

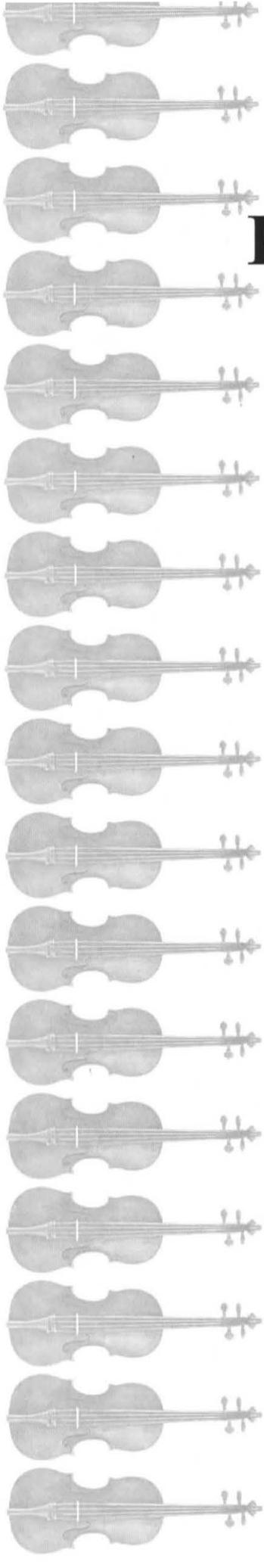
# Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 21 Number 2

*William Ritter*  
1980

**The Rise and Fall of  
Ritter's *Viola Alta***

**Icelandic Congress  
In Review**



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# Journal of the American Viola Society

A publication of the American Viola Society

Fall 2005

Volume 21 Number 2

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Editor: Matthew Dane  
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At the Grassroots: Louise Zeitlin  
AVS Retrospective: Dwight Pounds  
Fresh Faces: Lembi Veskimets  
In the Studio: Karen Ritscher  
Meet the Section: Michael Strauss  
Modern Makers: Eric Chapman  
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## COVER ART

Back of viola made by Homer Clark, Salt Lake City, 1979. Clark and Primrose were friends at the time Clark made the instrument. According to a previous owner, he often asked Primrose to try his new ones. Primrose liked this viola in particular and played on it, among others, during the last several years of his life. Primrose signed it at Clark's invitation, just as Menuhin had signed one of Clark's violins that Menuhin played. The instrument is owned by collector and amateur violist Bill Thompson.

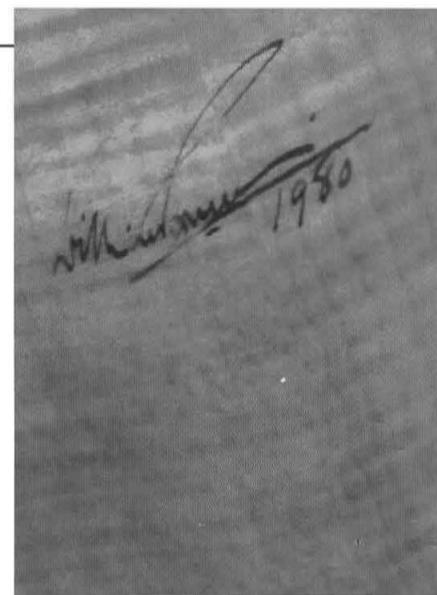


Photo by Bill Thompson

# The David Dalton Viola Research Competition Guidelines

The Journal of the American Viola Society welcomes submissions for the David Dalton Viola Research Competition for university and college student members of the American Viola Society.

Entries must be original contributions to the field of viola research and may address issues concerning viola literature, history, performers, and pedagogues. Entries must not have been published in any other publication or be summaries of other works. The body of the work should be 1500–3500 words in length and should include relevant footnotes and bibliographic information. Entries may include short musical examples. Entries must be submitted in hard copy along with the following entry form, as well as in electronic format for either PC or Mac. Word or WordPerfect format is preferred. All entries must be postmarked by 15 May 2006.

The American Viola Society wishes to thank AVS past president Thomas Tatton and his wife, Polly, for underwriting first prize in the 2006 David Dalton Viola Research Competition.

## Send entries to:

AVS Office, 14070 Proton Road, Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75244.

A panel of viola scholars will evaluate submissions and then select a maximum of three winning entries.

## Prize categories:

All winning entries will be featured in the Journal of the American Viola Society, with authors receiving a free one-year subscription to the Journal and accompanying membership to the American Viola Society.

In addition:

**1st Prize:** \$250, sponsored by Thomas and Polly Tatton

**2nd Prize:** *Bartók's Viola Concerto* by Donald Maurice and Facsimile edition of the Bartók Viola Concerto

**3rd Prize:** *An Anthology of British Viola Players* by John White and *Conversations with William Primrose* by David Dalton

---

## David Dalton Viola Research Competition Entry Form

Please include the following information with your submission to the David Dalton Viola Research Competition. Be sure to include address and telephone information where you may be reached during summer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

University/College \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Level: Fr / So / Jr / Sr / Grad

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Word Count \_\_\_\_\_

Current AVS member? Yes / No

If you are not a current AVS member, please join AVS by including \$21 student membership dues with your submission, along with a membership enrollment form, which can be found in the current issue of JAVS.

# FROM THE EDITOR



The most significant news of this issue is to announce our new president, Helen Callus. Helen has been involved with the AVS nationally for many years, was the founding president of the Seattle Chapter, and hosted the 30th International Viola Congress. Her wealth of first-hand experience, from the local to the international level, should be a great asset as the AVS moves into its next “chapter.”

The contents of this issue cover a broad spectrum, from Linda Shaver-Gleason’s Dalton Prize-winning article on the Viola Alta to Rita Porfiris’ “interview” with the Houston Symphony Violists/Pirates. We also feature letters from two violists about Hurricane Katrina- Scott Slapin used to live in New Orleans, and Nick Coventry got involved in the recovery effort. Sam Bergman writes for the *Orchestral Training Forum* again, this time demystify-

ing the network of organizations and committees that help our major orchestras run smoothly.

Readers will also find reviews of all kinds. Sel Kardan discusses a bounty of recent and historical recordings, Eric Chapman talks bows, and Myron Rosenblum gives an informative account of a recent biography on Lillian Fuchs. And then there are the reviews of this past summer’s events, namely the Iceland Congress and the Primrose Competition and Festival! Having attended each personally, re-reading the two accounts brings these inspiring experiences back again. Hopefully many of you will be able to attend the Montreal Congress, described here by host Jutta Puchhammer-Sedillot following the Announcements.

The Dalton Research Competition will take place again this year, and again we are able to offer a cash prize to the winner thanks to the generosity of Tom and Polly Tatton. This Competition not only supports the research mission of the AVS, but also encourages an important skill for today’s classical musician: the ability to communicate about musical issues in non-musical ways (i.e., in writing or speech). If you think that it’s “all” been written already, you are wrong! If you

are a university student, undergraduate or graduate, I hope that you will consider submitting an article; if you are a university teacher, I hope that you will encourage your students to explore this possibility. I would be happy to speak with any potential entrant about his or her topic- email [mdane@ou.edu](mailto:mdane@ou.edu). B

Sincerely,  
Matthew Dane  
Editor, *Journal of the  
American Viola Society*  
Assistant Professor of Viola,  
University of Oklahoma

*The Primrose International Viola Archive*  
announces a generous gift  
by Peter Bartók  
of several hundred copies of the  
*Facsimile of the Autograph Draft of the Viola Concerto*  
by Bela Bartók



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- *Fair transcription of the draft with notes prepared by Nelson Dellamaggiore.*

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

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When I look back at the rich history of the AVS I am truly amazed at what has been accomplished by what is effectively a volunteer organization. The AVS has gone from strength to strength over the past 30 years and with it has brought us a sense of tradition and heritage.

This particular organization makes its mark with the mission of the betterment of ourselves, furtherance of the instrument and connection to all those who share the same passion for the viola. With that in mind, it is with great honor that I step up as President of the AVS to carry on the tradition of our forefathers and also to perhaps bring new ideas and a fresh light to our society as well. I cannot fully accept my new role without acknowledging the great work of all those before me and in particular Ralph Fielding who served his term before me with great insight and understanding. I am apprecia-

tive of his experience and continued advice and know that we all thank him for his many hours of commitment every day to our organization and to his enthusiasm for making the AVS as relevant and useful to our everyday lives as possible.

As President, I think part of my message to you should clearly outline my vision for the AVS. Part of that vision relates to an appreciation of what I refer to as the AVS being 'one of the best kept secrets.' Within the next three years I hope to accomplish a renewal of support for the AVS in both financial and membership terms; a raised awareness throughout the country and the larger world community of some of the wonderful and important contributions the AVS has made to the life of all violists and the development of some new initiatives (please check our web site for updates) and continued development of ones already set in place. The AVS has earned its place to be embraced by all violists through its good work and support and needs to no longer be the 'secret' of a select group but freely accessible to all violists.

In addition to this fundamental concept I also wish to develop specific member benefits; the AVS will offer better deals for our students and teachers; expand our E-News and Online resources for you to get more of what you need to stay connected; support our colleagues in

their academic pursuits in terms of research; offer chapters the support they need to build and develop programs in your community and provide some new exciting educational initiatives. Our aim is to be able to engage every type of violist in our community and allow them to be able to fully participate in the AVS, embracing our diversity and building on our strengths.

As members I know you are aware of some of the exceptional and unique things the AVS has to offer. Some of these include but are not limited to the International Congresses representing such diversity on our instrument, the peer reviewed journal of such quality that covers a range of topics that you cannot find anywhere else for our instrument; the Primrose International Viola Competition for our aspiring young performers, our E-News online newsletter to keep us connected to our colleagues and friends and the beautiful and comprehensive web site which is one of the most magnificent resources for viola in existence. Over the past few years we have started to encourage the development of Chapters without which we would not be able to reach and help those outside of the larger towns in the US. We are very pleased to be affiliated with The Primrose International Viola Archive which is the most extensive collection of materials related to Primrose including scores, pictures, documents and recordings anywhere in the

world. The catalogue in itself is second to none. The AVS can make a difference in your life and in the life of your viola colleagues, students and friends and here's how –

If you are a:

- a viola student the articles in JAVS are designed to supply you with all sorts of practical information from new pieces to play to new recordings to buy.
- a violist looking for an instrument you might come to a congress where there are more luthiers exhibiting together in one place than anywhere else in the world.
- an orchestral musician you can nominate your viola section for our "Meet the Section" profile or submit articles for publication in the JAVS.
- a member of a studio at a college or university you can form a stu-

dent chapter and apply for a grant to bring in a guest or host an event, or you could write paper for the David Dalton Viola Research Competition.

- a performer you can advertise your recordings and have them reviewed in our journal.
- a community teacher you might like to offer your services to a local chapter or give a masterclass.
- a college professor you can submit articles for tenure and promotion to our peer reviewed publication - the only publication of its kind in the US for viola.
- an instrument maker you can advertise your business in the JAVS.
- looking for more experience competing you could enter the Primrose International Viola Competition.

These are just a few of the ways you can benefit from being a member!

I believe firmly that there is no reason why every violist in the US isn't part of the AVS in some manner and I hope to bring the word to as many new members as I can. I cannot do it alone. I need your help. You know that the AVS can make a difference and I know that with your enthusiasm, I believe we can accomplish great things together. I know many of you have friends and colleagues who are not members. I want to encourage you to take a membership form with you and give it to just one person, a student, your stand partner, a colleague or good friend and help us reach out to all violists. I do hope you will join me in our mission to unite violists not only in the US, but around the world. B

Yours sincerely,

Helen Callus  
President,  
The American Viola Society

- a new music enthusiast then our New Music column in the JAVS will keep you connected.
- a recent graduate there are articles on audition preparation.
- a high school teacher and have private students we have articles about teaching methods and books to use.
- a University/ College teacher you might like to make a bid for a future International Congress.



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# ANNOUNCEMENTS



*Viola Gangs by bassist Scott Sund.*

## **2005 JAVS Online Issue**

It's never too late to see the JAVS Summer 2005 Issue! The contents include an in-depth interview article on former AVS President Tom Tatton by Dwight Pounds, and a progressive series of shifting exercises by Ralph Fielding that are downloadable. The featured viola maker is Marcus Klimke; several pictures from the Iceland Congress are included as well.

## **Garth Knox Travel Writer for AVS Website**

We are pleased to announce that our new "travel writer" for the AVS web site will be Garth Knox. Garth will post letters from time to time, describing the places he's going, the people he's meeting, and projects

he's working on. We hope to experiment by including other materials with his writings, such as sound clips and music files.

Special thanks goes to AVS Board member Nokuthula Ngwenyama, who inaugurated the "Travel" section with wonderful columns last year.

We hope that you will follow along with Garth, appreciating his interests and experiences as well as his personal warmth and humor!

## **Violas for Sale Listed on AVS Web Site**

This segment appears on the AVS web site. Listing an instrument or bow is a free service for AVS members- more information can be found under "Member ads" in the Marketplace section of [www.americanviolasociety.org](http://www.americanviolasociety.org).

## **Roberto Díaz Named Curtis Director**

The Curtis Institute of Music Board of Trustees voted unanimously to name Roberto Díaz to be the conservatory's next president/director. Díaz is expected to assume the president/director post full-time at the end of the 2005/2006 academic year, when current President/Director Gary Graffman will retire from the position while continuing on the piano faculty.

## **2005 Dalton Research Competition Results**

The AVS Board is pleased to announce Linda Shaver-Gleason as the winner of the 2005 Dalton Competition. Ms. Shaver-Gleason received the monetary Tom and Polly Tatton Award, in addition to being published in this issue of the Journal. Congratulations!

The 2006 Competition's guidelines and timetable will be similar to this past year, with a postmark date of May 15, 2006. For more information, please see the announcement advertisement in this issue. Any further questions should be directed to JAVS Editor Matthew Dane.

## **2006 Johansen and Washington International Competitions**

The Johansen International Competition for Young String Players (13-17 years of age) will be held in Washington, DC, March 8-11, 2006. Three substantial monetary awards are designated for violists. Application deadline: December 15, 2005. The Washington International Competition for String Players (Ages 18-28) will take place May 19-21, 2006. Three substantial monetary awards are designated for violists here as well. Application deadline: January 16, 2006. Both competitions are sponsored by the Friday Morning Music Club (FMMC) Foundation, Inc. Details, repertoire requirements, and applications are online at [www.fmmc.org](http://www.fmmc.org).

