Die Stim ist etwas rauh, so die Viole giebet.
Doch fehlt sie angenehm, dem der sie recht versteht.
Ein Stück wird edler gerührt und geliebet.
Wann dieser artige Thon zugleich darunter geht.
Rom, so die Mutter-Stadt der Musik-Künstler heißt.
IST die mein Instrument als etwas schönres preßet.
Contents

Feature Articles

p. 1  Take Care and Beware: A guide for Viola Maintenance!
     by Eric Chapman

p. 6  2006 International Viola Congress
     by Louis Privitera

p. 9  2006 Montreal Congress: Through the Lens of Dwight Pounds
     by Dwight Pounds

Departments

p. 19 New Music Reviews: Recent Viola Concertos
      by Kenneth Martinson
Take Care and Beware:
A Guide for Viola Maintenance

By Eric Chapman

Have you ever had that sinking feeling when you realized your favorite viola or bow had met an untimely fate? Have you ever had a friend tell you that he or she had accidentally backed over their instrument with a car?

With the briefest mental lapse, musicians can place the key tools of their trade in jeopardy and perhaps suffer substantial financial losses as well. Accidents happen in a split second. Many could perhaps have been avoided. For those that cannot be, it is important to be properly insured. This article will discuss habits to keep your viola protected, as well as what to consider when shopping for insurance coverage.

Accident Prevention

Based on more than thirty years in the business and having seen a wide range of bizarre accidents, here are some of my cardinal rules that should help avoid discussing a claim with your insurance agent. Most importantly, avoid thinking that accidents can’t happen to you!

- Never leave your viola on any chair or seat where it can be knocked off or squashed. Players in professional orchestras assume their colleagues are careful. However, the instrument is exposed and can be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

- Never hang a bow on the music stand or place it on the lip of the stand.

- When you put the instrument in its case, secure it by closing the case and locking or zipping it. Many a player has picked up a case that wasn’t completely closed and had the instrument fall to the floor. Broken necks are both painful and expensive!

- Keep your case closed when you have cats that find your case to be a comfortable bed.

- Never put your case on the ground behind a car.

- Never leave your instrument on the curb and drive off or leave it in a taxicab. Maintain physical contact with your instrument case when traveling. It took the Chicago Symphony a number of years to recover a viola left on the curb. The world renowned violinist in New York who left his Strad in a taxi cab was extremely lucky to get it back.

- Do not place your instrument in the trunk of a car. It will become airborne in a sudden stop, with potentially disastrous consequences. If the weather is cold, the wood could crack and if it is hot, the glue and/or the varnish could soften. I have seen several instruments
requiring surgical removal from their cases because the soft varnish adhered to the velvet lining.

Air travel with a viola presents a unique situation:

- Avoid checking any instrument of value as luggage on an aircraft. Tell the ticket agents the viola is a violin, which is specifically listed as a legitimate carry-on. Ticket agents do not necessarily know what a viola is.

- When traveling on a long plane trip with your instrument, it is a good idea to lower the string tension slightly. The dry, pressurized cabin can tighten the strings, which in turn exerts more tension on the top of the viola.

- Check the length of the horsehair on your bow before you fly and loosen the hair as much as you can. Aircraft cabins are very dry and will cause the hair to shrink. Under extreme conditions, the shortened hair could snap off the head.

Even when the instrument is around its case, there are several important ways to protect the viola and bow:

- Never leave the head of a bow sticking out the end of the case. If the case closes accidentally, the stick might be decapitated. Never leave your instrument with a shoulder pad attached in an open case. If the case shuts, it could crush the bridge and put the sound post right through the top.

- Always secure the bow in the case. When putting the bow in its holder, always lock the bow spinner. It is amazing how much varnish damage can be done by a loose bow in the case.

- Always use the Velcro locks or leather straps to restrain the instrument. An instrument which can move, can also hit the bow spinners. A good pop with a bow spinner can crack the top.

Be aware of safety features when selecting your case. Make sure your viola fits properly and cannot move around. If you live in cold climates, pay attention to how well the case insulates the viola. Pay particular attention to the amount of cushioning on the sides as the case gets carried with the instrument on its side and generally set down the same way. Side cushions are certainly as important as suspension features.

Don’t leave your instrument in a parked car even if it is locked. A couple of well-known violin dealers left some very expensive instruments in a parked car at the Los Angeles airport only to find they were gone fifteen minutes later. Some insurance companies will cover a loss if the car is locked, some will not.

