



15 Jan. 2006

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 1

Dear Friends, Fans, and Colleagues,

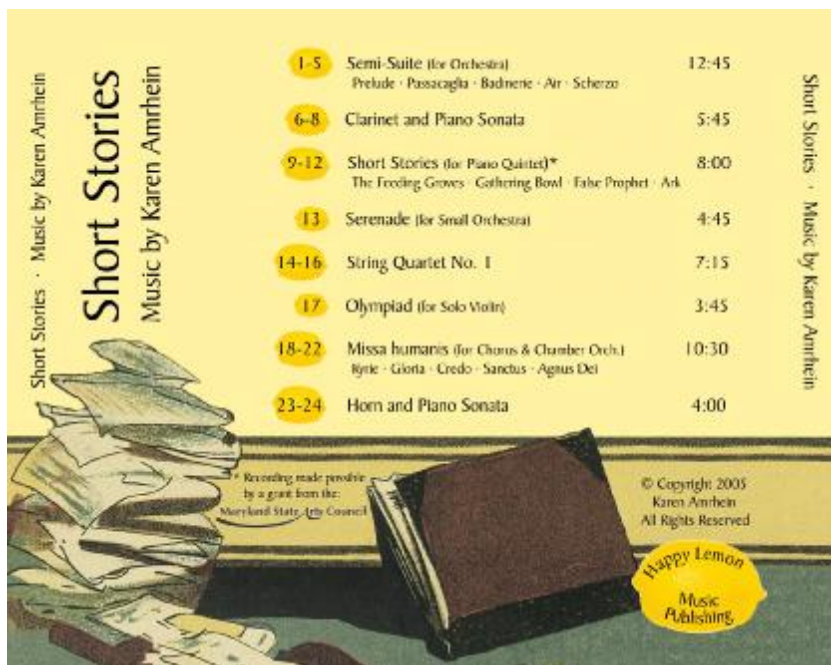
Welcome to the first issue of Happy Lemon's quarterly newsletter. In each of these little broadsides you'll learn about my newest compositions, recordings, and upcoming concerts, and be treated to a riddle and a guest's reflections on the topic, "What I listen for in music."

The Happy Lemon Newsletter is indebted to Jeff James for suggesting its inception and providing all sorts of wise advice and leads to follow. Complaints about this sheet junking up your in-box should be addressed to Jeffrey James Arts Consulting at jamesarts@worldnet.att.net. ☺

Actually, you're receiving this newsletter because you're someone who has expressed interest in my music, so you've no-one to blame but yourself. If you would rather not receive this quarterly update, please send me a friendly e-mail to that effect at: info@karenamrhein.com.

Thanks very much for your support of my music!

Karen



Short Stories CD now available

Just in time for the holidays — all 76 of them — my newest collection of recordings, *Short Stories*, saw its release in October.

As with my previous album, "Fresh Produce," this new CD contains a mixture of both orchestral and chamber music; why aren't more concerts done the same way? Taken together, like rum and coke or a hot dog and a bun, these albums offer just about all of my earliest (surviving) works — assuming I live to be at least 45 — from the *Serenade* (1994) to the *String Quartet No. 2* (2003). Why not make my day and purchase one? Better yet, get ten of each!

Short Stories includes performances by, among others, Kirk Trevor and the Slovak R.S.O. and Chorus, violinist Nicholas Currie, clarinetist Kyle Coughlin, and pianist Lisa Rehwoldt. Just \$12 at our website!

This issue's riddle

"What did the happy mountain ask the sad mountain?"

New music at www.happylemonmusicpublishing.com



My *Piano Concerto with Chamber Orchestra* was written in the spring and early summer of 2005. At 18 minutes a veritable epic by my standards, the music is in three movements: *A Gathering,*

A Ballad, and *A Dance.* A pretty good computer realization recording can be enjoyed at the HLM website, and scores will be happily provided to interested pianists or conductors.

The score's instrumentation is: 1-1-1-1, 2-1-1-1, piano, and strings.

The *Piano Concerto* awaits its premiere!



The Christmas Mirror

The Christmas Mirror, a recitation of my short story of the same name for up to three narrators and symphony orchestra, was premiered this December by Sheldon Bair and the Susquehanna Symphony, with Stephen Amrhein (my wonderful husband), Dina Lombardi-Cavallara, and Caroline Loeser performing as Narrator, Aunt Rigelia, and Eleanor.

