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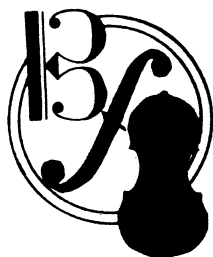


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WEST MEETS EAST IN THE ALTO CLEF

by

Milton Katims

I guess I have always known and admired the skill of the Chinese at the ping-pong table and on the volley ball court. But with the exception of the glimpse I had in Isaac Stern's fine film *From Mao to Mozart*, I knew little about the capability of the young performing musicians in China. Little did I know that this gap in my knowledge was soon to be filled in a most direct way.

It all began one day during my final year as Artistic Director of the School of Music at the University of Houston. I received a telephone call from Mr. Shen Zhen, the Chinese Consul in Houston. He wished to know if he could bring to my office a small group of distinguished visitors from the People's Republic of China. The group included Dr. Wang Zicheng, the Minister Counselor for Cultural Affairs, and the wife of a very high government official.

After answering many questions about degree plans, language requirements, applied music, music education, work-study programs, and enrollment, I guided my visitors on a brief tour of our facilities in the Fine Arts Building. They showed particular interest in the Music Library, Listening Lab and the Organ Hall. Before taking their leave, I presented them with two gifts for their Music Conservatory in Shanghai: a copy of my latest edition for viola of the Bach Six Solo Cello Suites, and a set of three cassettes of my performance of the suites. These had just recently been released. At the same time I expressed interest in visiting their fascinating country and meeting with their musicians.

Some months later, in August of 1984, I received a gracious note of appreciation from composer Sang Tong, Director of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In the letter he extended an invitation for me to come to Shanghai the following April, to give viola master classes and to conduct. I immediately accepted with pleasure. But if I thought that the wheels of academe moved slowly, I hadn't considered the wheels of the Chinese Ministry of Culture. After almost a six month exchange of letters, the official invitation finally arrived early in February. Preparations for a late March departure now began in earnest: travel plans, visas, plane-hotel reservations. And I had to practice!

But what repertoire to cover? I had no idea of the playing standard of the young Chinese violists, nor what music they would be playing for me. As I had just edited the three Bach gamba sonatas and reedited the Bach solo suites, they were fairly well in my head and fingers. I dusted off works that I hadn't taught for some time, from Boccherini and Handel to Bartók and Hindemith.

Arrival in Shanghai

After the frenetic crowds at Japan's Narita Airport, a late night arrival at the Shanghai airport was positively pastoral by comparison. The place was rather subdued, painted hospital white and there were far fewer people, but with friendly faces. A tall, bespectacled young man stepped forward as soon as he caught sight of my viola and introduced himself. Pao Jung was his name, and he spoke English quite well. (He was to be our translator at the conservatory.) With him was a lovely woman whom Pao Jung introduced as Professor Shen, the viola teacher at the school. It was her students I would be hearing during the next couple of weeks. I immediately sensed a respect for us on the part of the customs officials, not because of

our being musicians, but because we had journeyed a great distance from our country to theirs to help their young musicians.

I was told that there would be three students playing for me each morning. That first musical menu consisted of the Walton and the Bartók concertos and the Hindemith Sonata, op. 11 no. 4. The challenge of these particular works is well known to violists. I made a special effort to refresh that music the next morning, Sunday. The day of rest?

We arrived at the Guest House on the grounds of the Shanghai Conservatory which was to be our home for the next two weeks. In the spacious room to which we were shown, we found a tray of sandwiches and a large pot of tea. There were heavy quilted covers on the beds. We soon learned the need for those warm covers. It was quite cold in Shanghai at the end of March, and the Guest House, like most homes in the city, had no heating system. Our hosts learned of our discomfort and immediately produced a large, efficient electric heater for our room. We were to discover that members of the audience at concerts in the conservatory wear their coats, scarves and sweaters during the performances because of the lack of heat in the hall.

The following morning we came rather close to having an American breakfast: orange juice from a cardboard container, eggs that had been fried in a good deal of oil, bread that had been burnt in an oven, and a glass of black coffee. After that first experience we developed a practical sign language. We were successful in ordering a four minute boiled egg by making an oval with the thumb and index finger of the left hand while holding up four fingers with the right hand. The meals at the Guest House were decidedly different from the American-Chinese food I knew.

A Sunday afternoon, Professor Shen and Pao Jung (with a young lady driving one of the conservatory's cars) took my wife and me to Shanghai's justly famous Temple of the White Jade Buddha. Expertly dodging pedestrians, bicyclists, and buses bulging with people, our driver finally parked the car on a busy street near the temple. It was completely surrounded by a wide variety of buildings in a teeming part of the city. But as soon as we were in the courtyard and then inside the temple itself we felt that in this oasis of quiet and beauty we had escaped into the past. We had left the frantic activity and noise of the 20th century outside. Everywhere I looked there was exotic beauty. The large White Buddha is the centerpiece of a wide assortment of eye catching Oriental religious art made out of many materials--jade, gold, wood, glass--and skillfully woven tapestries. Just inside the entrance to the temple is the most gigantic temple block I have ever seen. My wife, Virginia, could not resist picking up the appropriately large mallet and striking the instrument. The resulting sound was deep, most impressive. I felt that this whole experience was an ideal way to put me in the right frame of mind for my first meeting with the Chinese students the following morning.

The Master Class

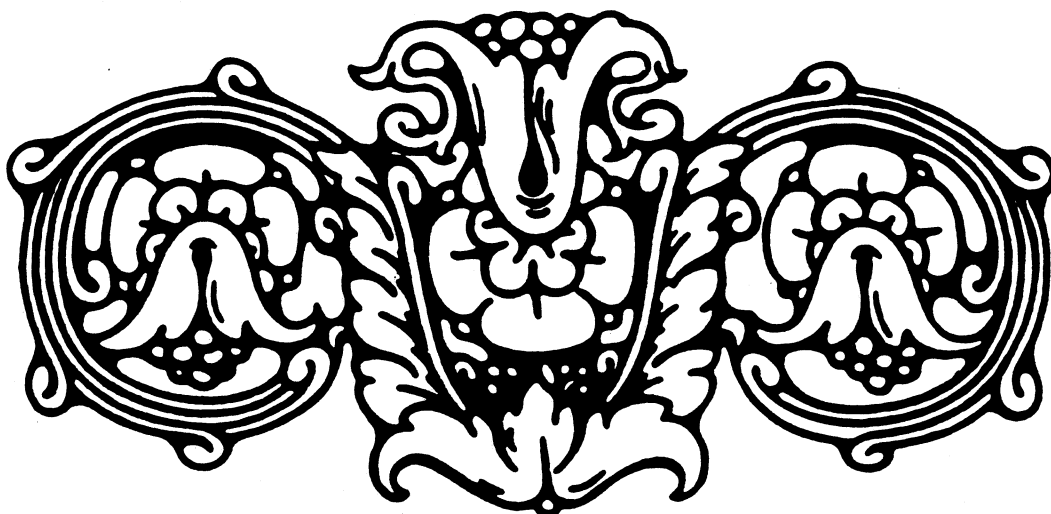
Right after breakfast, Pao Jung appeared and escorted me to a studio in a nearby building. (Like millions of his fellow Shanghaians, he had ridden his bike to work, leaving his home at 6 a.m.) Awaiting me in the large room were about fifteen violists and auditors, all of whom rose to greet me. Professor Shen first introduced me to a tall young lady, Wang Lan, who was to be our pianist for all of the sessions. Next to the piano, viola already tuned and in hand, stood a tall, soft-spoken young man Liu Yun-Jie. He spoke a little English mixed with his native Chinese. Without too many preliminary

