



INTRODUCING BERLIN'S SECRET CONCERT LIFE

Norman Lebrecht On June 2, 2019

From our diarist Anthea Kreston: Berlin is chock
of venues. And those venues are crammed

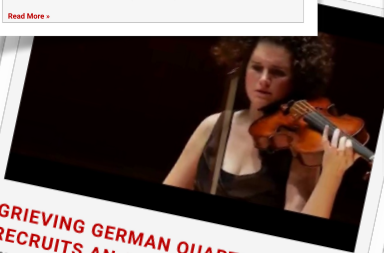


WHO SAYS CLASSICAL MUSICIANS HAVE TO BE SO SERIOUS?

Norman Lebrecht On June 10, 2016

Anthea Kreston (pictured right), American violinist in the Berlin-based
Artemis Quartet, has come up against an age-old misconception – that

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GRIEVING GERMAN QUARTET RECRUITS AN AMERICAN VIOLINIST

Norman Lebrecht On January 18, 2016

Six months after the tragic death of violinist Friedemann
Weigle, the outstanding Artemis Quartet has picked an
American violinist. Anthea

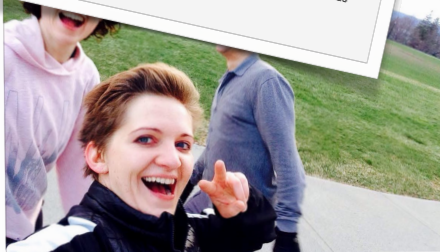


QUARTET JOY: ANTHEA'S STOLEN VIOLIN IS RETURNED

Norman Lebrecht On November 5, 2016

In place of her weekly diary, Anthea Kreston of the Artemis Quartet has
asked us to publish her translation of

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MY QUARTET HITS AIRPORT CELLO BLOCKADE

Norman Lebrecht On April 15, 2016

From our weekend diarist, Anthea Kreston of the Artemis Quartet: We
all been reading the stories...

[Re](#)



ON US TOUR, I GET TO STAY WITH MY SLIPPED DISC READERS

Norman Lebrecht On April 8, 2018

From our diarist, Anthea Kreston: Two concerts down, nine to go in 11 days
on this US tour. We started

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200 WEEKS

DRAMA, ADVENTURE AND PASSION - AN AMERICAN VIOLINIST'S
YEARS INSIDE THE ARTEMIS QUARTET, AN ELITE GERMAN STRING
QUARTET

200 WEEKS

ANTHEA KRESTON

****SNEAK PEEK****

PROLOGUE

What follows in these pages is a journey of a lifetime, preserved in a series of weekly blogs published on Slipped Disc, Norman Lebrecht's London-based website. In February 8 of 2016, with my violin, two small children, and partner in tow, I left rural Oregon and landed in Berlin, Germany, the capital of classical music. Berlin is bursting at the seams with music, boasting seven major professional orchestras and three opera houses, and is home to Germany's most famous string quartet, the Artemis String Quartet. A chance to join a group like this comes once in a lifetime—that is, if you're lucky and obsessively hard-working. In fact, after being invited to come to Berlin to audition (the Artemis Quartet had 240 applicants), I beat out the last remaining eight finalists to land one of the most coveted jobs in the music industry.

A position as a violinist with the Artemis Quartet was a fairytale come true. And the invitation to chronicle my journey on Slipped Disc was the first time the public would have an inside look at an elite quartet. Joining the quartet was an honor as well as a heavy responsibility—to my new colleagues, to the loyal audiences, to myself, and most of all, to my family.

From the outside, the Artemis Quarter is a sleek, gorgeous, super-powered foursome who delve with passion and

intellectual precision into the foundations of classical music, playing to super-fans in sold-out crowds from New York to Tokyo and awarded every conceivable international accolade.

Being inside one of these secretive elite ensembles is a rarity, and privacy is paramount. The shield between performer and audience is protected by not only the performers themselves but also the buffering group which surrounds and supports these four musicians: managers (during my time with Artemis, we had seven managers in seven countries), publicists, and musical colleagues. Even our dress rehearsals in the concert halls were private—no one was allowed to observe us at work, not even the organizers who had paid so dearly for the performances (a top-level quartet makes a healthy 6- figures per concert).

When I was accepted into the quartet on January 7, 2016, I began a journey that no other American violinist had ever taken. I was a member of an elite European String Quartet—the protectors and vanguards of hundreds of years of history through sound—living representations of the culture of the past and present.

The players in this story will be:

Norman Lebrecht: My relationship with author and cultural commentator Norman Lebrecht became increasingly important as my time in Germany continued. His website, Slipped Disc, is the most-read classical music website on the planet, and through his encouragement, I discovered a

new love of writing. He was the only person close to me who knew everything about my daily life, and he became a dear friend, mentor, and father figure. On several occasions, after submitting an entry that may have revealed too much about a difficult situation I was in, he would reach out to see if I was OK. He would ask if I needed to talk, and he would protect me from publishing the posts that would show too much of myself.

Fans of the column would travel for hours to meet me after concerts around the world, and readers began to form a new network of friends, some of whom would later welcome me into their homes as a guest while on tour—a needed change from the anonymous hotels and restaurants which became my new normal.

