



House of Note

News of Note



50th Anniversary Edition!

House of Note News of Note | Volume Five, Number 1 May 2009



Our Story

by Ed Volker

House of Note was incorporated on February 6, 1959. Ted Ptashne, my father-in-law, set up shop in a small office on 1st Ave. North, in downtown Minneapolis. He was an accomplished and well respected violinist who played for the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under Dimitri Mitropoulos. The orchestra is now called the Minnesota Orchestra. Ted also contracted musicians for different shows that came to town

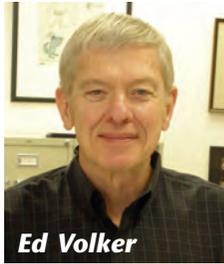
and freelanced around the region. Ted had many musician friends locally and around the country. He was invited for many years to the Casals Music Festival in Puerto Rico.

Starting out, Ted dealt in all band and orchestra instruments. He sold instruments to schools and individuals as well as maintaining a rental program. He soon moved the shop to Glenwood

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Annual June SALE – 10% OFF All Instruments

Ave., across from the Greyhound bus depot. Ted had one employee starting out and her name was Gertrude Dombeck. It was mostly just the two of them running the shop with the occasional help of some part time employees. In 1975 Steve Bennefeld joined the shop as a string repair person. In 1976 Paul Dahlin was hired as the second repair person and of course is still with us today.



Ed Volker

Later in 1976, the shop was moved to Excelsior Blvd., in St. Louis Park where the Excelsior and Grand development is now. Then in May of 1982, Ted died suddenly from a heart attack on his 72nd birthday.

All of his family and friends were shocked that a man who loved life and music so much was taken from us so suddenly.

After Ted's death, the shop was left with just Gert, Steve and Paul to carry on. It was up for sale for about a year with no takers. During this period, business was not so great as Ted had lost some of his energy and enthusiasm because of his wife's death a year earlier.

Then, early in 1983 Gert announced that she was going to retire. We had to come to some kind of decision as to what was going to happen next. Did we want to liquidate it? Or, did we somehow want to keep it going? So in May of 1983, I decided that I would give it a try and see what developed. I had been in different sales positions up to that point and was then employed as an industrial warehouse representative selling



Paul Dahlin
1989

forklift trucks and storage rack. Not exactly a good background for selling violins! Most of my friends and family thought I had no chance, but I always felt that if you are honest and treat people fairly, the rest would follow.

Well, somehow, some way, it has worked out. What a different world I had become a part of. I soon came to appreciate the commitment and dedication of string teachers, the effort and sacrifice of the advancing student and the talent and accomplishment of the professional.

During my first year I received a lot of advice and encouragement from many folks. The most memorable I think was from Doug Overland. One day he said to me, "You know Ed, Ted was known for the quality of his student instruments and the expert repairs that came out of the shop." To this day, I have tried to maintain those standards. In 1983 we had 15 to 20 instruments on rent and now we have over 1,000. Our entry-level instruments and more advanced instruments are better than ever. The standards keep getting higher and higher as

they should. Today, more than ever, I feel we are up to these challenging times.

About a year after I started, House of Note had its most famous musician require its services. I got a call on an early Sunday morning from my wife Leslie's uncle. His son was traveling with Yo-Yo Ma to Minneapolis for a concert that afternoon. During the flight, the fingerboard of his Stradivari cello had come unglued and he needed a very quick repair. Well, I had never heard of Yo-Yo Ma at that time. Was this some kind of a joke? Yo-Yo Ma sounded like a cartoon character to me, not a world class cellist. Well, I called Steve Bennefeld and asked him to meet me at the shop in one hour.

A sleepy Steve arrived at the appointed time and soon after, Yo-Yo and his cello arrived. The repair was a simple one, but Steve had never worked on a Strad before. The first task was to find some space to lay the cello down. Steve's benches were always covered with instruments, parts, tools, varnishes, etc. He was not the most organized fellow. He decided to set the cello on his

THANK YOU
I would like to thank all of our customers for 50 years of patronage. So far, it has been a wonderful journey. Most of you who are reading this have made our shop a successful, fun place to work and meet people, and a continuing adventure. I am grateful to all of you for making this possible. The first 50 years have been a great ride and I'm looking forward to more. As always, we welcome your ideas, suggestions and comments.



Staff and store on Excelsior Blvd. location

trusty Sears Workmate repair bench after folding a dirty army blanket on it. Who knew what Yo -Yo thought of this operation.