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words of any kind, Liu started playing the first movement of the Walton Concerto. With the very first phrase I sat up attentively and became engrossed in the sounds that flowed from his viola. He produced an attractive, well rounded viola tone, with accurate intonation. He met the technical challenges of the work very skillfully. And there was very evident musical understanding and a real inner feeling for this music. All I could think of was how naturally he handled this music of our Western world. I was quite sure that I could not begin to have the same understanding of his music, music indigenous to this Oriental soil.

When he finished the first movement, and I had made a few comments, I was curious to learn the name of the maker of his viola. He showed me his instrument and with the help of Pao Jung, explained that it had been made by the violin maker on the Conservatory staff. I was to learn that all of their string instruments came from the hands of this expert artisan. In another department, harps and even strings were made at the school. Virginia, a fine cellist, was so impressed with the school cellos which she heard and played that she plans to have the same Shanghai violin maker create a copy of her beautiful Ceruti cello.

The next student was a young lady, Chen Qing, so attractive that I can hear some of my American colleagues saying "she doesn't have to know how to play!" But indeed she could play! She performed the Bartók Concerto with all of the confidence and sweep of an experienced performer. She had a fine vibrant sound, played very much in tune, possessed all the necessary technical dexterity and had good stage presence. (At this point I congratulated Professor Shen on the playing of these two students. Any viola teacher would be proud to claim them.) Very much like Liu before her,

Chen Qing also had quite a mature grasp of the style of the music. With such talents, I was able to discuss the more subtle aspects of making music, beyond the physical demands of the instrument. The playing challenged me as I had not been challenged since I taught at the Juilliard School of Music some years ago. Obviously these young Chinese musicians were disciplined and prodigious workers to have accomplished so much. I later wrote an appropriately glowing letter of recommendation in behalf of Chen Qing for post graduate work at Indiana University's School of Music.

Not all of the violists I heard were of this high calibre. Professor Shen had shrewdly started the master classes with her prize pupils, Liu and Chen. Each of the others, however, had something to offer as, day after day, we explored the viola music of Bach and Handel, Brahms and Schumann, Bartók and Bloch. It was only when one young man assayed the Bloch Suite that I felt that the style of this music was quite foreign to him. Although he handled the viola well enough, he didn't approach any understanding of the content of this music. Whether or not I succeeded in converting him to a feeling for Bloch, I don't know.

I was naturally delighted to learn that several of the violists were using my editions and transcriptions. The fact that there were a number of xerox copies among them did not disturb me. I readily understood why. There were some of my recordings in the record library, and no doubt, there were also cassette copies around. I brought with me a video-cassette of *Mozart in Seattle*, a TV Special I had made with violinist Henryk Szeryng some years ago. I wondered if the conservatory had the necessary equipment to show the program to the students and faculty and soon learned that the Shanghai Conservatory had a fully equipped and staffed recording studio. All of the concerts by visitors, faculty and

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By

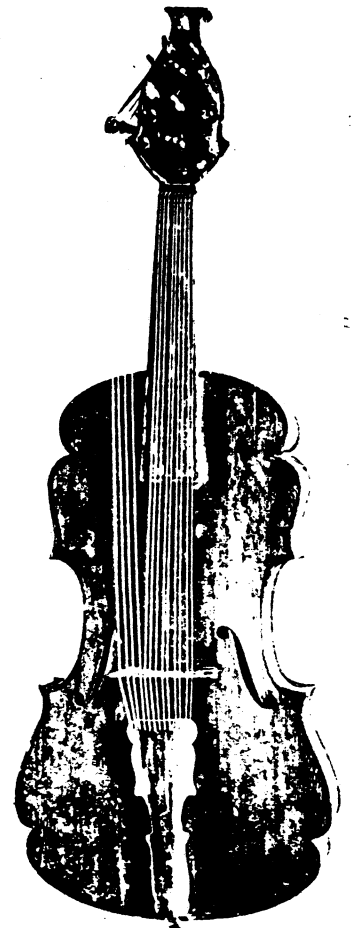
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students were recorded. The recording engineers made a good copy of *Mozart in Seattle* and asked permission to make it available to the PRC national TV network. I gladly gave them my okay. Later, when I told Szeryng, he was delighted.

Toward the end of the first week we were invited to a small banquet to be given in our honor by Director Sang Tong and Deputy Director Li Mingqiang at the Jing Jang hotel. Their wives, Professor Shen, and Pao Jung were the other guests. When we entered the private dining room, the first thing I noticed was the very artistic way the round table had been set. I was particularly intrigued by the way each napkin had been folded into the shape of a different animal. (At the same time I mentally wondered if it would have been possible to fold the napkins into the shape of different instruments.) It was a virtuoso display of the art of origami. Before sitting down to a 13 course dinner, each of us was served a small glass of a colorless liquor. This fiery drink must surely be China's answer to Russian vodka, but it's much stronger. During dinner many toasts were made, but I succeeded in limiting my intake of this fire water by substituting plain water. We were offered dish after dish. Anticipating the amount of food to be served, I ate only a few bites from each. I never asked for any food to be identified. I feared that if I knew what I was eating, I wouldn't. It was an elegant, unforgettable evening. I kept the beautifully printed menu, which I can't read.

Chinese TV

As I have mentioned, most mornings were spent meeting with all of the violists, exchanging musical ideas as we covered much of the viola literature. They seemed to welcome my interspersing remarks and tales of experiences with Toscanini and Casals. On the few occasions when we turned

on our TV in the afternoon, we were not really surprised to find the state controlled airwaves filled with serious educational programs teaching English and math at all levels. This bodes well for the intellectual future of the Chinese. (I couldn't even imagine a Chinese soap opera on that Oriental screen.) In the evenings, when there were concerts by a visiting artist or a member of the faculty, we would walk to the concert hall. It was always easy to anticipate the size of the audience by the number of bicycles parked outside.