Jason Duckles: Jason is my partner, best friend, father of our two daughters, and an outstanding cellist. Jason and I met in the cafeteria of a summer music camp in our 20s and have been together ever since. He believes in me more than anyone else—perhaps more than he should. He gave up his performance career and university position to move to Berlin, effectively becoming a single father in a foreign country with two weeks' notice. His humor, advice, talent as a dad, and inherent goodness made it possible for me to give every ounce of myself to this opportunity.

The Trolls: The comments section of Slipped Disc is a fertile and engaging place to spend some time. Whoever thinks that classical music is staid and civilized need only to take a gander at the sharp elbows swinging below posts. These

Slipped Disc fans became friends and passionate supporters, and with their invigorating debates, reassured me that classical music is alive and kicking.

And, without further ado, the members of the Artemis Quartet:

Vineta Sareika: Latvian superstar first violinist of the Artemis Quartet, Vinny has the technique of an Olympic athlete, a cool, eastern-European demeanor, and a velvet French accent due to her musical training in Paris. Standing at 6 feet tall, with a blond pixie cut and a sleek fashion sense, she lays down razor-perfect performances night after night, with a silken tone and stage presence of a Greek goddess. The primarius of a quartet has an enormous musical responsibility and has to maintain nerves of steel in the face of intense concert and publicity pressure, and she does just that.

Gregor Sigl: With flowing dark hair, full beard, and a figure which can't hide his love of wurst and beer, Bavarian violist Grischa cuts an imposing figure on stage. With his suit jacket cut in a vintage style, audiences frequently comment that he very closely resembles the 19th-century romantic German composer and violist Brahms. A gregarious sense of humor and a keen eye for details, he was never far from his phone, dealing with all manner of quartet business from travel to last-minute emergencies.

Eckart Runge: Cellist and child of a German diplomat, Ecki grew up moving post to post in a variety of exotic locations.

With ice-blue eyes, a million-dollar smile, and the ability to melt hearts with his playing, he was the natural choice for the publicity duties of Quartet. Radio, TV, and newspaper interviews were handled by him with a cool suavité, and his genuine and warm relations with all presenters and fans created a lovely social aspect to tours and concerts.

And so we begin 200 Weeks: the journey from rural Oregon to Berlin and back again. A travel adventure, a road to self-discovery, the search for balance between career and family... an American in Germany.

CHAPTER 1

ALL BEFORE

INTERNATIONAL QUARTET MOURNS DEATH OF VIOLA,
AGED 53

By Norman Lebrecht

July 7, 2015

Friedemann Weigle, viola player of the Artemis Quartet and professor at the Hanns Eisler School of Music, Berlin, died [over] the weekend after a long illness.

A founding member of the Petersen Quartet, he joined the Artemis in 2007. Our condolences to family and colleagues.

The Quartet has issued this statement:

For 30 years, Friedemann Weigle was one of the most important figures of the international string quartet scene and a passionate, devoted mentor. He was a founding member of the Petersen Quartet, of which he was the violist for 20 years. Friedemann Weigle had contributed to the distinctive sound and “beat” of the Artemis Quartet since 2007.

The Artemis Quartet has asked for time to mourn, reflect, and regroup.

We will always remember the violist standing on the rightmost side of the stage, his feet firmly planted on the ground and his dark hair flowing with the music. Above all, the sound of his viola—so special and so moving— will remain with us for a very long time to come.



GRIEVING ARTEMIS QUARTET ISSUE BIPOLAR APPEAL

By Norman Lebrecht

July 15, 2015

In a statement from the Artemis Quartet: Dear Friends,

On Friday, July 24, we will say the last goodbye to our dear colleague Friedemann Weigle. The funeral ceremony will be held at the SchlosskircheBerlin-Buch at 2 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate a donation for the Friedemann-Weigle-Programm, as part of the Stiftung Deutsche Depressionshilfe, to raise and increase awareness about young musicians suffering from bipolar depression.



GRIEVING ARTEMIS QUARTET ISSUE BIPOLAR APPEAL

Norman Lebrecht On July 15, 2015

Dear Friends, On Friday, July 24th we will say the last goodbye to our dear colleague Friedemann Weigle. The funeral

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TOP QUARTET BEGINS THE SEARCH FOR A NEW VIOLA PLAYER

By Norman Lebrecht

September 11, 2015

After two months of mourning for Friedemann Weigle, the foremost German string quartet has put out an audition notice for a new partner. Apply to the address below.

After a period of contemplation and mourning after the loss of our violist Friedemann Weigle, we would now like to look ahead and fill the missing position in the group.

Since Gregor Sigl is both a violinist and violist, we have decided to keep our options open by accepting applications for both the viola and second violin positions.

In addition to a detailed resume, please send us a video (.mp4) with chamber music (string trio to string sextet).

Impresariat Simmenauer Artemis Quartett Kurfürstendamm
211 D-10719 Berlin



GRIEVING GERMAN QUARTET RECRUITS AN AMERICAN VIOLINIST

By Norman Lebrecht

January 18, 2016

Six months after the tragic death of violist Friedemann Weigle, the outstanding Artemis Quartet has picked an American violinist, Anthea Kreston, to replace him. Anthea will play second violin while Gregor Sigl moves from violin to viola.

