

## **11 Questions with Allen Whear**

**Title:** Recital Series Director, Associate Principal Cello

**Number of years with the Festival:** 14 years

**Permanent Residence:** New York City

**What career other than music would you like to attempt?** I could give a different answer to this every day, but whenever I come out to Carmel, I'm with David Gordon: Forest Ranger.

### **Describe a typical day in the life of Allen Whear.**

There is no such thing as a typical day for me, so instead I will try to describe a typical/ideal day during the Bach Festival:

Breakfast includes a fruit shake from the Farmer's Market in Monterey, bought during a quick visit yesterday afternoon. A few minutes to warm up, then dash with coffee in the car to rehearsal at the Sunset Center, greet friends in the orchestra.

Rehearsal is intense yet constructive, with nice snacks and jokes at the break. Squeeze in a chamber music rehearsal in the dance studio with a sandwich from Neilsen's, then dash to play or listen to a colleague's recital. Then back to the Sunset Center to check for mail or to attend a meeting.

Home for a quick supper and change into concert clothes. On a rare evening without a concert, maybe a walk with my wife through the foggy village to the beach. If there is a concert, hopefully it goes well and I look forward to greeting friends from the audience afterwards and hanging out with my colleagues, perhaps with a glass of wine.

On the way home, a stop at the Mission Ranch, where Clint Eastwood walks up with a big smile and thanks us for a great concert, saying "You made my day."

Dream on...

### **Allen Whear on Bach and Baroque**

**What is your favorite Bach piece?** Aus Liebe from the Saint Matthew Passion. It's heartbreaking, and one of the few numbers without cello, so I can just listen.

### **Name the movie that best depicts the Baroque period.**

I'm still waiting for one, although *Tous les matins du monde* and *Le Roi danse* are interesting. There's a movie about Vivaldi in production. Maybe it will be good or maybe it will make one cringe the way such things can. I do love several movies which

are more evocative of the Classical era and the Enlightenment, despite controversy over their accuracy: *Ridicule*, *The Madness of King George*, *Amadeus*, *Eroica*, *Valmont*, and *Jefferson in Paris*.

**You composed "Short Story" for Baroque ensemble for Tafelmusik in 2006. Do you prefer composing your own works or performing them for audiences?**

It's hard to play your own music because you want to listen to all the little parts and not be distracted by your own silly instrument.

## **The Music**

**What is on your iPod?** I have to confess that I'm behind the times on this - I don't have one. I think I prefer the randomness of good radio stations; that way I'm always discovering new music.

**Name 3 composers (living or dead) that you would most like to have dinner with and why.**

Besides dinner, I like to imagine myself sitting in on a string quartet session with Dittersdorf and Haydn on violin, Mozart on viola. What a refined musical language they shared, and their personal relationships were warm and respectful. Each had a unique sense of humor which must have been amazing to experience in person!

I would love to be present at a dinner party where Mendelssohn was the guest of honor. Besides being a musical genius, he had many talents and personal charm which made him great company. He'd sing and play, do party games, limericks, whatever.

Lastly, I would love to spend time with Dvorak, whose music has tremendous meaning for me but was the most modest and simple of men. To play chamber music with him, perhaps in rural Iowa, and then to enjoy a beer and a good cigar as the sun set and the birds inspired another musical motive...

**You are going to be stuck on a desert island and you can only bring 10 CDs with you - which ones will you bring?**

1. Rossini: Overtures (Toscanini, NBC Symphony). This was my first classical record, a Christmas present when I was ten. It still amazes me!
2. The Beatles: *Help!*, *Sergeant Pepper*, *Abbey Road*. (Reveals my age).
3. Boccherini: Quintets with Sigiswald Kuijken, Anner Bylsma, etc.
4. Early Italian Violin Music with Musica Antiqua Köln.

5. Beethoven: Folk Songs with Robert White, tenor, Samuel Sanders, piano, Ani Kavafian, violin, Yo-Yo Ma, cello.

6. Biff Rose: The Thorn in Mrs. Rose's Side.

7. Sandor Lakatos: Budapest at Night. (World's greatest Gypsy fiddler.)

8. Bartok: String Quartets by the Juilliard Quartet (1964 version).

9. Dvorak: Cello Concerto with Mstislav Rostropovich, Royal Philharmonic.

10. Servais: Fantasies with Anner Bylsma, Smithsonian Chamber Players. You have to hear it to believe it.

**What is the most difficult piece of music you have ever attempted to perform?**

Elliot Carter's 2nd String Quartet. And the composer was going to hear it so we couldn't fake it!

**Recital Series**

**How did you go about developing the overarching themes for the recital series?**

Many elements contribute to the programming. My colleagues suggest programs they would enjoy doing, and I try to tie into the themes of the year's Festival according to Bruno's plan. We also consider anniversaries (this year it's Buxtehude, and Andy Arthur and Libby Wallfisch are doing quite a bit.)

Sometimes programs happen just because it seems like it's the right time, such as the all-violin program a couple of years ago. Or if someone like Roger Cole says, "let's do an oboe band program" who can resist?

Of course, there is the satisfaction of the audience to consider, and we try to present a variety of performers and musical styles.

**Does the venue, such as Church in the Forest, impact your choices for programming of a recital?**

That's a very special space, because of its connection with nature and the fantastic wooden pillars evocative of a sailing ship. People really like to perform there, and the Twilight recitals are singular events, so the atmosphere is especially charged.