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## **2006 Naumburg Viola Competition**

The Naumburg Foundation will have a viola category in its 2006 Competition, to be held October 12-18. Entrants must be 18-32 years of age and either reside or study in North America. For further information see their advertisement in this Journal issue on page 24.

## **Foster Focus**

The famous familial first stand of the National Symphony Orchestra's viola section was featured in the cover story of the International Musician's August, 2005 issue.

*Question to Bill Foster [father]:  
What's it like to take orders from your son?*

*Answer: I always say that it's no different from the previous twenty-five years. But now he gets paid for it!*

The two-page article covers their similar paths to the instrument and their experiences in the NSO, among other things. This is believed to be the first time that two violists have ever been featured together on the cover of the International Musician!

## **Stolen Viola Returns Home After 55 Years**

Fifty-five years after Eugene Phillip's viola was stolen from him, his instrument, crafted and built by his father in 1942, has returned home to the maker's grandson. Chicago violist Arnold Sklar, who has owned the instrument since 1959, compares the

viola's return to the story of Lassie, the famous collie.

Instrument maker Benjamin Phillips decided in 1942 to make a 16 3/4" inch viola for his son Eugene, a member of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In 1950, this instrument was stolen from Eugene's music studio and its whereabouts were never discovered until recently.

In 1955, Victor Stern, professor of viola at the University of Miami in Florida, purchased a Benjamin Phillips viola from a violin shop in Washington, D.C. That same year, Arnie Sklar, a music student at the University of Miami, switched his major from violin to viola, and upon receiving a Bachelors and Masters degree in music from the University, joined the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. While on tour with the orchestra just a few months later, he returned to Miami where he purchased his teacher's "B.P." viola.

Arnie went on to become a member of Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra in which he has played for 40 years, 31 of them as Principal Violist. In anticipation of slowing down his active playing career, he decided to sell his Benjamin Phillips viola and upon contacting a violin shop in Pittsburgh, was informed that the maker's son, Eugene, was still living in the area. The two of them had a very pleasant phone conversation and shared their mutual career stories.

About one month later, Eugene phoned Arnie to inform him that his son Daniel Phillips, first violinist of the Orion String Quartet, would be interested in trying out the instrument. Before the week was over, Daniel called Arnie to inform him that he did want to buy the viola; more importantly however, upon showing the instrument to his father – who was visiting at the time – Eugene exclaimed "That's the viola that was stolen from me!!!" B



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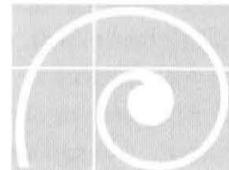
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# 2004 AVS BOARD MEETING

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## MINUTES AND REPORTS

Annual Board Meeting of the American Viola Society  
Monday, May 23, 2005  
Brigham Young University, Primrose International  
Viola Archive (PIVA) of the Lee Library  
6:30-9:30p.m.

**Officers Present:** Fielding (President), Callus  
(President-Elect), Zeitlin (Secretary), Kruse (Treasurer)

**Board Members Present:** Bigelow, Buck, Dane,  
Dubois, Hamilton, Ngwenyama, Palumbo, Pounds,  
Rodland, Strauss, White-Smith

**Board Members unable to attend:** Steely

Meeting called to order by President Fielding at 6:35p.m.

- I. Thank you to Claudine Bigelow for setting up and running the 2005 Primrose Competition and Festival.
- II. Announced results of spring 2005 elections. President-Elect is Juliet White-Smith. New appointments to the board are: Kirsten Docter and Lembi Veskimets. Reappointments to the board are: Michael Palumbo and Dwight Pounds.
- III. Helen Callus will begin her tenure as president on July 1, 2005.
- IV. Introductions of those at their first board meeting: Susan Dubois and Nokuthula Ngwenyama.
- V. Zeitlin presented membership report May 2005. Membership has increased significantly over the past year.
- VI. Kruse presented financial report 2005. The past year was an excellent year financially as income exceeded expenses.
- VII. Discussion on Primrose judging. Moved (Palumbo) seconded (Dubois) that "anyone involved in judging the final rounds will not attend the preliminary rounds. Motion approved unanimously.
- VIII. Dane presented JAVS report.
- IX. Web site report submitted by Steely and presented in absentia.
- X. Discussion on proposal by Philip Tietze of Ball

State University to host 2008 North American Viola Congress.

- XI. Discussion on potential conflict in 2007 between Primrose Competition and ASTA National Solo Competition.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Annual Board Meeting of the American Viola Society  
Tuesday, May 24, 2005

Brigham Young University, Wilkinson Student Center  
1:30-3:00p.m.

**Officers Present:** Fielding (President), Callus  
(President-Elect), Zeitlin (Secretary), Kruse (Treasurer)

**Board Members Present:** Bigelow, Buck, Dane,  
Dubois, Hamilton, Ngwenyama, Palumbo, Pounds,  
Rodland, Strauss, White-Smith

**Board Members unable to attend:** Steely

**Guest:** Jeffrey Irvine

Meeting called to order by President Fielding at 1:25 p.m.

- I. Continued discussion on when and where to hold the next Primrose Competition and Viola Congress.
- II. Continued discussion on Ball State University congress proposal.
- III. Discussion of issues to do with Primrose and Gardener Competitions.

Meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

Annual Board Meeting of the American Viola Society  
Wednesday, May 25, 2005

Brigham Young University, Wilkinson Student Center  
2:00-3:00p.m.

**Officers Present:** Fielding (President), Zeitlin  
(Secretary), Kruse (Treasurer)

**Board Members Present:** Bigelow, Buck, Dane,

*Continued on page 12*

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[christine-rutledge@uiowa.edu](mailto:christine-rutledge@uiowa.edu).

[www.uiowa.edu/~music](http://www.uiowa.edu/~music)



Continued from page 11

Dubois, Hamilton, Ngwenyama, Palumbo, Pounds, Rodland, Strauss, White-Smith

**Board Members unable to attend:** Callus (President-Elect), Steely

Meeting called to order by President Fielding at 2:00p.m.

- I. Moved (Buck) seconded (Ngwenyama) "to hold the next viola congress at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana." Motion passed
- II. Moved (Fielding) seconded (Dubois) "to hold the next Primrose Competition at the 2008 congress in Muncie, Indiana." Motion failed. Discussion to be continued.
- III. Set up a timetable of that which the AVS wishes to accomplish over the next three years.
- IV. Committees still to be assigned.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louise Zeitlin (AVS Secretary) B



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# 2006 MONTREAL CONGRESS

## **XXXIVth International Viola Congress in Montreal-June 7-11, 2006**

The Canadian Viola Society and the University of Montreal Faculty of Music are proud to welcome the 34th International Viola Congress, June 7-11, 2006.

It is an honor to welcome these well-known artists, congress participants, and amateurs who take the promotion and practice of the viola to heart. Montreal is a city that embodies the influences of Europe and the Americas; our programming will reflect this diversity, and without a doubt, each participant will go home feeling enriched by this Congress.

Among the noted invited artists are Heidi Castleman (USA), Steven Dann (Canada), Roberto Diaz (USA), Henrik Frendin (Sweden), Siegfried Führlinger (Austria), Bruno Giuranna (Italy), Neal Gripp (Canada), Robert Harris (Australia), Burton Kaplan (USA), Kim Kashkashian (USA), Michael Kugel (Belgium), Donald Maurice (New Zealand), Michel Michalakakos (France), Antoine Tamestit (France), Lars Anders Tomter (Norway), and Barbara Westphal (Germany).

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- Gala concerts and a closing concert starring Michael Kugel, Kim Kashkashian and Barbara Westphal, respectively;
- Performances given by the recent winners of the Tertis, Munich, and Primrose Competitions.

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Exhibits by luthiers and instrument demonstrations, with instrument evaluations by French specialist Jean-Jaques Rampal.

Canadian Music Competition, in collaboration with the Canadian Music Centre. This competition is open to current students and violists who have completed their studies within the past year. The winning candidates will perform Canadian viola works in concert at the Congress. Information about the competition, including eligibility requirements and repertoire options, can be found at [\[icentre.ca\]\(http://icentre.ca\) or by contacting Sarah Ouellet at \[sarah@centremusique.ca\]\(mailto:sarah@centremusique.ca\).](http://www.mus-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

A particular emphasis will be placed on chamber music, as the Congress will feature the chamber orchestra I Musici de Montréal, the Alcan Quartet, and the Trio Lyra. I Musici will give a gala concert featuring invited artists, and the Alcan Quartet will offer two concerts titled *The Viola Takes a Starring Role in Chamber Music*, in which they will be joined by guest violists and piano professors from the University of Montreal Faculty. Also, in order to reflect the bilingual culture of Montreal, June 8 will be entirely devoted to French performers, composers, and luthiers, the first event of its kind at an International Viola Congress.

It is important to note the registration deadline of April 1st! Accommodations will be extremely difficult to secure after this date, because of other major events taking place in Montreal at the same time. Hotels have agreed to reserve a certain number of rooms for the Congress, they will release them to the general public again shortly after the deadline.

Details of the XXXIVth International Viola Congress are posted on the Congress web site: [www.viola-congress2006.ca](http://www.viola-congress2006.ca). ☞

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# VIOLISTS IN NOLA

## 'COMING FROM' AND 'GOING TO' IN TWO LETTERS



*Slapin and Solomon, in front of Lake Pontchartrain (the lake that flooded New Orleans).*

by **Scott Slapin**

My wife, Tanya Solomon, and I loved being violists in the city of NOLA (New Orleans, Louisiana). We enjoyed everything from the unique food, music, and architecture to the region's subtropical climate with palm, fig and banana trees. Of all of the places we have lived, it is this city that we liked the most. We gave many recitals and chamber music concerts around town, and we really enjoyed playing with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), the only full time orchestra in the Gulf region and the only full time cooperative orchestra in the United States.

The LPO began as the successor of the New Orleans Symphony, which went bankrupt in the early 1990's. The musicians of the LPO have

always been committed to playing at a high level, no matter what the financial and administrative challenges of the moment were, and we really appreciated that. This is not the case in every orchestra.

The same week our viola duo CD *Sketches from the New World* was released, Tanya and I evacuated from our house on Mithra Street, near Bayou St. John and City Park. We left Saturday night, Hurricane Katrina hit on Monday morning, and the levees broke sometime Monday night. We didn't leave because we really thought the hurricane was coming for New Orleans; we left to avoid what was sure to be a lot of evacuation traffic on Sunday. In the summer, at any given moment, there's usually a hurricane floating around or near the Gulf somewhere. The

vast majority of the time these evacuations, warnings or watches are "false alarms;" the storms change course and hit somewhere else (just as Katrina was originally aiming at Pensacola).

We got out with our two best violas, some clothes, a laptop computer and our hurricane box, in which we kept most of our important papers (insurance, passports, social security cards etc.), and made it to Knoxville, Tennessee the next day. We spent the next weeks sleeping on friends' couches in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and the Atlanta area. A week and a half after the hurricane hit, I took the first audition out there, and won a one-year full-time position, which I am thrilled to have. This will allow us to survive while we figure out what to do next. But this was sheer luck; for the majority of our musicians there are no such opportunities out there.

Members of the Louisiana Philharmonic are now scattered around the country looking for whatever work is available, which in the orchestra world is not a lot. While many people on a personal level have been extremely generous offering places to stay, money, etc., on an organizational level things have not always been easy. Hotels, which proudly advertised their reduced rates to Hurricane victims on their websites, seemed not to know anything about it when we

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called. Many orchestras took great advantage of the publicity in their communities to show all the work they were offering to the displaced LPO members, but failed to clarify to the public that this work was almost always sub spots that they couldn't fill anyway and paid very little. (I received emails from several people remarking how well off the LPO players must be with all of the offers coming in! Far, far from true.)

The historic Orpheum Theater located one block off of Canal St., where the LPO is based, is now filled with water to the bottom of the stage, a reported twelve feet. The hatch to the chimney blew off during the storm, soaking the curtains, the lights, the stage and the acoustical shell ceiling panels, and the entire first floor seating is under water.

Our one-story house, at the height of the flood was under a reported nine feet, four inches of water. Three weeks later, it is still under three and a half feet of what is being politely described as 'water', but what is really a mix of gasoline, chemicals and a whole lot of other stuff. Many other musicians lived in our neighborhood, and their houses are also a total loss. We haven't been allowed back into the neighborhood yet (and can't imagine that will happen anytime soon), but I don't guess that any of our possessions will have survived submerged for this long.

The LPO and the Nashville Symphony are putting on a fundraising concert on October 4th in Nashville, which is for the moment the only concert scheduled for the LPO. On September

25th, Tanya and I are performing the 6th Brandenburg Concerto and some other pieces in conjunction with the New Jersey Youth Symphony in Morristown, NJ also as a fundraiser for the LPO, and we hope to play many more such concerts in the future to raise money for our colleagues until the LPO can recover. If you would like to contribute to the "Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra Relief Fund" please make a deposit at any Bank One or Chase branch (the Fund's account is in the Baton Rouge office) or mail a check payable to the Fund to: Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, c/o Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, attn: Babs Mollere, P.O. Box 14209, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

It's hard to say what the future of the LPO will be. Hopefully, the city will be rebuilt right, businesses that fled the city over the past 30 years (knowing this would happen someday) will return, and the LPO will be better than ever. If so, one day not too far off, you'll again be able to come down to New Orleans, enjoy the sights and sounds of the French Quarter, have some catfish po'boys and crawfish étouffée and cross Canal St. to finish off the evening with a concert at the LPO.

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## **Cleaning Up**

**by Nick Coventry**

On Thursday morning I woke up and turned on the television. Four days ago I had watched the wind tearing through the trees, the bending palm trees and reporters in raincoats yelling, angry seas rumbling behind

them. Next were pictures of flooded rooftops, entire cities gone, crowds of people walking, a mass exodus. This morning I was expecting to see a different picture: a dramatic helicopter rescue, an official address or media conference or a team of civil workers passing out supplies. Instead I saw pictures of people stranded on rooftops and I heard the angry voice of the Mayor of New Orleans pleading for help, brought to tears on a local radio interview from desperation. As I showered that morning, a determination swept over me: I wanted to help in the recovery from this event. Playing a benefit concert or making a cash donation to the Red Cross, both of which are of course very important to the relief effort, was not going to be enough to silence the nagging voice in my head saying "do something."