Steve re-glued the fingerboard to the neck without any problem, so the only thing left to do was let the glue dry under clamps. At this point, Steve turned on his black and white TV to watch the Vikings game. Yo Yo left for his hotel and said he would be back in a couple of hours to collect his cello. Steve and I watched the Vikings and the glue dry until Yo-Yo came back. He was very gracious and appreciative to have his cello back in playable condition. He wanted to know if we were interested in tickets for his concert which was to start in about an hour. Respectfully, we declined, explaining that we were big Vikings fans and this was an important game.

Since then, I have had the privilege to hear Yo-Yo in concert

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a few times and have enjoyed a good laugh with him about that day.

In 1994, we added Ruth and Lyle. We also added a second shop in Duluth, which was managed by Chris Eggert with administrative help from his wife Cindi and repair help from Ralph Watten. In 1997, I sold the inventory to Chris and it is now Christian Eggert Violins. Another luthier who was employed by us, Kevin Miller, opened a shop in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a few years ago.

In 1995, we moved to our current location on Minnetonka Blvd. It was then that the business started to grow at a more rapid pace. We started to sell and rent more instruments and the repair department became busier than ever. Since our move here, we have lost Kevin Miller, but have added Sheila, Ingrid, Jeff, Ute and Krasimir. One thing I am proud of is our low turnover. Our combined experience in the string instrument business is now 165 years.

I would like to re-introduce you to our talented staff. They have experiences in violin making, repairing, playing and teaching. I am also very grateful to every one of them for putting up with me and making my life a lot easier.



Paul Dahlin

is our senior luthier. He specializes in fine instrument and bow restoration, tonal adjustments and custom

set-ups. Paul has been with House of Note since 1976. For the past 25 years Paul has taught Swedish folk music and led the fiddling group at the American Swedish Institute. Paul received a National Heritage Fellowship for his work in sharing and preserving this traditional music.



Ruth Nielsen

is our office manager and administers our rental program. She has been with House of Note since 1994. Ruth also does all

of the bookkeeping as well as music ordering and assisting customers. She plays fiddle with the Spelmanslag group of the American Swedish Institute, she

sings in her church choir and plays bass with the Danish folkdance band Ballade. She is a graduate of Carleton College with a B.A. in Mathematics.



Lyle Knudson

is our shop manager. He is a graduate of the violin repair and guitar making courses at Minnesota State College–Southeast Technical at

Red Wing. He oversees the shop schedule and all repairs. Lyle is an active luthier specializing in building and repairing guitar family instruments and designed and builds the electric violins featured on our web site. In January 2004, Lyle and his electric violins were featured in an article in the Twin Cities Business Monthly. He has been with House of Note since 1995.



Jeff Anderson

is a graduate of the violin repair and guitar making courses at Minnesota State College–Southeast Technical at Red Wing and is a part-time student at Normandale Community College. Jeff restores, sets up and maintains instruments and bows.

He also manages all of the school repairs. Jeff gives lectures about violin repair at local colleges and universities. He plays guitar, bass, cello and mandolin in a local rock band. He has been with House of Note since 1998.



Sheila Graves

has been the Sales Manager at House of Note since 1998. She holds a degree in Viola Performance from Northwestern University.

Sheila plays with the East River String Quartet and freelances in the Twin Cities. Sheila has been a member of the Sioux City Symphony, the South Dakota Symphony and the Heidelberg (Germany) Chamber Orchestra. In addition to private teaching, Sheila has taught at Augustana College and the University of Sioux Falls. She entered the violin business in 1983. In 2004, Sheila gave a lecture on the 1698 L'Alouette Stradivari for the Suzuki Association of the Americas Convention. Sheila also enjoys playing bluegrass fiddle. Her experience includes owning her own shop, G & G Violins. Sheila has also worked for Kenneth Stein Violins in Chicago, Sioux Falls Music and Claire Givens Violins in Minneapolis. She is a member of the Violin Society of America.



Ingrid Liepins

is one of our sales professionals, has been with House of Note since 1996. She received a B.M. degree in Violin Performance from

Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. Ingrid has played with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, the South Dakota Symphony, the Academy Quartet at Augustana College and numerous other chamber groups. She is an active freelancer in the Twin Cities area.



Ute Zahn

started making violins in 1983, at the age of 18. She graduated from the Newark School of Violin Making in 1987 and

worked at Beverley Music Centre in England until she joined the shop of Sandra Wagstaff Violins in Hong Kong in 1990. Two years later, she started her own business as a violin maker and restorer. She also performed widely in Hong Kong as a freelance cellist and with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. Ute briefly worked at Vintage Violins in Vancouver, B.C., before moving to Minnesota in 1999 for a position with Claire Givens Violins. She has been a staff member at House of Note since 2003. Ute continues as an active maker, with her instruments being played on four continents. She has performed in the cities with Solstice and Smattering and currently plays with the Ayana String Quartet.