Official bio and quotes:

Anthea Kreston, born in Chicago, studied with Felix Galimir and Ida Kavafian at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, as well as chamber music with the Vermeer Quartet and Emerson String Quartet. Anthea Kreston was a member of the Avalon Quartet—with whom she won the ARD Competition in 2000—for seven years. In 1999, she founded the Amelia Piano Trio. She has given many concerts in the United States and Europe with both ensembles.

Cellist Eckart Runge and Anthea Kreston have known each other for 20 years. They met, as members of different ensembles, at a masterclass given by the Juilliard String Quartet.

Eckart Runge: “Already then, Anthea struck me as an extraordinarily brilliant musician and someone who has a big personality. She applied for the available position, traveled to the audition from the West Coast [of the United States], and impressed us with her warm-heartedness, boundless energy, and—above all—her fantastic qualities as a musician and violinist. All three of us immediately felt that,

in her own way, Anthea reflects the soul of Friedemann and will bring new energy to our quartet.”

Anthea Kreston: “It is with a full heart that I join the Artemis Quartet, my favorite quartet since we were all students together at the Juilliard Quartet Seminar 20 years ago. To share a life with these tremendous souls and musicians will be the fulfillment of a dream I never anticipated could be realized.”

The Artemis Quartet’s first European Tour in its new formation starts on March 12 in Holland.



FIRST PIC OF NEW ARTEMIS QUARTET

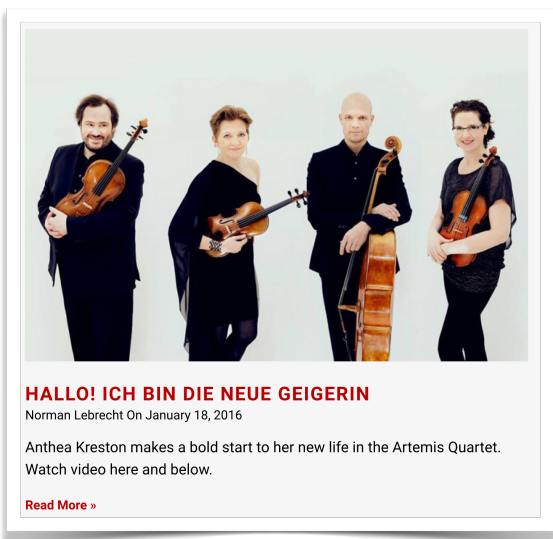
By Norman Lebrecht

January 18, 2016

Anthea Kreston, the American second violin, has just posted that she has moved to Berlin.

An hour after the job was announced, that’s keen.

Here’s the first lineup pic of one of Europe’s elite formations. In re-



formation.

THEY DIDN'T PLAY IT. THEY *WERE* IT.

January 24, 2016

Beginning a weekend diary by Anthea Kreston, new second violinist of the Artemis Quartet.

Part 1: Packing up my life. But first, a detour to a different time to set the stage for what's to come.

May 20, 1995

Dear Diary,

Last night, a truly spectacular thing happened. I am here at Juilliard with my string quartet as a participant in the Juilliard Advanced Quartet Seminar, and last night was the final concert. Quartets from around the world are here—truly wonderful, exceptional ones—to work intensely, one-on-one with the Juilliard quartet. I recently graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music, the pinnacle of music training, and am in Cleveland with the Avalon Quartet. We have been together for a year, working with Donald Weilerstein and Peter Salaff of the Cleveland Quartet.

As a musician, my goal is always to find that intangible quality—I am not sure what to call it... Time Travel? Full Heart Experience? Where time stands still, and all that exists is the music and my heart. A real out-of-body experience.

I have been able to enter “the Zone” for years, and I am addicted! Melting into a timeless swirl where every nerve ending is sharpened to a point, my vision focused, my hearing as keen as if I was a child and had first placed that enormous conch shell against my ear, to hear a new, magical and wonderful world. But it has only ever happened when I am playing by myself. To enter the Zone with others—is that even possible?

Last night was the final concert. After we played, I went to hear the rest of the quartets play. There is a quartet here from Germany called the Artemis Quartet. They played Schubert G Major.

Wait, let me rephrase. They didn’t play it—they WERE it.

And somehow, it happened. The Artemis Quartet took me with them without even realizing it. I felt like the world stopped and my heart opened, and I traveled with them to this earth-shattering wonderland. Time stood still. When it was over, I reached up and felt my face wet with tears.

I had entered the Zone with strangers. I was addicted... to the Artemis Quartet.

Fast forward 20 years. An entire career later, a partner of 18 years, children—you know, a full life. I am now sitting in the living room of my beautiful old home in rural Oregon, surrounded by a loving community and friends.

I am in the midst of packing. We are all moving together— Jason, two children (ages 4 and 6), and I are heading to Berlin because I am the new second violinist of the Artemis Quartet.

Yes, that quartet.

We leave in 16 days, and so begins the journey of a lifetime.



BETWEEN GRIEF AND HOPE, WE'RE HEADING FOR
CARNEGIE HALL

January 30, 2016

Dear Diary,

The house is slowly emptying. Every day, a steady stream of friends comes to help bring things to donate, drop off food, or just come and talk. We generally don't lock our door anymore—our house is always filled with people. Students and parents and friends.

Did I tell you the other day I spread the word that we could use some big suitcases and food? We gave away all of our dishes. Several hours later, I came downstairs, and there were five suitcases in the front hall, and in the kitchen, there were two lasagnas, a salad, some Indian, Mexican, and Persian food, two pies, and a quiche. I love this town!