Three days later I was standing in six inches of Mississippi mud, a shovel in my hands chipping away at the toxic goop covering the floor of the Second Street elementary school classroom. I paused for a moment trying to find a clean spot on my yellow Volunteer Minister shirt to wipe away the new torrent of sweat now pouring from my brow. As I looked around the room I noticed the chalkboard had a treble clef drawn neatly next to a message that said: "If you cannot keep your voices down I will turn off the air conditioner until you can be quiet." Imagine the desperate music teacher threatening her kids with the only weapon left, the heat. I can see the kids settling down instantly, thinking of the suffocating cloud of humidity waiting for them right outside their classroom. Now it was inside the classroom and

my friend Phil and I were in it, sweating water faster than we could drink it from the thousands and thousands of bottles lying in a mountainous pile outside the front of the school.

We had joined forces with our religious organization's relief effort in Baton Rouge and were deployed in a small group comprised of a chiropractor, a housewife, a retired navy engineer and us, the musicians. I am a violist, violinist, and elementary school music teacher, while Phil is a guitarist and singer. We played music together in a group in Santa Barbara, and were convinced to bring our instruments by the fellow parishioner who raised the money for our travel tickets. Packing as little as possible, I was reluctant at first. Who would have time for music with all the work to be done?

But after our first night of playing, my opinion changed. Phil played his guitar, I played violin and together we did what we do every night at home, playing improvised musical conversations. Sometimes Phil would sing Johnny Cash and Leadbelly songs. At first it was a few people coming over to listen, then a circle formed and before long it got so nobody at the shelter let us go a night without playing.

The Second Street School was slowly transforming into a functional shelter, due mostly to the combined efforts of our team and a crew of Puerto Ricans who worked tirelessly. Our Navy trained engineer leader rigged up electricity to a generator and we were in business. We housed families in the gymnasium and stored food and supplies in the

newly cleaned classrooms. At eight o'clock in the evening the army trucks cruised around the empty streets—a curfew to prevent looting and gas siphoning. The heat never really waned as we ate our military rationed MRE's and southern sweet tea and celebrated with our new comrades the victories of the day's work. One night the Puerto Ricans found some percussion instruments in a classroom and we began a rousing wild-eyed Latin jam, Phil and I trying to

keep up with Carlos' rapid clave beat while the others danced salsa, the ensemble parading through the cafeteria.

Performing music is always fun for me but this time it had a more resounding effect on people. I watched Suzie's face brighten when I played her the Sarabande from Bach's first Cello Suite. She had heard us playing and came to take a closer look, waiting until we had finished a raucous gypsy song to request that I play something classical. Suzie and Bobby first arrived at the shelter requesting a ride back to see their home. It was their first visit back since they had crawled onto their rooftop to escape the quickly rising waters of the storm surge. Clutching a fallen tree through eight hours of wind and rain they miraculously survived to crawl down and find help. Upon returning they found mud and mildew, an overwhelming stench, Suzie's piano ruined, and her drawings washed away. Now she was wearing a wide-eyed, child-like expression on her face listening to me play. As soon as I finished she said without hesitation, "Play another song." Phil and I couldn't help but laugh, her intent was so unwavering, eyes fixed unflinching on us. But something in her voice reminded me that this music was not just for her entertainment and we started playing again.

It was surprisingly hard to say goodbye after our week-long stay was over and I fought back my own emotions when Suzie hugged me and said, looking me in the eye, "you boys were the best thing to come out of this hurricane." Next time I won't need any convincing—the viola will be the first thing I pack. ☺

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# RITTER'S VIOLA ALTA: THE VIOLA'S NINETEENTH CENTURY IDENTITY CRISIS

by Linda Shaver-Gleason

*This work of Ms. Shaver-Gleason was selected as the first-prize winner of the 2005 David Dalton Viola Research Competition. She is a 2005 graduate of Roosevelt University in Chicago, and now lives in San Diego, California.*

The conflict between the viola's size and sonority has plagued the instrument from its earliest days. Whereas the violin is widely accepted to exhibit the ideal physical properties to project and support its acoustical properties,<sup>1</sup> the "standard viola" (if such a label can apply, since violas vary in size from instrument to instrument) is too small to produce equivalent projection. Making the viola larger, however, risks placing too much physical strain on its player, leading to chronic injuries and even to shortened careers. During the nineteenth century, the desire for louder, more powerful sounds led to an upsurge in popularity of large violas, most notably the viola alta, designed by German violist Hermann Ritter (1848-1926). Though the viola alta once seemed poised to replace the viola in solo, chamber, and orchestral settings, it has since faded into obscurity. Most accounts attribute its downfall to its unwieldy size, but a less concrete contribution to the viola alta's failure was its sound; it also



*Gene Moon plays 18.5 inch Ritter model made by Philip Keller, 1923.*

produced a tone remarkably different from that of a standard viola. Although its initial success seemed to confirm the assumption that a stronger, more brilliant sound would immensely improve the viola, the viola alta's subsequent disuse indicates that the viola's identity relies heavily upon its unique tone color.

The role of the viola changed dramatically during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from serving as harmonic filler to making independent melodic and timbral contributions to the ensemble. In his 1843 *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*, Hector Berlioz notes, "Of all the instruments in the orchestra it is the viola whose excellent qualities have

been unappreciated for the longest time....The general character of its tones is one of profound melancholy and is notably different from that of the other string instruments. Nevertheless, it has long been neglected—or used, senselessly and ineffectually, for doubling the basses in the higher octave"<sup>2</sup> As composers began experimenting with tone color and orchestral effects in the Romantic era, they found the viola's "mournfully passionate sound," as Berlioz described it,<sup>3</sup> particularly suited to their needs. Thus, the viola emerged from its accompanimental role and was given more exposed, prominent lines.

Berlioz attributed composers' previous neglect of the viola to more than just a different aesthetic, how-

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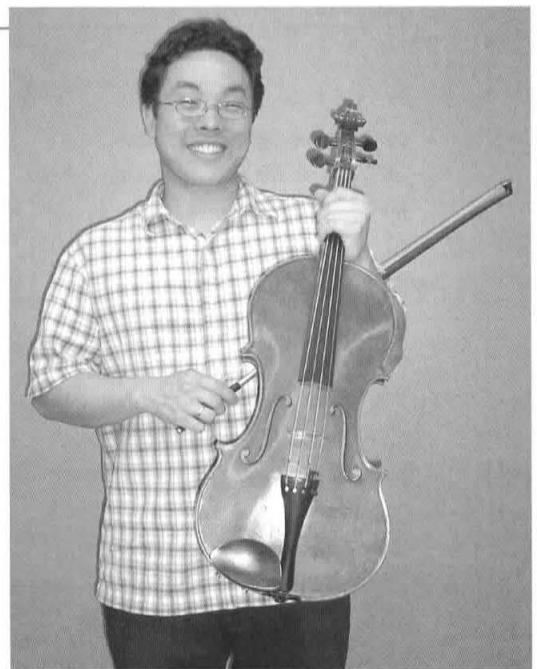
ever. The players themselves proved to be as much of a hindrance to the viola's acceptance as the instrument's design. Berlioz notes, "It was unfortunately impossible at that time to write any important passage for the viola requiring the most ordinary skill for its execution. Violists were always selected from the weaker violinists. If a musician was unable to fill creditably the post of a violinist, he was relegated to the violas....I must admit that even in our own time this prejudice against the viola has not disappeared completely."<sup>4</sup> Twenty-five years later, the anti-violist sentiment was certainly apparent in Richard Wagner's *Über das Dirigiren*:

*[A] traditional habit, however, regarding the choice of players of stringed instruments, has led to deleterious consequences. Without the slightest compunction...the viola parts have been sacrificed. 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 who could deal with the rather difficult passages in one of my later scores!<sup>5</sup>*

Wagner's scathing remarks distressed violist Hermann Ritter, who, like most German musicians of the

time, held Wagner in high esteem. Ritter associated the perceived weakness of viola players with the acoustic weakness of the instrument itself. In order to improve the viola's reputation, Ritter sought to correct the viola's physical inadequacies and make its power on par with the other, more respected members of the string family. Although Ritter did not originate the idea that "correcting" the viola's problems of projection lay in increasing its size, he was among the first to approach the desired dimensions of the viola scientifically, maintaining the violin shape which had withstood centuries with little alteration. He postulated that, since the viola is tuned one fifth lower than the violin, its size relative to the violin should be the same proportion of tonic to subdominant—2:3, or 1:3/2. Using Antonio Bagatella's 1786 pamphlet *Regole per la Construzione dei violini* as a reference, Ritter designed an instrument he dubbed the viola alta. This new instrument was significantly larger than its predecessor, with a body length of 18.9 inches (48 centimeters) and ribs of 1.7 inches (4.3 centimeters).<sup>6</sup> The first viola alta was constructed in 1885 by luthier Karl Adam Hörlein of Würzburg, who also referred to the instrument as the *Altgeige*.

Through the viola alta, Ritter achieved his goal of producing the power of a violin or a cello while maintaining the pitch range of the viola. Its initial trial at the orchestra of the Duke of Meiningen was a success; after hearing the instrument play Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* at the hands of the concertmaster, conductor Hans von Bülow



expressed the desire to have more violas alta in his orchestra.<sup>7</sup> The true measure of Ritter's success, however, came when he played his new instrument in Munich for Wagner. Wagner, who at that time was working on *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, praised the viola alta and its inventor. He optimistically predicted that Ritter's viola alta would have tremendous implications for the performance of existing works as well as for directing the composition of new works. In a letter to Ritter dated March 28, 1875, Wagner wrote:

*I feel certain that the universal introduction of the Viola Alta into our orchestra would serve not only to throw a proper light on the intention of those composers who had to content themselves with the ordinary "Bratsche" while they required for their melody the true Alto violin tone, but that it might also bring about an advantageous change in the treatment of the string quartet. The free "A" string of this no longer thin but now free and brilliant sounding instrument, will be able to take over many an energetic melody from the*

hemmed in "A" string of the viola which hitherto was so impeded that, for instance, Weber was already obligated to add a wind instrument (clarinet or oboe) in such cases to strengthen the viola part.

*The viola alta will obviate this, will therefore no longer compel the composer to use mixed colors where the pure string character was originally intended. It is desirable that the improved and vastly ennobled instrument should be given to the best orchestras, and that its cultivation should be urgently recommended to all the best viola players. . . . Friend Fleischauer (concertmaster in Meiningen) has already declared his willingness to recommend the Viola Alta for use at the forthcoming Festival performances at Bayreuth. If that lets me hope to see at least two*

*of these instruments used in my orchestra, I regret only not to have six already to assist in the same way.*<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the viola alta did find a place at the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876. Ritter served as principal viola for the premiere of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, playing his viola alta.

The Bayreuth Festival proved invaluable to the dissemination of the viola alta. There Ritter met many famous musicians including Franz Liszt, who expressed an interest in the larger viola. Liszt was so impressed that he wrote a composition for viola alta and piano, his 1881 Romance Oubliéé, bearing the dedication "To Herr Professor Herman Ritter, the inventor of the viola alta."<sup>9</sup> Ritter performed the piece many times

while promoting the viola alta all over Europe, eventually publishing his own arrangement of the piece for viola alta and orchestra.<sup>10</sup> In an account of Ritter's demonstration in London in 1886, the Musical Times comments that the viola alta is "fast superseding the old viola in Germany."<sup>11</sup> Beyond personal appearances, Ritter furthered his cause by writing books on the subject, including *Das Geschicht der Viola Alta und die Grundsätze ihres Baues* (The History of the Viola Alta and the Basis of its Construction) in 1877 and *Die Viola Alta oder Altgeige* (The Viola Alta or Altoviolin) in 1881. In *Das Geschicht*, Ritter relates a history of bowed stringed instruments, portraying the viola alta as the result of a natural progression from the standard viola before outlining

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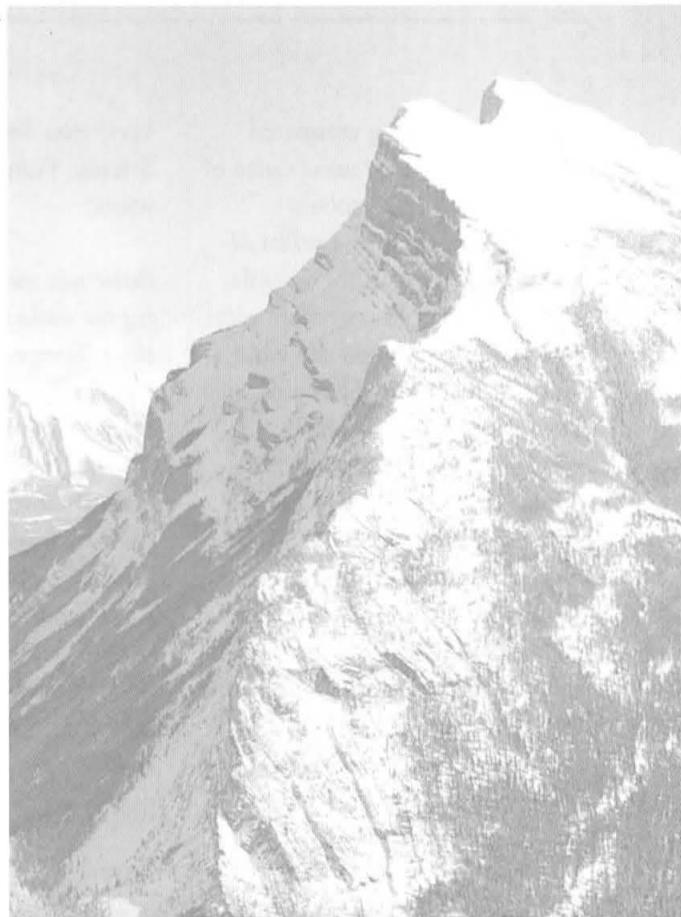
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the process by which he determined the viola alta's ideal specifications. In the latter book, Ritter includes his correspondence with Wagner and a complete repertoire list for the instrument. Some pieces, like Liszt's *Romance Oublié* and Ritter's *Konzertfantasies*, were original compositions for viola alta; most, however, were arrangements of pre-existing music, such as Mozart's oboe concertos and the *Andante Cantabile* from Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata.<sup>12</sup>

