our heads.

The following night Nina and Mauricio presented a concert of world music, in which both displayed their considerable virtuosity and control of their instruments. Nina used at least five sizes of recorder, as well as a chalumeau (ancestor of the clarinet). They performed medieval dance pieces, and music from the Balkans and the Middle East, with enthusiasm and great dexterity. Toes were tapping in the audience! The Austin chapter was delighted with their visit, and encourages other chapters to invite these talented musicians to lead workshops.

*Kate Bracher  
Cynthia Shelmerdine*

With the Concert on Monday night May 5, the team concluded their tour to Austin. We, the chapter members and others, who attended, were absolutely charmed by the tunes and rhythms that swirled around our ears in rapid succession. We owe thanks to Danny Johnson from the Early Music Project in Austin, and James Brown, music director at First Presbyterian Church, who arranged for the concert to be presented at the Mesa location. We hope that Nina and Mauricio will someday be back to Austin so that many more schools can musically benefit from their expertise. Incidentally, the Austin Independent School District organizes a Recorder Fest every year in May, and it would be wonderful if we could persuade a few top people to get a team like Nina and Mauricio to lead it.

*Compiled by Marianne Weiss-Kim*

## Scholarship Committee

The scholarship Program is now in operation. Recently, due mostly to individual's diverse schedules and travels, a subcommittee was formed of LaVerne Sargent, Sue Dura, and Jan Jackson to evaluate scholarship applications. Criteria and an application process was developed and advertised. Information about the recipient will be published in the next ARTA*facts* issue.

The committee is now pursuing donations from recorder related businesses in addition to individuals.

We must also find the means to disperse sound files and application materials in an efficient manner to all committee members whether Macintosh or Windows users.



*Jan Jackson  
Scholarship Committee Chair*

## Scholarship Fund Donations

Many thanks to the generous member donors to the Scholarship Fund who made this first year of the awards possible!

Barbara Duey  
Clea Galhano  
Sue Groskreutz  
Laura Hagen  
James Heup  
Jan Jackson  
Carolyn Peskin  
Susan Roessel  
Patsy Rogers  
LaVerne Sargent  
Henry Seale  
Rose Marie Terada  
Marianne Weiss-Kim

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