If there was no concert, we would stay in our room and sample the TV fare during prime time. In addition to viewing exciting ping-pong and volley ball matches, and Chinese Opera with its extraordinary variety of performers, there were also concert performances by singers and instrumentalists. One evening we heard a young violinist play the Saint-Saëns *Havanaise*. She played with a virtuosity that belied her apparent young age. This work is a challenge to violinists of any age. The next day when I arrived at the orchestra rehearsal, I raved about this young lady to Pao Jung. He didn't say a word but led me over to the third stand of the first violin section. There she sat warming up. With the help of Pao Jung, I told her how much we had admired her performance of the Saint-Saëns. I must say, I was really amazed to find her sitting at the third stand of the violin section.

At the beginning of our second week at the conservatory I had begun to have afternoon rehearsals with the orchestra of the middle school, which is equivalent to our high school. I had already planned to give a concert just before leaving Shanghai with the first half devoted Bach, Beethoven and Brahms on my viola, and the second half with the orchestra playing the Schubert 5th Symphony in B-flat. From the very first rehearsal, the young orchestra players responded beautifully

to all of my requests and suggestions, relayed in Chinese to them by their regular conductor, Professor Wang. During the early part of the week the string players seemed to be somewhat ahead of their wind colleagues in performance and understanding. But, by the time we reached the day of the concert, they were all very much with me.

I wondered where all of these young people had started on the road to such musical excellence. Surely it was not in their homes. Even if there had not been that devastating Cultural Revolution (it really is misnamed and should be called anti-Cultural Revolution), I don't believe their parents could have provided a home environment conducive to such understanding and dedication to Western music. I was told that during that trying seven-year period, the conservatory had been closed. Not a note of music was allowed to sound. The faculty and directors were being "reeducated" by peasants and soldiers. Most musicians and intellectuals were sent to work on farms or in factories. If it had continued much longer, the result might well have been an entire lost generation of musicians.

The Children's Palace

One answer to my wonderment might very well lie in the fascinating Children's Palace which we visited the day before leaving Shanghai. The impressive building, which had been the home of the widow of Sun Yat Sen, houses a very special school for gifted children. Here in this spacious facility, music (both Western and Chinese), dance, and the visual arts are taught. It was quite an experience to be escorted through the building by a fourteen-year old boy who spoke English quite well, to go from room to room and witness the training being given to these alert young people. There was a piano class, a string orchestra, and orchestra of ethnic

instruments, an orchestra of accordians, a chorus, a wind ensemble and a ballet class. We were impressed with their skills but even more with their obvious joy in what they were doing. I am quite sure that the best of these young musicians are sent on to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to continue their training.

It was very cold the night of my concert. I thought my hands and fingers would never be warm again. Professor Shen very thoughtfully brought me a small hand warmer, and by the time I had to play, my fingers were again moving. A few days before the concert, Virginia and I had gone to see an exhibition of scrolls painted by the famous Chinese artist Ying Ye Ping. We met the painter at the gallery and told him how much we admired his paintings. In return for the pleasure he had given us, Virginia invited him to my concert. He came with his son, who teaches Western philosophy at the Shanghai University. At the end of the program Mr. Ying asked to be brought backstage to greet me. He told me he had enjoyed the music so much that he wished to give us one of his paintings. I was extremely touched. That inspirational reminder of our all too brief visit to Shanghai now hangs on the wall in our living room. What a beautiful way to remember our warm Chinese friends!

Milton Katims was principal violist of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini. He later turned to conducting as his major professional endeavor while continuing to perform on the viola at the Prades and Puerto Rico Festivals with Casals, for instance. He was longtime music director of the Seattle Symphony, and most recently, head of the school of music at the University of Houston where he was the host chairman of the XI International Viola Congress.



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HOBSON'S CHOICE?

by

Watson Forbes

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Now, you have paid an awful lot of money for some pieces of wood joined together with glue. Apart from the investment, what is the instrument really worth? It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to separate the two ideas, namely, the basic price of the materials and the expertise of such a genius as Stradivarius. But if you are a fiddler, especially if you are a professional viola player, you have to weigh the price against the level of quality in the instrument required for your professional standing. At the beginning of this century a viola player could expect to have an old instrument by a well-known Italian maker (violas by Stradivarius are scarce) because the price of such an instrument was not excessive. If you were an international soloist it was taken for granted that you would be playing, if not a Strad, then an instrument of repute.

But great soloists don't always play nowadays on such violas, and lesser mortals sometimes have violas by less well-known makers. I know of one leading viola player who was always

praised for the beauty of his tone. He played on a fine Italian instrument of some antiquity, or so he thought! When he died and his viola was for sale, it was found to be by a very modest English maker? So perhaps it is possible to separate the value of a viola as an antique from its value as an instrument to be played. Every day of our lives we take a chair and sit down at a table. An adequate chair and table can be bought for as little as a few dollars. I was in an antique shop the other day where a Queen Anne chair was priced at \$1500 and a table at several thousand. Age, combined with superb workmanship was responsible for the difference in price. Does the same hold good for a viola?

I went into another shop where they were selling chairs and tables made by fine craftsmen of the finest wood in traditional patterns--reproduction furniture. It was quite superb. All reproduction furniture is not of this exceptional quality, but undoubtedly the best will carry great value in years to come. The trouble is, we can't all wait 200 years for this to happen! Throughout the last few centuries fine furniture has been continually produced (not always of the most beautiful design), and once it is a hundred years old it is considered to be an antique and up goes the price.

Since the time of the Amati family and Stradivarius, fine violas have been produced by expert craftsmen working on the best models of the great master. In varying degrees, these too, are highly prized, and what was once considered to be an ordinary viola may very well now command a high price. With the spread of musical appreciation and the consequent growing demand for violas, the craft of violin making has taken on a new lease of life. Through the dissemination of knowledge, the modern maker knows more about quality of wood, seasoning of wood and the matching of the various kinds of woods. Statistics of the great violas are readily

available. The all important ingredients of varnish and its application have been fully analyzed, though not standardized. Really first rate craftsmen have come to the fore in European countries and America. How do these new violas compare with the masterpieces of the past?