There have been a lot of tears—from students, us, parents. The other day, I saw Jason in a full embrace of a father and daughter, crying. How is it that we have decided to leave this wonderful place—nestled in a valley between mountains and the ocean— surrounded by family and friends?

I constantly go back and forth between feeling guilty for ripping my family from their homeland—their culture, friends, grandparents, language, home, career, possessions — and knowing this is an opportunity of a lifetime for us all. But what if I am wrong? I am directly responsible for the happiness of my daughters and husband. They are taking a leap of faith for me, and they trust (sometimes shakily) that this is a good

leap. To jump from something that is already perfect is a crazy choice. My guilt is only overcome by my deep and unquestionable belief that somehow this must be right for all of us.

The list of things to do is mind-boggling, and priorities are constantly shifting. One minute, the most important thing in the world is to get the oatmeal on the table. And the next is to sell our cars and get my paperwork in order for my work visa application. Finances, housing, visa, health, schooling, and OH—maybe I should practice?!

Two full quartet programs Carnegie-Hall ready. I can do this!

And to think: the Artemis Quartet, with their still-fresh, public grief of the loss of their friend and colleague. This is the hole they want me to fill. During my auditions in Berlin last week, they spoke of their friend often—in rehearsal, he is there with us. The mentions of him are sometimes lighthearted, sometimes “He would have liked it to be this way.” This is a group of three people who will never stop grieving his sound, now emanating from Gregor through his generously loaned viola, his ideas, his carefully

annotated sheet music with signature markings, red smiley faces reminding us of his warm presence.

Just as much as Volker, Heime, and Natalia, Friedemann is a permanent part of the sound, heart, and mind of this quartet. We are not a quartet, rather an octet.

Did I tell you Heime came to see us for a drink after the audition? What fun to see him. And there are plans to meet with Volker soon! These are the people I knew at Juilliard. Heime welcomed me into the Artemis family with a bear hug. He looks the same as he did 20 years ago, with that sparkle in his eyes and warmth of personality seeping out of every pore.

So, grief and hope—for all of us in our own ways—this is the hand we now play. My favorite composer is Schubert because of his ability to mix two divergent emotions in a

single moment in time. This is precisely what the four of us are embarking on.

Grief and hope, all together.

OUT OF THE
THE STRING QUARTET



OPERATING THEATRE, INTO

February 5, 2016

A month and a day:

On January 7, I stepped on a plane in Portland, Oregon, heading to Berlin, Germany, to audition for the spot of second violin for the Artemis Quartet.

On February 8, I again step on a plane in Portland, Oregon, heading to Berlin, Germany... but this trip doesn't have a return. This time my husband, cellist Jason Duckles, is with me, and our very excited daughters, who are 4 and 6. In just over a month, our lives have taken a 180-degree turn.

Did you know that there is a baby elephant at the zoo in Berlin? And Legoland. And a cat cafe—you can pet a cat while having a cookie. Imagine that! Those were the main selling points for the shorter members of the Kreston-Duckles household. The selling points for the taller members are too numerous to list here, but here is a summary.

- I get to rehearse and play with my favorite quartet in the world. Rehearsing might be even more fun than performing.

- My children get to grow up in a wonderful culture and learn to speak multiple languages. My husband will be able to stay at home with the children.
- I get to see the world and play wonderful music along the way.
- We get to live in one of the most exciting cities in Europe.

When the Artemis asked me to come play the auditions (because I was coming from so far away, they asked me to prepare for both rounds in one visit), I had a little less than two weeks to learn large segments of eight quartets. Now, I have two weeks (it took time to solidify the programs with the presenters) to ready six quartets in their entirety, concert-ready. Of course.

The quartets are:

Mozart 387, Beethoven 59/1, Janacek "Kreutzer Sonata", Wolff Italian Serenade, Shostakovich 5, Grieg

I also have to:

- Get papers in order for a German work Visa
- Liquidate our belongings: a house and two cars
- Set up our rental house with long-term renters
- Do taxes
- Organize for international shipping of essentials (read: art, music, and a giant 6-foot stuffed panda)

- Pass off my concert series to a new director
- With grace, cancel my season of concerts
- Rent a flat in Berlin
- Co-ordinate travel for the March European tour and April USA tour
- Get the whole family to the doctor and collect all important records as well

Yesterday was our last business day, so we split up to handle the final preparations. Two days ago, the doctor called. The sample they took from my back last week wasn't cancer, but it has enough red flags to warrant a complete removal. Thursday morning, I went in for a larger procedure than I expected (on several occasions, someone said "suction please"). At the end, the instructions were this:

No lifting or playing violin for one week, and please take it very easy for three. If you rip stitches, the recovery will double.

Hrumph. I have an idea! Let's move to Germany for a huge violin job, but not lift anything (or anyone 🐱🐱), and sure. Let's not practice.

But the great news is that I have what Jason refers to as an "optimism problem." His only advice to me as I stepped on that plane one month ago was, "Just don't crush them with your optimism."

Today (Saturday) is a going-away party that a friend decided to throw. It has outgrown the first venue, and she started to put a cap on invitees. We are having a play-along... I just have to get that music xeroxed!

