

WILLIAM PRIMROSE, 1904 — 1982

Commemorative issue on the 10th Anniversary of his Death

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AMERICAN VIOLA SOCIETY

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Association for the Promotion of Viola Performance and Research

Vol. 8 No. 1

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VIOLIST oder BRATSCHIST.

*Die Stim ist etwas rauh, so die Violen giebet.
Doch heist sie angenehm, dem der sie recht versteht.
ein Stück wird edeler geachtet und geliebet.
wann dieser artige Thon zugleich darunter geht.
Dem, so die Mutter-Stadt der Music-Künster heisset.
ist, die mein Instrument als etwas schönes preisset.*



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The premier publication by the American Viola Society, under the direction of the AVS Publications Department, for the benefit of its members and their society.

The American Viola Society: A History and Reference

by Dwight R. Pounds

This publication was previewed in JAVS, Vol.7 No. 2, Fall 1991, pp. 23-27.

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From the Presidency An Open Letter to William Primrose



Alan deVeritch, President, AVS

understanding of this very special person in a format he would have related to.

When David Dalton, our immediate past president and current editor of JAVS, informed me of his decision to devote this issue to the memory of William Primrose, I was most delighted and supportive. It is ten years ago almost to the day that David and I stood together in Provo and officially said "goodbye" to our dear friend, mentor and great inspirer for the last time. 8 May 1982 will be a day that shall remain vivid in my memory.

My relationship with William Primrose was unique and dates back to 1961, when at age thirteen I became one of a limited number of his private students. Over the next twenty years William became much more than my viola teacher. He was an idol, friend, father figure, role model and confidant.

Perhaps as a result of his hearing difficulties, the written word became his most comfortable means of communication. He loved to read and was himself an eloquent writer. The open letter that follows will, I hope, give you, the reader, a better

Dear William:

So much has taken place over the past ten years and I have missed you a great deal. There have been so many times I wished I could sit with you and pick your brain, share a thought, explore an idea or ask for your support and perception on an issue, but instead I have had to rely on insight I gained from you in the past to help guide me through the future. Very few days go by when something you said to me does not impact my life in some way.

It is easy for one to imagine the technical and musical direction I received from you but perhaps even more valuable to me were the philosophies of life which you imparted to me as we shared nonmusical time together.

Your love of life, your optimistic outlook in spite of so much personal tragedy, your sense of style, elegance, sensitivity, attention to detail, appreciation of natural beauty and sense of humor and wit, all of which ultimately influenced your music making so dramatically, could never have been taught exclusively during viola lessons.

I will always remember you standing in the middle of a treacherous curve on Sunset Boulevard during rush hour traffic to make a path for my mother and myself to exit your driveway; how proud you were of your Rolls Royce (previously owned by Lucille Ball) with the General Motors transmission conversion that never really worked too well and jerked from gear to gear; gathering magnolia blossoms from your tree for my family, and so much more. But perhaps the most memorable of all was our last visit together when you came to California to see me for a couple of days in 1981 and ended up staying for a full week. Oh, the hours of playing chess, flying together in my new personal aircraft, and late night man-to-man discussions of many topics, including my opinion of what you had taught me over the years . . . What a week, and how I have thought of it often!

Approximately one year later there I was performing as you had requested at your memorial service. Standing but a few feet from your familiar portrait and the urn filled with your remains, I could feel your presence so strongly, so supportive, so loving and so ready to reach out and correct my bow arm one last time!

William, you shall always be with me and in turn often influence those who cross my path.

Love,



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My Cousin Bill Primrose's Roots

by James G. Wilson

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It was in the mid-1920s that I first became aware of William Primrose, the viola, and our mutual tie to one of Scotland's earliest and most prestigious families. My late father Peter Wilson, who had emigrated to America from Glasgow in 1911, related having been a pallbearer at the funeral of his maternal grandfather Archibald Primrose, who died at Glasgow in 1902. Primrose mentions this notable forebear in his memoirs:

When I wandered in the august realms of Mayfair in the West End of London, I often saw the inscription "Here lived Archibald Philip Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery." My father told me that Rosebery had three ambitions in life: (1) to be Prime Minister, (2) to win the Derby, and (3) to marry the wealthiest woman in Europe. He fulfilled all three. Whether the particular Rothschild whom he married was the wealthiest woman in Europe, I don't know, but I doubt if she had to be much concerned about her dress allowance. (*Walk on the North Side*, Brigham Young University Press, 1978, p. 17)

Father often mentioned his cousin John Primrose, a noteworthy violinist, he having performed at London's Albert Hall.

1861-1921
Extract of an entry in a REGISTER of MARRIAGES
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965

011327

No	1 When, where and how married	2 Signature of parties, rank or profession, whether single or widowed and relationship (if any)	3 Age	4 Usual residence	5 Name, surname and rank or profession of father Name and maiden surname of mother	6 If a regular marriage, signatures of officiating minister and witnesses If irregular, date of conviction, Decree of Declarator or Sheriff's warrant	7 When and where registered and signature of registrar
786	1903 on the 3rd day of August at Hotel Osborne Glasgow	(Signed) John Primrose Teacher of Music Bachelor	35	38? Little Street Glasgow	William Primrose Joiner (deceased) and Catherine Primrose Mrs Wright of Scotland	(Signed) James Thomson Minister of the Gospel of Scotland	1903
	After Banns According to the Forms of the United Free Church	(Signed) Margaret McInnis Whiteside (Spinster)	31	104 Smith Street Glasgow	John Whiteside Teacher of Music (deceased) and Jane Dutton Whiteside Mrs Logan	(Signed) William Beattie Simpson Minister of the Gospel of Scotland	

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The marriage certificate of John and Margaret McInnis Whiteside.

It was apparent from the moment of his birth (and perhaps before) that William Primrose, firstborn son of John Primrose and Margaret McInnis Whiteside, was permanently bonded to the vibrations of the violin and the viola.

Both of William's parents were musically talented, as was his uncle Samuel Whiteside, who himself had mastered several string instruments. At a very early age, William delighted his parents, sister Jean and brother John, as well as numerous Primrose cousins in Glasgow, with his ability on the violin at Sunday gatherings at home.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1922

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SECRET

Perhaps during that era, Scottish nationalism found it hard to accept William's being a member of the London String quartet and the media's describing him as the "English violist." It was not until 1938 that I had the good fortune of hearing Bill in concert at New York's Town Hall, and of

meeting him personally. At that time he was immersed in becoming a member of the newly formed NBC Symphony, sitting on the first desk of the viola section under the nose of Arturo Toscanini, and also recording for RCA Victor. When Bill's schedule took him to South America, and World War II interrupted our correspondence, it wasn't until February, 1964 that I established contact with him again when we met in Boston. He had been consulting Dr. Paul Dudley White about a heart condition which had caused him to shorten his concert schedule in favor of teaching the viola and playing chamber music. I heard him at Jordan Hall with the Paganini Quartet.

After that performance we dined at the Ritz-Carleton, where Bill introduced me to Joseph Silverstein, then concertmaster of the Boston Symphony, whom Bill had known when he was teaching years earlier at the Curtis Institute of Music. Bill asked if I knew about our families' Primrose connection, particularly to the Earls of Rosebery. I replied that until that moment I hadn't had time for genealogy.

While the subject of dead ancestors may appeal more to those of us in our later years, once the subject is broached, we may all ask, "What are my roots?" I promised Bill I would try my hand at it and keep him posted. Though I had no experience in genealogical research, my second thought was that it wasn't all that different from the investment research I had accomplished in a half-century in banking. Letters to various parish churches and libraries in Lanarkshire, home of Bill's and my families, resulted in birth and marriage records which, however, did not go much beyond the 19th century. I discovered a local branch of the Family History Center of the LDS Church of Salt Lake City, and through their most comprehensive and efficient system of microfiche and microfilm, I was able to reach back in the Primrose line to 1794. It appeared at one point that I had reached a deadend in my research when I was referred to a Mr. Tom Primrose in Australia, who had genealogical charts listing the names of more than four-thousand Primroses which he had inherited from an uncle of Steppes, Scotland. This John Dalling Primrose had devoted more than thirty years in researching parish records and gravestones throughout Scotland. From these detailed charts I was able to carry my research back to Peter Primrose, Laird of Bunbrae, born about 1512, whose descendants lived at Burnbrae Mansion House for several hundred years. The mansion house still exists. Our family's contention that we were descended from one of Scotland's earliest families was finally verified, and Bill's ruminations about his progenitors were proved out. My genealogical chart on William Primrose's paternal line was completed in 1991, which I presented to the Primrose International Viola Archive at BYU. My only regret is that Bill passed away before getting all the details.

James G. Wilson, a former banker and patron of the arts in Boston, now resides in Winter Park, Fla.



EXTRACT OF AN ENTRY IN A REGISTER OF BIRTHS,
of 17th & 18th VICT. CAP. 80, §§ 57 & 58, and



kept at the GENERAL REGISTRY OFFICE, EDINBURGH, in terms
10 EDW. VII. & 1 GEO. V. CAP. 32 § 1.

No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, and Rank or Profession of Father Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant and Signature of one of the Officers in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
1172	William	1904	M	John Primrose	(Signed)	1904
	PRIMROSE	August		Musician	John Primrose	September 3rd
		Twenty-third		Margaret McInnes	Father	At Glasgow
		10h. 50m. P.M.		Primrose		(Signed)
		22		K.S. Whiteside		Wm. L. Campbell
		Wilton Drive, Glasgow		1903 August 3rd, Glasgow		Assist. Registrar (Initd.) W.B.

EXTRACTED from the REGISTER BOOK OF BIRTHS, for the District of Kelvin in the Burgh of Glasgow

Birth certificate of William Primrose.

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Primrose Remembered

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In the early 1940s, Primrose sat on the first desk of the NBC Symphony. I never missed the dress rehearsals. He would come at intermission and give us his pungent comments on the music, conductor, and soloists, if there were any. His remarks were of the X-ray type, cutting through all pretense, the kind that only the brightest orchestral musicians can make.



Courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In the early 1950s he came to Salt Lake to play the then brand new Bartók Concerto with the Utah Symphony. His dedication, commitment, and of course magnificent playing made a then rather unprepared audience love the concerto. Much later he came to Santa Barbara to teach at the Music Academy of the West, of which I was the director. His teaching was so superb that several violin students switched permanently to the viola. One day he came to me: "What is going on here? Usually after two weeks, half of the faculty does not talk to the other half. Here, after three weeks, all is peace and harmony. Something must be wrong."

His hearing had declined, and he had trouble understanding conversation, even if you talked close into his ears. But when, out of the blue, he offered to hold a sectional rehearsal for a particularly difficult program (*Heldenleben* or *Don Quixote*) he would hear and correct a player on the last stand using a wrong fingering.

Still later, he was contracted to record *Flos Campi* with the Utah Symphony. When his doctor forbade him to come because of heart trouble, I insisted that our principal violist, Sally Peck, do the recording. When it came out, Primrose called me on the phone, full of praise for Sally Peck.

Finally, when he was in Utah (courtesy of David Dalton), I invited him to appear at one of the two-hour lectures I was holding at the University of Utah. He had the audience in the palm of his hand with his reminiscences of a rich life totally dedicated to music.

He was a great musician and a great man, never to be forgotten and always loved by anyone who had the good fortune of knowing him.

—Maurice Abravanel

Music Director Emeritus, Utah Symphony



As we approach the anniversary of the death of William Primrose, perhaps it is an appropriate time for those of us privileged to have had personal contact with him to consider an important responsibility. The world in which most of our students are maturing is recognized as being saturated with irrelevant information. Endless, often trivial detail tends to obscure the importance of recent history; and where violists are concerned, the names of those to whom we are most indebted in our specialized history of performance. William Primrose is obviously such a name, yet how many of our students are able to articulate his significance and achievement?