The viola alta's growing fame was also due in part to Ritter's pupils, some of whom became advocates of the instrument. By 1889, five of these students played viola altas at the Bayreuth Festival. Among those pupils was Michael Balling, who made a case for the viola alta in England. In October and November of 1896, Balling played three recitals in Queen's Hall in the hopes of garnering support for his teacher's invention. Some of the reviews echoed the favorable comments from the viola alta's German proponents; a review in the *Globe* declared, "The upper register, in particular, seems capable of producing that peculiarly penetrating and almost nasal tone which has hitherto been entirely associated with the cello, and has indeed constituted one

of its principal charms." The *Standard* marveled, "So distinct are the advantages in many points possessed by the viola alta, that it is somewhat surprising that the instrument, which had gained the approval of Wagner, Liszt, and Rubinstein, and was used in the orchestra at the first Bayreuth Festival, should not have come into general use in this country." Not all reviews were favorable, however. A critic from the *Manchester Guardian* expressed a dissenting view, saying of the new instrument, "It is merely obsolete and useless, that is all."<sup>13</sup>

The viola alta received its staunchest criticism, however, from violists themselves. Wagner, with his generally low opinion of orchestral violists, anticipated resistance to the large violas, warning Ritter in their correspondence, "We shall have to be prepared to meet with great opposition in this, as unfortunately in the majority of our orchestras the viola players do not constitute the flower of bow-instrumentalists! A courageous beginning will however draw followers, and finally conductors and directors will have to encourage the good example."<sup>14</sup> In a lecture given in February 1897 to the London branch of the Incorporated Society of



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Musicians, Balling compared Ritter's struggle for acceptance of the viola alta to Theobald Boehm's efforts in the realm of the flute, testifying, "The viola players of the old type were greatly alarmed and hated the viola alta and its player. They ridiculed both, but with little effect....It was too large and too loud."<sup>15</sup> Thus criticisms fell into one of two categories: those of the viola alta's size and those of its sound. While these concepts relate to each other in that the instrument's large size contributes to its different tone, the former criticism addresses a mechanical problem while the latter indicates an aesthetic preference.

The viola alta's large size became to Ritter a matter of pride, but concerns that the viola alta was too big were entirely justifiable. Most of the violists of Ritter's time were accustomed to playing instruments much smaller than today's, some no more than violins strung with viola strings. To Ritter, such instruments were indicative of their players' weak constitution. In his article *The*

*Viola Alta and Felix Draeseke's Sonatas*, Franco Sciannameo wrote:

*Ritter was also interested in rescuing the viola from the hands of those "foreigners" who continued to play small violas out of their physical ineptitude or laziness....The "infirm, decrepit" musician, moonlighting on the viola so much depre- cated by Wagner, did represent for Ritter the un-Germanic, unwholly [sic], "foreign" type of violist he and Wagner wished to dispense with. In sum, the viola alta had become for Hermann Ritter the "Teutonic" viola, an instrument of Wagnerian magnitude in every respect.<sup>16</sup>*

Nevertheless, the viola alta's size posed many practical problems; for example, since it was proportioned exactly like the violin, the upper bouts of the instrument had been enlarged to the point where it was difficult to reach around them to play notes in higher positions. Ritter conceded this fact, and in 1898 he added a fifth string to the viola alta that sounded the same pitch as the violin E string. Other problems

related to the viola alta's size could not be so easily remedied; many violists simply had neither the reach to navigate first position on its lengthened fingerboard nor the strength to draw the desired sound from its strings.

Not only does a larger viola impede agility while playing, it may contribute to playing-related injuries. Physical ailments associated with larger violas include soreness of the chin and neck, tendonitis, bursitis, and fibrosis of the arms and shoulders.<sup>17</sup> Such afflictions can prematurely end careers, as was the case for famed violist Lionel Tertis, who championed large violas in the early twentieth century but was forced into early retirement because of fibrosis of the arms developed by playing a 17 1/8-inch viola.<sup>18</sup> The violists of Ritter's time who were accustomed to playing small violas undoubtedly experienced pain after playing the viola alta for even a short period of time, hence the overall disdain for the instrument. In his defense of the viola alta, Balling claimed that pain could be prevented with proper technique, asserting, "One who wishes to master the viola alta must study it in the same way as the violin—that is to say, from the beginning. And the beginning is to learn how to hold the instrument."<sup>19</sup> Too few people found the viola alta's advantages over the standard viola significant enough to master a new technique, so the instrument's popularity waned by the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Most accounts of the viola alta's history attribute its descent into obscurity to its cumbersome size. The last mention of the viola alta as a contemporary instrument occurs in Richard Strauss's 1904 edition of Berlioz's *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*, in which he states, "Unfortunately, up to now [the viola alta] has been used only to a very limited extent, mainly because it required considerable physical power."<sup>20</sup> Since the viola alta, there have been several attempts to expand the viola while still accommodating the physical limitations of the human frame. These experiments in larger, more ergonomic violas continue today as some violists contend that the viola's less-than-ideal size is a flaw that must be corrected in a way that does not risk injuring the players.

However, doing away with what some view as the viola's greatest liability would alter the viola's acoustical identity—in other words, it would cease to sound like a viola. Maurice Riley's definitive *History of the Viola* notes criticism that the viola alta "lacked the nasal, somber tone quality characteristic of the viola, and that it sounded more like a cello."<sup>21</sup> Even Wagner's original letter of praise alludes to the fact that the viola alta, unlike the standard viola, produces a timbre similar to other stringed instruments. With a bigger body, the viola loses its distinct "profound melancholy tone" prized by Berlioz. Furthermore, works written by composers who were mindful of

and wished to exploit the viola's unique sound would be unbalanced and uncharacteristic on larger, more physically "ideal" instruments. Perhaps the most eloquent argument for maintaining the viola's standard smaller size comes from Arthur Froggatt, writing in defense of the viola in 1910: "It seems to be forgotten by many that the very defect of the viola has come to be its chief virtue; and that to the fact that its strings are too heavy for the size of the body, its rich and somber tone-colour is chiefly owing. The modern orchestra, with all its magnificence, is not so rich in varieties of tone-colour that it can afford to dispense with one of them."<sup>22</sup> Even as today's luthiers continue Ritter's experiment by increasing the viola's physical and acoustical size, the rise and fall of the viola alta serves as a reminder that the physically imperfect viola's unique tone color has endeared the instrument to composers for centuries. B

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>5</sup> Richard Wagner, *On Conducting*. trans. Edward Dannreuther. (London: Bookseller Limited, 1940), 3-4.
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- <sup>8</sup> Sheppard, 569.
- <sup>9</sup> Friedrich Schnapp, "Liszt: A Forgotten Romance," *Music & Letters* 34:3 (July 1953): 232.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Thomson, 161.
- <sup>12</sup> Hermann Ritter, *Die Viola alta oder Altgeige*. (Leipzig: Carl Merseburger, 1885), 51-62. Such re-instrumentation was a fairly common practice both in the nineteenth century and in the history of viola repertoire in general.
- <sup>13</sup> Thomson, 161-2.
- <sup>14</sup> Sheppard, 569.
- <sup>15</sup> Thomson, 163.
- <sup>16</sup> Sciannameo, 58.
- <sup>17</sup> Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola*. (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1980), 233.
- <sup>18</sup> Sheppard, 567.
- <sup>19</sup> Thomson, 163.
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- <sup>21</sup> Riley, 232.
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# ICELAND CONGRESS IN REVIEW

**By Jennifer Drake**

When I found out I had been invited to perform at the 33rd International Viola Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland, I was thrilled. I would spend time with great viola players! I'd get to experience a new, interesting country. Plus, the trip would afford the opportunity to do much-needed reconnaissance work on my friend and colleague, David Johnson.

Dave is the assistant principal violist of the Boise Philharmonic. He is an amazing player and a bit of a clown. He's the sort who will bow an entire phrase backwards while telling you the bowing is to be done the other way, or suggest a fingering, saying one thing while playing another, just to amuse himself. Dave can play anything and he sounds great doing it, and sometime in 1980's he was Principal Violist of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

The Boise Philharmonic viola section has speculated for years about Dave's time in Iceland. Was he on the lam as a consequence of involvement in an illegal pyramid scheme? Was he part of a secretive Scandinavian Mafia? I promised I would find out, although it might not be easy. Dave could live for years undetected in Iceland as he is blonde-haired and blue eyed, undeniably of Scandinavian origin. When I tried to extract information

from him about his time in Iceland, Dave would share tales of orchestra tours that all seemed to culminate in him spending the night in an alternative sleeping venue, such as a pile of hay in a barn.

## **Day 1: Master Class with Yuri Bashmet**

The first event of the Congress was a master class, led by Yuri Bashmet. Congress organizers, Sesselja Halldorsdottir and Gudrun Thorarinsdottir, incorporated professionals and students alike into this class. Helga Thorarinsdottir, the principal violist of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra performed Schubert's *Arpeggione*. Next was Ragnheidur Jonsdottir, performing Schumann's *Märchenbilder*, and then William Lane.

William Lane is a 23 year old violist from Australia. He performed at several master classes as well as with Garth Knox and Carlos Maria Solare during the Congress. In addition to consistently performing well, William is a tremendously nice guy. Full of enthusiasm, grace and kindness, William had something encouraging to say to everyone. One of my favorite moments with William went something like this:

ME: Hi there, William!

WILLIAM: (studying a picture of fellow violist Michael Hall, who had earlier put on a marvelous per-

formance) Why, hello, Jen! So, how old do you think this Michael Hall chap is, then?

ME: Well, I think he's about my age, mid thirties or so, maybe a little older. I guess he's about 35?

WILLIAM: (shocked) You're in your mid thirties?? I thought you were my age!

Like I said, he had something encouraging for everyone!

The master class with Yuri afforded many opportunities to listen to him play. When his English would run out, Yuri would simply take the student's viola and demonstrate.

## **Day 2: Opening Ceremonies**

Day Two was the official start to the Congress. Most events were at the Culture House, a building dedicated to all facets of Icelandic culture. The morning master classes were led by Claudine Bigelow and Matthew Dane, and featured talented young Icelandic violists. Dan Barach led a class about the Alexander Technique. A lecture about the history of Icelandic music, led by Bjarki Sveinbjornsson, followed.

The opening ceremonies, held in the afternoon, began with opening remarks by IVS President Michael Vidulich and Iceland Viola Society President Sesselja Halldorsdottir. Next was a performance by Suzuki



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viola students of Sarah Buckley, who performed to an adoring crowd. Icelandic Viola Society members performed traditional Icelandic folk songs arranged by Ingvar Jonasson.

I would love to have instantly adopted Ingvar as my grandfather. Considered to be the “Father of the Icelandic Viola,” his love and encouragement was present throughout the Congress. Many participants and organizers were his former students. His smiling face was often seen at the very back of the hall, quietly proud of his legacy. Always the first to applaud, Ingvar is an excellent example of everything our profession is about.

Next was a recital dedicated to Icelandic music. Many composers whose works were being performed were in attendance. Another recital, “The Multifarious Viola”, followed. Highlights included a performance of the *Hans Gal Sonata* by Christine Rutledge, and *Capricci* for Solo Viola, written and performed by Lawrence Wheeler. Steve Larson and Annie Trepanier treated us to an electrifying performance of Bohuslav *Martinu’s Three Madrigals* for Viola and Violin.

We then attended a reception at Reykjavik Town Hall. Toasted by the Mayor, we learned that “Pure Energy!” is the official slogan of Reykjavik, Iceland. While I think this might be a fabulous personal motto for me, ‘Pure Energy’ was also an apt way to describe the 33rd International Viola Congress so far.

The evening featured a performance of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra performs in an unusual building that is half concert hall, half movie theater. Yuri Bashmet conducted the orchestra, and performed the Hoffmeister D Major Concerto.

Leaving the concert hall at 10pm, I was surprised to see there was still daylight! We headed to Kaffi Reykjavik for some much-needed socializing. Congress organizers had reserved a room in this pub to ensure a location for everyone to meet. After staying to chat with new and old friends, it was time to head back to my rented apartment. Glancing at my clock, I saw it was 12:30am. There was still sunshine! Chad and I wandered the streets of Reykjavik, waiting for the sunset that never came.

### **Day Three: Look Out Iceland!**

Day Three was the day I had been alternately looking forward to and dreading: the first day I would perform at the Congress! Inspired by the presence of many Icelandic composers, Aage (bass clarinetist) and I decided to look up the composer of the Icelandic piece we were to perform. Grabbing a Reykjavik telephone book and the phone available in our apartment, we contacted Finnur Torfi Stefansson, composer of the Unison Piece we were mere hours from performing.

Mr. Stefansson is an avuncular man who has many apocryphal stories attributed to him. We heard through the rumor mill that

he was a lawyer and a rock star. He chuckled when we told him these stories, only to confirm that they were true! He agreed to attend our performance, and then arranged a time to meet for coffee afterwards.

It was time for my Viola Congress Debut. I’m certain that the first half of the recital was stellar. I was much too busy pacing and driving my friend, bass clarinetist Aage Nielsen, to distraction with my generalized lack of calm to have absorbed any of it. Then it was our turn. I introduced the piece with my standard one-liner “This is a piece by an Icelandic lawyer, but we like it anyway.” Continuing with a short Carl Nielsen piece, our performance was over. No one threw anything, and Mr. Stefansson was pleased with interpretation of his piece. He had never heard it performed, and had forgotten about it until we had called him. Our meeting later that day resulted in a new piece for Darkwood, and a life-long friend in Finnur.

We raced back to hear William Heinesen’s *Faeroese Melody and Ten Variations*, performed by Faeroe Islands resident Nikos Kapnas. Nikos made his own instrument! I was impressed with Nikos’ playing and his beautiful viola. I had never met anyone from the Faeroe Islands before, and can only hope they are populated with people as joyous and generous as Nikos.