The scoring is 1-1-3 (bass cl.)-2, 2-2-3-1, timp. (3), perc. (1 player), narr. (1-3), strings.

"...in her highly focused music, she says a lot in a small space..."

"Ms. Amrhein is tonally oriented, lyrical, and composes with an insightful sense of instrumental possibility. She is also a fine contrapuntalist who is equally adept at thinking both vertically and horizontally. Her lines are enlivened by quirky rhythms, and the harmonies that their convergences generate at key points are never less than pleasingly surprising.... In short, Want List material."

William Zagorski, *Fanfare Magazine* Jan.-Feb. 2006 (complete review attached below)

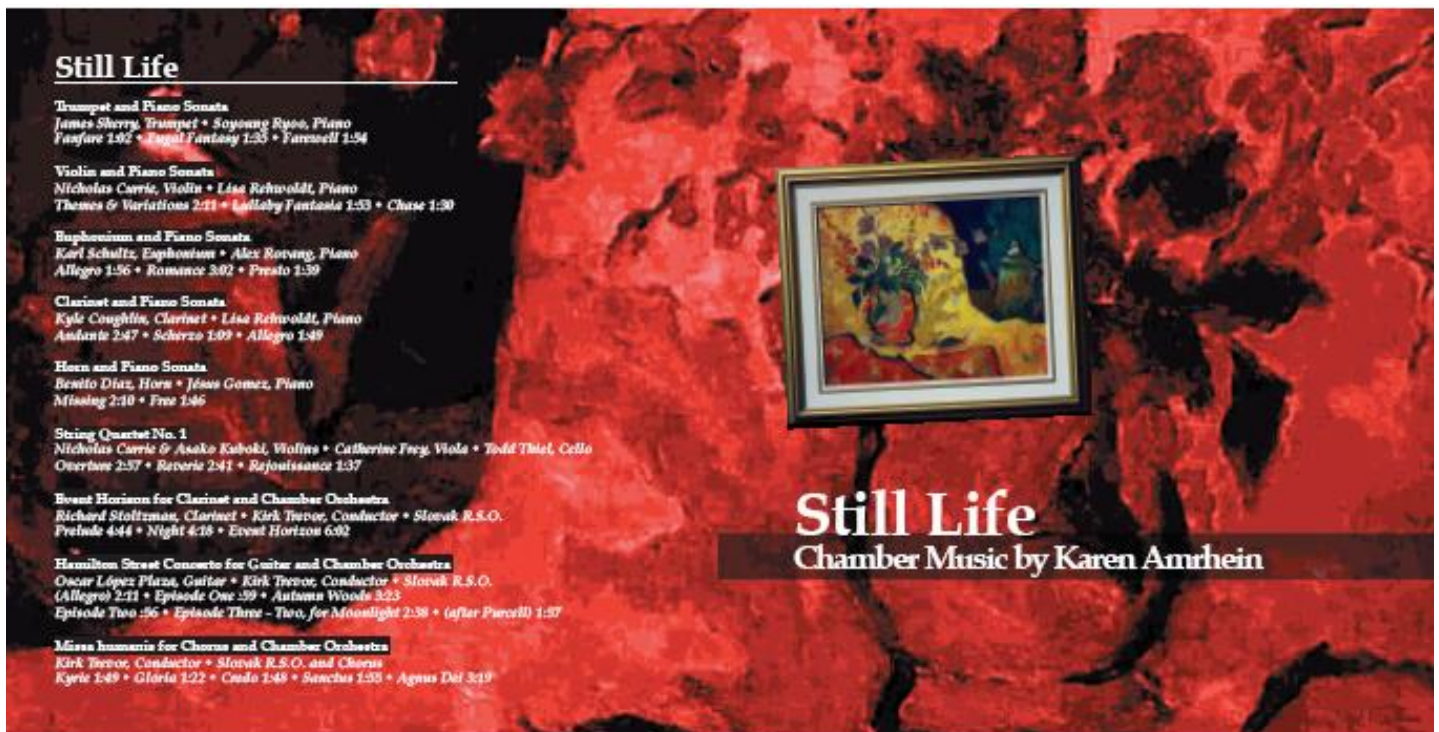
"What I listen for in music."