Right now, 300 people are expected. What an amazing send-off. We will miss it here, but we can't even imagine the adventures right around the corner.



NOW I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN TO PLAY STANDING UP
February 13, 2016

Looking at the calendar, I realize that we have our first concerts three weeks from today. The frenetic energy and non-stop “doing” of the past three weeks will not abate, but it has already changed course. Instead of packing, tying up endless loose ends, and saying farewell to family and friends, we are getting settled in our new apartment, figuring out the U-Bahn, finding the grocery store, and trying to make the girls’ landing as spectacular and filled with wonder as possible.

The Artemis is just my kind of band. Everyone is super organized, both in and out of the practice room. They’re excited to dig in—and dig in hard—to these amazing pieces. And we sweat during the rehearsals. You know, the Artemis is one of just a few string quartets which performs standing up, and I was curious if this was the way rehearsals would be conducted.

Yep. Tomorrow, all seven hours will be standing... and the energy expended at the beginning equals the energy at the end.

I was given the master calendar: each day has a four-hour rehearsal, and often, because of the time crunch, an additional three-hour rehearsal in the evening. Each rehearsal is assigned a movement, and often two. This is a large amount of work for the time. They are not content to just “fit me in” to the pieces they have played before—they want to hear my perspective and are happy to entertain new bowings or colors.

Also, I realize that I have to keep on top of learning the language since a portion of rehearsals are already in German. I wish I had paid more attention during my (gulp) one semester at Curtis all those years ago. Luckily, Jason’s German is fairly good, and he got some books for me today. I will get a tutor as soon as I can come up for air.

Today was our first rehearsal. Because of my emergency back procedure, I wasn’t able to play for a week and am supposed to be on a modified schedule for three weeks (I don’t see this as a realistic option). I took a double dose of ibuprofen when I came home today, but the stitches are holding strong.

By tomorrow evening (after seven hours of rehearsing on top of the four from today), we will have worked our way through the entire Beethoven Op. 59 #1. Then it’s on to Grieg. And this is the pace for the next three weeks. It

reminds me of my student days preparing for international competitions. A blend of (un?)realistic optimism, passion, and determination.

No is not an option here.

And my family. The girls can't possibly understand jetlag, and yet they can't stay awake past 4 in the afternoon. They wake up around midnight. Last night was later—2 a.m. Then they want to have kindergarten and jump on the bed and play with their toys. Jason and I take turns cat-napping until around 8. This morning at 3 a.m., they decided just to go upstairs and make breakfast by themselves.

Oh, dear.

Anyway. All is well! My first work-visa appointment happens Monday, and I have meetings Tuesday evening with the manager, publicist, and secretary to go over the many logistics of keeping this fine stallion of a quartet running on all cylinders. What a ride, though!

'Till next week.



THIS QUARTET NEEDS MY HUSBAND AS MUCH AS IT NEEDS
ME

February 19, 2016

When Slipped Disc asked me to write a weekly diary, my invitation to join the Artemis Quartet was just days old. I believe that Norman (who I have not had the opportunity to meet yet) somehow enjoyed my pluck and thought I was a decent writer. Looking back to that day six weeks ago, I wonder what I was thinking to accept putting another thing on my already overflowing plate. But it has been fun to write and ruminate during the week about what the next topic could possibly be.

And the comments—these alone have been enough to entertain me for years!

I am the youngest of three girls, all musicians, and the daughter of an engineer and English major. Both of my sisters are musicians, as is Jason. I started playing violin at the age of 2.5, and although I have always been reasonably obsessed with music, I have also had, and continue to have many different interests and passions.

After my years at Curtis, I earned a women's studies degree—and it seems as if (I easily could be wrong here) this is not a well-known college degree option in Europe. What it taught me, more than anything, is that every story has an equally compelling and complex story on its flip side. In women's studies, it is as if you look at every subject you have already studied before, but this time, you investigate what the women were doing during that point in history. Or what were they painting or inventing... Or if they were not doing these things, why not? What were they doing? How

and why, and what obstacles did they encounter? Who were the first in their fields to break through?

For example: Is anyone else as excited as I am about the recent breakthrough in the field of conducting for women? What an amazing thing—and long overdue! A final frontier.

In many ways, this diary has helped me look not at the finished performance—the review or the concert or the recording—but the journey, and most importantly, all of the other elements which make this kind of career possible. When I applied for this position, people advised me not to mention or talk about my children or my conscious choice to step off the music fast-track six years ago. And certainly not talk about the decision to have a family and raise them in a small liberal town in rural

Oregon. However, I don't see these things as a sign of weakness or inability to work an intense job.

I was open about my personal choices, and in fact, it was the quartet's questions about Jason and my children which made me even more eager to be a part of this new extended family. They had long conversations with me about my family and said,

“Without a happy home life, the quartet cannot be happy.” They even reached out to Jason and called him the keystone of the whole operation.

What is the saying, “Behind every great man is a great woman”? It just so happens that, in my case, the opposite is true.

On the plate this weekend: two days off. And my major concern is split between extreme personal practice (of which I need a lot—this Thursday’s rehearsal revealed one piece in which my preparation was woefully inadequate, and I don’t want to be in that position ever again), and extreme family time, which has also been terribly neglected. I have rented a car, and we will begin our search for the right neighborhood in Berlin to base ourselves permanently.