As more of his performances are reissued on compact disc, we gain greater access to, and evidence of, the “pioneering” for which he is so respected. This awareness in present and future generations will probably continue to be the responsibility of Primrose’s students and contemporaries. Perhaps this is the time to remind ourselves that his memory will not self-perpetuate.

In society, legends are traditionally passed from elder to younger, from teacher to student, gems of personal knowledge rounding out a special profile. We can and should direct our students to read *Walk on the North Side*, *Playing the Viola*, and Maurice Riley’s two volumes of *The History of the Viola*. Personal anecdote, observation and inspiration incomparably enhance the impression of this “larger than life” musician. While gratefully acknowledging David Dalton’s foresight and initiative in his provision of two invaluable video documentaries, we still depend on individual appreciation and experience to fully complete the picture of this intriguing subject. In the process of interchange between teacher and student—that relationship in which the student’s weaknesses bring forth the teacher’s strengths—many of us have experienced lessons from which we learned something much greater than merely playing the instrument. William Primrose was a teacher capable of imparting, sometimes unconsciously, concepts and strategies that his own life experience had formulated.

Of the many memorable practical and valuable concepts I received, few are as impressive as Primrose’s retrospective view of his own life. He expresses some of this philosophy in his memoirs, but I would like to share some personal correspondence that exemplifies the spirit of this man.

The appropriate comment has been made that Primrose wrote with the elegance with which he played, both modes of expression receiving the same originality and polish. His quiet and modest humor is exemplified in a letter to me from Australia: “Without a typewriter I am a total loss as a correspondent, and to inflict my ‘handschrift’ on any friend or even an enemy, comes under the heading of cruel and unusual punishment!” And a later amusingly patriotic comment: “Each evening via live satellite telecast I watch with no little glee those arrogant Australian cricketers take a trouncing from England at that great old classic ground at Trent Bridge in Nottingham.”

I am sure I am only one of many privileged to share his inspiring evaluation of the diagnosis in 1977 of his illness. The fearless rationalization and his ability to stand off and view his part and the future were admirable enough, but his concern for the reaction of his friends expressed in so much correspondence was truly remarkable. Few under such circumstances could write, as he did to me, “I have become quite sure in these past days that it is the friends, the relatives and the loved ones who are shocked, and not the victim. We are the only living creatures, so far as we know, that know that the old man with the sickle is awaiting us down at the end of the road, and as human beings we have to make the necessary mental adjustment. As of now I do assure you I give it but fleeting thought. If I have any unlovely aches or pains I’ll take care of them when the time comes and am sure God will give me the fortitude to bear them. He has given me so many gifts in a wonderful if checkered lifetime. This is not whistling in the dark or the graveyard, I do solemnly assure you, but an extraordinary and impersonal experience. I seem to be standing apart from some important thing that is taking place and am fascinated by it all.” The conviction and philosophy exemplified by these statements undoubtedly resolved their writer to insist on further years of travel, teaching and playing. Canadian violists will not forget his contribution to their International Congress, courageously made as “the end of the road” proved to be near.

Many of us were brought into his orbit by the man as a Violist and remain within it because of our shared appreciation. May this orbit now include those to whom William Primrose is only a name but a great name still synonymous with the Viola.

—Ralph Aldrich

Vice-President, Canadian Viola Society

In the few years I had the privilege to know William Primrose, our relationship became close and a very important one to me in my career as a viola teacher as well as a player. For me this relationship was based on sympathy and deep admiration for him as a great player—for me the greatest ever—a wonderful human personality, and an extremely thoughtful teacher. It took me a rather long time to understand fully the meaning of what he said, the reasons why he recommended this or that study, why he himself played Kreutzer No. 9 every day, etc. But with the years and my growing experience, everything began to fall into place. Today the name of William Primrose is so much present in every lesson I give that I feel obliged to tell my students that I actually never was a student of William Primrose, a fact that regularly surprises them.

What he has left to us might not appear as a complete school for viola; but when it comes to the essential points, to the differences between viola and violin playing (and, of course, teaching, Primrose was the only teacher in the world who had a very clear conception about those facts. His exercises were conceived for the needs of young viola players. He, as a brilliant former violin player, understood that playing the viola was not only different in timbre, but also different in matters concerning the technique of the left and right hands. Despite his famous sense of humor, I doubt anyone would have dared to tell him one of those stupid (or rarely good) jokes about slow or inept viola players. Those who have heard his recordings know how incredibly fast he was able to play. And that was surely the result of his profound studies of the technique of the viola.

Very few people in my life have so substantially influenced my way of playing, teaching and thinking about music. I always consider him my real mentor who helped me to detect the secrets of my instrument. But I shall not conclude this short essay without giving a wonderful example of Primrose's humor we all loved so much. When Primrose came to Vienna to give some master classes, he expressed his wish to see the graves of the great composers situated in the huge Vienna Zentralfriedhof. It was a sunny, peaceful afternoon in November; the atmosphere was that of a beautiful Indian summer. We walked through the cemetery toward the graves of Brahms, Beethoven and all the others, talked *sotto voce* and finally stood silently at the site of the famous tombstones. Suddenly Primrose broke the silence, saying, "This is a typical Scottish afternoon." (I can still hear his voice.) We all looked at him in surprise, and I asked him: "What do you mean by that?" His reply came quickly and with his mischievous smile: "It doesn't cost anything."

—Hatto Beyerle

Hochschule für Musik, Hannover, Germany

In Australia, during the war years of the 1940s, there had been a paucity of visiting overseas musicians to our shores. Fortunately, through the public broadcasting organization of the Australian Broadcasting Commission and a few private radio stations, our musical awareness and enjoyment continued to be fostered and provided for. As a young boy, I remember well the great pleasure and inspiration of hearing so many broadcasts of recordings by such artists as William Primrose and the great colleagues of his period in many performances now regarded as landmarks of artistic achievement. During the mid-1970s, I learned that Primrose had taken up residence in a city only eighty kilometers south of Sydney. Though the early contacts were brief, mainly during his visits to the Sydney Conservatorium for jury panels and concert attendance, the friendship and association led to a recording in the Sydney Opera House recording hall of the Beethoven String Quintet in C. This took place in 1980 and I believe it was the last recording of his long career. In spite of his failing health and the need to complete the work in two sessions, he maintained his unique confidence and great musical assurance, completing the task with strength and humor.

On subsequent occasions while on tour in Australia and in the USA, where my colleagues of the Sydney String Quartet and I had the good fortune to have him as a travelling companions, many hours were enjoyably spent in his warmly convivial, entertaining and enlightening company. His diverse interests and rich musical background reflected the real person in one who loved and lived his life to the full. The more recent generations of music lovers, and especially string players, are indeed fortunate in having this rich legacy via video and audio materials of this great artist through which we might further develop our art.

—Harry Curby

Sydney, Australia

Rummaging through a shoe box of family photos recently, I came upon snapshots dated August, 1973. There we all were in the pleasant shade of the patio, up to our chins in fried chicken, potato salad, fresh ears of corn, and the obligatory iced soda pop except for the obvious glass of milk at the Guest of Honor's plate! Even then, after twelve years of many such occasions in the company of our children, friends, and extended family, there was one distasteful American drinking peculiarity William Primrose would not allow himself to be coaxed into, even on the hottest summer day: ice cubes in carbonated drinks!





Whenever he paid us a visit on his many trips east and west over the Rockies, to Bloomington, Banff, Japan and Australia, I took pleasure in his congenial company at our table (dining room, patio or kitchen) and found his robust appetite and appreciative palate easily satiated from our larder. As his habit was to rise very early in the mornings, fix himself a cup of coffee and a small nibble in the kitchen before returning undetected to his cool room (our basement provided the correct temperature) to read before the family arose for full breakfast, I always kept his personal jar of Sanka in a special cupboard for his ready access. I regretted discarding that jar in 1982, because I knew that a lovely and unique chapter in our lives had closed.

Two of his adopted Japanese children lived with us in Utah during some of their school years while their family resided in Tokyo and later Sydney. When their final move came back to the States, I helped select the home in our neighborhood where William would eventually die. In those last years, he insisted on viewing David's complete slide collection (thousands!), the only person (including our family) who has shown that much stamina. "What kind of film; what was the setting; did you use a filter . . .?" He was curious about everything and relished beauty.

A few books from his marvelously varied library are on our shelves as personal gifts. I must confess to feeling a tug at my heart when that familiar signature presents itself on an inside cover. In twenty years of close friendship, I could hardly bring myself to address him as "William," let alone "Bill!" My esteem bordered on awe, but it was a comfortable respect, full of human warmth.

The impact of William Primrose bore mightily on our marriage, our professional focus and our family. Our four children were very much a part of the Primrose Years. One of our daughters cooked for him on occasion, our son mowed his lawns, still another daughter served as his secretary when his strength was waning, yet he felt compelled to keep up his voluminous correspondence almost to the end. In that same snapshot of 1973, our oldest daughter, then thirteen, is seated at Primrose's side, enjoying his relaxed company and charming wit. He encouraged her, and about a dozen years later she joined the Chicago Symphony as a violinist.

In literature we are warned about the consequences of following the Primrose Path. But for us the way was stimulating, enriching, and wonderfully rewarding—a great boon that will not be forgotten, for we cherish the memories.

—Donna Dalton
Provo, Utah

After the end of the Second World War, it took some time for civilian trans-Atlantic travel to get under way, which accelerated when the passenger airplane was developed and produced. Artists coming from the United States flew into England in increasing numbers, and among them came William Primrose, who visited us annually for sometime. He appeared to arrive with a new concerto or a major work for the viola on each visit and was always a welcome and successful artist.

For some years Lionel Tertis had been promoting his Tertis Model Viola and one day proposed to have a private demonstration at his home in Surrey. This coincided with one of Primrose's European tours. I was invited to take part and play on the Tertis model I was using in the BBC Orchestra. Lionel also asked me to be prepared to play other models in the demonstration. On the appointed day I found myself in the company of Lovatt Gill, an eminent architect. A lifetime friend of Tertis, he was an amateur maker of violins and violas and had also produced a fine drawing with complete dimensions of the Tertis model. Bernard Shore, the viola player I succeeded in the BBC Symphony Orchestra, arrived with the Montagnana viola that had served Tertis so well for many years. From the same taxi emerged Arthur Richardson, the master craftsman of violas, carrying three of his models. He was the maker who assisted Tertis in his efforts to produce the Tertis model. William Primrose gave up a free day and brought his two William Moennig models. Finally, there with three Tertis models was Lionel himself, quite excited with the completed arrangements.

All instruments were placed on tables with numbered labels attached in an adjoining room, the purpose of the exercise being to make comparisons between the different models without giving the listener any clue as to the maker. For this purpose William Primrose, Bernard Shore and I took it in turn to move to the adjoining room and choose an instrument, announce the number and demonstrate the viola, making sure to demonstrate on all the strings.



At one point I was doubtful if Primrose would stay with us for the day, for I wondered if he would become bored with the repetition. I was wrong. He was most enthusiastic all the way through and took the greatest interest in all that took place in the Tertis house on that day. A number of times he called out when I was playing, asking me to repeat a passage, sometimes quicker or slower, often very loudly, and then in complete contrast, as softly as possible. The violas on show that day received a thorough examination. When he demonstrated, it was always with snatches from the Walton Viola Concerto, because he was performing the work the next day in the Albert Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He used the opportunity to fit in a little practice, I assume, not that he needed it, for he sounded note perfect and completely at ease, and frankly, every viola he played that day sounded brilliant to me.