Lunchtime! I had worked very hard to save up a what I thought was considerable sum of money for the

trip, and thought I would be able to splurge on exotic meals, interesting souvenirs, and pounds of viola music. However, Iceland comes with a certain amount of sticker shock. Because virtually everything must be imported, things cost four to five times what they would cost in the United States. So, after months of anxiety and planning for this performance culminated not in a lavish, multi-course celebratory meal, but rather snorking up a hot dog and Diet Coke. It was one of two meals I was able to afford outside our apartment!

Soothed by grease and caffeine, I happily listened to the afternoon recitals. The first paid homage to France and Canada, featuring performances by Matt Dane, his wife Christina Jennings on flute, and harpist Elisabet Waage in the Debussy Sonata, as well as a stunning performance by next year's Congress host, Jutta Puchhammer-Sedillot. Lawrence Wheeler guided several students through a master

class, and we enjoyed a recital by Musica d'Amore, the husband and wife team of Matej Sarc and Svava Bernhardsdottir.

The evening concert featured brilliant Scottish violist Garth Knox. Garth is a gentleman genius, a virtuoso who explores the outer limits of technical and musical boundaries. In addition to performing with unerring beauty and grace, Garth attended virtually every Congress function. He would turn up at Kaffi Reykjavik every night to trade stories, answer questions, and have a beer with the rest of us mere mortals. It's one thing to be a brilliant player, but being a brilliant person as well is a rare and wonderful thing.

Garth performed on both viola and viola d'amore. Performing Luciano Berio duos with Iceland Symphony violist Thorunn Marinisdottir was a highlight. His original composition *Malor me Bat* for Viola d'amore and Five Violas

was a personal favorite, drawing on themes of Ockeghem.

We all retired to Kaffi afterwards. Ken Martinson – who had earlier put on a grand performance of Darius Milhaud's *Four Visages* with his pianist Christopher Taylor – had already stepped up to the bar to order an Icelandic cocktail made from unmentionable sheep parts mixed with vodka. Someone else mentioned a beverage known as "Black Death," a type of Icelandic schnapps Dave had warned me about. This reminded me that I had been unsuccessful in finding out about Dave's secret Icelandic past; I would redouble my efforts the next day. Håkan Olson and Henrik Frendin delighted us with Swedish fiddle tunes as we visited and celebrated together.

#### **DAY 4: It Took About 40 Hours to Get Here!**

A recital on day four celebrated the music of New Zealand. In chatting with Neil Shepherd, a New Zealander who came to listen to concerts and take lots of photographs, I learned that it takes an awfully long time to get to Iceland from NZ! I can only imagine the horrible in flight experiences that would await me on that long journey. Minnesota violist Adrian Lo is another who regularly attends viola congresses simply for the pleasure of hearing performances, taking pictures, and having a great time.

I was finally able to get information about my friend Dave. My group was scheduled to perform on the same recital as Oliver Kentish's piece for ten violas, and

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those players were all members of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. In the warm-up room, I was able to strike up a conversation with Helga, who had been Dave's stand partner. She remembered him warmly, as a kind, gentle man and an excellent player. Other section members came over to share their recollections of Dave, all of which line up with the Dave I know today. While I'd prefer to think of Dave having some dark secret that required him to hide out for a year, sadly, there is no hidden past. He simply won the Iceland Symphony Orchestra audition and tried it out for a year, then returned back to the States to take other auditions.

That mission accomplished, I was able to focus on our performance of Finn Hoffding's *Dialogues*, which are five funny, short, conversation-style pieces. My favorite movement, *Altercazione*, drew appreciative laughs. (At least I assumed that they were.) I had survived another Congress performance!

Michael Hall is another up and coming leader. President of the Chicago Viola Society, Michael is organized, efficient, and enthusiastic. Quick-witted and a compelling conversationalist, a chat with Michael will take you down many unknown roads very rapidly. Michael has a knack for performing contemporary repertoire, and I was not surprised to find that a new piece, commemorating the life of Pope John Paul II, had been written for him to perform at the Congress.

The afternoon concerts provided much new music for consideration. Carlos Maria Solare performed

Luciano Berio's *Naturale* for Viola, Percussion, and Tape, then joined Garth Knox and William Lane in three pieces written by Garth, titled *Viola Spaces* for Three Violas. The idea behind these pieces, Mr. Knox explained, was that contemporary music can hold many discouraging technical issues, often all crammed into the first measure. A performer might acquire a new piece, look at the opening, and then simply pack it in, swayed by the problems encountered early on. Knox's pieces are etudes to enrich understanding of the contemporary compositional language. Each movement employed one technique: harmonics, ponticello, or pizzicato (utilizing 9 fingers). The resourceful Mr. Solare figured out a way to use all ten fingers in the last movement, much to the delight of the audience.

*New Zealand Comes North* featured the inimitable Don Maurice and friends. His guitarist Matthew Marshall provided the continuo for a transcription of Vivaldi's *Concerto in E Minor for Four Violas*. They also performed Astor Piazzolla's *Histoire du Tango*. Don displayed his characteristic cleverness in both his rapport with the audience and his playing. His lecture the next day, *The Art of Vocal Fingering*, sealed him in my mind as someone imbued with profound intellect.

The evening's concert was by "the Giant of the Nordic Viola," Lars Anders Tomter. I was eager to hear this concert, because I own several of Mr. Tomter's recordings. I had never seen him perform live, and was surprised when he walked out on stage. I had always figured the

"Giant" nickname simply referred to his playing and reputation, and not his stature. But Lars is a big guy! The next day, I was able to chat with him for a few moments, during which I subjected him to my almost compulsive hand size comparison. I have yet to find a violist with smaller hands than me (and I teach lots of fifth graders). My fingertips barely made it past his palm. He found this to be greatly amusing. It was an excellent recital, the highlight being the Franck Sonata, which exceeded all expectations. We all applauded to an almost embarrassing extent, forcing him into an encore.

#### **Day 5: The Golden Circle Tour**

On the fifth day of the Congress, we were treated to a tour of Iceland's natural beauty. We piled onto a bus and headed to Thingvellir National Park, an hour outside of Reykjavik. I decided that J.R.R. Tolkien must have made a visit to Iceland before writing *The Lord of the Rings* because every place we visited had a very "Middle Earth" feel. "If you look to the South, you will see Mount Thormok!" announced our bus driver.

Our first stop was Thingvellir, which means "Plains of Assembly." Long ago, this is where Parliament would meet annually to decide important issues, such as which country to go to war with next, or whose unfaithful wife to drown. At this stop, we enjoyed some authentic Icelandic folk music performed by Herdís Jonsdóttir and her husband Steef van Oosterhout. Heldis played on an unvarnished viola, while Steef played a marimba constructed from

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Icelandic basalt. "Hey, we're going to hear some rock music!" joked IVS President Michael Vidulich.

After this performance we moved on to the Geysir region. All such natural springs in the world take their name from this one. Several geysers were cooperative during our visit, shooting super-heated sulfurous water up to eighty feet in the air. Then we saw the Gulfoss, or "Golden Falls," so named because of its ever-present rainbow. We also stopped at an extinct volcano. Next was Skaulholt chapel. Originally home to the Catholic bishops of Iceland, Skaulholt became the center of Icelandic Lutheranism. Håkan Olson performed a suite by Johan Helmich Roman, and Aage and I had one last performance.

During the closing ceremonies and dinner, Ingvar paid a touching tribute to Sesselja, the ICEVS president. I was able to see how this Congress was a testimony to the love between a student and teacher, how the people who provide our musical upbringing influence us long after we depart. Ingvar impressed on us how proud he was of "my Sessa," and how glad he was that we had come to Iceland. We had all grown to love her as well. Unassuming and kind, Sesselja was a gracious hostess to all who traveled from far and wide to visit her country, and participate in the 33rd international Viola Congress.

There are many legends of the "hidden people" in Icelandic folklore. Disguised as rocks, trees and the like, the hidden people are

elves and trolls who influence daily Icelandic life. Over half of all Icelanders believe in hidden people. Major roadways are routinely rerouted, so as not to disturb their covert friends who live in the vast moonscapes of the Icelandic countryside. They are spoken of as if they were another glacier or other tangible natural feature. In our world of violists there are many hidden people, who enthusiastically go about teaching young students, serving as faculty at small universities, playing in the sections of regional orchestras, organizing events in obscure locales. While there were many well-known violists at the Reykjavik Congress, it also paid tribute to the 'hidden people' of our community. Well done, Iceland Viola Society!

#### **See you in Montreal!**

*Jennifer Drake is a random section viola player and teacher from Boise, Idaho, and the secretary of the Idaho Viola Society. She performed at the World Bass Clarinet Convention in Rotterdam, Holland in October 2005 with Darkwood Consort. Jen is also communications coordinator for Credo, as well as the residential director for the Credo Opus 1 program held in Oberlin every year.*

# 2005 PRIMROSE FESTIVAL AND COMPETITION IN REVIEW

The viola activities of the summer of 2005 began with many beautiful and exciting flourishes—at the Primrose Memorial Scholarship Competition and Festival, which was held May 24-28 at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Over the course of five days, all present were treated to a program that celebrated both current high level of achievement of the competitors, and the continuing quest of everyone for deeper understanding of music-making and community.

The Primrose Memorial Scholarship Competition started in 1987 and has occurred biannually. Originally, the PMSC took place as a part of the North American International Congress. For various reasons, this hasn't been in the case in the recent past however; the Competition started standing by itself between Congress years. This year's host, BYU Professor and Utah VS President Claudine Bigelow, created a "mini-Congress" around the PMSC, to augment the experience for both competitors and listeners. With master classes, lectures, and guest recitals added, the event this year certainly deserved its title of Primrose Competition and Festival.

The Festival featured four guests in evening recitals, each of whom added a unique gift of programming and performance. The recitals began with two former Primrose first-prize winners,

(1993) Daniel Foster (1989). Ngwenyama's program showed off her special ability to set beautiful, captivating moods with a throaty contralto voice. Foster displayed exquisite phrasing that naturally spoke the Classical language of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata. Brant Bayless, violist of the Utah Symphony, sported a silky, luscious sound with a bow technique approaching the balletic. Michael Fernandez, principal violist of the Alabama Symphony, performed the final evening recital, putting together a diverse program that highlighted lesser-known works from the Primrose International Viola Archive.

Lectures and master classes were laced through the week's schedule. Dwight Pounds spoke on the history of the AVS as an organization, a natural outgrowth of his personally extensive and intimate knowledge of the subject. David Dalton gave an overview of the inception of the Primrose International Viola Archive (PIVA), housed at BYU, a story completed by several slides, a movie, and a wonderfully dry sense of humor. Carrie Maxwell, a BYU student violist who works in PIVA, also delivered a well-prepared lecture on the newly donated Harold Colletta collection. Maxwell discussed the contents of this specific collection as well as archiving methods in general; included were informative slides. Competitors who did not pass on to the semi-



*Host Claudine Bigelow with BYU Associate Dean Rory Scanlon.*



*Brant Bayless and Jason Hardink in recital.*



*Presenter Carrie Maxwell*



*David Aaron Carpenter*



*Jennifer Stumm*

final round had the opportunity to perform in master classes given by Foster, Ngwenyama, and Carol Rodland. These classes went a long way to help create a supportive, encouraging atmosphere in what can be a tense environment.

Of course, there was the competition itself. Sixty violists registered to compete, representing over fifteen countries around the world. The level of playing was deeply impressive, and judges had tough decisions to make in each of the three rounds. The nine semi-finalists were Sayaka Kokubo, Ji Hyun Son, Jennifer Stumm, Yu Jin, Sarah Darling, David Aaron Carpenter, Mara Gearman, David Kim, and Eric Nowlin. In the end, First Prize was awarded to

Jennifer Stumm, two Second Prizes were awarded to David Aaron Carpenter and David Kim, and Yu Jin garnered an Honorable Mention. Played by five out of nine in the second round and all four of the finalists, Paganini's *La Campanella* undoubtedly was the tune left ringing in listener's ears! The spirit throughout the week was both energetic and positive; the event succeeded brilliantly in giving every listener and competitor an unforgettable experience.

This Competition and Festival couldn't have proceeded so smoothly without the tireless dedication of its host, Claudine Bigelow. The depth of her commitment was obvious in her heartfelt and sincere remarks both at the beginning and the end of the week. The AVS community is fortunate to have such an idealist in their ranks, especially one so determined to get projects done well! For this gift, she deserves all of our thanks.



*Yu Jin*



*David Kim*

# ALTERNATIVE STYLES/FRESH FACES:

## THE VIOLIST AS COMPOSER:

### INTRODUCING KENJI BUNCH



Park Stickney

I had the good fortune to meet violist and composer Kenji Bunch this past summer at a one-week improvisation workshop. Kenji's music is impossible to categorize, and for good reason. In addition to learning a bluegrass tune and an African groove in one of his classes, I heard him in performances of two movements from his viola quintet, inspired by American folk music; a transcription of a more abstract work for solo cello entitled *Crawl Space*; and a solo piece for viola entitled *The Three G's* written in a funk style. We spoke again one Saturday evening in September after he had successfully managed to be in two places at once: to hear his music performed in person at Juilliard, and by the New World Symphony in Miami via an Internet2 Connection at Columbia University.

Kenji is a soft-spoken person, perhaps even a bit shy, and not at all intimidating. He can easily enjoy a good laugh and prefers to unwind in front of the television. In spite of his many accolades, one has to read his biography to discover the details of his career because he would be the last to boast about them. Rather than an obnoxious prima donna, one gets the impression that Kenji is just another one of the "fellas." He is keenly aware of the fact that he has achieved a great deal in his short life, but he is consistently humble about his accomplishments and expresses tremendous gratitude toward the people and forces that have inspired him.

Kenji grew up in Portland, Oregon, the second son of two music lovers.

He was surrounded by his parents' eclectic record collection and listened to everything from opera (he attended his first live one at the age of three) to jazz and Broadway musicals. As a member of the Portland Youth Philharmonic he developed a love of twentieth-century works (each program featured a work by a contemporary composer) and he would spend hours at the public library listening to the music of Shostakovich, Copland and Barber, among others. As a violist, Kenji says he feels "naturally more open to twentieth-century music and pieces written by more obscure composers." He was encouraged to listen to all types of music with open ears: "I took in all this music with equal seriousness and respect without attempting to distinguish it."