(As this is the premiere issue, I've invited myself to share my thoughts on this topic)

Foremost, I listen for melody. It is an exceptional piece that excites me if it lacks even one decent tune. I also listen for juicy harmonies — and I prefer a fast harmonic tempo; hammering away on a single chord or progression bores me. I listen for a solidly built, understandable structure. Music that overstays its welcome, or is inscrutably constructed, displeases me. Finally, I listen for music that is joyful, sad, witty, wise, noble, playful, thrilling, restful — but never despairing. Music that fails to nourish me, fails.

The answer to this issue's riddle is:

What's the Matterhorn?



FANFARE Magazine – January / February 2006

AMRHEIN Trumpet Sonata.¹ *Event Horizon*.² Violin Sonata.³ Euphonium Sonata.⁴ *Hamilton Street Concerto*.⁵ Clarinet Sonata.⁶ Horn Sonata.⁷ String Quartet No. 1.⁸ *Missa humanis*⁹ • James Sherry (tpt); Soyoung Ryoo (pn);¹ Nicholas Currie (vn);^{3,8} Lisa Rehvoldt (pn);^{3,6} Karl Schultz (eup); Alex Rovang (pn);⁴ Kyle Coughlin (cl); Benito Diaz (hn); Jesús Gomez (pn);⁷ Asako Kuboki (vn);⁸ Catherine Frey (va);⁸ Todd Thiel (vc);⁸ Richard Stoltzman (cl);² Kirk Trevor, cond; Slovak RSO;^{2, 5, 9} López Plaza (gtr);⁵ Slovak RSO Ch⁹ • MMC 2136 (71:53)

Karen Amrhein provided the liner notes to this most satisfying release. Alas, she gives no biographical information. A visit to her Web site, however, tells me that she was born in 1970 and studied music at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. Her notes, however, are aphoristic, concise, and often beguilingly metaphorical. As in her highly focused music, she says a lot in a small space. This offering bears the title “Still Life,” inspired by her friend, violinist and painter Nicholas Currie, three of whose paintings adorn the booklet, and who performs in two of the pieces. Amrhein refers to the whole undertaking as “an album of aural and visual images,” which provides yet another insight into her music. A painting or a piece of sculpture can be beheld instantaneously. Music flows through the element of time. In the six multimovement chamber music compositions found here, the longest movement weighs in at 3:02 (the Romance in the Euphonium Sonata), making this collection of musical miniatures prime examples of *Gestaltmusik* (my term), or, to put it differently, expertly composed musical snapshots.

(over)

Amrhein is tonally oriented, lyrical, and composes with an insightful sense of instrumental possibility. She is also a fine contrapuntalist who is equally adept at thinking both vertically and horizontally. Her lines are enlivened by quirky rhythms, and the harmonies that their convergences generate at key points are never less than pleasingly surprising.

The five sonatas for solo instruments and piano were composed in 1995 and 1996 and embody all of the above virtues using the most instrumentally intimate of means. Despite their obvious aural differences, they are all cut from the same harmonic and rhythmic cloth. But who can complain when the cloth is so attractive? The *Hamilton Street Concerto* for guitar and orchestra was composed in 1998 and, at 13 minutes, is the second longest piece found here. Its six movements provide Amrhein with the opportunity to explore a greater range of affective realms than is encountered in the two and three movement sonatas for solo instruments and piano. The piece is deftly executed, and provides a fine run up to the two most ambitious works on this offering.

The *Missa humanis* for chorus and chamber orchestra was inspired by a 1999 hearing of a performance of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*. The inspiration was, apparently, a negative one, urging Amrhein to compose the antithesis to Beethoven's Mahlerian masterpiece. Her setting of the Ordinary of the Mass takes a mere 10 and a half minutes. With the exception of the *Kyrie*, repetitions of the text are avoided. The choral writing projects a feeling of monody despite its occasional forays into counterpoint. The result is an almost primordial take on a timeless text, and it reminds this listener of Stravinsky's (another master of concision) Mass setting of 1948.