There was a lot of viola sound that day and little talking, and certainly no verbal comparisons exchanged as each listener made his own personal notes. Strangely Lionel was very quiet throughout, but I could see that he was enjoying every minute. It was generally agreed that the sound we had all listened to during the demonstration was of the quality that most viola players of the future would accept. This was all forty years ago, and yet the playing of Primrose remains most vividly in my memory.

—Harry Danks
Wembley, England

During the early years of the 1960s there had been competitions for violinists and cellists, held annually and sponsored by the BBC of London, with the finals taking place in Scotland (Glasgow). 1968 was a blank year for string competitions. No international events had been planned, and so I suggested that the time had come for a viola competition. London frowned on the proposition, so I leaped at the idea of sponsoring the competition from Glasgow. London still frowned on our enterprise, but we went ahead, notwithstanding, and quickly booked our adjudicators, Gwynne Edwards and Frederick Riddle. We had a very fine entry; our adjudicators worked well and chose the few best players to compete in the final.

For the final I had to choose an international figure to head the list of adjudicators, and who more worthy of this task than William Primrose? To my delight he agreed to come, especially welcome since he was a Glasgow boy. We booked him despite the fact that he was on the other side of the USA! The Lord Provost of Glasgow jibbed at my suggestion that William should get the Freedom of the City (if only he had been a football star instead of a viola virtuoso!), but he did agree to give Primrose a Civic lunch, cover all his expenses, and provide a most comfortable room in the best hotel.

William was magnificent. He talked with the contestants, he expressed appreciation of his room, he attended the official lunch with apparently much enjoyment, and indeed he mixed with all and everyone, and was obviously happy to be back in his hometown. He praised the contestants, saying that they were all of a higher standard than his class at home. He also chose the right winner, or so thought his fellow adjudicators. He was full of stories of his past life, about his playing with Heifetz and Piatigorsky, and his time in the orchestra with Toscanini, as well as his days with his string quartet.

He recorded a talk with me for BBC Scotland. At first he was surprisingly tongue-tied before the microphone. I thought he would fill the time easily, but he only replied "yes" or "no" to my questions, so that the first and second takes were much too short. However the third effort found him in a much more expansive mood, and we ended with him talking about the viola he most recently played on, his Andreas Guarnerius.

Later he told me that this trip to Scotland did him a power of good in that he was subsequently asked to adjudicate many times, so that it opened up a new source of interest to him. From our point of view it was grand that we could call upon such a distinguished Scotsman to adjudicate for us.

—Watson Forbes
Warwickshire, England



Primrose and I were both charter members of the NBC Symphony and for three years I was a member of the Primrose String Quartet. Besides all this, Bill lived one story higher in the same New York apartment house, and, so by the way, did Harvey Shapiro, our cellist.

Bill was a close personal friend and a musical collaborator of the highest standard. Playing in the quartet with Oscar Shumsky, Bill and Harvey was a great experience. Bill was the guiding spirit of our group. His enormous experience as a member of the London String Quartet was a "preparatory" for our group, and his magnificent playing, plus all of us being constantly on an alert to meet his standards, made our rehearsals and broadcasts a joy.

Since we were all engaged by the NBC Symphony, we did not have to depend on quartet playing for our living. It was an ideal situation in one way and problematic in another. Because our duties were first of all to the orchestra program, we had to turn down a great number of concerts that were offered to us. The inspiration of Bill's playing the opening solo of the Smetana Quartet will live with me forever. We all got along marvelously, and playing next to Oscar Shumsky was no small matter either.

We did make some recordings. The Smetana Quartet, for instance, was released, as was the quartet version of the *Seven Last Words of Christ* by Haydn and the Schumann *Piano Quintet* with Jesús María Sanromá. The best recording we ever did was the B-Flat Quartet, Op. 67 by Brahms. Unfortunately it was never released, but what is left are the test records.* To hear Bill play his solo in the third movement, I can safely say, has never been equalled by any violist. His seriousness of purpose and dedication was as great as anything that had to do with music, be it symphony or a salon orchestra. He was not a musical snob.

When we were on our NBC Symphony South American Tour in 1941, Bill and I roomed together. One day we had rehearsal in the morning and a matinee performance in Buenos Aires that started at 5:30 p.m. It was a miserable, dreary and cold day, and after lunch Bill suggested that we go upstairs and catch a little nap. We left a wakeup call for 3:30 p.m. Well, both Bill and I fell fast asleep. When I woke up I felt very rested, looked at my watch and realized it was already 5 p.m.! Bill was still deep asleep and I had to shake him awake telling him what time it was. Bill looked in amazement and asked, "Where is the tea?" I urged him to get dressed and turned on the radio, where the orchestra was already playing the beginning of Schubert's Ninth Symphony. It sounded glorious! During the fifty minutes' duration of the symphony we made it to the hall where Toscanini had not missed me at all, since I occupied the fourth stand on the outside. But Bill, sitting right under his nose, wasn't so lucky. Bill tried to offer his apologies and told the story about falling asleep, to which Toscanini responded in anger screaming, "Why don't you young people sleep at night!"

One day we played at the Bohemian Club in New York City, where everyone sits around you when you are playing. I never liked the idea of someone looking over by shoulder, but that day, while playing a Mendelssohn quartet, I somehow had the feeling someone was. I turned, and who should be there looking daggers at my music but Rachmaninoff! The boys, of course, had seen him, since they were facing him. They teased me unmercifully for a long time, and I never quite lived that down!

When Bill first arrived in the United States, he asked me what our greatest holiday was. I replied, "The Fourth of July," to which he said, "And tell me, is the feeling among Americans very anti-British on that day?"

One of my greatest regrets was the fact that I might have met Bartók, but actually refused an invitation by Mrs. Primrose to join her and Bill for dessert after dinner. My wife and I thought it over and decided not to disturb them, since they had obviously planned a working session. I am happy I did not disturb them, because the Viola Concerto, dedicated to Primrose, was the reason for the meeting. But I am sad to have missed this golden opportunity.

—Josef Gingold

Indiana University

*Editor's Note: This recording is to be made available on CD by Biddulph Records.

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Harold J. Klatz

Harold Klatz
Conductor, Hyde Park (Ill.) Chamber Orchestra;
Former Principal Violinist, The National Symphony,
Washington D.C., Lyric Opera Orchestra, Chicago;
and the Dallas Symphony

I met Primrose very briefly during one of the juries of the Geneva (or Munich) competition, and we had a couple of drinks together. I remember a very charming and witty conversation and a very special sense of humor. My gratitude is to this musician that made the viola an instrument of first rank. And all viola players should feel the same.

—Bruno Giuranna
Asolo, Italy

As I think of Mr. Primrose, the first words that come to mind are zest for life, integrity, generosity, modesty and wit. He was a man true to his word, without a prejudice of any kind, young at heart, unpretentious and endowed with a very alert and inquisitive mind.

From the first day I met him (I was then touring with the Monte Carlo orchestra under Paul Paray), I was struck by the warmth of his presence. I did not speak any English at the time, yet Mr. Primrose made me feel completely at home. After I played for him, he immediately went to seek the help of Mr. Gingold, who is fluent in French, and they made sure I got a scholarship for the upcoming school year at Indiana University. At the end of the first year, the scholarship was not quite enough to pay my trip back to Paris. I simply mentioned it to Mr. Primrose. His only question was "How much do you need?" At my next lesson, there was an envelope on the music stand. Without a word and very tactfully, Mr. Primrose took care of that matter and would not even accept my thanks.

Mr. Primrose's peerless talent was matched only by his great modesty. In all his peregrinations, he never kept any of his many recordings (78 rpms or LPs). I once got hold of the Sarasateana album and was thrilled to give it to him. I will always remember that evening at his home, as we were listening to it. Mr. Primrose was relaxing, indulging in a cigar and reflecting on the past: "This is so long ago . . . ! I did not think I played well at the time . . ." He finally had to admit, with a bit of nostalgia, that this was pretty good stuff indeed. Many times, I felt that he was not given the recognition he so rightfully deserved, but then I realized that this was the last thing on his mind. He was too busy trying to satisfy his curiosity, meeting new people, discovering new things, always open to challenging ideas or suggestions.

Primrose had a special curiosity for foreign languages: if in doubt, he was quick to check a word in one of his many dictionaries, the same way he liked to check the urtext in a string quartet. He knew that some words are better left untouched, words such as "panache," "prima donna," "fliessend," just to name a few. He loved to use certain foreign idioms and did so with a sure instinct. I remember one of my first lessons, when he showed me his now famous parlor trick of holding the bow without the aid of the thumb: "pour epater le bourgeois (to amaze the public)."

Mr. Primrose always made me feel proud to be a violist. I like to quote from one of his letters: "We do frequently get TV programs of the BSO, and listen with great delight. But, why, oh why, do the camera men never pan on the viola section? I must enter a strong complaint!" In these days of demeaning and stupid so-called "viola jokes," his voice is sorely missed.

—Marc Jeanneret
Boston Symphony Orchestra

I was born, raised, and educated as a violist in Poland, but I had a dream to study one day with the legendary William Primrose. Since my homeland was behind the "iron curtain," it took me a very long time to make my dream come true. At first I regretted that I had not had a chance to meet Mr. Primrose earlier in my career, although looking back, I see it quite differently now.

I came to America as a young but mature, married person, a father of three gifted children, a winner of international viola competitions with teaching and performing experience. My relationship with the master went through various stages of development, from getting to know him and his teaching, through moments of disagreements, exchanges of ideas, sometimes even frustrations, to genuine affection and lifelong friendship.

Mr. Primrose was not only a fantastic violist who had every imaginable arsenal of technical and musical skills at his disposal, but also a remarkably stubborn man. As I also am not known for a weak personality, we could have easily been on a collision course, which indeed was the case at the beginning of our relationship.





Left: Young
"Willie" Primrose.
Below: William
Primrose the
beloved Master
Teacher with a
student.



Photos in this article from the Primrose International Viola Archive.

Our most memorable confrontation occurred when I decided to perform the Bartók Viola Concerto with orchestra as a partial fulfillment of the doctoral requirements at Indiana University. I brought the Concerto to Mr. Primrose for his approval, but he did not approve of a number of things: my changes of his fingerings and bowings, various nuances, tempi, etc. As I had already performed the Bartók a number of times, I had my own strong opinion about it and was not eager to make any changes. Out of respect for Mr. Primrose, I tried to be polite by applying, at least superficially, some of his remarks to my own interpretation of the Concerto. It did not work. Mr. Primrose did not like half applications, and being very smart and sensitive, he knew immediately what I was doing. Then Mr. Primrose suggested that I go to the school library and listen to his recording of the Concerto, which I already knew very well. That did not work either. Mr. Primrose decided that I should not bring the Bartók to him anymore. To my surprise, when the date of the performance came, not only did Primrose show up for the dress rehearsal with the orchestra, but after the performance he gave me a compliment I will always remember. He said: "It was a beautiful performance. On the platform you show what you really can do, indeed."

That incident was the turning point in our relationship; it changed from tolerable to a real friendship. From that time on there was never any tension between us. I was given more freedom to express my own ideas; and in turn, Primrose's influence began to show in my handling the instrument in such a way that I really felt the difference and was very happy about it.

Primrose helped me also on a personal level. At that time our family had many problems with the immigration authorities, financial problems, etc. He was always there to help. He wrote letters in my behalf, made phone calls, and did everything he could to keep me and my family in this country. Later on, besides correspondence, the various Viola Congresses served as a meeting place for both of us. Mr. Primrose attended my performances and was always appreciative, supportive and encouraging. In fact, I was deeply moved that during the last Congress Mr. Primrose ever attended (in Toronto, Canada), although he was not well, he came to my recital.