The statement by the Artemis is absolutely true: The happiness of all members of my family is key to the happiness of all of our newly extended family.

To end, we are all holding our breaths for the imminent arrival of Ecki’s second child— it was due Friday! What a time of change and rebirth for all of us.



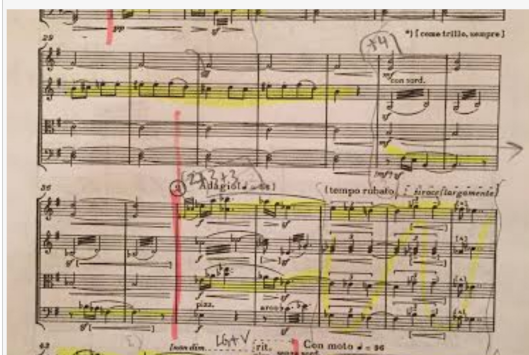
THINGS I HAVE TO DO BEFORE WE START REHEARSAL

February 26, 2016

This week: Ecki's wife gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Gregor, our violist, finally came out of a week of a serious flu, Vineta, first violin, broke a tooth, and I alternate between small victories and small mistakes. Jason and I now can rent cars at will. We have found an excellent school for Tzippy for the fall and can now search for a place to live in that area. We have also found a babysitter to allow Jason some practice time. Jason got a speeding ticket, and my German is atrocious (but I am trying!). In a nutshell.

So... rehearsal prep. This section could

either be for musicians (who may find it interesting or ultra-annoying) or non-musicians.



THINGS I HAVE TO DO BEFORE WE START REHEARSAL

Norman Lebrecht On February 26, 2016

Anthea Kreston, the new violinist in the Artemis Quartet, has moved her family to Berlin, found a home and schools

[Read More »](#)

Over the years, I have developed (as all musicians do) a way of getting from 0% prepared to 100%. There are three main sections of this: personal technique, historical knowledge, and score study. These three factors rely on one another and grow in fits and starts. There is, of course, no way of getting to 100%—it is more of a vanishing point situation.

But first. My practice set-up:

- Pencils, yellow highlighter, and red pen
- Three binders—my personal part, scores, and a copy of the original Artemis part—and preferably three stands
- Stool
- Metronome
- Recording device
- Collection of recordings of the pieces (some people like to listen to recordings, and some don't)
- Tasty drink (or several)

Historical Knowledge

This consists of knowledge of the composer, the period in his (or her) life in which the piece was composed, what was happening in their country, the world (peace or war), personal influences, loves found and lost, and

compositional techniques used. This information influences everything, from the amount of vibrato used to the amount of rubato or volume which is acceptable.

Every composer (and their country and era) has a specific set of rules—it is our pleasure to discover this world (I like to think of it as a box) and fully inhabit it. Not to be afraid

of the restrictions, but rather to spread myself out into the world in which they lived. We may think of people from certain historical periods as being repressed emotionally because of societal conventions and expectations. But really, didn't people fall in love in 1720 just as deeply as they do now? Didn't they suffer or have great epiphanies equally in 1880 or 2016? We must simply discover the ways in which different eras express these universal human events and show this knowledge through our performances. I enjoy finding parallels in literature and also am a lover of history and parallel histories from different countries. For example, the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and subsequent Lewis and Clark Expedition was the same time as Beethoven is writing his first symphony. Think about it! Lewis and Clark were eating beaver and dog while Beethoven was eating.... well, not beaver and dog. And Beethoven had shoes (the Lewis and Clark company somehow spent a majority of their cross-country trek shoeless).

Personal Technique

This is interwoven with score study. There are different opinions about fingerings for string quartets. My main teachers for quartet were the Vermeer Quartet and the Emerson Quartet (I held two-year residencies with both groups). I also worked closely with Isaac Stern for piano trio for five years. These three influences are very different—some people advising lower positions, simple fingerings close to the nut for clarity and intonation. Others suggested lower strings/higher positions and more dangerous fingerings/bowings for color.

In quartet, I don't always write in fingerings. Rather, I have several different options in my head depending on the opinion of the group. In trio, you can really do whatever you want, as you are more of a soloist. But in Quartet, it is about the group consensus. Bowings for quartet depend on the first violinist—everything comes from the top down (the first violin, or *primarius*, is the *de facto* leader). But all of this is negotiable. I practice as you would for any solo repertoire—I aim to be performance-ready at the first rehearsal and be as memorized as I can so I can quickly pick things up without having to verbalize too much. But—and a big but—no decision can really be made unless I have a full grasp for the score and phrase structure.

Score Study

For two years, I studied conducting with a great Spanish conductor and teacher in Connecticut. He had studied for

15 years with Celibidache, and 90% of our time together was score study and preparation.

Here is where the highlighter and red pen come to play. I highlight the main voice(s) and put a red line vertically to signify the end of phrases. If a phrase has an unusual number of measures (normally, a phrase is eight bars), I try to figure out where the extension is or where the music was cut short. This always indicates an emotional change to me—an intensification or a calming. Something. I write down the bar structures at every red line (8+2, or 4+4+4, for example). I also make notes as to the character of the music.

Then I transfer all of this into my personal part, so my part reads as a score. I add in who has the melody (in a circle) and who my “rhythm buddies” are (in a bracket). I also copy everything in from the original Artemis parts (I have made sure my personal parts are the same edition), translating as I go, and of course, number my parts and the score.