Modern Violas

A brand new viola should, straight away, sound good if it is to have any chance of being of value. It will, if played upon, tend to improve during the first five years of its life. It matures like fine wine. The various pieces of wood seem to marry happily, and the varnish should by then become as one with the wood and be thoroughly dry, even if the varnish is oil based. During the second five years the viola should improve marginally, and by ten years old it will be just about as good as it will ever be. Thereafter the tone might lose something of its sharp quality, and in time become more mellow--but essentially, the instrument will be fully mature at ten years old. The second five years is the danger period. A viola that is not well made (wood too thin, or wrongly graded in its thickness), can improve during the *first* five years, only to fade away during its second period. Once this happens there is nothing that can be done to rescue it, and the only thing to do is to get rid of it. These sound like dogmatic statements, but they are not intended to be so. There are always exceptions and room for errors of judgement, but by and large these remarks are founded on my own observations.

How does the sound of a mature viola of ten years old compare with the best violas of the past by celebrated master craftsmen? Actually the best of the modern violas stand up to the test very well. Experiments with having various violas, of different vintages, played behind a screen so that their identity should not be revealed, have often

confounded connoisseurs. Occasionally a modern viola has been declared the superior instrument. So we must conclude that it is quite possible to produce violas which, in tonal quality, are indistinguishable from the best that the past has had to offer.

Undoubtedly such masters as the Amati family and Stradivarius set the standard, and it would be foolish for any modern maker to ignore these ideals. Most modern makers make reproductions of a favorite design by these old masters. Yet there is room for individuality, more so in violas than for violins and cellos, since the size has never been standardized. The older designs, however, are not merely repeated by the modern maker, he must not lose the fundamental reality in the new creation, that is, the expression, even in a limited degree, of his own personality. A slavish repetition will be dull. There should always be the realization of dealing with wood and its unknown qualities. To stray too far from the ideal is to have fun in experimentation. But how rarely have these deviations been successful? The viola, especially, has been a favorite hunting ground for these deviations, but saner views now seem to be in vogue.

Evaluating and Selecting

I have sometimes been in the company of players with several violas to play and evaluate. One of the most interesting things to emerge is the fact that each player still sounds like himself in spite of which instrument he chooses to play. The individual personality still shines through. A certain degree of difference is sometimes noticeable that can be attributed to the instrument, but it is slight and mostly unremarkable. We read how expert opinion suggests that tonally only 5% at most can be attributed to the viola, the other 95% being due to the player.

If you are a viola player you can even get an instrument made to measure. We are all built differently, some with long arms, large hands and a strong build--the ideal for a viola player--and others are less well well equipped but need not despair. The cult of the large viola is a recent development. The aim for greater sonority, especially on the C string is now of foremost importance. But it has not always been so. Mozart's viola was little more than fifteen inches in body length. The violas made by Guadagnini were all of sixteen inches, or less. There are lovable qualities of sound to be realized from a smaller viola not always so seductively possible on the larger instruments. The smaller viola is often found to be handier than its bigger brother for violinists who wish to change every now and again to the alto clef. But the ideal size really lies between sixteen inches and sixteen and three quarter inches, or exceptionally, seventeen inches.

So what is the young viola player with limited means to do? One solution is to try all the violas he can assemble within his price range, and on finding one by a living craftsman to suit him, to buy it, or ask the maker to make one especially for him. With a new instrument there is always a gamble as to whether it will turn out to be all right or not. But if the choice has been wise, the risk is minimal. Better by far to put your limited amount of cash towards a new, sound instrument, than pay out a vast sum (mortgaged) for a cracked, resurrected old creak that has seen better days. As you get on in the profession and find you can buy something of value by a well-known maker, and fifty, to several hundred years old, by all means invest in it. But do realize that much of its value is in its antiquity. And don't part with your present day instrument. It might still sound better!

Watson Forbes, *distinguished British*

violinist, has written extensively for and about the viola. His editions and arrangements for the instrument number over 100 examples.

ALESSANDRO ROLLA'S STRING MUSIC

by

Luigi Inzaghi

(Continued from AVS Journal, Vol.1 No.2)

There is a period of 17 years between the publication of the Opus 10 duets in 1809 and the Opus 12 duets in 1826. During this time, Rolla experienced a series of "Romantic" musical events. In early November, 1807, Muzio Clementi came from Vienna and played in Milan. He spent time there until December, 1808. Earlier in 1807, Clementi had negotiated with Beethoven the English publication rights for the following of his works: the three quartets of Opus 59, the Fourth Symphony (which Rolla would conduct in 1813), the Overture to *Cariolanus*, The Fourth Piano Concerto, and the Violin Concerto.

In 1813, Paganini played for the first time at La Scala, greatly impressing the audience, the critics, and Rolla. In his variations on *Le Streghe*, he showed for the first time his left-hand pizzicato and double harmonics passages. The German critic Peter Lichtenthal wrote that Rolla reported: "From a technical point of view, Paganini is one of the greatest violinists in the world."⁸ And in 1816, Louis Spohr played in Milan his Violin Concerto No. 8, Opus 47, known as the *Gesangsszene*, which is fully romantic in style. Spohr himself then performed at Rolla's house his Duo for Two Violins, Opus 39, which he had composed just before coming to Italy.

All of these experiences must have

shaken Rolla's sensitivity, and undoubtedly led him into reconsidering his compositional style. He did not stop composing, but came more under the influence of Beethoven, and turned his talents to composing works like the sonatas for fortepiano and violin (BI. 291, 292, 294), the Sonata for Viola and Bass (BI. 323), and the sonatas for violin and viola (BI. 81, 99, 110) dedicated to Antonia Bassi of Trezzo sull'Adda. Rolla knew from Bassi's copies the recent publications of several works of Beethoven, including the Kreutzer Sonata (Opus 47) and the Sonata for Violin and Piano, Opus 12, as well as the two Opus 5 sonatas for cello and piano.

The Sonatas for Violin and Viola

The three sonatas for violin and viola mentioned above were published in Milan by Luigi Scotti in 1810. Although there are no harmonics or left-hand pizzicati, the technique in them clearly approaches the style of Paganini. There are long passages on the violin's G string in the first two sonatas (in BI. 110, the first theme of the Allegro, and in BI. 99, the first theme of the Allegro Moderato). Rolla uses chromatic scales, double stops, string crossing, and--especially in the Polonese of the Sonata in A Major (BI. 99) and in the Allegro Moderato of the Sonata in F Minor (BI. 80)--passages on two strings which foreshadow Paganini's use of similar techniques in his Caprices.

These three sonatas, which are characterized by their excellent style, rich imagination, and great expressiveness, have three completely different finales of considerable virtuosity. The Theme with Variations (BI. 110), or which the fourth variation is built on arpeggiated thirty-second notes, is a crucial test for the violinist. The Polonese (BI. 99), with its pleasant delicate theme, becomes brilliant through the use of double stops. And the Allegro agitato of BI. 81 gets its

dramatic effects by means of spiccato bowing on two strings.