Having been in the business for more than thirty years, few accidents surprise me any longer. The following are among the more bizarre (and avoidable) claims I have encountered:

- A high school orchestra in Michigan was rehearsing when the fire alarm went off. The players were instructed to leave their instruments on the chairs and exit the building immediately. Never mind that the instruments would have been
incinerated in a fire—when the orchestra returned to the rehearsal room, two of the instruments had vanished.

• A well-known New York violinist was in a hurry—late for a gig. Oops, he forgot something in the house. Absentmindedly, he set the violin behind the car. It was a rather helpless feeling to hear the crack of the case and the instrument as he backed up. As he searched for another instrument, his colleagues would often ask him if he had “run across any nice instruments lately.”

• Bear, my large Samoyed sled dog, is a superb judge of quality viola sound. When he rolls on his back with all four paws in the air, his vote has been cast for his preferred tone. If your dog is not quite as astute and has eaten your homework or shown other vindictive tendencies, keep your viola out of reach. In my practice room is a “wall of shame” filled with quality instrument accidents. What is left of one instrument is only the treble side with the post still standing, kindness of a hungry German Shepherd puppy. It never occurred to the player that the dog might mistake the instrument for a rawhide bone!

• Once in a while, an accident is totally independent of its owner or player. A number of years ago, I received a call from an administrator at the Met Opera—accident—appraisal needed. This one involved a cello packed in a shipping crate. As the Met orchestra had just concluded a tour, the crates were being moved for unpacking. The moral of the story—if you happen to be an operator of heavy machinery, don’t drop a shipping crate off a forklift! The instrument had been split the entire length of both the top and back.

“Instrument ‘finishing’ courtesy of German Shepherd puppy. Photo by Eric Chapman.”
Instrumental Insurance

Good insurance coverage is essential. Choices abound, but the fine print, especially “exclusions” need to be examined carefully. Keep in mind that policies are only as good as the way the company handles claims.

With instruments and bows of value, it is prudent to insure with a company that specializes in musical instruments. If you play with a major symphony, the orchestra will have its own carrier at rates generally more favorable than with individual policies.

The greatest risk to owners, in my experience, is the way insurance companies cover “loss of value.” Most claims involve damage and more damage claims involve bows rather than instruments. While many believe that theft is the greatest risk, the “stolen goods” category is actually a small segment of insurance claims.

“Loss of value” means the decrease in value of an item due to damage. If, for example, you paid $20,000 for a Sartory bow and then broke the head, the loss of value is 70% or $14,000. You will also have the cost of a spline or other restoration. If your bow was properly insured, your 70% loss of value will be paid to you. The caution with homeowner’s policies, as opposed to policies with insurance companies specializing in instruments, is that the loss of value- in this case, $14,000- is often not covered leaving the owner on his own except for the cost of the repair.

Another common exclusion often found in homeowner policies is “professional use,” which insurance companies generally interpret as accepting any money for performances. If, for example, you were paid $100 for a wedding gig and it was the only time you ever got paid for playing, the insurance company would have an “out” for any future claims and you could be out of luck.

Beware of other exclusions in homeowner policies, such as damage from floods. Many policies in California exclude earthquake damage. It is best to have all-risk, worldwide coverage.

Be extremely careful if you are inclined to loan a valuable instrument to another player. The key issue very often is what is termed “gross negligence.” Here is a perfect case in point: A number of years ago, a very well known quartet violinist had borrowed a Strad for some concerts. Having played a concert in a series on Nantucket Island, he went to his house, closed the door, put the instrument on the kitchen table and went to bed. When he came downstairs in the morning, the Strad was gone. What had he not done right in the eyes of the insurance company? Exercise due diligence and lock the door! That omission was deemed “gross negligence” and the company was not planning to pay any claim to the user who did not have insurance of his own on the instrument. The insurance company would, in a case like this, pay the owner and then sue the user to recover the funds. Fortunately for all concerned in this particular situation, the Strad appeared in a Nantucket ferry boat locker several weeks later and a very difficult situation was avoided.

The best ways to prevent disaster include securing your instrument and bow at all times, make certain that it is comfortable (if the environment is comfortable for you, then it is fine for your instrument), and be aware of its whereabouts at all times.
Take great care, and do not take anything for granted. Accidents can happen to you!

A founder and current Board member of the Violin Society of America, Eric Chapman owns Eric Chapman Violins, Inc. in Chicago and serves as Vice President of the Chicago School of Violin Making. He has been commended for distinguished service by both the AVS and the VSA.
My curiosity was aroused when I saw the brochure posted on my teacher’s bulletin board. An International Viola Congress? I had never heard of such a thing. After discussing this event with my teacher, I was convinced it was something I could not miss. Professor Buck said it would be a great opportunity and a life-changing experience—she certainly was right.