Both Kenji and his older brother studied violin from a young age. Kenji was drawn to the viola in order to do something different from his brother. His father liked to collect instruments, and at age thirteen Kenji started to play on a viola in his father's collection just for fun. He found that he liked the idea of playing in a different clef and preferred the range of the viola to that of the violin.

For Kenji, performing and composing are inseparable. While his most recent accolades have been for his compositions, he is an



exactly the right range, the [tenor] saxophone range” with the potential to be “more convincing than jazz violin.”

Since high school Kenji had also been drawn to improvisation, and starting in college, he says, he “became interested in contemporary ‘concert’ music that requires it, like the New York School composers John Cage, Earl Brown, and

Christian Wolff.” His association with the new music group Ne (x) tworks is a direct result of this interest. He also had the opportunity in college to work on improvisation in a workshop with Bobby McFerrin and in collaboration with Ornette Coleman. Seven years ago he began to delve more heavily into non-classical improvisation when he picked up the violin again and joined the bluegrass band Citigrass. “Nowadays,” he continues, “I’m combining the different performing outlets more, doing some fiddling on the viola, putting more fiddle influence in the pieces I write and performing my own music,” which he shied away from early on.

The inspiration for his music often comes from the least predictable places. He is open to receiving influence from anywhere, often-

times recalling a musical idea from something heard years ago. He somewhat reluctantly admits that many of his ideas come from television. For instance, the first measure of a section of his piece for trumpet and piano recalls a lick from an episode of the television show Perry Mason that had stuck in his head since he was a child. His brass quintet The Torment of the Metals owes the inspiration for its title and the transformative element of the composition to a reference to alchemy in a book on medieval times that he happened to thumb through.

Kenji always tries to keep in mind the experience of performing when composing music. This does not result in watered-down versions of his ideas nor does he sacrifice his ideas because they may be technically challenging. It is not uncommon, however, for him to revisit his compositions post-performance and make changes based on suggestions from and interpretations by those who perform his works. “Just because I’ve come up with the idea in my head, I’m not the best interpreter,” he says. “Composers,” he continues, are “just real people whose music can’t exist without the input of the musicians who play it.” Kenji also considers it his job to help demystify the role of the composer. “We’re not inaccessible geniuses up there somewhere,” he is quick to point out.

Kenji feels fortunate to have the role of performer and composer blurred for him, and he attributes this to the fact that he is active in

equally accomplished violist; he earned two performance degrees at the Juilliard School in addition to his master’s degree in composition. Prior to college he had often fantasized about being a composer, but did not possess the theory background at that time to develop his ideas. Once he delved into writing music, he discovered that his playing could inform it- and vice versa. Kenji’s performance venues are as diverse as his listening tastes. He played in a rock band in college, performs at summer chamber music festivals, is a member of the new music group Ne(x)tworks, and is a fiddler in the New York based bluegrass band Citigrass. His Lichtenstein Symphony is scheduled to be performed by the Colorado Symphony during the 2005-2006 season and he is in the process of developing his jazz playing because, as he says, “the viola is

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Gold Medal, 1998 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis; performances at Carnegie Hall and with orchestras in the U.S. and abroad

**Robert Chen, violin**  
Concertmaster, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

**Soovin Kim, violin**  
First Prize, 1996 Niccolò Paganini International Violin Competition; 1998 Avery Fisher Career Grant; concerts in the U.S. and abroad, including at Salle Pleyel (Paris) and Alice Tully Hall

**Zuill Bailey, cello**  
Soloist with orchestras in the U.S. and abroad; performances with Itzhak Perlman

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Grammy Award winner; performances with the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras and with major orchestras in Europe

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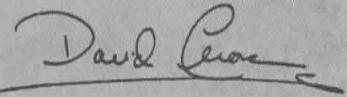
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**Sheryl Staples, violin**  
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**Scott St. John, violin**  
1989 Young Concert Artist; performances at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, with the Musicians from Marlboro tours and with the Flemish Radio Orchestra

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David Cerone



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both arenas. He is keenly aware that without the performer the music exists only inside his head. He considers that his success as a composer owes to the realization that the interpreter may have a better idea about how to play a piece than the creator of the original idea itself. Instead of being in awe of each other, "or of oneself," he adds jokingly, his mission is to reconcile the divide between the two groups and to promote more interaction between the parties.

Kenji has written several works for viola, including the five-movement Suite for Viola and Piano commissioned in 1998 by Young Concert Artists, Inc. for fellow YCA alumna Naoko Shimizu. (see sample score following article.) In addition to notating The Three G's, Kenji is at work on a viola concerto commissioned by the Mobile Symphony through its "Music Alive" residency. The work is in one movement, but he intends to expand it someday into a full-blown viola concerto—like any "good" violist/composer, he has always wanted to have one of those in his catalog!

In addition to composing and performing, Kenji is also on the faculty of the Juilliard Pre-College program. To access his full list of works (including more works for viola) and listen to a clip from his Nocturne for String Orchestra, visit <http://www.yca.org/bunch.html#works>

*Juliet White-Smith teaches at University of Northern Colorado and is president-elect of the AVS.*

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# SAMPLE SCORE

## LAMENT, FROM SUITE FOR VIOLA AND PIANO

Kenji Bunch  
1998

Slow, graceful  
♩ = 42

*con sord.*

Musical score for measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a dynamic marking of *pp espr.* and a *con sord.* instruction. The second system continues the piece with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Musical score for measures 5-9. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 5-7 with dynamic markings of *p* and *mp*. The second system shows measures 8-9 with dynamic markings of *p* and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 10-13. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 10-12 with dynamic markings of *mf* and triplets. The second system shows measure 13 with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a sextuplet.

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VOLUME 21 NUMBER 2

13

*f*  
*f*

17

*mp*  
*p*  
*mp*  
*p*

22

*pp dolce espr.*  
*pp*  
8vb

27

*mp cresc.*  
*mf*  
*mp cresc.*  
*mf*  
*cresc.*  
8vb  
*loco*

32 *ff*

36 *p*

40 *pp* *sotto voce* *ten.*

44

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ABEL FAIVRE

# IN THE STUDIO

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## QUARTET COACHING STRATEGIES

by Roger Tapping

Coaching a good chamber group is a tremendous luxury. You can help them to mold a piece, free of the actual difficulties of playing it yourself. And you can't fail to learn more about a piece while coaching it - I sometimes think that one shouldn't get up on stage to play any piece without first having coached it. Here are a few thoughts about the issues I find come up most when coaching quartets.

Balance is one of the things a coach can most valuably help with. It never really stops being an increasingly well-informed guessing game when you're in the thick of it, dealing with your own and your colleagues' anxieties about it, and good balance is one of the most important aspects of making a performance which will engage an audience and bring a piece to life. One can help students to find the melodic thread as it weaves its way amongst them, making sure that it is passed from one to another with an equivalent intensity.

The type of sound you make is of the utmost importance and this brings me to a subject which is not, it seems to me, given enough thought. The viola is, of course, quite a variable beast, but in general, as we know all too well, its melancholy, soulful beauty comes at a price: it is less acoustically efficient than the violin or cello. Add this to the other fact of acoustical

life, that the human ear is most readily drawn to higher frequencies, and we do have a challenge.

There are plenty of things we can do; but, after years of playing and coaching, I'm fairly certain now that sitting opposite the 1st violin and allowing the viola to face the back wall of the stage is not our most effective strategy. I am well aware of the argument that plenty of sound comes out of the back of the instrument, and in some circumstances, with some violas, with some players and with some colleagues this is enough. But the clarity we need at our disposal to match the violins and cello -- the higher frequencies of an "open-mouthed" type of sound-- comes much more from the belly (or front) of the instrument.

So generally I advise students to try to widen the semicircle a bit and angle the viola chair at about 30 to 40 degrees more towards the audience. If you get it just right you can hold the viola out in such a way that the f holes can be seen by most of the audience and yet you still have visual contact with the cellist. It takes some getting used to for everybody in the group, but it is my impression that audiences respond well to hearing a more telling viola presence this way; I have a vivid, recent memory of an excellent student group being bowled over by the difference it made when they each went out a little way to listen. It can also help with the problem viola players very often have that their colleagues tell them

they are too loud when rehearsing in a room. Facing outwards means that they are not projecting their sound directly at their poor cellist colleagues so much.

I have a slight preference for seating the viola between the 2nd violin and cello. It follows the score order and unites the 2nd violin and viola, who have to work so closely together. But in this arrangement too the viola player should sit pretty much square on rather than symmetrically at an angle. Sitting further back than the cellist you need the whole belly facing the audience. And the cellist will want to angle out for the same reason I've described for the viola.

It can be a challenge to get the members of some groups to look at each other enough. You often find one player looking over at another while the other's eyes are stuck in the music, as if each note has to be read a note at a time. This is not primarily a matter of theater - groups that make a show of it and smile knowingly at each other can easily distract from the content of the music. But to have a musical dialogue in "real time", as opposed to just doing what has previously been rehearsed, is much better served by each player giving the others the feeling that they can do unplanned things, magical little inflections, bursts of energy, lingerings, changes in intensity. An involuntarily raised eyebrow, a cloud coming over the face, a sudden impish look - these are little,

often involuntary visual clues to the inner workings of your colleagues' working musical imagination, and to look up and see the others ready to react can only encourage spontaneity. Also, I have often noticed students able to play with greatly increased similarity to each other if they are not only listening but also studying the way each other is using the bow. Just as

the sense of smell enhances the sense of taste, so can the visual sense enhance the aural.

I'm sometimes asked, "How polite should we be to each other? Isn't it a waste of time and effort framing your comments with civilized tact when you know each other so well?" Yes, we can all tell when somebody is trying too hard to

wrap up a barb in velvet. But my answer is that it is very beneficial to work in a good atmosphere. The amount of time spent in rehearsal is sufficient reason in itself, but I also know that I am much more likely to want to collaborate with the utmost musical intimacy on stage with somebody I've just shared a joke with than with somebody whose wounding comment has just made me fume. I guess the art is to use humor where possible and to make all remarks with the implied assumption of mutual respect. Above all, we should all remember how much easier it is to play when we're feeling buoyed up and happy than when we're sure we can't do anything to please anybody. Speak so as to get the best out of each other.

"How much time should we spend on intonation?" is another frequent and plaintive question. An old colleague, then in his third quartet, used to say "I must have been a very good person in my last life to have been allowed to play quartets all my life - oh but maybe not - I have to play them in tune!"

It's been estimated that a professional quartet spends more than 60% of its rehearsal time on intonation. The most frustrating thing for students is when they put in a lot of time on a passage and then find that the next day it's pretty much back where it started. So it sometimes seems worth spending some detailed coaching time on the basic principles. Making sure everybody is identifying when they are playing in octaves, 5ths and 4ths with another part; keeping thirds

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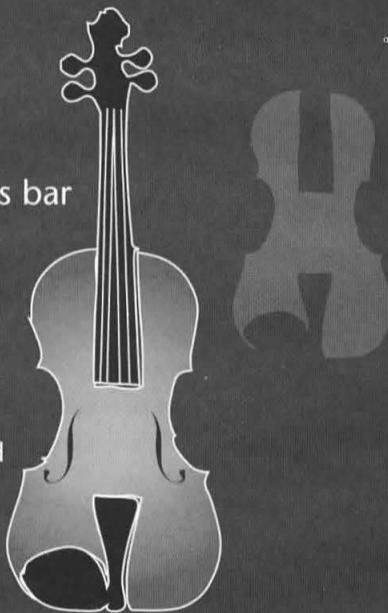
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tempered in chordal writing; deciding jointly where, for example in octave passages, it is desirable to give certain notes more expressive intonation or directionality; hanging onto something that is out of tune long enough to find out who needs to correct in which direction, rather than instantly correcting. But, as with balance, the type of sound is so crucial. It is rarely useful or even musically appropriate to use much evident individual vibrato in octave passages. I like to get students to imitate each other's sounds as closely as possible, like mimics, to produce a broad sheet of collective sound. A good core is essential - it is too easy to hide uncertain intonation in a wobbly, feathery, inconstant sound. But I believe that a moderate amount of vibrato should normally be used so as to

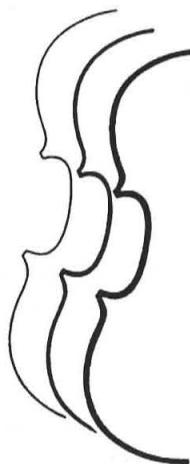
blend the sounds one is actually going to make. Getting one player to stop and listen very critically and help is very useful, developing their critical faculties as well as enabling them to be an impartial arbiter.

Playing a passage with character and feeling and beauty at about 60% tempo can be extremely valuable, if approached with the right ears. This allows time not only to hear every detail of intonation but also to become more aware of expressive phrase shapes, convincing balance and interesting textures and inter-relationships. Brief moments of great harmonic beauty are easier to notice, and in general a level of perception of the whole musical content is built up, which deepens and enriches a passage that had previously seemed merely exciting or

virtuosic. I am sometimes sorry that the audience misses out on the opportunity to hear the music under this audio microscope!

If one can get a sensitive group to agree on the mood or character of a piece or passage vividly enough, it can be a great "short cut" through too much detailed discussion of bow strokes and other technical questions. Just today I witnessed the transformation of the sound of a passage after discussing whether a forte passage should be angry or joyful. It was enough to make a rigid sound become lithe and living.

Sending one player out a few yards to listen can sometimes clarify things, exposing how hard one has to work to bring a musical character vividly to life or to achieve really



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great balance. But they often need a bit of a “push” to plumb their musical imagination and do more than fix a technical problem. I try to persuade them that the most important part of our job is to convey the moods and emotions in the music so as to make the audience undergo actual emotional sensations.

Chamber music has been described as intelligent conversation among equals. Yes - but with the extra dimension that many strands of our musical conversation have to be intelligible simultaneously. In coaching quartets one of the challenges is to get everybody to contribute enough all the time. Whether they are leading with a melody, commenting on it with a counter-melody or descant, keeping it bubbling with good rhythm or

surrounding it with a vibrant bed of warm beauty, there is scarcely ever a passive moment. Anybody who has done the exercise of completing a string quartet in a harmony exercise will have learnt that no mark gets onto the manuscript by accident.