The best of the three sonatas is surely the third in F minor; it is a composition of pre-Romantic taste, which inspired the composer in his best known string quartet in the same key with the same type of Allegro agitato finale. This sonata leads one to think that Rolla already knew the early works of Beethoven and that he possessed a technique on the violin second only to that of Paganini.

The Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin

From the point of view of virtuosity, the sonatas for fortepiano and violin (BI. 291, 292, 294) are inferior to those I have just mentioned. The fortepiano often dominates the violin part, which acts as a harmonic support. In these sonatas, Rolla approaches the style of Beethoven's Opus 12 sonatas which, in turn, are based on Mozart's works; he is most successful in the Sonata in E-flat major (BI. 291). Eduardo Farina writes of these sonatas: "The Beethoven style is confirmed by the Rondo finale quasi moto perpetuo, which displays a vivacity typical of similar passages of the young Beethoven written in the same key, but which also, I feel, owes much to the very beautiful finales of Muzio Clementi."⁹

The Prestissimo of the Sonata for Viola and Bass in C major (BI. 323) is reminiscent of the Rondo of the String Trio in G, Opus 9, by Beethoven, a copy of which was also owned by Antonio Bassi.

The Duets for Two Violins

The duets for two violins are masterpieces; Rolla published only 48 of the 131 he wrote. From the point of view of style, they are similar to the duets for violin and viola. Opus 1 of the violin duets, published in 1785, is parallel in development to the second group of duets for two violas. Opus 3,

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published first by Imbault in Paris in 1786, was favorably reviewed in 1803 in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, where the reviewer suggested that it be performed by advanced violinists, as the duets "approach violin concerti" in their technical demands.¹⁰ In the Opus 5 duos (BI. 135, 231), published in 1813, there is a theme with four variations (in BI. 135) which are extremely difficult, while the imposing Opus 9 duet (BI. 157), in four movements, also published in 1813, ends the "Gran Duo Concertante Sinfonico" style.

As he did with the duets for violin and viola, Rolla abandoned composition of the duets for two violins from this point until 1830, when Ricordi in Milan and Carli in Paris published his Opus 10. These are the first of a series of instructional duets of progressive difficulty for violin students. These *Tre Duetti Progressivi*, dedicated to his pupil Giovanni Benedetto Foscari, are all in two movements: Andantino-Polonese (BI. 120) and Andante sostenuto - Rondo (BI. 182, 214).

His last group of duets for two violins is the *Tre Duetti Concertanti*, Opus 28. The third duet (BI. 125 in C minor) is in four movements. While Rolla does not entirely abandon his favorite theme and variations pattern, he ends the last movement with a marvelous Adagio in A-flat major--almost as if demonstrating that fate "knocking at the door" is rather comforting and healing, and thus encouraging to the dying artist. Rolla was 84 years old, and died fewer than five months later.

The String Trios

The trios for violin, viola, and cello number only nine, but all of them are "concerto-like" in style. The first six are dedicated to the Duke of Parma, and must therefore have been composed toward the end of the eighteenth century. The last three (BI. 342, 343, 348) are dedicated to Marquis Giulio Orsini, and were composed late in

Rolla's life; they were published in 1827, when he was 70 years old.

Unlike the six early trios, those dedicated to Marquis Orsini require great virtuosity, so much so that only three first-rate players can perform them. The eighth trio in C minor (BI. 342), in three movements, recalls in the initial Allegro a theme of one of Beethoven's Opus 18 quartets. This Allegro is built on two themes, the first for the violin and the second for the viola. In the contrasting Adagio, the violin leads in a Rossini-like cantabile style. The third movement, Polonese, is a piece that might almost have been written by Paganini and in which the three instrumentalists are faced with acrobatic difficulties. It is not hard to see here the virtuosity required by Paganini's fourteenth quartet with guitar, composed in 1820. The solo passages, particularly those for the cello, are written in such a high tessitura that frequent use of thumb position is necessary to perform the passages on two strings.

Advanced technical demands are present in all nine of the string trios, but the first six, though concerto-like in style, require less virtuoso abilities than the last three, especially since the ranges are smaller. These first six trios contain light pleasing melodies to be performed with a fairly quick bouncing bow technique. A writer in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* wrote in 1804 that "playing the trios at sight might be a daring task for all three players. Though the passages are well suited to all of the instruments, to reach the highest pitches perfectly, especially in the violin part, might not be possible when sight reading."¹¹

The String Quartets

There are two sets of string quartets--Opus 5 (BI. 399, 401, 406, dedicated to Carlos IV of Spain), published in 1807 in Vienna by Artaria, and Opus 2 (BI. 397, 405, 410, dedicated to Count

Giuseppe Archinto), published in Milan by Ricordi in 1823. They are less demanding in virtuosity than the trios.

The opening movements of the first two quartets of Opus 5 are in sonata form, with two themes in each. The first movement of the third is in a freer form, and its Rondo is more brilliant than the first two quartets.

The quartets of Opus 2 show more inspiration, an inspiration reminiscent of the young Beethoven rather than of Haydn or Boccherini. It is possible to see an influence of Beethoven in the first movement of the quartet in F minor (BI. 405), whose opening theme resembles that of the first movement of Beethoven's Opus 18, No. 1 (F major). Rolla probably knew Bassi's copy of these Beethoven quartets. The similarity can be seen in both content and texture, though key, rhythm, and character are different, and there are in Rolla's quartets virtuoso passages more typical of the "Quartetti brillanti" by Rode, Radicati, and Spohr than of Beethoven. Conversely, the third movement, Adagio ma non troppo, is Beethoven-like; in it the classic quartet style is fully emulated and, in fact, the Romantic quartet style of Schubert and Mendelssohn--to a certain extent--anticipated.

Summing up, it may be said that Rolla in his chamber music adopts a strictly classical sonata form, unlike Paganini, who almost always merely suggests it.

The accomplishment, the virtuosity, and the cantabile style of Rolla's works make this composer a master of musical classicism in Lombardy. His works from the last noble model of a style of composition which, because of the rise of nineteenth century opera, declined, though its significance did not. His works have had to await the twentieth century's rediscovery and reevaluation.

(English translation adapted by Louise Goldberg)

⁸See "Nachrichten: Mayland," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 16 (August 10, 1803), col. 231-32.

⁹E. Farina, "Le composizioni con pianoforte" in *Alessandro Rolla; Atti del Convegno* [1981], (Parma, 1984), p. 219.