I also have a small notebook with four sections, with our pieces each listed alphabetically. I keep this on my stand during rehearsals. Here is what they contain:

1. Notes from recordings of our rehearsal run-throughs (this helps streamline group practice)
2. Personal spots for my solo practice
3. Intonation spots for the group

4. A graph of all pieces with the progress —spots practiced, play-throughs, etc.

Of course, there is more. A lot more.

Wow, this is a slightly inelegant diary entry. But it is fun to put all of this down in writing.

I hope it's entertaining, and can't wait to hear about everyone else's great ideas for preparation!



COMMENTS SECTION:

RW2013 SAYS:

Just imagine if all musicians wrote their diaries here!
Already wearing thin.....

ALORA MARTORELLO SAYS:

There is no need for you to read Anthea Kreston's diary if you feel such great disgust. As for myself, I enjoy following along with a refreshing perspective that reveals the more personal story that articles do not. Yes, indeed, high-profile musicians are humans too. They celebrate simple joys and deal with human concerns....is that such a crime?

RW2013 SAYS:

How many musicians practice, rehearse and perform constantly without advertising their every move? Isn't that something that should be restricted to one of those grubby little social networks?

BRUCE SAYS:

She clearly owes you an apology for forcing you to read about her against your will.

RW2013 SAYS:

Read?! More like the fascinating glance at road kill...

SCOTT FIELDS SAYS:

At least she has enough courage to accept responsibility for what she writes, unlike whoever "RW2013" might be – I imagine R2D2's nasty uncle

RW2013 SAYS:

R2 who? Sorry, not a follower of pop-culture. But really, do you all want to go hear this quartet and be distracted by wondering if the kids are in bed, who Jason is, if she's taken her pills....?

JAMES SAYS:

You're not meant to read the blog during the concert

SCOTT FIELDS SAYS:

"Beep, fizzle, beep beep beep, squank, fizzle fizzle,"

RW2013, 2016

ABIGAIL STOUGHTON SAYS:

I'm anxiously awaiting the next entry! It's a blessing to be able to vicariously experience a life of such promise & richness! Let's all just wish her the very best as that is what she deserves!

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FIRST VIOLINIST OF THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG STRING QUARTET SAYS:

Artemis Quartet with previous First Violinist brilliant Natalia Prischepenko never need such cheap way to advertise this world known and excellent (on that time) group. I haven't heard Artemis with new members yet. Maybe they still excellent -this is I will be able to tell when I'll listen them live- but this article shows me clearly that they are having problem without Natalia and trying to make group visible makin such funny article that can attract only non professional musicians.

Hope to hear them in the USA.

JAMES SAYS:

Yes they must have big problems and need cheap publicity. You can just hear the crickets, looking at their schedule in the next few weeks...Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Carnegie Hall (NYC), Wigmore Hall (London), Berliner Philharmonie.....

NATHANIEL ANDERSON-FRANK SAYS:

Actually, I was just thinking what an amazingly generous insight we have been given into the workings of one of the world's great string quartets. Truly fascinating and exciting

to hear of this musician's entry into the ensemble. How dare anyone think to belittle her achievement or her chronicle thereof. 'RW2013', your comment is either extremely ignorant or in the poorest taste. Shame. Crawl back into your cave and troll elsewhere.

FRED VANZEE SAYS:

First of all Slipped Disc asked her to write a weekly diary so there's no need to berate her for writing this compelling journal. Secondly, if you don't like it just simply ignore it or don't read these at all. There's no need to criticize others writing or lives.

ANDREW MORAVCSIK SAYS:

It is great that an accomplished professional is telling the truth about this issue. I am someone who recently wrote in the ATLANTIC about my experience as a "lead DAD" – fathers who are the primary caregivers- and with a wife – Anne-Marie Slaughter, who has written even more prominently about it. Most really world-class professionals in any field have a "lead parent" at home, but mostly (96% of the time, the statistics tell us) it is the woman at home. Often the 4% of women in this situation keep quiet about their "lead Dads" at home, because we do not have social and cultural categories to speak about it. If we want women AND men to have more choices, and string quartets like Artemis to be as great as they can be, people have to be more open about this issue. I applaud Norman for making the space. Those who think it's banal have obviously never struggled with these issues.

MILKA SAYS:

Why this banality? If this dullness reflects the quartette playing then one can easily forgo hearing the Artemis quartette. Boring is too kind a thought.

PEGGY SAYS:

Your snark is totally unjustified. For those of us who are not professional musicians, it is an unmitigated pleasure to read these insights.

BRUCE SAYS:

(And for some of us who are)

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FIRST VIOLINIST OF THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET SAYS:

I'm absolutely agree with you. Such cheap ad. There are millions of musicians who can tell much more interesting stories about their life.

It's clear to me that she trying to make herlelf popular. Because without tjiis article nobody will know who is Anthea Kreston.

BRUCE SAYS:

Before she started writing for Slipped Disc (at Mr. Lebrecht's invitation), I had no idea who Anthea Kreston was. I enjoy reading her posts though. Before reading your comments on Slipped Disc, I had no idea who you were either. Your comments are also fun to read

MARGARET SAYS:

Alla -why so upset? I am nervous about your blood pressure. Please have some calming tea. Anthea Kreston will not ruin your career. She seems nice and she doesn't hate you. Maybe find something else to read that is more your style? Spy novel or something? Or watch that James Bond movie "The Living Daylights" where they use a cello case as a sled to escape the bad guys?