In matters of ensemble, a great deal can be solved by getting the players to clarify for themselves who is leading at any moment. Clearly this is, by default, the person playing the melody, but when two or more people are playing an accompaniment or secondary material it is very valuable to have one of them take some leading initiative too. It really is possible for them to interpret the timing and character of an accompaniment in equally valid but quite different ways. For example, accompanying eighth notes could be played with

more or less thrust, clarity, presence or phrasing. So working closely as an accompanying group helps to give it some independently cohesive character while enhancing the melodic line.

Leading and being led are by no means black and white. Sometimes it can make all the difference to a player with a secondary line to encourage them to lead as well, so long as they understand this to mean that they are taking an active, collaborative part of

the responsibility for the rhythmic lifeblood of the music; and it can make a decisive difference to a first violinist, who finds him or herself ahead in a passage, to pay particular attention to the cello line, and imagine playing the leaps in the bass line while struggling to make the lower strings speak. Actively imagining that you are playing another person's part is a great cohesive tool.

I've seen a large range of abilities. A younger, less advanced group can get a real thrill if you, as the coach, can play in the group for a minute or two and impart some intensity and rhythmic drive. But beware the frozen atmosphere in which a very clear question is put pointedly by one member of a group and there is a tense silence as they wait for the “judgment of Solomon.” You have probably stepped into a major argument, and only your highest skills of tact are going to prevent you from making an enemy for life!

And then, you get that occasional moment of thrill mixed with panic when you hear a group playing so well that you feel you are going to let them down by not having anything to add. I've realized that when this happens you change your focus and just get drawn into it as if you were in a professional rehearsal. There is always some point of musical imagination to discuss in the great works, and before you know it the time has flown by. E

*Roger Tapping was for 10 years the viola player in the Takács quartet, and, before that, in Britain's Allegri Quartet. He is now on the faculty of the New England Conservatory, the Longy School, and the Boston Conservatory.*

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# MODERN MAKERS

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## PAUL SIEFRIED AND THE PORT TOWNSEND CONNECTION

by Eric Chapman

Historically, the French cities of Paris and Mirecourt have been known as the seats of great bow making, home to some of the most renowned bow makers in the world. With the florescence of bow making in the United States, the idyllic coastal town of Port Townsend, Washington, has emerged as the New World's "Mirecourt."

The village of Port Townsend, located on a quaint peninsula north and west of Seattle, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Its original inhabitants envisioned the location as a major port of entry for the west coast. When that distinction fell to San Francisco, the town became noted for shipbuilding, especially for the revival of the craft of wooden boat building. String players know, however, that it is also the home of some of the finest bow makers of our time. One man who has helped forge the reputa-

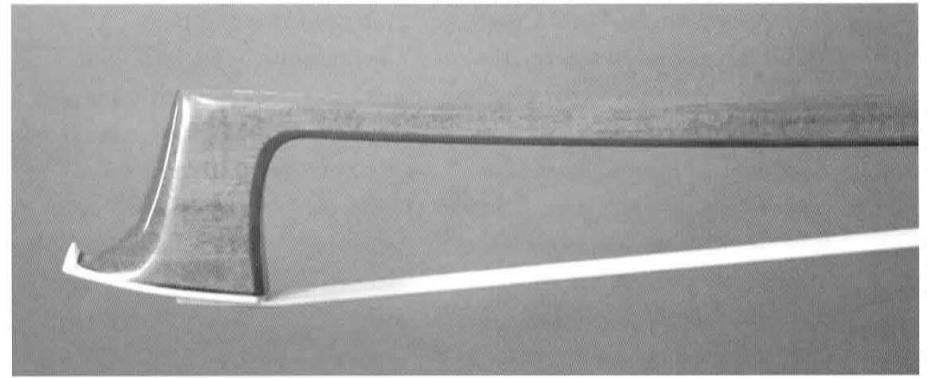


Photo by Thomas Metzler.

tion of Port Townsend is Paul Siefried.

The bow-making world was a quiet place in the mid-1970s. When the Violin Society of America's International Competition took place in La Jolla, California in 1978, a distinguished panel of judges from around the world shattered the quietude by honoring Siefried with three Gold Medals. At the time, hardly anyone knew his name. Where had a maker of such talent been hiding?

Siefried's path to the top of the bow-making establishment pro-

vides inspiration to many an aspiring luthier. While he has worked at two important violin shops, he is largely a self-taught maker: a rare feat, particularly at the international level.

Though his parents loved music, and he had friends who were musicians, a career in music or related endeavors was not originally considered. His turning point came when someone showed him a violin by Jams Carlisle, a good violinmaker who was most famous as the teacher of Rembert Wurlitzer. The encounter with Carlisle's creation was a mesmerizing experience, and a career as a violinmaker suddenly became a plausible concept. Siefried applied to the Bavarian State School of Violinmaking in Mittenwald, but then elected to accept an entry-level position at the shop of Nash Mondragon in San Francisco. The shop also employed Boyd Poulsen, an instrument and bow-maker.

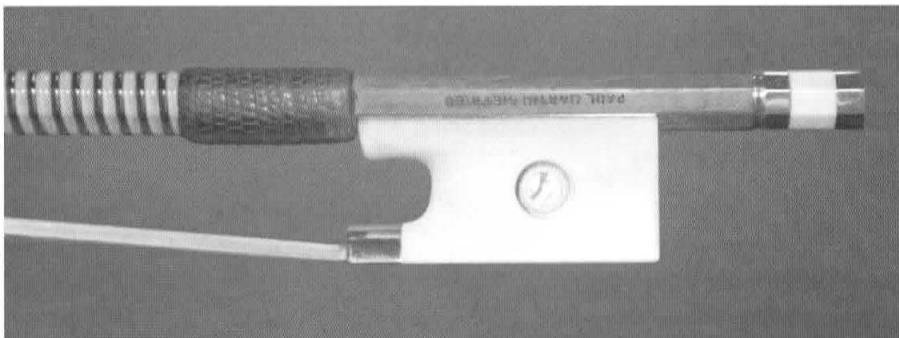


Photo by Thomas Metzler.

While Siefried worked on instruments, his attraction to bows was evident. After three years in San Francisco, Poulsen introduced him to Hans Weisshaar, an alumnus of the Wurlitzer shop in New York and proprietor of the most famous one on the West Coast. While a fine maker and an outstanding expert on restoration, Weisshaar was also a master teacher. Though not himself a bow maker, Weisshaar understood how to challenge someone with talent and cultivate his artistry. Siefried readily accepted the challenges, including the opportunity to copy great bows in Weisshaar's collection.

When he first joined Weisshaar's shop, Siefried felt overwhelmed

by the level of craftsmanship among his colleagues. Next to him at the bench were David Burgess and his bow-making colleague Klaus Grunke. These world-class makers convinced him to enter the Violin Society of America's International Competition at La Jolla. The resulting three Gold Medals and Certificate of Merit were followed two years later by three more Gold medals and another Certificate of Merit, and suddenly Siefried was a widely recognized artist with well-established credentials.

He was now in demand as both a maker and an international competition judge. Over the past 25 years, he has served five times as a

VSA judge, twice at the Manchester Cello Competition and once in Paris.

Many great musicians have pointed out that in performance, the technician is in the left hand while the artist is in the right. "What I want," the great violinist Oscar Shumsky once said to me, "is a bow that gets out of the string and out of my way. If I want the bow in the string, I will put it there." The bows of Paul Siefried are considered great because they give great artists the freedom they need to be both technicians and artists.

Much of Siefried's time as a bow maker is spent on restorations, a pursuit he considers vital to his

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overall artistry in the craft. There are many great bows that are in use but also in need of replacement frogs and buttons. The sound original parts are preserved for future generations and the bow still retains its utility. With a maker of Siefried's ability crafting the reproduction parts, this will undoubtedly pose a problem for future appraisers; the copies are so meticulous that as these new replacements age, it will be increasingly difficult to tell a "Siefried" frog from an original.

Artistic inspiration comes to Siefried from a number of sources. Among the contemporary makers Siefried credits are Stephan Tomachot, Charles

Espey, William Salchow and fellow Luthier du Monde colleague Noel Burke. He also found suggestions from the late Frank Kowanda to be very helpful.

Asked about the future of bow making, Siefried shares the concern of every top bow maker: that pernambuco is being wasted through a distinct lack of appropriate conservation methods. Together with his peers, he is involved with international efforts to save the pernambuco forests.

In addition to his artistic contributions, Siefried was a founding member of the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers, has served on its Board of Governors, and is also a member

of the International Society of Violin and Bow Makers.

He makes silver mounted bows for violin, viola, and cello. Don't take the ferry to idyllic Port Townsend thinking you will leave with a bow however, as there is a waiting list! B

*A founder and current Board member of the Violin Society of America, Eric Chapman owns Eric Chapman Violins, Inc. in Chicago and serves as Vice President of the Chicago School of Violin Making. He has been commended for distinguished service by both the AVS and the VSA.*



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## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

by Sam Bergman

It's an accepted fact of modern life that almost nothing we learn in school turns out to be of any direct use once we reach adulthood. That doesn't mean that these things aren't worth learning, of course – aren't we all a little better off for knowing that the color green played a significant (if symbolic) role in Jay Gatsby's love life, or that you should always remove radical numbers from the denominator of a fraction before solving for  $x$ ? – but the disconnect between the hard truths we are taught in school and the malleable, ever-shifting reality of professional life (whatever the profession) does occasionally give one pause. For those of us in the music business, particularly in the orchestral subculture, one's first full-time job has the effect of ringing up the curtain on a whole new world of rules, acronyms, and professional obligations that no one ever mentioned back in conservatory. It's overwhelming to say the least, and many musicians respond to the onslaught by hiding quietly in the corner for a few years until they can begin to decipher the insider code in which everyone else seems to be speaking.

So why the code, and why all the extra-musical activity in an organization that is supposed to be

about music? The simple answer is that, several decades back, orchestral musicians got organized, and began a determined fight for such controversial “luxury” items as health insurance, job security, and a living wage. In an industry which had always been ruled by temperamental conductors who held the careers of everyone in the orchestra in their hands, the rise of the union was a revolutionary change. Within a few decades, it became possible (not usual, but possible) to make enough money as a member of an orchestra to support a family and live comfortably. A few orchestras (16, as of this writing) even expanded their seasons to 52 weeks, allowing musicians to be paid year-round for the first time.

But with higher pay and added benefits came the necessity for musicians to share a measure of the responsibility for monitoring the health of the overall organization, and to keep an eye on the often combative relationship between musicians and management. Committees were formed, stocked with musicians elected by their peers, to represent the interests of the group as a whole, and to serve as the voice of the orchestra whenever such a voice was called for. The general public – indeed, even professional musicians who make their living outside the orchestral sphere – rarely

hear about these committees unless something horrible, like a strike or a lockout, is going on. But they are always there, and most orchestras couldn't function without them.

The members of most orchestra committees meet regularly with their orchestra's upper management team to discuss all the nitty-gritty, behind-the-scenes, “inside-baseball” minutiae that most people prefer not to think about. For instance, say the orchestra wants to put on a free concert in a large public park, and a local radio station wants to carry the event live. A lovely idea, you say, and what could be complicated about that? But to the orchestra committee, such an event sets off a chain of actions and reactions, checks and balances, all designed to insure that the event goes off smoothly. For instance, what if the concert is scheduled for July, and your orchestra is based in, say, Arizona? What will the maximum allowable temperature on stage be, and who will monitor it? Which direction does the stage face, and will direct sunlight (a no-no for string instruments) be a problem as a result? Will there be live cannons going off during the *1812 Overture* (the answer to this one is always yes), and if so, who is responsible for making sure that they are set up far enough from the stage that the musicians will

---

still have their hearing intact afterwards? And finally, will the radio broadcast trigger a provision in one of the approximately 824 national labor agreements on media that would require the musicians to be paid extra?

Serving on an orchestra committee (and most orchestras have several, each with a different focus – artistic concerns, contract matters, radio and TV broadcasts, etc.) is a labor of love, with emphasis firmly on the labor. Most orchestras either don't pay committee members at all, or offer an annual stipend of a few hundred dollars. The idea behind setting the pay low is to insure that no one joins the committee just for the extra cash. If you are lucky enough to play in an ensemble which enjoys good relations between the management, the board, the staff, and the musicians, the job is not terribly difficult, although it is time-consuming and frequently quite boring. In addition to its primary directives, the committee is usually the central clearinghouse for all in-house musician complaints, which must be dealt with quickly and (hopefully) quietly. In many orchestras, the committee also collects a small weekly sum from each musician; this goes into a general fund that can be tapped as needed by the group as a whole, whether for strike relief, a gift to a retiring musician, or a donation to another orchestra in need.

Committees are primarily responsible to their constituents – the

musicians of the orchestra – but they have other masters as well, and here is where many new arrivals to the business find their heads beginning to spin. Governing the labor activities of the musicians is the local office of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), which is the national union representing nearly all the professional musicians in the U.S. The Local represents the committee's most direct link to the AFM (and collects hefty "work dues" from the paycheck of every musician in addition to the annual fee paid by all union members,) but how much that connection is used varies from orchestra to orchestra. Sometimes, members of the orchestra will serve on the board of the Local; sometimes they won't. In general, Locals allow orchestra committees to function independently and undisturbed, but the Local has the final authority in all labor matters, including contract negotiations.

The national office of the AFM is also closely linked to each orchestra committee through a New York-based division called Symphonic Services. This chronically understaffed and overworked unit deals with all the questions, complaints, and general rants of committee chairs who have run into a situation they aren't sure how to handle. They also field questions about those 824 national agreements on media, a task so monumental that it is beyond my capacity as a writer to craft an appropriate metaphor.

Finally, in between the AFM, the Local, and the orchestra committee, there float the Player Conferences. These organizations were started by orchestra musicians a few decades ago, to combat what they saw as a lack of responsiveness to orchestral issues at the AFM. (In other words, it was a new union designed to protect us all from our union. Cute, eh?) Since that time, a modicum of peace has been achieved between the Conferences and the AFM, but disputes still flare fairly frequently. Nearly every American orchestra belongs to one of two player conferences, known as ICSOM (the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, which represents larger orchestras) and ROPA (the Regional Orchestra Players' Association, which represents smaller part-time orchestras). Each conference has its own national governing board, and every orchestra appoints a representative to attend annual conference meetings and keep the orchestra informed of important national and regional issues. (And yes, every orchestra musician pays yet another round of weekly dues to his/her player conference.) The overall mission of the player conferences is fairly loose, but in times of crisis for one orchestra or another, their existence is invaluable, allowing for quick and efficient distribution of information and resources.