Primrose was a great man, and his legacy is still alive through the work of his students. After years of performing and teaching, I cannot distinguish any more what is my "original idea" and what is Mr. Primrose's influence. Recently, after a series of viola master classes I conducted, someone from the audience came to me and said that my playing showed that I am a Primrose disciple and my tone quality reminded him of that of Primrose's. I wish!

—Jerzy Kosmala

Louisiana State University

During one's lifetime, there appear on the horizon three or four persons who significantly affect your thoughts, dreams, goals, standards, and taste. In my life, such a person was William Primrose. His legendary artistic career certainly does not need substantiation. But his magnificent human qualities as a friend and teacher are only known by a relatively few. It is these qualities that have played an immense role in my decision making, and in whatever success I have had as a performer, teacher, and human being. For this, the measure of my indebtedness to him is indescribable.

William Primrose not only enjoyed the greatest solo viola career in the history of music, but to those that had the honor of knowing him, he conveyed a human compassion for others, a self-pride that would never allow self-boasting, a strong religious faith that governed his entire thinking, and a wonderful wit that always made him the center of any social gathering. I appreciate this opportunity to honor a mentor, a beautiful human being, and person who taught me artistic integrity, stage conduct, a "behind the scenes" knowledge of the profession, and above all, the need to base one's life and decisions on a faith in a Supreme Being. I will always miss him, but will always remember his enormous influence, not only on me, but also on many others.

—Donald McInnes

University of Southern California

I studied chamber music with Primrose when I was a student at Curtis in the early 1940's. He was a great influence then and has been ever since. Later in life I had several opportunities to become better acquainted with him; eventually we became friends.





When I was principal violist of the Boston Symphony, Primrose came to record *Harold* with us in the 1950's during Munch's tenure. His hearing had deteriorated by then, and there were a few passages that we had to retake. He invited me into the sound booth and asked me to help identify some of the pitches that weren't quite on. I was impressed that an artist of that stature would invite someone else to listen in and help correct, and I was flattered that he would ask me. Each time after that whenever we happened to be together, he would give me a lesson.

Bill invited me to be on the jury for the Primrose International Viola Competition in 1979. This was right before the Viola Congress in Provo, where I was to play a recital with my Curtis colleague Vladimir Sokoloff in which we premiered the Rochberg Viola Sonata. Primrose was very interested in the new work and insisted that I play it for him a few days before the performance. He ended up giving me a two-hour lesson on a work he had never heard. Before I went out on stage for the premier, I could see Bill in the front row. My knees started chattering. I asked him afterwards why he thought he had to sit right down front. His typical gracious answer was, "So I could observe your superb artistry," (and I thought, "Sure, so he could see my knees shaking!")

Not too long after that he came to Philadelphia to give a master class and also to hear his old friend Milstein play. He stayed in my home, and I asked him if he wanted to take a shower? He said no, that he always took a bath. Since then, whenever house guests want to bathe, I introduce them to the tub and let them know who also had a bath there.

Primrose was the greatest violist that ever lived. I invoke his memory to my students all the time, "Go listen to his recordings!" He was a living legend, and it's up to us to carry on his work to maintain the viola as a solo vehicle.

—Joseph de Pasquale
Principal, Philadelphia Orchestra

In past months and in months to come, I am regarding an encapsulated view of Bill's life in my writing a book of my brother's extraordinary progress in the musical world.

It was an advance of fortuitous, unintentional, personal steps in his career that started as a little boy of ten. It makes amusing reading, of a boy, mischievous, full of pranks and the very normal enthusiasms of youth playing soccer, cricket, climbing trees and, yes, fighting, and with an avid, healthy appetite. Violin playing was as natural as breathing, taken in stride, and to himself, nothing extraordinary!

This writing of his life makes me happy to adjust his inclination cited in his own book of reminiscences, *Walk on the North Side*, to verge towards the undertones of himself, and still, in his grown years, to have a reflection of his father's and teacher's admonition not to get above himself, and to understand he was not as good as he might think himself to be. As he says, "an impossible way to nurture the burgeoning prodigy," and rightly so!

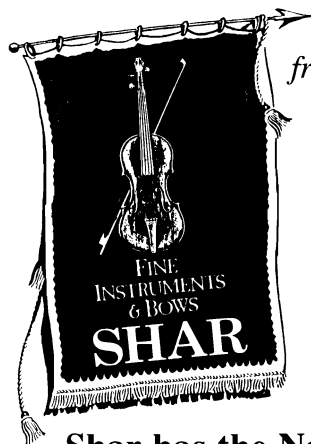
Happily, in this biography I am able to say things of him he would not say of himself. For instance, he was as celebrated in his young life as a violinist—to quote a review at the age of eighteen, "almost on a par with that of the greatest living violinists"—as he became as a violist.

The irresistible pull towards solo performance on that beautiful instrument is of course unique, and in abandoning the solo platform as violinist where he had the greatest success, shows the true musician that he was. He desired and received an extraordinary further musical education and great experience in being a member for a few years of the London String Quartet of world acclaim. Later he acquired vast knowledge in his four years as violist in the great NBC Orchestra, sitting at the feet of Toscanini, and then back to the solo platform as a world renowned violist!

One the many facets of this complex person was an appreciation of humor, an appetite for knowledge in many directions, a healthy liking for sports, a rather pronounced modesty with an absence of conceit—indeed an unawareness of his gifts, an acceptance of any misfortune without complaint, a propensity for losing things, the necessary selfishness of the artist, an absence of guile, a rare spiritual quality which prevailed beyond fading in middle life, and a touching humility.

Indeed the rather great soul that was Primrose was, in spite of being submerged often in the "business" of getting through this life, the wonder of music-making and the creation of what he was born to do.

—Jean Primrose
New York City



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In his later years, William Primrose was a frequent visitor at the Banff Centre, teaching and coaching in both summer and winter music programs. He was a great favorite of faculty, staff and students, as much for his humanity and warm humor as for his teaching.

So many memories! One that persists is of William, Tibor Séry, and Zoltan Szekely analyzing Serly's reconstruction of the Bartók Viola Concerto with the aid of overheads showing Bartók's scribbled, almost indecipherable notations. Or William, center of attraction in our living room, spinning tales of the musical greats, and laughing uproariously at his own jokes. He loved music in all its forms, and was often to be found at the back of the "Blue Room" late at night listening to jazz faculty/student jam sessions. He was not only a great musician, he was a wonderful human being.

—David Leighton

President, The Banff Centre, 1970-82



"Look at all the good stuff I have missed!" This exclamation was what William Primrose said when shown a printed program of the first International Viola Congress held in Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1975. He had missed the events of the first day and a half of the Congress due to previous teaching commitments in Banff. Our viola son John had picked him up at the airport and had brought along a program. Primrose perused the program of performers and lecturers, which included, besides himself Henry Barrett, Lyman Bodman, Harold Coletta, David Dalton, Nathan Gordon, Louis Kievman, Donald McInnes, Uri Mayer, Robert Oppelt, Myron Rosenblum, Ernst Wallfisch, Francis Bundra and his gifted student, Patricia McCarty, Baird Knechtel from Canada, Dietrich Bauer and Wolfgang Sawodny from Germany, and Franz Zeyringer from Austria. He was most regretful that he had been unable to participate in all of it, but he was most gratified to see that the VIOLA was being properly dignified and promoted.

He was also happy to see that the first exhibit and competition of the new organization, the Violin Society to Promote Violin Making in America (now The Violin Society of America), was exclusively for violas. He bemoaned the fact that he could not try them out because he was having problems with his neck at the time.

All the programs and lectures of the rest of the Congress were attended enthusiastically by Primrose. At the conclusion of the Congress, Eastern Michigan University conferred an Honorary Doctor of Music degree upon William Primrose.

Dr. Primrose supported, attended, and participated in all subsequent Viola Congresses held in the United States and Canada until his death in 1982. His presence gave the meetings impetus, dignity, and a reputation that insured the American Viola Society continued growth and recognition.

—Maurice W. Riley

Ypsilanti, Michigan

"If Music could be defined by means of words, there would be no need for Music." A familiar quote, to which one might well add, "... nor for the Musician." An attempt to evaluate a musician ultimately turns to the music itself. In the Arts, those who devote themselves to the shaping of its forms are in turn shaped by them.

The artistry of William Primrose first came to my attention during the period of my early days as a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. It was during a concert of the London String Quartet; Primrose had just replaced the previous violist, H. Waldo Warner. From the very first sounds of his viola, my ears tingled. Save for the few records of Lionel Tertis, I had not heard such viola playing before that time. Here was a perfect blend of magnificent tone, virtuosity, shaping of phraselines and an awareness of what constituted the highest in fine quartet playing. Later, solo recordings by Primrose confirmed the intensity of that impression.



It was not until a decade had passed that we were to meet. That took place at the NBC Studios in New York, where I was involved in one of a weekly series of solo recital broadcasts for the networks, and Bill had dropped in for a listen. He was then already a member of the glamorous newly formed NBC Symphony under Toscanini, and ambitious to form his own string quartet with fellow members of the orchestra. Learning that I was being asked to join the Symphony, he invited me to join the group that came into being as the "Primrose String Quartet" (Shumsky-Gingold-Primrose-Shapiro). We enjoyed a stimulating and very active existence during the two and one-half years of my tenure at NBC.

Very little socializing took place outside the confines of our stringent rehearsals—nor did there seem to be a need for any. Within the closeted existence of a string quartet, no secrets can be withheld for long, and we came to know one another much better than any dialogues could ever have achieved. Bill and I soon discovered a common denominator in our love for the playing and artistry of Fritz Kreisler. Then too, the genius of Arturo Toscanini and his uncompromising musical integrity loomed before us all as a constant check to prevent our solistic virtuosity from spilling over into our quartet playing. It was the best of musical worlds!

—Oscar Shumsky
Rye, New York

My memories of William Primrose extend back to 1945 when as a pre-teenager I entered the Curtis Institute of Music and found myself in his chamber music class. His extraordinary warmth and accessibility to students was quite different from the distant and aloof presence that was the style of most of our teachers. William Primrose was generous in sharing his knowledge to a far greater extent than many artists of his generation. In specific terms, the information that he gave me about something as basic as note reading has been central to my approach to music throughout my career. He had a devotion to accuracy in rhythm and dynamics that was almost obsessive. If one failed to observe the difference between *p* and *pp* in a Beethoven quartet, a rather derisive stare would emanate from his normally kind face. The memory of his playing in chamber music class as a sometimes overly physical violinist (he would play the violin with such vigor that we didn't think the instrument would survive), and the most elegant persuasive violist I have ever heard, is indeed vivid.

Late in Mr. Primrose's career, I had the pleasure of performing with him in chamber music at a festival in Florida. In spite of his advanced years and physical difficulties, his musicianship and rhythmic vitality were undimmed. After that experience Mr. Primrose sent me a letter in which he recalled my early days at Curtis and remarked on how it was very nice for him to see that in fact I had learned something from his classes. I treasure his letter because along with Jascha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler and Emanuel Feuermann, William Primrose is truly one of my musical heroes. In this era of CD reprints of old recordings, I hope that all of those truly remarkable performances of Primrose will become available to our present-day players so that they will be able to share in the beauty and incredible technical brilliance that were the assets of this dear man.

—Joseph Silverstein
Music Director, Utah Symphony

It was my good fortune to be admitted to the world-famous Curtis Institute of Music in 1929 at the age of sixteen. I majored in accompanying and chamber music. From the first day of my acceptance, I was immersed in the program dealing with my chosen field of musical activity.

My assignment included accompanying for the major teachers, among whom were Efrem Zimbalist and Ivan Galamian in the violin department; Louis Bailly, Joseph de Pasquale, Karen Tuttle and Max Aronoff in the viola department; Felix Salmon, Emanuel Feuermann, Gregor Piatigorsky, Leonard Rose and Orlando Cole in the cello department; besides William Kincaid, Marcel Tabuteau, Marcella Sembrich, Elizabeth Schumann, and a host of others in school recitals and professional appearances.