Event Horizon for clarinet and chamber orchestra, completed in 2002, is the finest piece on this release. It is an expansion of a single movement five-part concert overture originally composed in 1999 for Jason Love and the New Horizons Chamber Ensemble. At the request of William Thomas McKinley in 2002 for a piece to be written for Richard Stoltzman, Amrhein fleshed out the original five-part scoring to chamber orchestra proportions, added a solo clarinet part, and composed two introductory movements. An event horizon is the cosmological term for the perimeter of a black hole. Amrhein's musical narrative takes us from the comfortably known realm of our universe to that terrible place. We are sucked into the vortex where one of two things can happen—utter annihilation, or we can be punched into a parallel universe. In Amrhein's piece, the latter happens, and we are treated to a jaunty passacaglia. She is writing for a world-class clarinetist, and puts him through his paces—exploiting the extreme registers of his instrument. As to be expected, Stoltzman acquits himself admirably, as does the Slovak RSO under Kirk Trevor.

All of the other performances are similarly simpatico. The recording is fine, and adds up to one of the most fascinating releases to come my way in a long while.

In short, Want List material.

William Zagorski



Music by
Karen Amrhein
Happy Lemon
Music Publishing™



15 April 2006

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 2

Dear Friends, Fans, and Colleagues,

In this issue of Happy Lemon's quarterly newsletter: *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *Hamilton Street Concerto* for flute and guitar duo, Dr. Harlan Parker's reflections on the topic, "What I listen for in music," and, of course, a riddle!

Karen

LITTLE NEMO IN Slumberland



Little Nemo now available for chamber orchestra

Little Nemo in Slumberland can now be performed in any of three iterations: for concert band, for full orchestra, and the newest edition, for chamber orchestra. For the latter version, I've added counterpoint to *King Morpheus*, sprinkled a little extra impish dissonance on *Flip*, and allowed *Doctor Pill* to dispense his useless remedies even more ineptly, thanks to some "wrong note" harmonies.

The chamber orchestra scoring is: 1-1-1-1, 1-1-2-0, perc. (1 player), strings. Note that the piano has been omitted from this version, in hopes that the piece will be more accessible to community, pops, and festival orchestras.

Little Nemo in Slumberland for chamber orchestra will be heard – and danced! – for the first time on May 20th and 21st as the Harford Ballet Company brings *Nemo*, *Flip*, *The Princess*, et al, to the Harford Community College stage. Dr. Harlan Parker will be conducting a 22-piece orchestra composed of Peabody students and Susquehanna Symphony members in a concert that will also feature the premiere of my friend Lauren Bernofsky's ballet music to *The Wizard of Oz*.

Then, on June 10th, the Missouri Symphony Orchestra will offer the professional concert premiere of the chamber orchestra version of *Little Nemo*. Music Director Kirk Trevor will conduct. Stephen and I are especially excited about this performance, as this is the first time a professional American symphony orchestra has programmed my music!

This issue's *riddle*

"What do you call Dvorak on a trampoline?"

Little Nemo in Slumberland (continues)...

I invite you to visit the Harford Ballet Company website at: www.harfordballetcompany.org

... and the Missouri Symphony Orchestra website at: www.mosymphony.org

If you're in the neighborhood, please join us on May 20th or 21st in Bel Air, Maryland, or on June 10th in Columbia, Missouri!

My heartfelt thanks to Harlan and Kirk for making these performances possible

New music at www.happylemonmusicpublishing.com

The *Hamilton Street Concerto* for guitar and chamber orchestra is now available for flute and guitar duo as well! Since the concerto already includes two episodes for guitar alone, and one episode (*Two, for Moonlight*) for flute and guitar, it occurred to me that it might be possible to re-imagine the entire concerto as a flute and guitar duo. The result is something of a palimpsest of the original concerto: the three orchestral movements were erased, but the principal melodic lines and harmonies remain.

Both versions of the *Hamilton Street Concerto* may be sampled at the Happy Lemon Music Publishing website. Please visit: www.happylemonmusicpublishing/orch

"What I listen for in music."

To over simplify, what I listen for in music is form and development. Of course, there are the usual things such as orchestration, melodic line, harmonies, etc, but for me a good piece of music develops the ideas and has some coherent form. Also, do I have a reaction to the music? I hear so much new music out there that I just feel: "just another piece of music." But, there is some music that I either love or hate right off; it is those pieces that I look at more to find out why.

