

Ndidi Menkiti began her cello studies with George when she joined Project STEP in 1989 and went on to study at Harvard University.

Remembering Mr. Seaman, by Ndidi Menkiti

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It is a daunting task to try and put into words the extraordinary person George was. Even to recount his patient kindness, overwhelming generosity, and undying capacity for hope, might come short of doing him justice. What I will do though, is share with you a little of what George, or Mr. Seaman as I affectionately called him, meant to me.

Mr. Seaman was my first cello teacher. I began studying with him when I was six. Lessons with him quickly became the high point of my week. I never felt scared to play for him or worried about whether I was well enough prepared. Mr. Seaman was anything but intimidating or negative. His goal was always to encourage his students and make them enjoy music, never to humiliate them into practicing. When my mother asked him to make me practice, he simply said "that's not my job. My job is to make her love music." And he certainly did that. It is during the six years of studying with Mr. Seaman that music for me developed from hobby into a passion.

The part of lessons I looked forward to most was the second part, after the scales and etudes. That's when the real fun began! Together we made music: Mr. Seaman at the piano enthusiastically using his keyboard skills and calling out directions from his post. And I eagerly followed, inspired and invigorated by his enthusiasm.

Mr. Seaman's positive and encouraging teaching style made learning and performing a mutual endeavor. His extraordinary dedication assured me that we were in the process together. If I had a recital or audition to prepare for, he ran over time or went out of his way to schedule extra lessons to make sure I felt prepared. He genuinely enjoyed teaching and wanted me to excel as much as I wanted it myself.

Mr. Seaman's dedication was unwavering. His commitment to his students was not only musical, but personal. He came to recitals and took an interest in other aspects of our lives. When Mr. Seaman recommended that I change teachers after six years, I cried. But he assured me it was not because he wanted to get rid of me but because it was in my best interest. He promised we would keep in touch and perform together at Longy's "Generations" concerts in the future. As was his style, he kept his promise.

Mr. Seaman always had a way of making you feel special and worthy of his time. He was the kind of mentor every parent wishes will come and make a positive difference in their child's life. It is not often that you find a teacher who cares so much or has a heart so big. His capacity for kindness and unselfish generosity were truly remarkable. I am forever indebted to him for being a central figure in my childhood. I know I am lucky; for a teacher like Mr. Seaman is a blessing that is precious and rare.