¹⁰"Recensionen: Trois Duos concertants pour deux Violons... Oeuv. 3^{me}," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 5 (August 10, 1803), col. 767.

¹¹"Recensionen: Trois Trios concertants pour Violon, Alto et Bass... Liv. 2," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 6 (July 11, 1804), col. 68.

Luigi Inzaghi, a resident of Pavia in Italy, did his dissertation on Alessandro Rolla. Together with Luigi Alberto Bianchi, he published in 1981 the definitive biography and index of Rolla and his works. Inzaghi will host during September in Italy the XIV International Viola Congress.

FROM VIOLIN TO VIOLA: MORE THAN A FIFTH APART

by

Michael Tree

We were three fiddle players and a cellist, that fine afternoon in Marlboro, Vermont, when we decided to form the Guarneri Quartet. I jumped at the chance to finally devote some serious time to working on the viola. Like most violinists, my viola playing had been almost entirely of the *Hausmusik* variety.

My biggest surprise (and it took some time in coming) was realizing some of the differences in bowing technique. I

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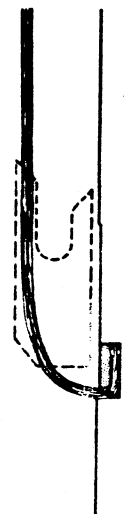
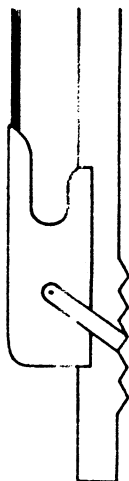


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had always assumed that widening the half-steps and vibrating a bit slower were all one needed to become an 'instant' violist. Guaranteed, or your fiddle back! For example, I had to learn to get "into" the lower strings, using a more concentrated stroke in rapid détaché passages. Of equal importance was learning to apply all the hair, particularly in the upper half of the bow.

The problem of being heard, or projecting through the quartet, caused me to experiment with all sorts of new and fairly bizarre fingerings. My colleagues would be the first to agree that some of these fingerings must never appear in print. Suffice it to say that the lower positions and unashamed use of open strings are a violist's best friends. I would very often cross over two strings to play a single note on an open string and then back again, if I thought it would sound. I call this "inner voice smart."

Many times, the so-called little notes are not clearly heard. By that I mean the sixteenth note of a dotted eighth and sixteenth note figure, or similar quick notes surrounded by notes of longer length. It is more incumbent on the middle voice player to give an extra articulation of the bow on these notes. They are otherwise lost in the overall texture. And, of course, the same must be said for repeated notes of the same pitch. Because of our earned ability to achieve a glassy smooth change of bow at either tip or frog, the intended rhythmic pulse is often erased.

The violist's positions in a quartet, being a pivotal one, puts special tonal demands on the player. Doubling either of the violins one moment, and then playing the upper line with the cello three notes later, requires a subtle change of vibrato as well as bow pressure. I believe these considerations should also be a factor in choosing one's instrument. If a viola produces

too soprano a sound (as most smaller instruments do), the quartet sounds top heavy. What we seek is an instrument that more closely matches the darkness of the cello, but with enough edge to rival the brilliance of the upper voices. Given the number of really first class makers in this country today, my advice to any violist is: buy new.

It must have taken close to a dozen concerts before I realized the importance of tuning the C string sharp to the open G. This, of course, applies to the cello as well. The reason becomes increasingly clear as the violinists begin to play above the third or fourth positions. As a matter of fact, one of the first things an oboe player learns in his or her first orchestral job is never to believe the fiddle section when they tune to their A. They may mean well, but once those ledger lines appear....

Michael Tree is the violist of the Guarneri Quartet. He is a respected teacher of the viola at the Curtis Institute of Music and St. Louis Conservatory.

EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN VIOLA CONGRESSES

by

Franz Zeyringer

In 1975, the first International Viola Congress of the International Viola Society held in the U.S.A. was convened. It was organized by Dr. Maurice W. Riley and hosted by Eastern Michigan University at Ypsilanti. Since then, there has been a congress every other year in North America: 1977 in Rochester, 1979 Provo, 1981 Toronto,

1983 Houston, and last year 1985 in Boston. The XIII Congress in Boston was therefore a kind of jubilee.

I was asked in Boston, "Which congress in America was the best?" I couldn't exactly answer this in that all those congresses were outstanding, enjoying a high standard of performance and exceptional organization. Each congress in the U.S.A. and Canada had its individual character and special features.

Furthermore, I was asked, "Are the congresses in North America better than those in Europe?" It would not be correct to render a prejudicial judgement on that. The congresses in the North America are different from those in Europe. This comes about because of the vastness of the land itself, but also because of the diversity of the Americans, their open and social nature and mentality.

From the standpoint of balance in the American congresses between the artistic and musicological compared with that of the European congresses, the fact must be recognized that the organizers of the congresses in the U.S.A. have the advantage:

1. All congresses in the U.S.A. and Canada were carried out by the respective sections of the International Viola Society in cooperation with universities. These universities offered ideal and very conducive conditions, i.e., space, living quarters, artists, ensembles, musicologists, libraries, and capital.
2. The American Viola Society and the Canadian Viola Society have among their ranks leading viola performers.
3. From a reserve of over 240 million who speak the same language comes naturally a

significantly higher number of participants.

4. Americans are more easily enthused. This comes from the nature of the people and also in part because of their relatively young music culture.

It is exactly the diversity among the congresses in North America and in Europe that makes them attractive. It would be monotonous if all congresses were alike. Those who attend the European congresses are not so numerous as those who attend the American congresses, but they represent a more colorful mixture of people. However, the language differences do represent a certain hinderance in communication.

The European congresses take place in cities whose music culture reaches back to the Middle Ages. The European still hopes to claim leadership in matters pertaining to music as visitors from abroad gaze in reverent awe at the monuments of a once lofty musical culture. As I have said regarding congresses, different conditions prevail in different locations, but all differences are subjugated by the viola, the medium of mutual understanding among and the basis for international cooperation, and the promotion of viola performance and research.

(Translated from *Viola--Informationen* Nr. 30, November 1985, by David Dalton)

Franz Zeyringer is the founder and president of the International Viola Society. He is author of the forthcoming new-edition of Literatur für Viola.

Of Interest

WILLIAM PRIMROSE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The WPMSF, initiated after the death of Dr. William Primrose, May 1, 1982, is rapidly reaching the \$10,000 goal of the AVS. When this goal is attained the first scholarship will be awarded from the accrued interest available. This will probably be possible by the time of the XV International Viola Congress, which will be held in Ann Arbor, at the University of Michigan, June 16-20, 1987.