Harlan Parker

The answer to this issue's riddle is:

A bounce D zech A



Music by
Karen Amrhein
Happy Lemon
Music Publishing™



15 July 2006

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 3

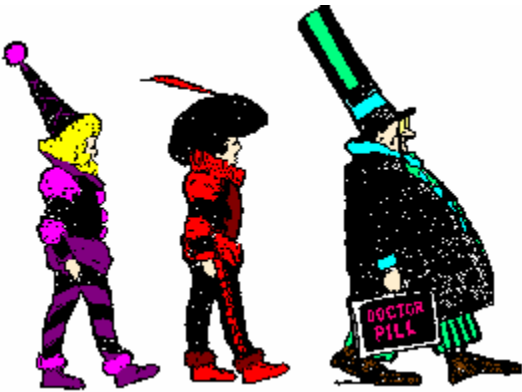
Dear Friends, Fans, and Colleagues,

In this issue of Happy Lemon's quarterly newsletter: *Euphonium Concerto with Strings*, a report on the recent performances of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, Maurice Ravel's reflections on the topic, "What I listen for in music," and, of course, a riddle!

Karen

LITTLE NEMO IN Slumberland

Little Nemo in Slumberland, Maryland, and Missouri



The performances of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* on May 20th and 21st by the Harford Ballet Company and Chamber Orchestra and the professional premiere on June 10th by the Missouri Symphony Orchestra were quite successful.

Dr. Harlan Parker led a chamber orchestra of Peabody students and alumni, and members of the Susquehanna Symphony (a community orchestra based in Bel Air, Maryland), for the May ballet productions. Choreographed by Shana O'Brien, the dancers were splendid and the entire show, with original costumes, set pieces, and lighting, was

thrilling for Stephen and me. The Amoss Center at Harford Community College filled for both performances. I'm grateful to the Harford Ballet, the band, and Harlan for bringing *Little Nemo* to life!

Kirk Trevor led the Missouri Symphony on Saturday, June 10th for the professional premiere performance of the *Little Nemo* chamber orchestra score. The MSO brought Stephen and me to Columbia, Missouri for this Mary Nell Porter Premiere Series Opening Gala concert, leading the MSO's 2006 Summer Music Festival. The MSO staff received us with great warmth and excitement, which we had no trouble reciprocating. Two days before the concert the local radio station interviewed us during morning "drive time," and Kirk interviewed me on stage before performing *Little Nemo*. The 1100-seat Missouri Theatre was nearly filled that evening, and the audience was very receptive of *Little Nemo*, applauding enthusiastically.

My profound thanks to Kirk, the Missouri Symphony Orchestra musicians, Lea and Kanani and the entire administrative staff, and my parents (who drove all the way from California for the May and June performances) for an unforgettable experience!

This issue's *riddle*...

"What did the sweet potato say to the squash?"

New music at www.happylemonmusicpublishing.com

My [Euphonium Concerto](#) with strings, completed this past spring, begins with a *Daydream on a Thanksgiving Chorale* — a sort of fantasia on a hymn tune that had been languishing in my piano bench since its composition in November 2002. The opening chorale, stated by the strings, concludes with the violas commencing the first "variation" — a canon in 5/8 time. This brief canon rises until it resolves on a C-Major chord, and the entrance of the euphonium. The canonic material is reworked and reprised over the next few pages — the euphonium offers a brief cadenza — and then the second "variation" is presented. This slower and somewhat pensive section is succeeded by brisk and sunny "strolling music." The canon returns — in variation — and the music grows increasingly virtuosic until the movement concludes with a reminder of the chorale tune. The daydream vanishes.

A Song from the Seashore, a melancholy reflection at seaside, follows. The undulating primary theme — played by the strings alone — precedes a "medieval" exchange between the euphonium and strings, then a more virtuosic episode for the euphonium. The

movement is then reversed: the modal B Section returns, followed by a variation on the primary theme — the euphonium joining in before the conclusion.

Cascades offers the euphonium player a chance to really shine. Following a cadenza-like introduction, a driving theme is introduced by the euphonium. This theme is quickly developed until a little fugue blooms. This fugue subject-and-answer resolves into a waltz-like episode, which is in turn succeeded by a jaunty skip. The fugue subject appears once more, followed by a revisitation of the theme, leading to a rousing conclusion.

The concerto was composed at the invitation of English euphonist Charley Brighton and American euphonist Jason Ham and is about thirteen minutes in length.

Bassoonists also have my blessing to perform this concerto.

The [Euphonium Concerto](#) awaits its premiere! Please visit happylemonmusicpublishing.com for score and sound samples.

"What I listen for in music."