In 1942 William Primrose joined the faculty of the Institute as head of the viola and chamber music departments. My association with him continued until he left the Institute in 1952.

Dr. Primrose brought new musical horizons both to me personally and to the Institute. These included the Bartók Viola Concerto, the Sonata for Viola and Piano by Arthur Benjamin, written in 1942 and dedicated to Primrose. I recorded this with him in 1943 for RCA. I was in the service at that time, stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia, and I was given leave to make the recording in New York. We did not have much time to rehearse but I remember so well our making the recording in one session. We also recorded several other short compositions of Arthur Benjamin's, including the *Jamaican Rumba* and *Cookie*. Working with Primrose was always a joy and a gratifying musical experience. His interpretations were so logical and individual at the same time, and of the highest integrity. It was easy to work with him, and he was never a tyrant, imposing his own ideas.

He always travelled with two instruments: one, a marvelous Guarneri, which he never used in recital—just had it with him “in case”; and the companion instrument, one built for him in 1944 by William Moennig. It had a marvelous sound, and as Primrose explained to me, it was much easier to play than the Guarneri. He said that he protected the older instrument by not exposing it to the strains of public performance.

I always marvelled at his physical prowess. The strain of pressure and fatigue did not bother him when we were on tour. He explained that he had been a wrestler in his youth!

In July of 1979 I was invited to join Joseph de Pasquale at the Seventh International Viola Congress in Provo, Utah. One of the works to be performed was the commissioned work for the Congress, dedicated to Dr. Primrose. This was the Sonata for Viola and Piano by George Rochberg, eminent American composer. For me personally, it was an emotional experience. After an interlude of almost twenty—seven years, this Viola Congress offered me an opportunity to see Primrose once again. Our reunion was a heartfelt occasion!

The world lost a great treasure when he passed away, but his impact, influence and inspiration to his students and admirers is still with us.

—Vladimir Sokoloff

The Curtis Institute of Music





In all areas of human endeavor, time and again an individual appears who, due to a multitude of personal attributes, elevates his or her field to a hitherto unknown height. Such an individual was William Primrose. His name and the viola are synonymous. He was unquestionably the greatest exponent of the instrument. Because of him, the viola may emerge as an equally rewarding solo instrument to other members of the string family.

Primrose was a great artist and a man of enormous courage, humility, knowledge and insatiable curiosity, who had the desire to contribute as a performer and teacher.

For those of us who knew him, it is reassuring to see how his life work is being preserved and continued, as well as put in its proper perspective. This perspective shows a man reaching heights, but never losing sight of his frailties, while unflinchingly pursuing the loftiest goals. To have known him and been allowed to be his friend in his declining years remains a lasting honor. Rest well, Bill, you are among the few who have fulfilled their destiny.

—Janos Starker
University of Indiana

Perhaps never were myth and legend so closely intertwined as in the case of William Primrose, the greatest violist in history. A proud and debonair Scot, three years my senior, he insisted on calling me a fellow Scot, even though I had only spent less than a year of my life in Scotland, the offspring of Polish Jews.

We first met in the thirties when he was my close neighbor, just across the street in Abbey Road in St. John's Wood in London. St. John's Wood was, in those days, London's understated version of Montmartre. There were little mews and hideouts everywhere. There artists lived and worked: prominent pianists like Myra Hess, Solomon, Harriet Cohen; the duo pianists Bartlett and Robertson, and others long forgotten; composers like Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the King's Musick; Sir Arnold Bax, Cyril Scott, and for a while Benjamin Britten; musicologists like Alfred Einstein, the Mozart expert. It was a closely knit, friendly colony.

My first musical encounter with Primrose occurred when the great Polish violinist, Bronislaw Huberman, asked us to come to his suite at the Hyde Park Hotel for a run through of the Chausson Concerto for violin, piano and string quartet, which he was about to perform in public for the first time. It turned out to be an incongruous group of players. One of the oldest and most frequently heard clichés is that music is the universal language, but let me assure that it can be spoken in a thousand different dialects. Primrose and I exchanged perplexed glances while the pianist thundered across the keyboard and Huberman was looking heavenward, obviously lost in one of his otherworldly trances. The cellist was unaware of the fact that he was one bar behind.

Many years later we both had moved to Los Angeles, where we often played chamber music together informally. One of the highlights of our association occurred on 6 January, 1963, when he appeared as soloist with my California Chamber Symphony at UCLA's Royce Hall. Primrose played Vaughan Williams' *Flos Campi*, and after the intermission, he and I performed the Symphonie Concertante of Mozart, in which I exchanged my baton for the violin. It was a lucky performance, and it was the last time that I heard Primrose play like Primrose. He was almost fifty-nine years old, and he did live on for another nineteen years, but he would never play again the way he did then. He had long suffered from a hearing problem, which he described in his memoirs (*Walk on the North Side*). No greater misfortune could befall a performing musician, but he handled it stoically. Shortly after his concert with me he went to Israel, and upon his return to Los Angeles suffered a massive heart attack. For many months it looked as if Primrose might never play again. But prior to his heart attack, a contract had been signed with our mutual management, Columbia Artists, under which Primrose was to go on a national concert tour with my quartet, the Paganini, in two programs which would feature Mozart and Brahms viola quintets. One day his wife, Alice, phoned me, deeply worried about the chances of his making this tour. We both agreed that no matter how great the risks were to his health, it was vitally important for William's morale to make the tour. The mere thought of cancelling it threw him into a deep depression. He was in a state of acute conflict, for as a highly principled artist he knew what was at stake. I, too, was in a state of conflict, but, swayed by friendship and affection, I persuaded William to make the tour with us.

Some of my other cherished memories are the times we spent together at the Banff School of Fine Arts in the glorious Canadian Rockies, beginning in the summer of 1974. We were asked to perform the Mozart duos for violin and viola together, that first summer. Aware of his hearing problems, I was deeply concerned. We met for the first rehearsal; a miracle had occurred. Primrose's hearing had improved dramatically. What had happened? He told me that he had undergone prolonged treatment by a mysterious Doctor Haruchika Noguchi, in Japan, whom he described as a "philosopher, poet, thinker, scholar, scientist and healer." Primrose was vague about the details of his treatment and suggested that, by western standards, Dr. Noguchi might even have been considered "a quack." No matter. During that first year of our reunion Primrose was able to play again, and our treasured friendship was reborn. I was touched when, in his book, he spoke of the friendship he valued, and referred to me as "the incandescent, incontrovertible, incorruptible, indisputable Scot." Bill was a master of the English language and loved alliteration.

To the end of his life, William Primrose continued to be a great, inspiring teacher, despite the recurring deterioration of his hearing. How is this possible? you may ask. Well, to begin with, intonation is but one of many factors. Second, surprisingly, he could hear others better than he could hear himself. And nothing interfered with his ability to communicate, visually, his own fabulous bowing technique to his students. It is probably true to say that Primrose accomplished his most important works as a teacher after he had concluded his career as a performer. Also, there were his many superb recordings to guide and inspire his students. Through his teaching, Primrose left a tremendous legacy.

—Henri Temianka
Los Angeles

I was most impressed and deeply moved by William's generosity in advising, teaching and helping my violists. This marvelous attitude he maintained to the end of his life. A student of mine, Pierre Henri Xuereb, studied with William in Provo during January, 1982. William spent hours with him for a week. Pierre will cherish this experience and what he gained from it all his life. I will also remember it.

—Walter Trampler
New York City

After a chamber music coaching at Curtis (about 1942), Primrose invited me back to his apartment. "Would you like to listen to a recording of the best quartet in the world?" Expecting the Pro Arte or Budapest, I was surprised and delighted when the Benny Goodman Quartet came on full blast! "Now that is chamber music," said he.

—Karen Tuttle
Curtis Institute of Music

I had the pleasure of meeting Primrose in Geneva at his first appearance here in the early 1950s accompanied by the L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under the direction of Ernest Ansermet when he performed the Bartok Concerto.

From this encounter, a faithful friendship began, and each time he visited, I benefited from his advice on the areas of instrument construction, acoustics, and resonance. These were precious moments in my career as a luthier, and I remember him fondly as a friend, faithful and true.

—Pierre Vidoudex
Geneva





I met William Primrose in my last year as a student at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik when he came to give master classes. What I sensed during my work with him and under his influences can best be described as joyous.

Primrose understood how to bring the potential of a young person to realization in such a way that one had the feeling inside already to have known these things. When I strove for the interpretation of a piece and was aware of his presence, his happy expression of anticipation became a kind of affirmation.

This wonderful quality, together with his uncomplicated and always effective technical suggestions led me at the end of that week in Vienna to the decision to use my scholarship for the continuation of my study with Primrose in America. Primrose said he was prepared to accept me, but because my study with him would take place in the heavily Mormon populated area of Provo, Utah, he advised me to bring an ample supply of tea, coffee and whisky! Actually, Primrose arranged for me to stay not far from his home with the indescribably hospitable Dalton family.

So it happened that I had the great fortune of becoming one of his last students and to profit from his instruction, as much as he was able to give. He was in the last year of his life, and in the way he imparted his knowledge made a great impression on me and exemplified the heart of his philosophy to carry with dignity that which is meted out to you.

It was apparent that this didn't apply only to public performance. Within this dignity there was much else that could be found—the dry humor of a Scotsman, the inpretentiousness of a person who is and always was what he is. Also, there was the particular gesture that he regularly offered, and which I especially loved. After I had finished a lesson and was leaving his house, I would turn once more at the end of the snowpacked path, and he would still be standing there waving good-bye.

In William Primrose one recognized how the successful outer image and the inner greatness of the man were united as one.

—Ilse Wincor

Principal, Vienna Chamber Orchestra

Early in my career, sometime in 1955, my manager called me with a tinge of excitement in his voice. "Zvi, I got an engagement for you in Montreal next season to play the Mozart Symphonie Concertante with Primrose."

Walking on air, I rushed to get the music and began to study it feverishly. The engagement was more than a year hence, but it was one of the most exciting prospects I had so far. I knew of William Primrose as the greatest living viola virtuoso, and to be teamed with him in a performance of the greatest work written for violin and viola was a milestone in my musical life.

As the new season approached, I was anxious to meet with Primrose with the hope of learning from him how to approach this work, which I had never played before. An appointment was arranged for me to meet with him at the Juilliard School, where he was teaching at the time. His very handshake reassured me. I don't believe our meeting lasted more than a half-hour. It was my first experience with top professionalism. Primrose, who played and recorded the work with Heifetz and Spalding, treated me at once as an equal with whom a cursory run through the score to discuss tempi and a few items of interpretation was sufficient. I had hoped that he would lead me through the work with inspiring revelations and stylistic gospel. Instead, he kept asking me questions like, "Would you like to start upbow or downbow?" or "If you want to play this phrase more freely, I'll just follow you."

But I kept watching him like a hawk as we were playing, trying to remember his bowings and stylistic approach. We were to meet again two days before the performance at his hotel in Montreal for another rehearsal. The thing that struck me during our brief Juilliard encounter was the vibrancy of his playing, the simplicity of his demeanor, and his warmth and sincerity.

When I called him at his hotel several months later, he treated me as an old colleague and friend. He confessed to me that he had a hearing impairment, but I had no inkling of it during our rehearsals.

The performance was over the CBC with the McGill Chamber Orchestra. The conductor had a tragedy in his family and was distraught, which affected the clarity of his beat. Primrose gave cues to the ensemble with his fingers behind his back and, gaining confidence, I emulated him.

