

Guy Klucevsek and Cody McSherry – A Heartwarming Story of Coincidences

By Joan Grauman, AAA Historian

As a believer in miracles, I am so pleased to be able to share this beautiful story – one that I witnessed from start to finish (or, perhaps I should say, “a new beginning”?!).

I will start with the young, brilliant accordionist Cody McSherry, then just 12 years old, asking me to teach him Balkan meters and harmonies. He was fascinated by a workshop I had given on the topic and he wanted to learn more. So, the week that Cody turned 13, he and his parents came to stay at our house and I prepared lesson materials and a CD for him. I demonstrated simple 7/8 tunes and described the mathematics and accenting of the asymmetrical Balkan meters. It is difficult for most people to grasp the actual “feel” of these meters. This takes time – for most people – but not for Cody (and this is an understatement!!).

Cody learned and mastered 7/8 meter, with proper accents, learned the melodies and harmonies I provided, played the pieces flawlessly.... in about ten minutes. OK, let’s move on to 5/8 meter. Now 9/8. Cody was so excited and he wanted to learn more. “These are difficult,” I warned as I introduced 11/16 and 15/16 meters. He mastered these with delight and precision and we moved on to Bulgarian ornamentation and how to create the hauntingly lovely harmonies.

How many days did this take, you ask? *All of this took less than ONE HOUR!!* I was as excited as Cody was, plus totally shocked, as I was watching this lovable, gifted child’s mind process things I didn’t imagine possible in such a short amount of time!

Now let’s move on three weeks from that fateful week at our house. We and the McSherry family are at the 2016 AAA Festival in Buffalo, New York. Celebrated composer and accordionist Guy Klucevsek is on stage premiering his beautiful AAA commissioned work, “Three Tributes”, honoring three people in the accordion world who had recently passed away: Evan Harlan, Faithe Deffner and Walter Kuehr. The first of the three is “Evan-essence”. This piece begins in 9/8 meter and I look over at Cody, who is on the edge of his seat listening with delight. The meters change, the harmonies are gorgeous – a terrific piece! At the end of the concert, Cody runs to me, beaming. “Joan!! Guy’s first piece was in 9/8, then 7/8, then 5/8.” He was absolutely right, and he could hardly wait to learn to play Guy’s exciting composition.

Now it’s 2017, Cody has just turned 14 years old, and we and the McSherrys are at the AAA Festival in Princeton, New Jersey. Cody expressed sadness that Guy Klucevsek was not there as Cody was going to compete in the Carmen Carozza Memorial Competition, Junior Division, and play “Evan-essence” as one of his selections (Cody is a student of AAA President Mary Tokarski). Cody played beautifully and took first place in the competition. Later that evening, we all gathered in the ballroom for the Gala Concert. The McSherrys asked me to sit in the back of the room with them since my husband Dan was videotaping. Suddenly I noticed that Guy and Jan Klucevsek were sitting directly in front of us! “Guy Klucevsek is here, Cody!” Cody jumped up, I introduced them to each other, and Cody asked Guy if he could get his accordion and play “Evan-essence” for him after the concert. Guy was noticeably moved and delighted! I couldn’t help but wonder, “What if Guy sat in the front, or the other side of the room?” Throughout the concert, I thought of how small moments of time can create such enormous changes in one’s life.

Cody played for Guy and Dan videotaped it. It was pure joy for Guy and for the small group of us watching this special moment!

Guy's words expressed to me in an email, a few days later, said it all:

"I celebrated my 70th birthday earlier this year, [and Cody is just 14]. I love that my music can reach across the generations! This was one of the most unexpected and beautiful moments of my life. To see such an enthusiastic, joyful, not to mention technically brilliant, performance of my piece by someone so young and talented, in a private performance for me and a small group of rapt family members and mutual friends, was a great honor and a rare privilege! It has long been my desire to have other accordionists play my music, and to see that happen by someone so young and gifted was the dream of a lifetime."



Cody McSherry performs for Guy Klucevsek



Guy and Jan Klucevsek watch Cody perform

Cody's mother, Dianna McSherry said, *"Having the opportunity to play the piece for Guy was the absolute highlight of the weekend for Cody – even more important than winning the competition!"*

Cody is already working on other compositions by Guy and I feel that a wonderful, lifelong friendship will result from this magical moment in time!

The very important "moments" that led to this event kept running through my mind as I prepared to write this article. I was inspired to write a poem for these two kind, appreciative and brilliant musicians:



Guy hugs Cody after performance

A Moment in Time – for Guy Klucevsek and Cody McSherry
By Joan Grauman

*A moment in time
Something totally new
Magical musical meters
So exciting for you.*

*An urge, a spark, a thought
That moment when it's taught
Joy in knowing that what you hear
Suddenly seems so very clear.*

*A moment in time
A song so sweet
Made that much sweeter
By someone you meet.*

*A moment in time
That's all it can take
And, oh what a difference
That moment can make!*