Recent donors to the WPMSF include:

Professor Dr. and Mrs. Volker Klingmüller (second time) - Mannheim, West
Germany
Elisa Birdseye - Roslindale, MA
Francis Grime - Brookline, MA
Jill Johnson - Plains, TX
Patinka Kopec - Scarsdale, NY
A contribution of \$400 from the Canadian Viola Society
A contribution of \$1,000 from the same anonymous donor who gave this
amount earlier in 1985

Anyone who wishes to contribute to this fund should send your contribution to the AVS Treasurer, Dr. Ann Woodward. These gifts are tax deductible.

THE AMERICAN VIOLA SOCIETY AWARD

The American String Teachers Association will sponsor a national competition for violin, viola, cello, and double bass at their convention in Anaheim, California, April 8-9, 1986. Officers and members of our Executive Board were unanimous in recommending that the American Viola Society sponsor the award for the violist winning first prize. This award, for \$500, will come from the AVS treasury, and will be called "The American Viola Society Award." The \$500 does not come from the William Primrose Memorial Scholarship Fund, but is a completely separate award.

PLAYING THE VIOLA

Dr. David Dalton, professor of viola at Brigham Young University, has been informed by Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, that his new book *Playing the Viola: Conversations with William Primrose* will be published in 1987. The approximate 100,000 word volume with scores of illustrative features on the subject of the instrument plus music examples is the result of six year's work between Dalton and the late William Primrose.

This present collaboration is an outgrowth of an earlier one which resulted in the Primrose memoirs *Walk on the North Side*, published by Brigham Young University Press in 1978. The new book, which ranges in its subject matter from how to draw a lovely sound from the viola to how a soloist comports himself on stage, will be published and distributed internationally by one of the most respected and venerable publishing houses. In 1978, Oxford University Press celebrated the 500th anniversary of its founding.

LIONEL TERTIS COMPETITION

The next Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition has been tentatively set for August 13-20, 1987. For information regarding this event, write to John White, 36 Seeleys, Harlow, Essex CM17 OAD, England.

3RD INTERNATIONAL VIOLA D'AMORE CONGRESS

The 3rd International Viola d'amore Congress will take place July 10-12, 1986 at the University of Texas, Austin. Viola d'amore players, music historians, teachers, and others, will offer concerts, lecture-recitals, panels, work-shops, and other events related to the viola d'amore, its performance and history. Several world premieres of works written for the viola d'amore at this congress will take place, as well as music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods.

For information about the congress, housing and other fees, write: VIOLA D'AMORE SOCIETY OF AMERICA, at either 39-23 47th Street, Sunnyside, NY 11104, or 10917 Pickford Way, Culver City, CA 90230.

ELECTION OF AVS OFFICERS

Ballots are currently being prepared and will be sent to all members of the American Viola Society for election of new officers. The results of the election will be printed in the August edition of the AVS Journal.

New Works & Recordings . . .

IGNAZ PLEYEL VIOLA CONCERTO NOW AVAILABLE

Until recently only one of the eight viola concertos by Ignaz Pleyel has been available in modern edition, the Concerto for Viola and Orchestra in D Major, op. 31. A second Concerto, op. 26 and also in D Major, was originally published by J.J. Hummel

in Amsterdam in 1790. It has been edited by Wolfgang Granat, violist in the Philadelphia Orchestra and is now available. The work is in 3 movements: Allegro, Adagio poco andante, and Rondo Allegro. Granat's maternal grandfather, Rudolf Zwinkel was a viola student at the Hochschule für Musik, in Breslau in Upper Silesia. When he graduated he was recognized for his superior accomplishments by the school's librarian with a gift of the Pleyel Concerto. Later Zwinkel became a violist in the Breslau Philharmonic, and still later a violist in the Munich Philharmonic.

A solo part, full score (for strings, 2 oboes, and 2 horns), and parts are available on loan from the Fleisher Collection in the Free Public Library, Philadelphia, PA.

RECENT RECORDINGS

Albert Roussel, Trio, Op. 40, for Flute, Viola, and Cello, and Gabriel Pierne, Sonata de Camera, Op. 48, for Flute, Viola, and Piano. The two works on one record are performed by Robert Willoughby, flute, Catharina Meints, cello, Katherine Plummer, viola, and Wilbur Price, piano. Available from GASPARO, P.O. Box 120069, Nashville, TN 37212.

Bax Bonanza, a recent record/cassette containing the Fantasy Sonata (1927) with Michael Ponder, viola, and Imogen Barford, harp on Whitetower ENS 136 is available for \$9 plus \$3 shipping charges. Mr. Ponder with John Alley, piano, also offer the Rebecca Clarke and Bax sonatas on Whitetower ENS 123 for the same price. Write to Michael Ponder, 101 Selbourne Rd., London N. 14, England.

Milton Katims offers his three-cassette recording of the Six Cello Suites by J.S. Bach to members of the AVS at a reduced price of \$16.24. Simply send check to Mr. Katims at Fairway Estates, 8001 Sand Point Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98115.