I had a tape of our performance. I had lent it to a dear friend who was killed in a plane crash, and I don't know if the tape is still extant.

About a year later, my new manager, Frederic Schang president of Columbia Artists' Management, invited me to a party at his house. Primrose was there. When he heard that I was under the same management as he, he looked at me conspiratorially and whispered, "Congratulations, you are now in the Big League."

In 1977, during an Australian tour, I called Primrose at his home in a town south of Sydney. During our conversation, he evinced great interest in the programs I was to perform and asked me when I was rehearsing at the ABC Studios for my recital. When I arrived at my next rehearsal with my pianist, Primrose was waiting alone for me in the dank corridor. I was deeply moved to see him. He had travelled all the way to Sydney just to hear our rehearsal. His keen, genuine and deep interest in a younger colleague, and in the music he was playing, was, to say the least, most uncommon. (As I am writing, I suddenly recollect that in 1966, he travelled from Bloomington to Indianapolis to hear me play with the Indianapolis Symphony.) During the rehearsal he made some helpful comments as to balance and offered some interpretive suggestions. Later we made an arrangement to meet at a mutual friend's home to play chamber music.

It was a scintillating evening for me. At the end of the evening, he mentioned that he was leaving the next day for Rochester, New York, where a viola congress was being held. He offered to take a letter from me to my wife. As my wife relates it, she got a call one evening. "This is William Primrose. I have a letter from your husband in Australia." A rare man, indeed.

Shortly before his death, he came back to Rochester to give a master class at the Eastman School. It was a wonderful class in which he spoke much about posture. I remember the first words he said in this class, "There is no grand tradition of solo viola playing, unless it's me."

After the class, we had a reception for him at our home. I recall that he smoked a great deal and kept asking for more Scotch. He told anecdotes in his inimitable style about his life and his encounters with other artists. It was the last time I saw him. Whether in New York, Australia, Montreal or Rochester, meeting William Primrose made those places more significant for me.

—Zvi Zeitlin

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Of Interest

Vienna Viola Congress

The XX International Viola Congress takes place 25-28 June 1992 at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, Austria. Christoph Angerer is the host chairman and can be contacted for information concerning this event at: Esteplatz 3, A-1020 Vienna, Austria, Tel. & FAX 43 1 714 71.

Among the performers are Csaba Erdélyi, Enrique Santiago, Alan de Veritch, Clyn Barrus, David Dalton, Georg Hamann, Johannes Flieder, Bojidar Dobrev, Miroslav Miletic, Sabine Toutain, Bernard Goudfroy, Ulrich von Wrochem, Libor Novacek, Werner Lamber, Günter Ojstersek, the Concilium Musicum with Paul Angerer, the Trio Erato, and the students from the class of Prof. Siegfried Führlinger.

Lecturers are by Wolfgang Sawodny, Ulrich Drüner, Werner Nickel, Heinz Berck, Wolfgang Klos, and Hermann Neugebauer. A demonstration on new instruments will be given by Burkhard Eickhoff and Fridolin Rusch.

Viola d'Amore Congress.

The Sixth International Viola d'Amore Congress will take place 24-26 June 1992 at Harlaxton College, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England. Concerts, lectures and exhibits will feature the viola d'amore and its music, history and performers. For information write to Myron Rosenblum, Viola d'Amore Society of America, 39-23 47th Street, Sunnyside, NY 11104.

About Violists

In Memoriam FRANCIS TURSI

My first memories of Francis Tursi were from Junior High School when I studied violin with him. I was not sure what to make of

his gentle nature and broad beaming smile.

At that time, I had my own interests in electronics, and designing various projects. Once during a poorly prepared lesson, he asked very quietly where I was going afterwards, and yes, he was right, I could hardly wait to go to Rochester Radio Supply. My next lesson was better, but I had some growing up to do.

During my late high school years I would see Mr. Tursi for lessons even though I studied violin with one of his dear friends Carroll Glenn. During this time, I realized that Francis possessed a true "beingness"—in the center his art ran quietly. I was able to fully appreciate his approach to teaching technique through the development of one's inner voice projected through the sound of one's instrument.

The sound from Tursi's viola was so deep, rich and mysterious that I knew I had to follow the path that he was taking through his mystical existence. "Life is always becoming," he would say. At the beginning of my lessons, he would play various resonant chords on his grand piano (he was a proficient pianist, too), I would close my eyes, play, improvise and perform with my viola, finding my own inner voice in the glorious mystery of sound and tonality that he created. Performing was so much more than merely learning the instrument. It was a voyage into self-awareness and a very demanding trial of expanding that new-found knowledge.

When I made a decision to transfer from Amherst College to the Eastman School, Francis Tursi became my mentor—a position that may have embarrassed him a little. I was absolutely convinced that he was one of the few totally honest and sincere people on this earth. He had confronted and communicated with the darkness within and lived his life in harmony with his spirit. He was the only profound man with whom I could study; he could set me free. This was his influence as a teacher upon me.

After graduation, I would always return to visit Francis and Mary Tursi at their home whenever I was in Rochester. Although older, I grew up with his children, and probably as one of them. Our visits would always last several hours and I would find myself bathed in his warm glow as I'd recount my passages and he would tell me about his life. Later on, I would bring my family to visit Francis and Mary in Philadelphia. Although he was not up and



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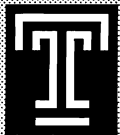
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around as much, Francis would watch with merry eyes and smile his broad beaming smile as my little ones chased each other around his apartment.

On my last visit to Francis, I brought one of my students to play for him, to create the circle of continuity, another of his many concepts: the circle of becoming and continuing.

I was about to call Francis and Mary last New Year when I received the news of his death. I felt deeply stunned and cheated. But Francis is still continuing and he is still becoming, just in another form and identity.

—Richard Field
Principal, Baltimore Symphony

For one all too brief year in 1982, I was privileged to have had the opportunity to study with Francis Tursi. What impressed me most during our first meeting was the aura of inner peace which radiated from within him. It was magical, contagious and never faded. I soon discovered that this unpretentious man was not only a wonderfully inventive teacher, but an extraordinary human being whose life embodied only the finest that the human spirit has to offer.

In speaking of Mr. Tursi and his teaching. I can only compare him to a master gardener, for throughout his distinguished teaching career, he ever so gently planted many seeds. For me, some of those seeds which he planted sprouted and grew immediately, while others, even now years later, are just beginning to take hold. With creative imagery, thoughtful insights or a simple gesture, he helped lead me down a path of self-discovery—opening my eyes, heart and imagination not only to the world around me, but also to the new untapped world within. In essence, he bestowed upon me and all of his students the greatest of all gifts—the ability to think for ourselves, to teach ourselves and most importantly, to be ourselves. That, to my mind, is the mark of a truly rare and exceptional teacher.

His warmly lit studio was always a welcome haven away from the outside world, a place where one could feel safe and comforted. An origami mobile hung in one corner, silently rotating in silent motion to remind us that

neither life nor playing should be stagnant or motionless. In the other corner sat a child's stuffed "Pooh" bear. Occasionally, he would lovingly hug this simple toy to remind us to embrace and drink in every note of the music and every moment of life.

A poster in his studio read "The center is still and silent in the heart of an eternal dance of circles." With a reference to a birch tree whose leaves were fluttering in a breeze, he once said, "Imagine your left hand moving up and down the fingerboard as effortlessly as those leaves are fluttering in the wind." "Never let your imagination die." "Paint pictures with sound," "Be aware of all your senses when you play," and "Let your inner voice speak," were but a few of the seemingly infinite pieces of wisdom Mr. Tursi shared with me.

But in the end, it isn't his studio or his words that I will most remember. It is his captivating smile and indomitable spirit that will forever remain with me and within the hearts of all those whose lives he touched.

—Bonnie Minkler

Francis Tursi was a man who idealized everything in life, from the most important to the most trivial. His insight into discovery, especially towards one's self, was truly inspiring. He was able not only to teach spirit in everything he tried to accomplish as a teacher—he was able to draw more music from within me than I knew existed, while all the time giving me the feeling that it was there all along.

I remember a particular incident that struck me when I was studying with him at the Eastman School of Music. I was trying to prepare the Schuman *Märchenbilder* for an upcoming recital. After I played the last movement through, he let me finish and then I asked what might be improved. I began to inquire about fingerings, bowings, etc . . . He smiled as I asked him about each of these points. When I was finished, he stood up straight, both arms at his sides, and his look told me that I was playing very stiffly, just like he was now standing. He then opened his arms and smiled even more as if asking me to play like I was hugging something soft, like a stuffed animal. He didn't criticise my fingerings or





bowing, or tell me where I should distribute my bow: he simply opened his arms, and invited me to hug the music as if it was my best friend.

I closed my eyes and began again, this time trying to illustrate what he had done with my sound and my playing. I found myself feeling so comfortable with myself and with the music; it was as if I had been playing it that way all of my life. I opened my eyes, and I will never forget how he smiled at me. He never said a word, yet with a simple movement he opened a whole new world of music to me with all of its embracing beauty.

His was a spirit that could never be duplicated, and even as he got older and weaker, he never lost his smile. It was that smile that inspired his students to love him and always try to capture his love for music in their own playing. That's why his spirit will always live as long as his students continue his undying legacy.

—Peter Minkler
Baltimore Symphony

Tursi Remembered

The Eastman School of Music will remember Francis Tursi with a gathering in Kilbourn Hall on 20 September 1992. It is hoped that many of Prof. Tursi's former students and other string alumni will be in attendance. Prof. John Graham at the ESM is coordinating this event and can be contacted for further information at Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY 14604.

The Viola Today Around L.A.

The Winter concert season around L.A. continues to provide exposure for violists through the string quartet medium in dizzying abundance. Quartets from near and far have appeared under the auspices of colleges and universities, and the various civic or regional presenters. The more exotic groups were the Cuarteto Latinoamericano at the Orange County Performing Arts Center, playing music by Spanish and Latin American composers (violist Javier Montiel is the only non-brother in the group), and the Quartet Sine Nomine from Switzerland (Nicolas Pache, violist). Not

that Switzerland is all that exotic, but the country is not noted for its string quartets. The Sharon Quartet, made up of Romanian nationals (Georg Haag, violist), was reviewed as being "abundantly romantic." The Vogler Quartet, from what used to be East Germany (Stefan Fehlandt, violist), made its West Coast debut in Pasadena.

More normal visitors included the Cleveland, Borodin, and Kronos quartets. Perhaps normal is the wrong word for the Kronos (Hank Dutt, violist), which travels with a lighting technician, a sound technician, uses a stage set, and performs in clothes not usually considered appropriate concert attire, even for an audience. They are from San Francisco, concerned about the AIDS epidemic, and reportedly play nothing earlier than Charles Ives.

Some violists made appearances as soloists also. Cynthia Phelps, the newly-appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic, played the Variations for Viola, by Alan Shulman, with Francis Steiner conducting the South Bay Chamber Orchestra on March 1st. Later in the program Miss Phelps was joined by Miwako Watanabe, violinist, in the Mozart Symphonie Concertante in E-flat.

On February 28th, Milton Thomas presented another in his series of recitals at the University of Southern California, where he is part of the distinguished viola faculty. He was assisted by Shunsuke Kurukata, a polished and sensitive pianist from San Francisco, and Dame Donna Peterson, a mezzo-soprano who is head of the voice department at Mills College in Oakland. Mr. Thomas, who is seventy-two years old this year, looks and sounds in his prime (at least twenty years younger than reality), can play more notes-per-second than it is reasonable to imagine, and seems to take almost embarrassing pleasure from drawing hedonistically sensuous viola lines from his magnificent Matteo Goffriller. The programming was rich also, featuring a rare performance of the Elgar Cello Concerto in the Tertis transcription for viola and piano. This transcription gives two versions of the third movement; one using scordatura, with the C-string tuned down to B-flat, so that the whole movement can be played in the original octave. The other version, retaining normal tuning, causes about seven measures to be transposed up an octave, so the approach to the one B-flat is

musical. The difference is only one note, but the change in tone-color for the whole instrument, using scordatura, would certainly call into question the wisdom of lowering the C-string one whole step. The second movement, an Allegro with a real scherzo mood, was especially attractive; very fast and light. Overall, the piano - viola version gives an impression not unlike the violin - piano sonata by Elgar. The Brahms Songs were as well-balanced and sensitive as could be imagined.

