

Marion Feldman, New York
A Very Rare Teacher
By **BILL BLACKARD, New York Correspondent**

Cellist Marion Feldman pursues her dreams and challenges herself in front of the Gohonzon. After 25 years of Buddhist practice, her life has become one of overwhelming benefit and joy. A school has recently established a scholarship in her name.

On Jan. 24, the Manhattan School of Music established a scholarship in Marion Feldman's name. Her parents and 50 of her friends and current and past students gathered to cheer this remarkable cellist. During a jubilant presentation ceremony, the president of the school read the following tribute:

"Marion Feldman is a very rare teacher. Her dedication to her students engenders love and loyalty that is evident in the creation of the Marion Feldman Scholarship. She gives generously of her time and energies, and her students respond with their eagerness to work hard and their devotion to her. Their musicality, sensitivity and confidence are tributes to her teaching. To be among her past or present students is a privilege, and we are all happy to be here today to express gratitude to this wonderful lady."

When Marion Feldman was 6, growing up in Brooklyn, her mother decided that she and her siblings — two sisters and one brother — should have a musical education. One of Marion's sisters chose the violin, the other chose the bassoon and her brother chose the piano.

Marion chose the cello — an instrument as big as she!

Despite the cello's intimidating size and the fact that she and her siblings had to practice simultaneously in a small apartment, Marion's love of the cello's sound and her strong desire to play led her to become one of the most respected cellists and pedagogues in the United States.

As a young cellist, Marion was accepted to New York's prestigious High School of Music and Art. She then won a scholarship to the renowned Juilliard School, where she earned her master's degree. After graduating in 1962, Marion began teaching and performing as a freelance musician.

Although her reputation and career were growing, she felt that her life had no real direction. She had no dreams for the future. She was constantly depressed.

In 1973, on the way to a job, a fellow musician told her about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and invited her to a meeting. Marion had been approached by other Buddhists before and had never been interested. But this time, something sparked her seeking spirit. The next week, she attended her first meeting. Impressed with what she heard and desperate to become happier, Marion began chanting and doing activities immediately.

The friend who introduced her encouraged her to picture where she wanted to be in five, 10 and 20 years. She soon found that everything she chanted for brought her back to the mirror of herself, face to face with her strengths and weaknesses.

For example, Marion chanted to perform more. Her prayers were answered when she joined an enormously successful piano trio with which she played at least 30 concerts a year. She also had the opportunity to appear as orchestral soloist on numerous occasions. And she found a pianist with whom she could present sonata recitals.

At the same time, though, she was forced to confront her overwhelming stage fright. She chanted to the Gohonzon to overcome her fear and did her best in her performances. She

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soon realized that her fear had become nonexistent.

Chanting in this way — with a dream in her heart — Marion is always presented with larger and larger problems to challenge. Whether it involves helping a difficult student, fighting for a student's acceptance at a conservatory, finding scholarship funds for a student or supporting fellow Buddhists in practice and study, Marion's tenacity in front of the Gohonzon is a source of encouragement to all who know her.

With incredible consistency, she sets goals and attains them in her personal and professional life. She maintains her performing career as a soloist and chamber musician. She co-founded a summer chamber music school in Maine, which she ran for 10 years. And during those 10 years, she took 40 of her most gifted students to perform at the White House.

Her work has taken her to many parts of the world, including Taiwan and Korea, where she has performed and taught. And she has been invited to teach in Bulgaria this fall. Future plans include traveling to Beijing and Shanghai.

Even though her schedule is filled with rehearsals, performances and teaching, Marion always finds time to hold discussion meetings in her home and constantly encourages members to study SGI President Ikeda's writings to enrich their lives — and to win, no matter what!

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