Host Jutta Puchhammer-Sedillot performs with partner Elise Desjardins.

Speaking of soloists, one of the highlights of the congress was the opportunity to be among some of the most celebrated violists in the entire world. Getting the chance to hear recitals by Kim Kashkashian and Barbara Westphal, two of my idols, was nothing short of amazing! Seeing Roberto Diaz premiere a new work for our instrument and play forty-five violas at the luthier demonstration was also an unforgettable experience. And finally, having the chance to hear some of the world’s up-and-coming viola soloists, such as Antoine Tamesit performing the Stamitz Viola Concerto in A Major, gave us all the incentive to practice just a little bit more.
In addition to highlighting these acclaimed soloists, there was equal recognition for our world’s most recognized viola teachers. Much of this year’s Congress focused on the famed pedagogue Heidi Castleman, who was presented with an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Montreal at the opening event of the congress. Later in the week, Mrs. Castleman also presented a master class. Not only did I witness an informative and enlightening master class, I watched the woman who taught my own teacher! Overall, the congress offered a variety of master classes which included instruction in concertos, sonatas, orchestral excerpts, and even solo Bach. Being a student, I found it valuable to hear a myriad of perspectives from some of the biggest names in our industry. Each day proved itself a continuous learning experience.
I’m sure it would be agreed by everyone who attended this year’s International Viola Congress that it was a complete success. For me, it was not the memorable recitals, informative master classes, or endless exhibits that I will remember the most; it is the connections I made with the people there. Within the five days of the congress, I got the chance to meet student, amateur, and professional violists from all around the world. Coming to a place where we all share the same love of the viola was a special experience, and I hope to make it an annual tradition for years to come. After the 2007 Congress in Australia, the 2008 Congress will be hosted in my hometown of Phoenix at Arizona State University, under the capable leadership of Professor Nancy Buck. I am sure that we will all once again enjoy another incredible musical experience at the Congress, but this time among the unique surroundings of the great American Southwest.

Louis Privitera is a senior at Arizona State University

Quatour Claudel-Canimex
2006 Montreal Congress:
Through the Lens of Dwight Pounds

[Images of a group of people at an event, one holding a violin and sheet music]
I have worked with musicians and have developed an expertise in treating string- related injuries.

J'ai fait plus de 30,000 traitements depuis mes débuts. J'ai beaucoup travaillé avec les musiciens de l'OSM et les professeurs de musique et j'ai développé une expertise dans le traitement des blessures des joueurs de cordes.
New Music Reviews:
Recent Viola Concertos

by Kenneth Martinson

Concierto Cubano for Viola and Orchestra
(1999/2000-01)

I. Defiantly
II. Toccatas: Allegro Scherzando
III. Andante Sostenuto e molto rubato

Difficulty: Level 6
Duration: 22 minutes
Premieres: Roberto Diaz and Toby Appel

By José Raúl Bernardo (b. 1938)

Sample Score

Audio Example - Bernardo Movement I

This work was enjoyable to listen to from start to finish. It is saturated with Cuban flavor and Bernardo seems to be highly influenced by his native Cuban folk music with some American influences, especially that of Gershwin. It has a solid tonal center, starting and ending in the key of E-flat, but wandering through several other keys throughout the work. However, Bernardo seems to take pleasure in exploiting and leaning on those dissonant chords that eventually lead to the key he is in, and oftentimes he throws in “blue notes” like the major 7th and the 9th when he resolves to the tonic chord.

The three-movement form reminded me slightly of the unusual structure of the Walton Viola Concerto. In both pieces, the first movement is in a medium tempo and is very lyrical, the second movement is a short Scherzo-like movement with quick 16th notes, and the third movement returns to lyricism, sometimes quoting what was heard in the first movement. This is the end of the similarity however, as Bernardo’s musical material is completely different from that of Walton.

From the performer’s standpoint, this piece will be a pleasure to learn as it all lies well within the hand and Bernardo seems to have an excellent grasp on what is playable for the viola. The work is full of double-stop writing with some triple and quadruple-stopping especially near the end of the last movement. Some of the double-stopping in the Toccatas with the quick jumps during the sixteenth notes will certainly take some extra time to prepare on the violist’s part.