The first half of the program was unaccompanied and opened with two of the three 14th-century dances for viola alone from the *Schering Anthology, Geschichte der Musik in Beispielen*, plus a 16th century *Gagliarda*, all arranged by Mr. Thomas. The program promises these pieces will be published this year. *The C-minor Solo unaccompanied Cello Suite* by Bach was played, reading from a facsimile edition of the Anna Magdalena manuscript, which also uses scordatura: the A-string tuned down to G-natural. This allows for all the chords to be played intact, but the resulting inconsistency in tone quality calls into question the benefits of this trade-off. The scordatura seemed to make the performer uncomfortable in places. But this was a wonderfully ornamented, dance-like performance . . . with artistically spun-out lines, a real sense of color, vigor and breath-taking speed in the right places.

On February 3rd, Kim Kashkashian made a guest appearance on the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series. This series is presented by the orchestra's New Music Group. She performed in a work by Tod Machover called *Song of Penance*, (1991) which had many new wrinkles, "extended techniques"—technology galore, which most of the audience seemed to take with the utmost seriousness. *Song of Penance* is for voice according to the program notes, (poem by Rose Moss, presented by soprano Karol Bennett but "recorded, mixed, treated, and enhanced by computer, using Hyperinstrument techniques, at the M. I. T. Media Lab.") Hyperviola (Miss Kashkashian), normal, unamplified instruments (2 basses, 2 trombones, French horn, clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 violins, 2 celli, 2 flutes, oboe and English horn), electronic keyboard, 2 technicians at various computers, two computer screens, and one sound mixing board. There probably were others, hidden about, but these the audience could see. The Yamaha

Corporation, M.I.T. Media Lab, and The Freeman Fund for Contemporary American Music were specifically thanked in the program for their support.

The Hyperviola is an electric viola (It looks like a viola, disembodied), equipped with special sensors which help the computer respond to the instrument being played: a device worn on the right hand to measure wrist movement, finger pressure sensors built into the bow, a radio transmitter to indicate where the bow touches the string, optical sensors to analyze the viola's sound. Three of the technicians responsible for these wonders were acknowledged in the program also. One boggles when contemplating the costs involved.

When Miss Kashkashian, who is a handsome presence on any stage, presented herself for the event, two high-topped tennis-shoe clad technicians rushed toward her and plugged her into cables secreted in her flowing garment. She was literally "wired." There was a lot of tremolo. You couldn't really understand the voice, which moaned, sometimes seemed to be recorded over itself, sometimes just seemed an annoyance, sometimes was comprehensible. The hyperviola often sounded like a normal viola, in fast passages was often drowned out (what's new ??), often was really unreal in volume, but generally sounded like a well-played saxophone. The accompanying instruments often were very sustained. Some tonality was clear (it seemed to end in C major). There were some traditional rhythm patterns, but it was often so busy rhythmically that the whole thing turned into a blur. At spots, it was lyrical. It lasted for sixteen minutes, and all performers, including the computers, seemed fully occupied. It did keep the attention of the audience.

The Los Angeles Philharmonic included Strauss' tone poem *Don Quixote* in its programs the last week in January. Lynn Harrell played the cello solos, and Evan Wilson, who has emerged from the viola section to be acting principal, did the viola honors. The very next week, the Pasadena Symphony with Jorge Mester conducting, played the same work, this time with Ralph Kirshbaum at the cello with Janet Lakatos, violist. Miss Lakatos observed wryly, that, in view of the popularity of viola jokes these days, it seems only proper the role of Sancho Panza should be given to the viola.

—Thomas G. Hall,
Chapman University



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New York Recitals

Rosemary Glyde with Abba Bogin, pianist, and Emanuel Vardi played at the Mannes School of Music. The program included works by Richardson, Shostakovitch, Clarke, Kreisler and the New York premiere of Bernard Hoffer's Dialogues for two violas and piano.

Shortly after his seventy-fifth birthday, Harold Coletta with David Jackson (now eighty), violinist, played a duo recital at The Bohemians, New York Musicians Club. Included in the program were works by Handel-Halvorsen, Mozart, Bartók, J.S. Bach, Villa-Lobos and Vieuxtemps,

The Glazer Duo, with Robert Glazer, violist, and Gelda Glazer, pianist, appeared in a concert of chamber music with the Mendelssohn Quartet in the Miller Theater of Columbia University. The concert featured music of Shostakovich, Turina, Ravel and Dvůřák.

Gordon Viola Scholarship

Nathan Gordon has established through the American String Teachers Association an annual Nathan Gordon Viola Scholarship. Gordon was the former principal violist of the Detroit and Pittsburgh Symphonies, and was on the first desk of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini.

The first awarding of the Gordon Viola Scholarship took place at the ASTA convention's seventh national solo competition in New Orleans.

Encore

Mark Jacobs, violist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has been appointed to the Encore School for Strings faculty in Ohio. Other violists on the faculty are George Taylor and Robert Vernon.

New Works

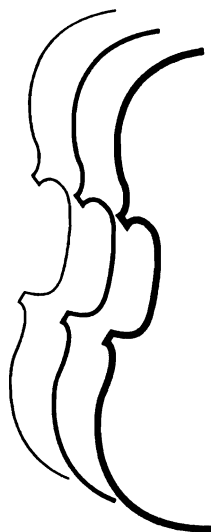
My Secret Life for Unaccompanied Viola, by Ray Luedeke. Unpublished. Copyright, 1983. ***Silence! for Suitcase percussion and Marimba or Voice or Oboe or Flute or Clarinet or Viola or Cello***, by Raymond Leudeke. Unpublished. Copyright, 1986.

My Secret Life consists of three brief, contrasting movements of beautifully presented manuscript, exploring extended viola techniques in the 20th century style with logic and clarity. Mr. Luedeke defines his notational practices in brief explanations which would be hard to misinterpret. For the most part, the notation is traditional and explicit. In the first movement, bar-lines are used, but meter signatures are not; the eighth-note is constant, with lots of instances of *più mosso*, and *ritard* and *a tempo*, so rhythmic flexibility is attained with a minimum of fuss. The second movement is a set of four variations, which appear to use a motive rather than a theme as a basis. Harmonics, glissandi, microtones, pizzicati, saltandos, abrupt changes of all sorts, extremes of register, surprise of dynamics, lyricism contrasted abruptly with passages which for all the world sound like automobile accidents, combine to make this piece rich in ideas. The last movement is marked, *Allegro molto, appassionato*, with one 18 bar section labeled "Schizophrenic."

However overripe the aesthetic involved here, the work demands virtuoso technical ability of a sustained nature. Performance would require study, patience and dedication at least equal to that necessary for performance of something by Stockhausen or Boulez . . . not in the realm of rhythmic complexity, but quickness, accuracy of pitch, and dynamic variation. There are deep technical difficulties here, but it still demonstrates an understanding of the instrument. This is surely the off-spring of the Casimir-Ney Preludes. *My Secret Life* is inscribed "for Rivka Golani-Erdesz," a well known protagonist of 20th Century music for the viola.

Silence! is a thirteen-minute piece for percussion with viola obbligato. The





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performance notes say the percussion instruments fit into a small suitcase, hence the "suitcase percussion" of the title. The percussion writing is complex, but idiomatic and straight forward, with the exception of pages 12 and 13, which are probably just a guide to the effects desired.

The notation is mostly without staff for the percussion or regular measure lines in either part, but the two players' parts are spatially aligned to show how they fit together. The notation is beautifully drawn, and although togetherness would be the biggest performance problem, the composer's intentions are clearly obvious. The score pages are oversized (15 X 11), not bound, but loose-leaf, and a set is provided for each performer. A page-turner would be necessary for the percussionist. This piece is clearly ready for the recital hall.

The musical organization is apparently sectional, without form dependent on repetition. There are double bars, and some silences, so the title is appropriate. Pages 5 and 6, use a percussion-writing technique which places notes on three lines, for three sets of instruments, as though the player had three hands. Stravinsky uses the same strategy in *L'Histoire du soldat*, so Mr. Luedeke is in good company, but it does seem like there might be a less confusing way to do it. All in all, *Silence!* is an interesting, refreshing, welcome addition to the repertory.

"There is a willow grows aslant in a brook" for small orchestra, by Frank Bridge, arranged for viola and pianoforte by Benjamin Britten. Thames Publishing, London, 1990. Theodore Presser Company, Sole Selling Agents.

The title of this work is taken from a speech in the fourth act of *Hamlet*, delivered by Queen Gertrude, describing Ophelia floating down the stream before she drowns. According to a preface note by Philip Reed in this Frank Bridge Trust edition, Britten saw a ballet using this music in 1932 (He was 18 years old, and a composition student of Bridge) and decided to transcribe the piece for viola and piano, but it was not published until this present edition, prepared by Paul Hindmarsh, in 1990. Both

Britten and Bridge had the viola as their principal string instrument.

The piece is in a single seven-minute movement that consists of sections in varying tempi, strung together with little repetition, slightly unified by some motivic ideas. The viola melodies are expressive and poignant, supported by highly chromatic, atmospheric, eloquent, often contrapuntal, imaginative pianism. The tempo markings are overwhelmingly slow, the slowest being 40 to the dotted quarter, in twelve-eight time. It isn't slow in every section, but it is a down-tempo piece . . . a real threnody. Harmonically it is atonal, but somehow it still takes its point of departure from the English colorists like Bax and Delius; here and there a turn of melody reminds the listener that Bridge studied with Stanford at the Royal College of Music.

In measure 52 of the viola part, there is a missing change to alto clef . . . the kind of obvious mistake easily corrected, but uncharacteristic of the Frank Bridge series from Thames Publishing. There is no performance editing in the viola part, with the exception of what appears to be an ossia in measures 97 - 100. Page 11 of the review copy has some dim staff lines, but generally the print and paper quality is quite high. The \$11.25 cost seems a bit pricey for so few pages, but if you have a place on a program for an elegy, this is a somber opportunity for violistic beauty and 20th century expressiveness.

Events in Space for Solo Viola, by John Holland. American Press, 1987.
Alternating Sequences in a Uniform Boundary for Viola and computer-generated Tape, by John Holland. American Sound Press, 1988. **Solo Music No. 1 for Unaccompanied Viola**, by John Holland. American Sound Press, 1990. (no address or price available.)

The score for *Events in Space*, by John Holland is inscribed "for Marcus Thompson." It consists of a sparse introduction, and four brief pages of large-type directions, in English prose, telling the performer what to do, or what the sounds should be, in vague detail. Musical





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notation is not present. Except that this should go on for five to ten minutes, and that Marcus Thompson is a superb violist, there is little here to form opinion or derive fact. It does call forth speculation about what the responsibilities of a composer are.

Alternating Sequences in a Uniform Boundary uses the same compositional point of departure as *Events in Space*; there is no musical notation, only prose directions. The directions here are in some increased detail, but it's still improvisation, completely dependent upon the performer. An added attraction is the simultaneous playing of a seven-minute tape recording of spurts of noises which sound artificial, like imitations of a viola (or a very large comb and tissue-paper). The listener would hear the tape playing along with a performer who is following directions like "play a sound-group while imagining walking barefoot on ice," or "play a sound-group which expresses anxiety." If this is anything but a joke, anxiety would be easy to generate.