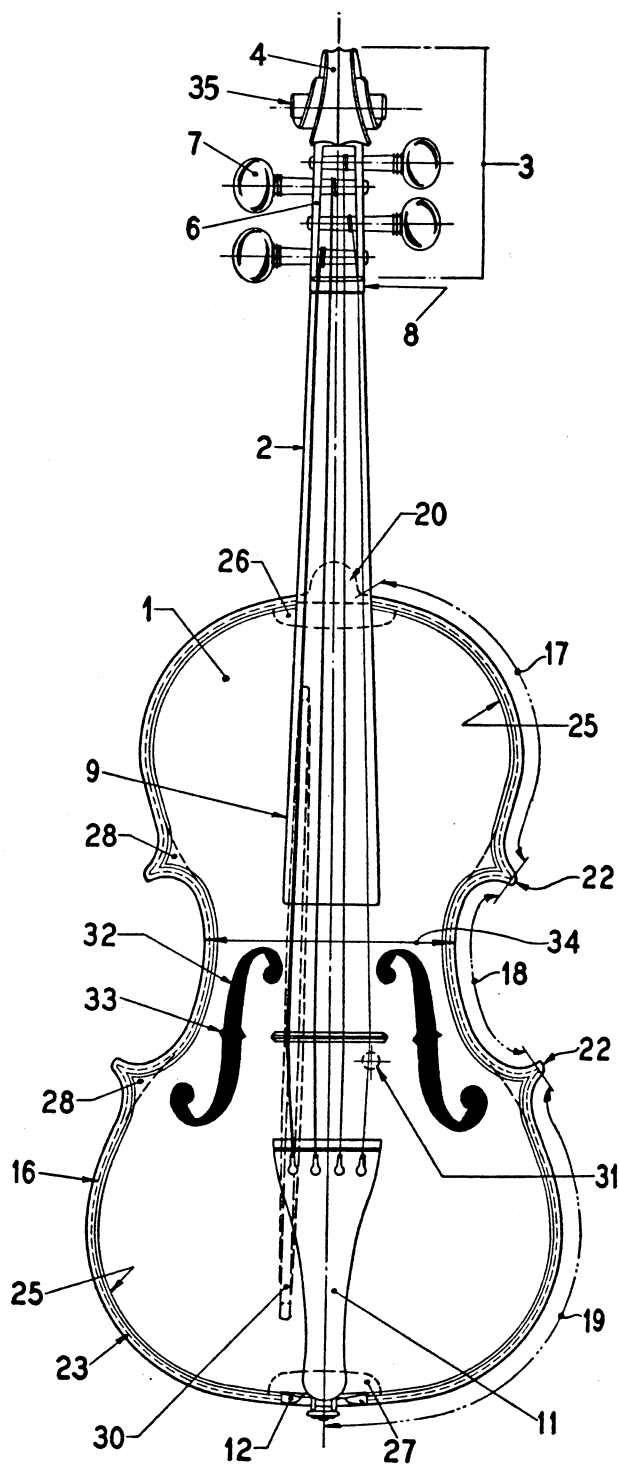
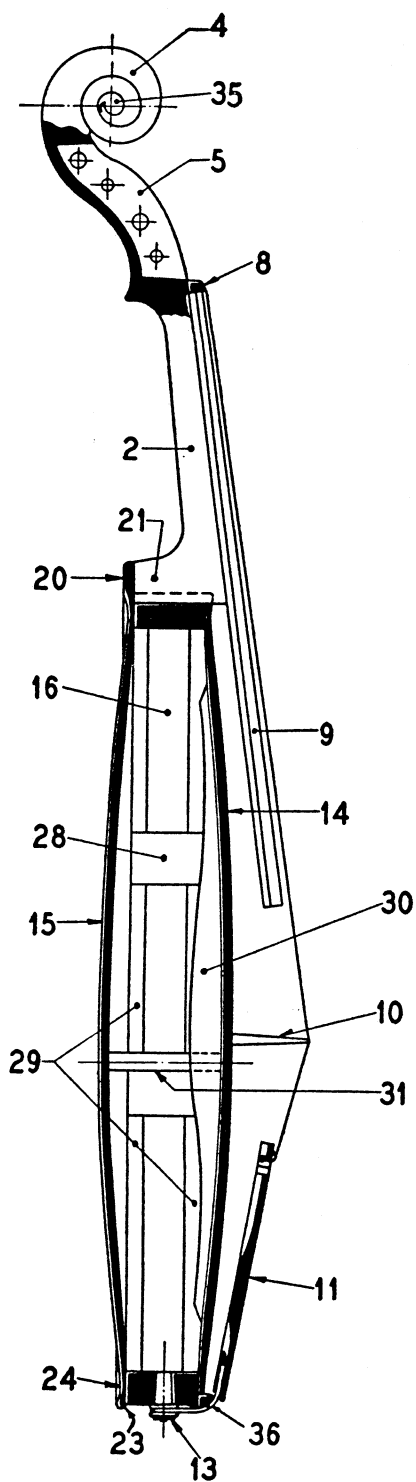
Editor's Note: Any information pertaining to the viola or violists of general interest can be submitted to the editor for inclusion in the AVS Journal. Commentary from our readership is appreciated.

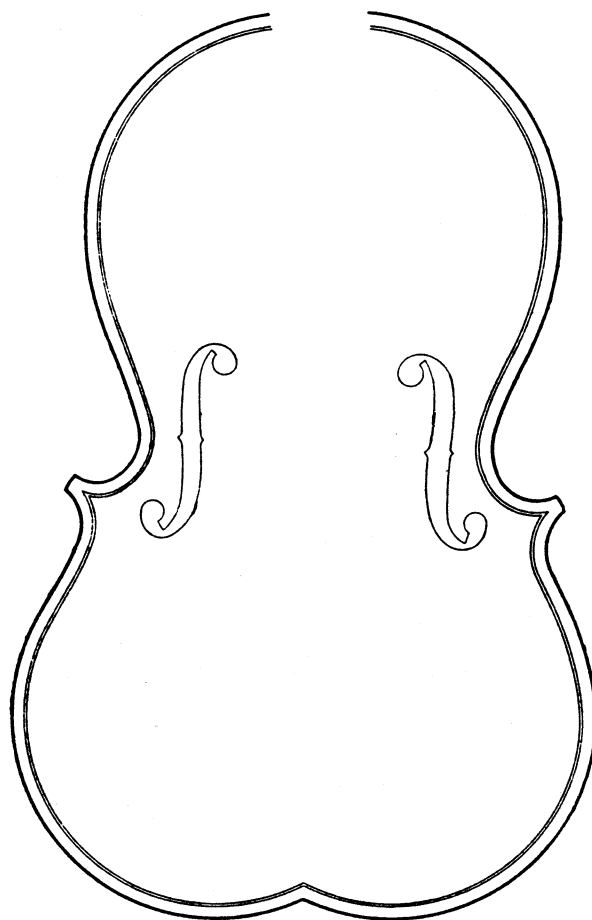


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Schol. Fund	4532.46			
December 31, 1983				
AVS	\$ 6196.37			
Schol. Fund	5285.63		\$1352.50	
December 31, 1984				
AVS	\$ 5603.79			
Schol. Fund	6198.71		\$1000.00	
December 31, 1985				
AVS	\$ 6347.08			
Schol. Fund	10163.40		\$2564.84	
RECEIPTS			EXPENDITURES	
1982				
Dues	\$1835.00		Newsletter & Operating Exp.	\$ 748.69
			Int'l Viola Research Soc.	1362.50
			XII Int'l Viola Congress	1000.00
1983				
Dues	\$4211.00		Newsletter & Operating Exp.	\$1335.01
Other	786.25		Int'l Viola Research Soc.	1352.50
	(Including exhibits at XII Int'l Viola Congress)			
1984				
Dues	\$2817.00		Newsletter & Operating Exp.	\$2231.08
Other	174.00		XIII Int'l Viola Congress	1000.00
1985				
Dues	\$4651.00		Newsletter, Journal & Operating Exp.	\$2232.21
Other	525.00		Contribution to Schol. Fund	700.00
			Partial travel for IVRS Pres. to XIII Int'l Viola Congress	500.00





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