Great music, I have always felt, must come from the heart. Any music created by technique and brains alone is not worth the paper it is written on. Music, I feel, must always be emotional first, and intellectual second. That is why, in composing, I have never been tempted by the radical style of the young and very interesting composers. And so, although as experiments there may be something to say in defense of all this music, it is, in my opinion, an artistic failure.... Besides being cerebral, 'modern music' is for the most part, very ugly; and music, I insist, must in spite of everything be beautiful.

Maurice Ravel

The answer to this issue's riddle is:

I think, therefore I am.



Music by
Karen Amrhein
Happy Lemon
Music Publishing™



15 October 2006

Vol. 1, No. 4

NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends, Fans, and Colleagues,

In this issue of Happy Lemon's quarterly newsletter: promotional efforts, Peter Landgren reflects on the topic "What I listen for in music" (thank you, Peter!), and, of course, a riddle!

Karen

Promotional Efforts

As my daylight hours in the past six months have been largely spent on promotional efforts, I'm granting most of the real estate of this issue to a description of those efforts. Indeed, since completing my *Euphonium Concerto* last spring, I've not had the time to write any new works, though I've arranged a number of my pieces (which is a compositional process all its own) as part of my promotional exercises. I'm hoping to get back to writing new music soon — since composing is what I enjoy more than anything else — but, until that happens, here's what I'm doing:

Since February of 2005 I've contacted 111 (mostly American) conductors — from small regional orchestra directors to the big guys. Of these 111 contacts (primarily made via e-mail after research on the internet), eighteen have replied to my invitation to send CDs or scores and welcomed some music. Of those eighteen, six have responded to a follow-up e-mail, sent two months after the recordings and scores were dispatched. Four of those haven't gotten around to listening to the music. The remaining two have listened, like what they heard, but haven't made any programming decisions at this time. If anything comes from all these messages in bottles you'll be among the first to know!

I've made similar overtures to chamber musicians, radio stations, and music critics in the past year. I've had some small success with the chamber musicians and with two radio stations.

My days are comprised of publicity efforts (such as outlined above), score preparation, grant and score call applications, website maintenance, other music administration work, and (when I'm really lucky) composing. This year I've spend \$237.61 so far on postage alone and sent out hundreds of dollars worth of scores and CDs in mailings for score calls, contests, grant applications, and the like.

I often arrange my works to accommodate various ensembles. (I once arranged a chamber orchestra concerto of mine five times to meet the needs of an ever-narrowing ensemble. As it happened, the performance never materialized, and I didn't receive a penny for all my labor.)

This issue's *riddle*

"What did the Estonian conductor say to the orchestra?"

Promotional Efforts: Making Arrangements

This year, I've created the following arrangements:

- *Hamilton Street Concerto* (for guitar and orchestra) arranged as a flute and guitar duo and as a violin and guitar duo
- *Event Horizon* (for solo clarinet and chamber orchestra) arranged as a suite for standard chamber orchestra without the clarinet solo
- *Piano Concerto* (with chamber orchestra) arranged for chamber wind ensemble

I've also been working this year on revising and expanding both the orchestral and wind ensemble scores for *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and my *Symphony of Seasons*.

"What I listen for in music."

Music from the standard repertoire can get a bad rap if it's performed with a standard interpretation. I want to hear how a performer interprets the music of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, Mahler, Stravinsky, Debussy, or Strauss. I don't want to hear the performer's personality all over the music, but rather, I want to hear the music and personality of the composer channeled through the performer. This begs the question: how does a composition attain "standard repertoire" status and remain there for decades or centuries? This also assumes that there is only one set of compositions that make up the standard repertoire and everyone has to accept this as an absolute, while in fact every listener of music, serious or popular, has different works that speak to him or her on a melodic, harmonic, or emotional level.

I love to perform and listen to new music. I love the familiar (as long as it is played well), but hearing a new piece of music is a gift. Even though I am an educated professional musician, I don't want a new piece of music to make me feel stupid. I want to be able to understand it on a first hearing. I am *not* saying however that simple is good, and complex is bad. I want to be able to understand what the composer is telling me; I want the music to make me feel a certain way; then on repeated hearings, I hope to discover more about the piece that I may have missed the first time around.

Music should be a continual discovery. The day music stops becoming that for me will be the day I lie down and close my ears forever.

Peter Landgren

Associate Principal Horn, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Artist Faculty, Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University
Former Interim Director, Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University

The answer to this issue's riddle is:

What part of Ave don't you understand?