Interview with Shawn LeSure

Shawn LeSure is a violinist from Memphis, TN, who began attending Apple Hill in the early 2000s. He is now a fellow at Community MusicWorks in Providence, RI. We interviewed him via email.

Quite fortuitously, one day, the Apple Hill Chamber Players happened upon my corner of the globe: Memphis, TN. I was corpulent teen-violinist. I thought that I would give the application a chance, though secretly I was unsure that I would ever make it there; but, lo and behold, I was accepted, and attended two sessions that summer.

In preparation I watched the Apple Hill Playing for Peace VHS a million times—I had practically memorized the Mozart Oboe quartet!

The first summer of Apple Hill was truly like a dream—even today I feel the waves of that dream-world wash over my memory. I was playing the funeral march movement of Schumann’s Piano Quintet; and the skies opened up, and rain was pouring, like the clouds hitting critical mass and relieving their copious tears; beads and beams of water fell; lighting dotted the sky with flashes of brilliance, and thunder sounded deep and ominous upon those hills. Quite suddenly we were outside, running and screaming; feeling the rain wash over us and delighting in it. Sooner than it began, it was over—mysteriously, and we were inside again—silent—we were suddenly awake to some fundamental truth of being.

I cried my eyes out—and I still don’t know why. Something about being in the woods—close to nature, with all of its murmuring, something about being at that place delighted my heart.

At Apple Hill, I learned what it means to listen. To be honest, I’m still working on it – we need more listening in the world. Listening for its own sake. At Apple Hill, I first came in touch with the vast inner world of my psyche—and today I’m still unwrapping what was first opened at Apple Hill.

I’m extremely fortunate—and one could even say blessed; getting to attend Apple Hill for so many summers—meeting amazing people—from all over the world—and connecting with them on a supremely human level. The beauty of this place is timeless and enduring—like from a distant star—both near to us and far away in beauty.