Solo Music No. 1, a note explains, was computer generated "in real time," and converted into conventional notation. The conventional notation is, at least, notes on a page, but a possible relationship between a person playing viola and what is present in the notation, is completely obscure. Consideration of actual performance on an instrument seems to be missing.

The last two movements of this four-movement effort have dots over a few notes, and the fourth movement has a few dynamics. Phrasing is completely missing, as are cadences. The computer generated notation is far more awkward than it need be, with poor spacing of notes and rests within measures, lack of appropriate clef changes, funny-looking ties, and absolutely no consideration at all given to page-turning problems. The measures are not numbered, and at least one measure doesn't have the right number of beats. There are frequent changes of meter; e.g. 9/8, 17/16, 9/8, 7/8, 17/8, 13/8, in successive measures. Since there is no evident rhythmic pulse, the necessity for such meters is not obvious. In honesty, this is prolix, machine-generated dross, lacking artistic merit. Perhaps there is some interest here for the world of technology, but it has a long way to go before this approach to creativity will compare favorably with traditional artistic

sincerity and adequate presentation of orchestration and compositional techniques.

—Thomas G. Hall
Chapman University

The History of the Viola, Volume II by Maurice W. Riley, Printed by Braun-Brumfield, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1991, ISBN 0-9603150-2-0, 0-9603150-3-9. 454 pages, 145 plates, 18 examples. Hardback \$33.50; paperback \$29.50. Available through Shar Products Company, P.O. Box 1411, 2465 South Industrial Highway, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, Tel. 1-800-248-7427; or from the author at 512 Roosevelt Boulevard, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197; or at most music stores.

Can we persuade Maurice Riley, now in his eighties, to write Volume III of *The History of the Viola*, covering the coming decade of the 1990s? His initial *The History of the Viola* appeared in 1980—without the added "Volume I," incidentally, because he had no intention to publish a second. The first, however, spawned so much interest among violists that the stock sold out. (We are promised, however, a reprinting of the 1980 book by summer, 1992.) This demand, coupled with a significant decade which saw new material coming to light about the viola and other related and important organizational and musical developments, prompted the author to bring these events into focus in another book. Riley calls the years between 1980 and 1990 some of the most eventful in the history of the instrument.

Volume II contains four major parts:

The Viola and its Luthiers
Recent Research Related to the Viola
The History of the Viola in the Decade 1980-1990
Brief Biographies of Violists

The author in the present volume expands considerably his treatise on the development of the viola and its makers. He also furnishes new biographies to the last section which add thirty to the sixty pages contained in the first book. Except for some inevitable duplication in these

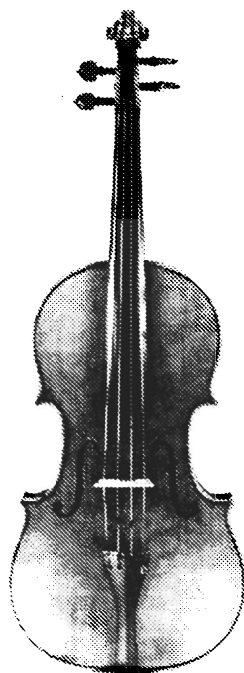




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two parts, one can look for completely fresh material in *Volume II*.

Riley's examination of the viola and its makers flows more easily here than in the first volume. An array of photos of instruments from Andrea Amati to the 20th century luthier Otto Erdesz offers an expanded treatment of this subject. In addition, the important luthiers of the Austro-German, French and English schools are given space, such as Stainer, Vuillaume and Banks. One might have wished for a more consistent quality in the plates furnished. The reader is always fascinated by the beautiful grain of the wood selected by master craftsmen; and when an exposure is too dark to reveal that beauty, something desirable is missing. The source of numerous examples in this section, by the way, is the Shrine of Music Museum at the University of South Dakota. Noting the priceless violas that are repositied there, one is inspired to plan a trip to Vermillion.

Another interesting chapter in the first part is "*Experiments in the Design of the Viola*." Will the quest never end to find the ideal solution to size and design of the viola so that we have an instrument that meets the demands of compass and tone? Probably not. Examples through the centuries are laid out, and many deviate from the norm. The observer might wonder "deviation" or "aberration?"—for some violas appear to be strangely anthropomorphic—but with a twist. That is, scoliotic, or with a body part missing, or with a backside flayed. Unusual visual effects, these.

While in the first section the viola as instrument is being examined, a subtheme of the violist as performer emerges. Why were fewer violas than violins produced in the 17th century? Why fewer sonatas and concertos than for the sister instrument? This was rooted, for instance, in compositional trends and performance practice. What gave rise to Wagner's rebuke regarding the quality of sound of viola sections in German orchestras of his day, as well as the ability of their violists?

The viola is commonly (with rare exceptions indeed) played by infirm violinists, or by decrepit players of wind instruments who happen to have been acquainted with a stringed instrument once upon a time; at best a competent viola player occupies a first desk, so that he may play the occasional solos for that instrument. But I have seen this function performed by the leader of the first violins. It was pointed out

to me that in a large orchestra which contained eight violas, there was only one player who could deal with the rather difficult passages in one of my later scores!

Dr. Riley offers these and other illuminating questions and answers, citing the latest musical research. Although the viola cannot boast the large repertoire of the violin, the nagging, disparaging and uninformed cliché (used by legions of music reviewers, it seems) that "solo literature for the viola is limited almost entirely to arrangements and transcriptions of works written for other instruments" is simply not true. It would be more accurate to say, for instance, that until recently much of the original music written for the viola has not been made available in modern editions. Franz Zeyringer's lexicon *Literatur für Viola* (1985) should cause any thinking person to pause when 14,000 works for viola are listed, most of them original to the instrument.

While Maurice Riley's 1980 book was essentially the result of his own considerable effort, about ten of the thirty chapters in *Volume II* have been written wholly or in part by other contributors at the author's invitation. These colleagues offer excellent insight into subjects of their particular expertise and lend diversity to the book.

Dr. Ann Woodward, in her chapter "*A Profile of Violists in the Classical Period*," reveals titillating bits of information that have escaped the attention until now of at least this reviewer. For instance, Forkel writes in 1782 that:

The viola stands between the violin and cello in the middle. Its primary function is accompaniment; there it is indispensable. Where the viola is lacking, there the whole is lacking—a link missing in the chain It belongs among the instruments which are essential for coloring. If it is to shine forth heroically, if it is to be heard as a solo, then its treatment requires perhaps more taste, more prudence, more clarity in handling than any other instrument; at all events, through the violation of these principles, it becomes more unbearable to the ear than any other. But would any one who has heard a [Carl] Stamitz play the viola with a taste for majesty and tenderness, which appears to be peculiar only to him, not then declare himself for the viola, and would he not then accept it among his favorite instruments?

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are illuminated by other contributors, such as Dr. Wolfgang Sawodny of Ulm, Germany, who assists Riley in identifying L. Casimir-Ney, a mid-nineteenth century Parisian violist, and evaluating his 24 *Préludes* for solo viola. These place upon the violist such exceptional technical demands, reflecting period virtuosic pieces for violin, that it is conjectured they were intended for a smaller instrument than the normal 16-inch plus viola of today. Other violists given focus are Alessandro Rolla, Ferdinand Giorgetti, Maurice Vieux and Paul Hindemith. Among the writers here are Albert Azancot, Franco Sciannameo and Robert Howes.

Regional studies of the viola and violists not included in the first Riley volume, are offered. Eduardo Dali gives a brief history of the viola in Argentina, Elena Belloni Filippi writes concerning the viola in Italy, and Dr. Zvonimir Davidé writes a similar essay on the viola in Yugoslavia.

Tully Potter, the well known annotator (familiar to readers of *The Strad*, for instance) illuminates the consequential history of the viola in Czechoslovakia. (How many of us violists, for instance, in preparing Hindemith's *Solo Sonata, op. 25 no. 1*, have wondered who the dedicatee Ladislav Cerny was?) Potter's knowledge of violists (and especially their recordings) is impressive in both breadth and depth, and some of his pronouncements are occasionally surprising. For those used to thinking that it was foremostly Lionel Tertis and British violists, including Primrose, who established the viola as a viable concertizing instrument in the 20th century, Potter doffs his hat to the Czechs and "the nation which began the viola revolution." His strong preferences may stimulate thinking or even tweak wonderment in the reader: [Czerny] hark[ed] back to the days of gut strings when little or no vibrato was used—with him, vibrato was simply one of a number of expressive devices. This does not endear him to some players of the British or American traditions." And "like Czerny, [Simáček] is sparing in his application of vibrato, having no intonation problems to conceal [!]."

Part Three is devoted to the history of the viola in the last, and important, decade of the 1980s. The author recounts the activities of the International Viola Society and the sponsorship of the annual International Viola

Congress by national chapters. These significant events, alternating between Europe and North America, in which performance and scholarship have been stressed, have seen the introduction of emerging young solo violists and new works brought to the light of day. In addition to competitions, which in the past have included a viola division, new international forums expressly designed for violists have been founded, i.e., the Tertis, Vieux, Primrose Scholarship (sponsored by the American Viola Society), and two such events added to the prestigious Naumburg Competition in the last decade.

Dr. Riley includes here a chapter "*The Primrose International Viola Archive*" by David Dalton. In a broader sense this article underscores the research, gathering of materials, writing, composing and publishing for the viola that have gone on at a gratifyingly accelerated pace. Besides the author and reviewer, other contributors to this expanding trove of knowledge about things "viola" are Zeyringer, Drüner, Sawodny and de Beaumont. Music publishers need be mentioned as well for their foresight and courage in making available repertoire to a market admittedly smaller than that for other more popular instruments.

Part Four of the book concludes with brief biographies of violists. Dr. Riley introduces these terse and factual biographies with three vignettes on violists Ferenc Molnar, Virginia Majewski and Stefan Todorov Sugarev, explaining that "without exception, the violists whose names appear . . . in these biographies could easily be expanded into interesting life stories that would fill a chapter or even an entire book." Indeed, the lives of these three are fascinating, their experiences strong, at times moving, adding an appropriate human side to the concluding pages.

Maurice Riley, who has been in ill health during most of the time he has struggled to complete *The History of the Viola, Volume II*, also exemplifies the human side of questing toward a goal out of devotion to a laudable cause—the viola. We violists are indebted to him.

—Courtesy *American String Teacher* Vol. XIII, No. 2

David Dalton is professor of viola at Brigham Young University. He is past president of the American Viola Society and author of *Playing the Viola: Conversations with William Primrose*.



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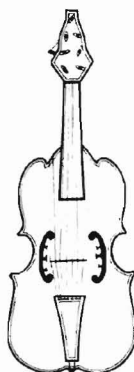
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CLYN BARRUS is a graduate of the Curtis Institute, the Vienna Academy, and the University of Michigan where he earned his doctorate in viola. He was principal of the Vienna Symphony and for thirteen years occupied that same position in the Minnesota Orchestra. He has been heard frequently as a soloist and recording artist, and is now director of orchestras at BYU.

The Primrose International Viola Archive, the largest repository of materials related to the viola, is housed in the BYU Library. BYU graduates find themselves in professional orchestras and as teachers at institutes of higher learning. B.M., B.A., and M.M. degrees in performance-pedagogy are offered viola students.

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The New York Times



DAVID DALTON studied at the Vienna Academy, the Munich Hochschule, and took degrees at the Eastman School and Indiana University where he earned his doctorate in viola under William Primrose. He collaborated with his teacher in producing the Primrose memoirs *Walk on the North Side* and *Playing the Viola*. He served as president of the American Viola Society.

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