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FIRST VIOLINIST OF THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG STRING QUARTET SAYS:

Don't worry. My blood pressure is 90 over 60. Thank you for your anxiety.

BRUCE SAYS:

Margaret – no need to worry. Alla is doing something that makes her happy.

SALLIE SAYS:

I am not a musician. For me, these glimpses into Anthea's life make the music more approachable and alive. Alla's comments also offer some insight into the world of professional classical musicianship. Fascinating! (Although Alla presents herself in such an unflattering light that it occurs to me that she might have been hacked.) I hope Anthea will keep writing.

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FIRST VIOLINIST OF THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET SAYS:

Incredible banal and boring even for the people who watching soap operas instead of going to the concerts.

PAULA MULDOON SAYS:

Beautiful post. Thank you for your thoughts.

BRUCE SAYS:

These are some really good preparation techniques. I love reading these posts.

ANDREW MORAVCSIK SAYS:

This is a unique and fascinatingly detailed description of the detailed preparation that goes into an inspired classical music performance – from one professional’s perspective. I find the biographical statements of any kind of musician – books, posts, interviews – are always long on flashy stories about the final product and short on descriptions of the hundreds of hours of front end work that go into it. (Renée Fleming’s autobiography is an interesting exception.) also, this is a riposte to whomever it was who complained a week ago about reading Anthea’s post about family issues. Obviously she can write about anything engagingly.

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FIRST VIOLINIST OF THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET SAYS:

Ms. Kreston with this “stories” continuously discrediting professional musicians. Reading those primitive “articles” I become really nervous about previously great Artemis Quartet. With such “thinker” inside the group they have no future.

SCOTT FIELDS SAYS:

Is this really Aranovskaya? She lives in the US and I think her English grammar is better than that in the comment, at least what I've read from her in the past.

ALLA ARANOVSKAYA, FORST VIOLINIST IN THE GRAMMY NOMINATED ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET SAYS:

Yes. This is Alla. Yes I live in the USA where I moved permanently in 1997 at age 39. Yes, my granmar is not the best because I never studied English. At the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 80's I studied French. Yes I came to performand and teach to the USA in 1987 with no English at all and was not able to talk almos like FISH for 2 years using just Italian , French and German as much as I knew from the music, and gestures to communicate with students and audience.

Yes my grammar is better in my article and books because some of my friends-wrighters like Lilian Duval, helped me to prepare my manuscript for the publication. Yes it's me , who saying that the dairy of Ms. Kreston discrediting professional musicians because in my opinion professional musicians can

NORMAN LEBRECHT SAYS:

Alla, this is getting tedious. You don't like the exposure this quartet is getting? We got the point. Now give it a rest.

FRANKLIN SAYS:

These comments are hilarious.

MARGARET SAYS: I think I am falling in love with Scott Fields

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



I sometimes just need to pinch myself. How did I get so lucky? I live in the small university town of Corvallis, Oregon, and I am first violinist of Oregon's Delgani Quartet, "the state's finest chamber ensemble" (The Oregonian). I lived for years in Berlin, Germany, where I was the first American violinist to hold a position in major European string quartet, Germany's Artemis Quartet, and I travelled the world, performing on some of the most legendary stages a person could dream of, from Carnegie Hall (New York) to Wigmore (London) - from the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam) to Seoul.

While living in Berlin, I was Professor at the Universität der Künste Berlin, the largest university of arts in Europe, established in 1696. I enjoy returning to teach and perform at the Curtis Institute of Music, my Alma Mater. My teachers include Ida Kavafian, Shmuel Ashkenasi, the Emerson Quartet and Isaac Stern. I think about each and every one of them every day.

Equally comfortable as a teacher, soloist, chamber musician, leading an orchestra, or organizing concert series, I played in the Berlin Philharmonic, as Principal Violin in the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and as concertmaster of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. If you are wondering, I don't sleep very much, and am never bored.

An avid writer, I have published in classical publications such as Strings and Chamber Music Magazine, as well as penning a weekly music blog for Slipped Disc which clocked in as one of the top-5 most read music blogs internationally. I have produced and hosted a variety of podcasts (notably a series of podcasts for Berlin's Pierre Boulez Saal for their Quartet Festival), and curated the Fortnightly Music Book Club, which brought music lovers, musicologists, performers and authors together for in-depth discussions. My recent release on Warner Classics of Shostakovich Quartets and Piano Quintet with the Artemis Quartet and pianist Elisabeth Leonskaja won the Diapason d'Or, France's highest honor, and Germany's Echo Award (the equivalent to a Grammy award). The documentary "the Neverending Quartet" follows the Artemis Quartet for a year on the road, exploring the intricacies of life in a quartet.

The San Diego Reader said "...Anthea is a soloist of the Heifetz-Shaham-Vengerov caliber, whose musical instincts could make even a mere bagatelle thrill the soul and stir the senses to a frenzy."

But actually the only thing that really matters is that I have an incredible husband and two funny and generous daughters, and I love to grow tomatoes and pet guinea pigs.