Krasimir Bakardjiev

received his Bachelor degree in 1973 from the Bulgarian State Conservatory. For more than 10 years he toured

throughout Europe with various rock 'n' roll and pop bands. In 1986 He went back to classical music and successfully auditioned for Stavanger Symphony Orchestra in Norway. In 1987, Krasimir moved to Oslo to play first violin in the only professional café orchestra in Europe. In 1990 he moved to Minneapolis and became established as a freelance musician and teacher. Krasimir attended the violin repair course at Minnesota State College –Southeast Technical at Red Wing. Krasimir is one of our sales professionals and has been with House of Note since 2005. He is also available for outside sales.

Ode to 50 Joys 1959–2009

Congratulations to all of you who have done such an outstanding job of professionally serving all of us while working at House of Note!

Yes, I can recall when the late Ted Ptashne started the first store in downtown Minneapolis. This was a natural “fit” for Ted. He was a great symphonic player and played in Pablo Casals Festivals in Puerto Rico. In the early 1970s, he started his own Mozart Festival which engaged many of the top musicians of the time.

Upon Ted’s death in 1982, son-in-law Ed Volker took over the ownership and leadership of House of Note. He has done a superb job of continuing the business, adding to the office staff, repair department (admirably led by Paul Dahlin), and increasing the general sales. And, besides all this, Ed plays a terrific golf game.

The store has always handled repairs, restorations, sales, appraisals, supplies, and rentals in a top professional manner. I have nothing but admiration for all of you because you have served the professionals, student, and community needs to the fullest.

Bravo!

— Cliff Brunzell

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN 1959?

Dwight D. Eisenhower was President and a young Richard Nixon was Vice President.

Fidel Castro became Premier of Cuba.

Hawaii became the 50th State.

American Airlines began the first coast-to-coast service from New York to Los Angeles on a Boeing 707.

Charlton Heston won the Oscar for best actor for his role in Ben Hur.

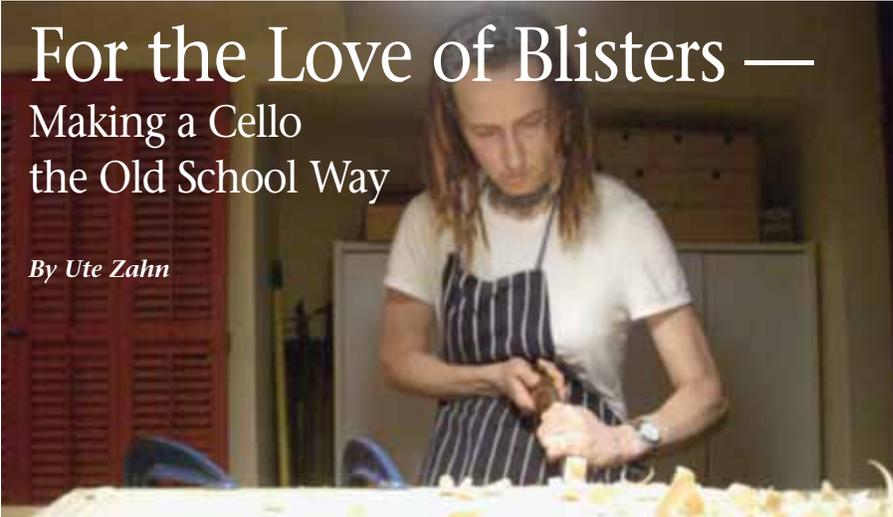
On TV we were watching *Bonanza*, *The Twilight Zone* and *The Jack Benny Show*.

Hit songs were “Put Your Head On My Shoulder,” by Paul Anka, and “Mack the Knife,” by Bobby Darin.

House of Note opens its doors.

For the Love of Blisters — Making a Cello the Old School Way

By Ute Zahn



“What?” my luthier friends say. “No machines? What do you mean, you don’t use machines?” I mumble something about the drill press, the grinding wheel and the band saw I do use, and then my eyes gradually glaze over as my friends expound on the advantages of disk and belt sanders, routers, dremel tools.

“But think of the time you could save!” they urge me, and in vain I try to explain that I enjoy using my hands, that this — in conjunction with my love of string music — is precisely what drew me to violin making in the first place. This, I think, poses an interesting question. Is it really possible to “save time” extracting from an activity the very thing that, to you, makes it worthwhile?

“Oh,” they say, “your living doesn’t depend on your making. That’s why you have the luxury of this approach.” Not true; I have always preferred the hand-made approach, even when my livelihood did depend on it. We turn the conversation into a discussion of the weather, which offers a refuge from thorny work-related questions.

