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If Mondavi Center is a Strad, what will that do to the Orchestra? "It will bring out a better performance and contribute towards taking our sound to the next level. We'll always be able to hear what we need to hear."

"I grew up listening to classical music on my parents' cherry wood hi-fi. Safeway sold classical records then. They were affordable. It expressed what I felt, and it still expresses things we all care about. A truth that gets to you. Today, it's all I listen to. I feel privileged to have what I have: I work with students, I teach, I perform the music I grew up on, as well as new music. It's a rich life."

### Susan Lamb Cook, cello

There is, of course, another side to a classical musician's life, one that is considerably less balanced. Susan Lamb Cook has been there, done that, no thanks. "The hours were quite long. When the Sacramento Symphony was performing (in the late 1980s to early 1990s), it was a 60-hour week of practicing, performing and teaching. I've got four kids. I don't do that anymore."



With a violist for a father, a pianist for a mother, Susan began cello at age seven with private lessons, augmented by instruction in the public schools—"Sacramento had a great music program until the early 1970s". Then came the University of Iowa, then her studies in Europe. She studied teaching and performing at the Vienna Academy of Music, making a living as a performing musician while completing her academic work. "It may be a little dreary in the winter," she laughed, "but in the Musikverein in Vienna, all the greats perform there. You could stand in the back for a dollar."

Or, perhaps, stand in the front. While in her 20s—"in your 20s you have no fear!"—Susan helped found the first all-women's orchestra in Vienna, the Frauen Kammerorchester (FKO), in a time and place in where male-dominated orchestras were *de rigueur*. "While the Berlin Philharmonic was taking the [then] controversial step of hiring the first woman to their orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic claimed at that time that they would never allow a woman to break into their

## MUSICAL FACTS

**"Only 18% of those polled (by the John Samantha and James L. Knight Foundation) said they listen regularly to classical music on the radio, often while driving. Fewer than 1 in 20 actually attend more than one classical concert a year." *The Oregonian*, 4/20/02**



## MUSICAL FACTS

**"Local public-radio stations, such as WNYC-FM (one of only two classical outlets left in New York City) are paring back classical programming to run more talk and news; privately owned classical radio stations are disappearing rapidly as big radio companies buy them and convert them to rock formats." *Business Week Online*, 4/16/02**

male-dominated ranks." Her memories of performing with the FKO are good ones, and not limited to the performance hall. She spoke before the Viennese City Council seeking funding for the orchestra with all the necessary trimmings: rehearsal space, lighting, available dates and money for the players. She did this in German. "It was a rather hostile environment for the first couple of years, until it finally began to be recognized as a possible orchestral training ground for women, where no such possibility existed before."

Such tenacity is a welcome accompanist for any classical musician; it perhaps prepared her for the trials and tribulations of the local symphonic scene. Susan returned to Sacramento in 1989, to teach and to perform with the Sacramento Symphony, which dissolved into the Sacramento Chamber Orchestra, which later dissolved into the Sacramento Philharmonic. "After the Sacramento Symphony died, many of the musicians left the area. A few of us hung on here and found work...by that time, I began to find more satisfaction in solo work and teaching." She has taught cello with the UC Davis Department of Music ever since and conducts the Chamber Music Workshop with the Sacramento Youth Symphony. She married and started a family after arriving in the area.

Today, Susan has a recording, Rachmaninoff: *Works for Cello and Piano* (Agnelli Productions; available at Watermelon Music in Davis). She performs, solo and in ensembles. She teaches. She raises money through public speaking and performing at a benefit she organizes.

And she performs chamber music, as a soloist and as a chamber musician. Chamber music ensembles drift together and apart, looking for the chemistry that binds. The longtime affiliations of quartets like the Guarneri, Tokyo, and Juilliard

## MUSICAL FACTS

**"What's the most difficult college to get into...It's not Harvard, Stanford, or MIT. It's the Juilliard School in Manhattan, a premier training ground for tomorrow's classical musicians. (Only the Coast Guard Academy accepts a smaller percentage of applicants.) Some 400 private youth orchestras alone are home to 50,000 young classical musicians."**  
*Christian Science Monitor, 8/30/02*

are elusive and magical. "When you find musicians that you feel great about, you hope you can work it out and stay together." Such are the hopes for her current ensemble, the Gold Coast Trio. "It was a real fluke that we were thrown together—we were attending a music festival in Austria and it was suggested that we play together." It clicked; they debuted in Austria last August and performed in Sacramento in January. Future dates include Claremont College, San Francisco State University, and the Haydn Society Convention at Scripps College.

Part of the performing life involves the nerves. Performing at such a high level is like that, so rosin up the bow: "Obviously, I get nervous. I rely on my preparation; I prepare long in advance. I began working on a piece of Brahms last June... for a performance next April."

And she often encounters the expectation that classical musicians are waiting for opportunities to play and will do so for free. "And when I bring up the subject of payment, people are sometimes put off. They felt like they were offering us an opportunity."

At UC Davis, where Susan teaches cello as an "applied faculty" member, she applauds the addition last year of a music performance degree ("Faculty has realized that to support a full symphony, they have to expand their course offerings.") And she shares Cynthia's enthusiasm for Mondavi Center ("I'm very impressed with the acoustics. I could hear 80 other people and still hear myself...it forces you to live up to your surroundings and allows you the freedom onstage to play at the very best of your ability.")

Is classical music dying? "In my life, classical music is alive and well. My students are well versed: in the Sacramento Youth Symphony, there are 270 children from the ages of eight to 18, all of whom are heavily involved in classical music." How did that happen? She considers the question, "it starts with parents—the kind of music they listen to and the kind of music they play in the house."

It was like that for Cynthia. And for Robbie as well.

Is classical music dying? For people like Susan, Cynthia, and Robbie, that's not really the question to ask. There's a concert coming up, of music time-tested, celebrated, and richly challenging for any musician. There's work to be done. And, as they know too well, when the baton rises at 8 p.m., they better be ready.

## Classical websites of interest:

### **Andante—[www.andante.com](http://www.andante.com)**

—Comprehensive. News, concert and CD reviews, essays and reference material, including lists of radio stations worldwide and directories of agents, recording labels and competitions.

### **Classical Music Pages—[w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/classmus.html](http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/classmus.html)**

—a source of history, biographical information about composers, explanations of the various musical forms and a dictionary of musical terminologies. Also has links and sound samples.

## MUSICAL FACTS

**"Officials at Euclid Public Library (a Cleveland suburb) hope to chase away loitering teenagers by playing classical music through speakers outside the library's front door and inside the lobby. Librarians hope that aversion to symphonic sounds will disperse the teens, whose loitering after school and at night intimidates some older patrons."**

*Associated Press State & Local Wire, 9/7/02*