

REMEMBRANCES OF JANOS STARKER on Indiana University website:

<http://blogs.music.indiana.edu/janosstarker/remembrances-2/>

My contribution:

I learned so much from Mr. Starker's teaching that it took several years to process it all, and I'm not done yet. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life to study with him. His teaching was so personalized to my needs that I didn't realize at first that I was learning a musical and technical language that I'd have in common with generations of his students. I plagiarize from his ideas in my own teaching constantly.

Mr. Starker thought talent was a responsibility- so the expectation of hard work was a given- and he respected the learning process he guided us into ('It will seem at first like you can't play as well as you used to.') He was skilled at teasing us about bad habits to get us to stop doing them (my audible descending slides caused him to say "not after my lunch.") But he was also skilled at confidence-building, because he simplified technical problems with elegant solutions that worked. These were further clarified by his imagery- for example, the *grazioso* gesture of the 2nd phrase of the solo cello theme of Strauss's *Don Quixote* was Quixote lifting his hat to a lady going by. Mr. Starker was a genius musician with an analytical mind who, fortunately for us, actually enjoyed explaining how he did things and searching for universal principles. Mr. Starker spoke with compassion and humor about teaching, orchestral playing, chamber music, and solo playing, having filled all these roles. Several months after leaving school I called him from abroad to ask his advice about a bewildering situation at my first full time orchestral job. He quickly suggested 2 or 3 courses of action; he also reassured me by telling me a story from his days in the CSO.

In 2004, he published his Memoir, "The World of Music According to Starker." In December of that year, I broadcast a radio show devoted to Starker at Columbia University's radio station WKCR, and I interviewed him by phone. I'd never heard him mention what he and his family had faced in WW II, but since he referred to it in his book I asked him, "Do you think that living through all that you did changed your priorities as a musician on some level?" His off-the-cuff response: "Look, the only way to answer this particular question is that all the events in one's life affects one's thought processes, behavior, and feelings, and philosophies and so on. The changes caused by those events in my life are not just cellistic issues, and not just music issues, but the way I view the world, and the way I view cello-playing as well, and teaching, and obligations, responsibility towards one's profession. And above all, the word professionalism—you never know what demands will be put to you in your existence as a musician. So you have to be prepared to fulfill any demands, and that requires professionalism." Mr. Starker's musicianship and his positive attitude remain a huge inspiration to me. It's hard to believe his strong spirit is no longer here. I'm sending warm thoughts to his family, and I hope it's some comfort to them to read these accounts of how he changed so many of us for the better.