This work has an interesting history to it in how it came to being. Originally, it was titled Silent Wing: A Poem for Viola and Orchestra. This version was commissioned by the Binghamton Philharmonic for its Millennium season, and was premiered on November 3, 1999, with John Covelli conducting and Roberto Diaz as the viola soloist. Because of the success of this work, Bernardo decided to expand it into a full 3-movement concerto which was then premiered in that form by the Utica Symphony Orchestra with Charles Schneider conducting and Toby Appel as the viola soloist in 2001.
Bernardo was born in Cuba and he came to USA as a refugee in 1960, where he began by working at a tomato plantation in Florida. He later moved to New York City and eventually received his Ph.D from Columbia University, where he also taught. The epitome of a “Renaissance Man,” he is not only a composer/pianist, but he is also a published author having written works of fiction such as *The Secret of the Bulls* (1996) published by Simon & Schuster, *Silent Wing* (1998) (honored by the Los Angeles Times Book review as “One of the Best Novels of the Year”) and *The Wise Women of Havana* (2001) published by HarperCollins.

This work is available through:

Pepacton Arts Music  
P.O. Box 700  
Downsville, NY 3755-0700  
e-mail: pepactonarts@earthlink.net

Viola Concerto (1996)

I. Maestoso  
II. Variations on B-A-S-H-M-E-T;  
III. Allegro Molto

Difficulty: Level 6  
Duration: 20 minutes  
Dedication: Yuri Bashmet

**By Steven R. Gerber (b. 1948)**

**Sample Score**

**Audio Example - Gerber Movement I**

This incredibly exciting work was full of intensity that made me sit at the edge of my chair as I was listening to it for the first time. This energy in a viola concerto is only matched in my mind by the intense moments of the 2nd movement of Schnittke *Viola Concerto* (which was, interestingly, also written for Bashmet). This work is also tonally-based, but in a very fresh manner and no key signature is ever used. The first movement starts with pervasive drones in the orchestra where the soloist explores the intensity of several different intervals against it; later in this movement, he begins to use penetrating minor seconds, inversions thereof, and dissonant note clusters in which the upward harmonic motion combined with the speeding of the tempo really makes for gratifying result. This movement has an interesting cadenza about two-thirds of the way through that expertly summarizes all of the previously heard material in a virtuoso manner.

The double-stops in this movement are all playable, but at times a little bit uncomfortable as some stretching beyond the octave is required within the hand, and this work will certainly challenge the violist as far as hearing these dissonances. I am sure this will be even more difficult in a full performance, and being able to hear your fingers tap the fingerboard for the notes might not be a viable option to have with all of the orchestra “white noise.”

The mastery of Gerber’s compositional technique is best seen in the 2nd movement where he writes variations on a set of notes that spell out B-A-S-H-M-E-T, with the “M” being “mi” (or “E”) and the “T” being “ti” (or B) [see sample score]. The resulting melody is quite convincing and seems to fit Gerber’s compositional language very well. The fast 32nd note writing in the solo part set against the theme in the winds is intriguing, as is the following section that uses tremolo harmonics against the theme in the upper strings. The ending of this movement is reminiscent of the opening trumpet fanfare of the Mahler *Symphony No.*
5 and some of the brass writing in the opening of Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, but an exact quote is never heard. This ironically adds to the intensity of this work too, and Gerber leaves you hanging wanting to hear it as a full quote, but we only get a “quasi-partial reminiscent chunk” of it.

The last movement is a challenging rhythmical piece, alternating between 5/8, 7/8, 9/8 and 6/8 time signatures. This movement sounded almost as challenging for the orchestra to count as it was for the soloist to execute. I loved the part in the middle where the instrumentation was reduced to viola soloist and 2 percussion players (alternating between timpani, glockenspiel, tamborine, and triangle). This texture is always welcome, reminding me of sections of the Hindemith Kammermusik No. 4 for Violin and Chamber Orchestra that use solo violin and timpani, as well as subsequent works by other composers.

Steven Gerber has an extensive catalogue of works including numerous concertos, 2 Symphonies, 5 String Quartets, and some chamber works with viola including the Duo for viola and piano, a solo viola piece Élegy on the name of Dmitri Shostakovich, and a viola-cello duo titled Passacaglia and Fugue. The Viola Concerto is recorded on the Chandos Label CD 9831 with Lars Anders Tomter and the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra.

This work is currently available at:

American Composers Edition/American Composers Alliance
73 Spring St., Room 505
New York, NY 10012
(212)362-8900
e-mail: info@composers.com
web: www.stevengerber.com

Key to the Difficulty level chart:
1 Very Easy
2 Somewhat Easy
3 Intermediate
4 Somewhat Difficult
5 Difficult
6 Very Difficult

Please send all viola scores for review consideration to:

Kenneth Martinson, Viola Professor
University of Florida
School of Music, 300B AUD
P.O. Box 117900
Gainesville, FL 32611-7900