My beloved Vespa apart, I can safely say that I have never had a “quality experience” involving a machine. For me, making an instrument has a certain contemplative aspect. While engaged in sawing, planing, carving, scraping the sometimes pliable, sometimes resistant matter into shape, I have to be present to the task at hand. Besides, I enjoy the attendant physical sensations — the hiss of a sharp plane flattening the back, the bite of a gouge carving an arching, the fresh wood smells — resin for spruce, acid for maple, spice for rosewood. I even relish the sore muscles

and blistered hands that often result from the physical workout of making, say, a cello. It really is rather like making a small boat.

There is, I think, a sound argument or two to be made from a craftsman’s point of view, for doing (almost) everything by hand. In the process of cutting, filing, planing every square millimeter of a piece of wood, I get intimately acquainted with its physical properties. While working with it, my hands, eyes and brain are busy assimilating data — is this hard? soft? brittle? tough? spongy? Is it pretty even across the board, or are there problem spots? This comes in handy while making decisions about the thicknesses of the plates and the size and shape of the bass bar.

Then, too, I cannot help but think that in a metier nearly entirely devoted to recreating something that was at its peak three hundred years ago, and hasn’t been improved since, there is room for doing things the traditional way. After all, don’t we wish we knew Stradivari’s secrets? Don’t we regret that some of the old tricks, recipes, methods were lost? It seems logical to me that the only way to preserve them is to use them; which is why this stubborn luthier isn’t going to change her ways anytime soon.

Featured

Instruments and Bows at House of Note

If you are interested in auditioning any of our instruments or bows please phone toll free (877) 503-2181 or (952) 929-0026 for an appointment and one of our talented sales staff will be happy to assist you.

Violin:
**GIUSEPPE FIORINI
MUNICH
1893**



This violin is in very good condition with a full deep sound and quick response. An outstanding value at \$9,000.

Viola: 16½"
**ANDREAS EASTMAN
VA605 "Russian Cut"**



This is an exceptional viola. The viola is extremely manageable because of the upper bout cut-aways. The sound is rich, dark and very cello-like. Priced with custom oblong case \$1,900.

Coda Bow Giveaway!

During the month of May, anyone trying out a Coda Bow will be entered in our drawing to receive a **free Coda Bow**.

If we pick your name you will receive a **FREE Coda SX** bow personalized with your own Monogram.

We are featuring CodaBows during the month of May at a discounted price.





House of Note

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Welcome to House of Note!

We are a full-service violin shop serving the string community since 1959. House of Note searches the world over to bring you the best-sounding instruments for the best value. Whether you're a beginner, professional or reacquainting yourself with the joys of playing, House of Note brings you the very best instruments, accessories, and personal service.

If you'd prefer to receive this newsletter via email, just drop us a note at info@houseofnote.com.

Hours:

**We are open: Monday – Wednesday, Friday
9:30 – 5:30 p.m.**

Thursday 9:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:30 – 12:00 noon (July and August)

House of Note

7210 Minnetonka Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Toll-Free: (877) 503-2181

Local: (952) 929-0026

Fax: (952) 929-6778

info@houseofnote.com

www.houseofnote.com

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Annual June SALE 10% OFF All Instruments

**For your convenience, Evening hours
on Thursday until 8:00 p.m.**

**Just a few of the many services we
at House of Note have to offer:**

- INSTRUMENT AND BOW REPAIR**
- INSTRUMENT & BOW RESTORATION**
- APPRAISALS**
- TONAL ADJUSTMENTS**
- INSTRUMENT TRADE-INS**
- THE FINEST RENTAL INSTRUMENTS**

Advantages to Purchasing from House of Note:

All instruments, regardless of price, are professionally reconditioned and set up with the same care. We maintain a large selection in all price ranges under \$15,000. Home trials are available, allowing the player and teacher time to assess an instrument or bow. Written appraisals are included with all fine instrument purchases. Repairs of previously owned instruments are guaranteed for one year.

Friends at House of Note

Proud to be serving the next generation of string players.

Mark Anderson teaches strings in the St. Louis Park Schools. His children Eric and Leah are second generation House of Note customers.

Jennifer McGuire is a violin teacher in Minneapolis. Her mother was a Suzuki Mom when Jennifer started violin in 1975. Jennifer got her

first violin from House of Note. Now Jennifer has two children also playing violins from House of Note. We are pleased to be a part of this second-generation House of Note family.

Pictured above are Mark Anderson and his children, Eric and Leah.



**Be sure to stop in and register for our
monthly \$50.00 Gift Certificate Drawings.**

Congratulations to our monthly winners:

January – Robin Sternberg

February – Martha Norton

March – Sage Jenson