That's a lot of acronyms, organizations, and procedures we just



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laid out, and that was without even beginning to get into the various power struggles, leadership vacuums, and internal debates that routinely cross an orchestral musician's field of vision. And here's the kicker: on your first day on the job in a professional orchestra, no one explains any of this to you. Not on the second day, either. Most of the time, you remain squarely in the dark until your first orchestra meeting, after which you are so mightily confused by all the jargon being flung about the room that you never want to leave the stage again. All you know is that literal gobs of money are disappearing from your paycheck every week to fund a bunch of acronyms that you couldn't differentiate if your life depended on it. Eventually, if you're interested enough, you'll find someone else in the orchestra who can explain it all to you, but beware: your interest is very likely to get you drafted onto the committee yourself the moment you gain tenure. And then, well... then you're really on your own. B

*Sam Bergman is a violist in the Minnesota Orchestra and a news editor for ArtsJournal.com. In his seven years as a professional orchestral musician, he has served four years on the Minnesota Orchestra Members' Committee (MOMC), including two years as chairman, and currently serves on the orchestra's Local Internet Oversight Committee (LIOC). He also spent a year on the national governing board of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM). He has written about music and the music business for various publications in the U.S. and Europe, and authored a widely read online diary chronicling the Minnesota Orchestra's 2004 European tour.*



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In photo: Kim Kashkashian gives a lesson to an NEC viola student  
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# BOOK REVIEW

## LILLIAN FUCHS, FIRST LADY OF THE VIOLA

by Amédée Daryl Williams  
Hard Cover: The Edwin Mellen Press  
ISBN: 0-7734-9086-8  
Soft Cover (updated): iUniverse  
Inc. Publishing  
ISBN 0-595-30957-7.

### Reviewed by Myron Rosenblum

The 20th Century witnessed a dramatic change for the viola, an instrument relegated to the rear of the string hierarchy since the 17th century. Suddenly the viola shone in a very different light when some remarkable violists appeared in the early decades of the 20th century--performers who raised the level of viola playing to new heights and inspired composers to write important works for it. Lionel Tertis and William Primrose from The British Isles paved the way, but in America this new viola mantle fell to a small woman who would become part of an important family of major string players. She was Lillian Fuchs, the first important viola soloist (and thought by some to be the greatest) in America, a woman whose special gifts encompassed performance, teaching, chamber music coaching, recordings and composition.

Many violists and other string players around today are the beneficiaries of Lillian Fuchs's private teaching and legendary chamber music coaching. Miss Fuchs' three



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LP recordings of the Bach Suites for Viola remain a violistic and musical feat and are still a benchmark for all players of those wonderful Bach pieces.

Violist/author Amédée Daryl Williams studied with Lillian Fuchs and had access to a large number of documents, letters, articles, critical commentaries and other sources related to her life and career. Miss Fuchs was still

alive in 1994, when the book was published (she died on October 5, 1995), so the author was privy to Ms. Fuchs herself, and to many photos and documents in her possession.

The book's ten chapters cover the many and varied aspects of Lillian Fuchs's musical career, her changeover to viola from violin, her serious endeavors as a composer, her teaching, her performances



1950 portrait by Zajbia Anderson. Used by permission.

as both chamber musician and soloist, her alliances with composers who wrote some fine viola music for her, and her last years. Over the course of this book, the reader is taken from Miss Fuchs's birth on November 18, 1902 (not 1903 as reported in the NY Times obituary notice) to Philip and Kate Weiss Fuchs to her death at the age of 92 in 1995. Her father was a furrier by trade, but also an amateur violinist who gave free violin lessons to largely poor, Jewish children in the Bronx. One of his pupils, earmarked early as unusually talented, was Sascha Jacobsen who would become a well-known violinist in his generation and first violinist in The Musical Arts Quartet. Lillian had two brothers

concertmaster (Cleveland Orchestra), teacher, and chamber musician. The three siblings collaborated on some impressive recordings of chamber works of Beethoven, Mozart, Martinu and other composers.

Lillian's first instrument was the piano, but she soon changed over to violin. Both Joseph and Lillian studied at the Institute of Musical Art – first with Louis Svecenski and later with Franz Kneisel, renowned Roumanian/Viennese violinist, teacher and leader of the Kneisel String Quartet. Lillian Fuchs was quoted in her obituary as having said, "I just developed quietly because nobody paid any attention to me, even in my fami-

ly. They were always fussing over Joseph. I didn't mind at all. I was delighted to be left alone." It was Kneisel who convinced her to play viola in the Marianne Kneisel Quartet, an all-female string quartet that was short-lived. Fuchs's love was still the violin, but with her playing viola in the Marianne Kneisel Quartet and later in the Perolé Quartet, c. 1927, her viola career became solidified and permanent.

As violist, she played much chamber music with well-known musicians, including Jascha Heifetz and Mischa Elman. The author tells an amusing story of her reading through the Brahms B-flat Quartet with Elman. Fuchs noticed that Elman did not use a mute in the third movement - the one with the big viola solo. When Miss Fuchs asked Elman why he was not using a mute, "Elman was noticeably offended by the question, because he always assumed his first violin part to be the most important. Instead of discussing the situation or excusing his failure to play 'con sordino,' Elman simply gathered up the parts, put them away, and chose another score for the four of them to read."

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The influences on her musical career were many: the Institute of Musical Art (forerunner of the Juilliard School), Franz Kneisel, The Perolé Quartet, her brother Joseph, her husband Ludwig Stein, and Rosalie and Edgar Leventritt, great patrons of music whose home on Park Avenue in Manhattan served as the site for Miss Fuchs' legendary weekly

chamber music coaching sessions and where many musicians, younger students and older professionals, gathered to absorb her marvelous insights into the great quartets, quintets and other chamber works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms.

In her performing activities, she was frequently the only female in a largely male-dominated profession. As the only female member of the Perolé Quartet, she was a driving, dominant force. The quartet had a preference for playing Brahms, perhaps a carryover from her studies with Kneisel, who had been a close friend of Brahms. During her long career she played on three wonderful violas – a Gasparo da Salò, a Goffriller and a Maggini – and the reader will learn a bit about each of those instruments and how Fuchs used them during her long career. The author devotes an entire chapter to Fuchs and her involvement with the Bach Suites. As a pupil of Svecenski and Kneisel, Lillian Fuchs knew the Bach violin sonatas and partitas and the Bach cello suites by hearing her brother Harry frequently play them. She had a special fondness for the Suite No. 2 in D minor, subsequently worked out her own viola transcription, and performed it in a Musician's Guild concert in 1947.<sup>1</sup> A recording company executive was present at that performance and was impressed enough to invite her to record all six suites on viola. Over the next five years she learned and performed all six Bach Suites and ultimately recorded them on the Decca label, using her

Gasparo da Salò viola. It is documented that she recorded those suites with her back to the microphone.

According to the author, Fuchs was the first violist ever to include the Bach Suites in concerts and to record them. Mr. Williams writes: "The method she devised for learning these Suites can best be described

as a thoughtful, almost scientific, process. She would spend hours working on a single phrase and was incredibly patient and attentive to the slightest detail..."<sup>2</sup>

The author offers some historical background on the Bach Cello Suites and focuses on Pablo Casals' involvement with these pieces. The reviews of Ms. Fuchs' performances of the Bach Suites were generally outstanding. After one performance Howard Taubman wrote in the New York Times on March 8, 1949: "Lillian Fuchs, who is not much bigger than the viola she plays, appeared alone on the stage to play Bach's Suite in C minor. The viola



*Joseph Fuchs and Lillian Fuchs. Used by permission.*

is not an easy instrument to manipulate and it takes craftsmanship to keep it interesting when it is unaccompanied. Miss Fuchs was equal to the occasion. She played with dignity, a well sustained tone and a grasp of Bach's music."

In the Herald Tribune, a reviewer wrote of the same performance: "No one has ever, in my experience, played the viola in so grand a manner as does Miss Fuchs. Her sounds have at once the smooth voicing of a violin and the warmth of a cello scale. She has tension, authority and beauty, all within the most straightforward presentation imaginable. Few artists give such thorough auditory and intellectual satisfaction."

# The History of the Viola

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In reviewing Miss Fuchs' recording of the Bach Suites No. 2 and No. 6, a reviewer in the November, 1951 issues of American Record Guide said that one does not "need to go back to Casals for satisfaction in the two Suites, which are equally effective on the cello or viola. Miss Fuchs is quite good enough. Need anyone say more?"

Regretfully, Miss Fuchs never made her own edition of these suites. The edition she used was that of Louis Svecenski and Mr. Williams declares that her interpretation of the suites was close to this edition (this reviewer used the Svecenski edition, with Fuchs modifications, when studying the Bach Suites with her).

There is an interesting discussion of William Primrose and his earlier, initial belief that the Bach Cello Suites were not adaptable to the viola. As is known, Primrose ultimately came out with his own edition of five suites, omitting the sixth Suite as he thought it not feasible on the viola.

Fuchs was always interested in composition, going back to her early student days. In addition to her three excellent volumes of

viola Etudes, Studies, and Caprices and the Sonata Pastorale for unaccompanied viola, she wrote some violin solo works and earlier piano and chamber works. She frequently performed her Sonata Pastorale in public.

When The Musician's Guild disbanded in 1957 and those players went their separate ways, Lillian Fuchs focused more on solo concerts as well as continuing her chamber music appearances. She often appeared with her brother Joseph in performances of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* and recorded that work many times, including one with Pablo Casals as conductor with the Prades Festival Orchestra. Other works that she performed frequently with orchestra were Telemann's *G Major Viola Concerto*, Vaughan Williams' *Flos Campi*, Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, and Martinu's *Rhapsody*. The Italian-American composer Vittorio Rieti wrote a triple concerto for Violin, Viola and Piano (written specifically for Joseph and Lillian Fuchs and pianist Artur Balsam), which she performed with Joseph and Balsam. In her later years she had a trio – the Lillian Fuchs String Trio with her twin daughters,



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the late Carol Amado and Barbara Stein Mallow.

Her teaching took many turns. Initially, she rejected teaching at The Juilliard School, because, “she did not feel qualified to teach the viola.” At one point she left the Manhattan School of Music because she felt that they emphasized orchestral training at the expense of chamber music. She also taught at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Aspen Music School and the Mannes College of Music.

There are some wonderful photos of her as a 10-year old, as a young woman in her early 20s with her Landolfi violin, photos of her family, Lillian Fuchs with other musicians, such as J. de Menasce, harpist Laura Newell, Quincy Porter, Joseph Fuchs, the Kneisel Quartet, her daughters, and a sweet photo of her with her husband at their farm in Pennsylvania.

There are two appendices – one of biographies of many of the people with whom she performed or interacted with during her career and one of reviews of many of her concerts and other articles about her. A discography and bibliography conclude the book.

This book has also been made available in a softcover version, slightly updated and modified, by iUniverse Inc. Publishing. Mr. Williams has added some footnotes, updated the Appendix A (the biographical files; for example, Lillian Fuchs’ very talented grand-daughter, violist Jeanne Mallow is there) and added another brief

chapter – Epilogue. The Epilogue essentially is about Miss Fuchs’ death and the subsequent tributes paid to her. We also are told of the deaths of her daughter Carol and her brother Joseph since the original book was published ten years earlier.

Mr. Williams has done the viola and music worlds a great service by documenting the life of this remarkable artist. He has taken the time to research and locate many old reviews of the concerts she gave and played in.

As one who had private lessons with Lillian Fuchs at Blue Hill and the Yale Summer Music School at Norfolk, CT. and for several years attended weekly chamber music sessions, coached by Ms. Fuchs at the home of Mrs. Leventritt, this reviewer was swept back to the special musical world of this superlative violist, artist, teacher and human being. Readers of this excellent book will also be able to take in this special chapter of viola history and the musical and personal life of an outstanding woman who was not only the first female viola soloist of importance in America, but one of its greatest string players, teachers, and recording artists as well. ❧

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Some years ago, this reviewer had occasion to meet a librarian, a woman who told me that she lived for many years under Lillian Fuchs in her apartment on Pinehurst Avenue in

Washington Heights. As the apartments had the same room configuration, this woman was struck by how many hours Fuchs would practice (often six hours a day, according to her) and that she would move from room to room over the course of the practice hours and repeat certain phrases endlessly. The librarian found this difficult to listen to, but was impressed by the small woman’s discipline and stamina.

<sup>2</sup> The Musician’s Guild was a performing group of nine musicians, formed in 1947 by Joseph Fuchs and William Kroll. Lillian Fuchs was one of two violists in it (the other was Nathan Gordon, violist in the Kroll Quartet) where she frequently performed various solo and chamber works for and with viola. She often performed the Mozart Violin and Viola Duos with her brother at these concerts.

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Prior to teaching, he had a long history as an orchestral musician, including 16 years as a member of Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, where he chaired the Auditions Committee. Fielding has since helped students prepare musically and mentally for the most competitive of performance situations. His orchestral repertoire students have won a number of recent auditions on both violin and viola.

He graduated cum laude from Yale University with a B.A. and M.M. in Music and an M.B.A. from their School of Management.

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# RECORDING REVIEWS

by Sel Kardan

An embarrassment of riches in our Fall recording reviews. Everything from historic recordings featuring Boris Kroyt and Karen Tuttle to a trio new of recordings on ECM featuring contemporary composers. The incredible legacy of William Primrose continues in several new CDs that feature his students, his transcriptions, and works dedicated to him. Chamber music, viola concertos, viola duos, and solo viola, it's all here! Please continue to send your recordings to the AVS office for review. Also, contact us if you have difficulty obtaining reviewed recordings.

## **The Budapest String Quartet with Artur Balsam, piano and John Barrows, horn**

Paul Hindemith Sonata, Op.11 No.4  
Boris Kroyt, viola Artur Balsam, piano  
Recorded live in Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress, March 4, 1966

Bridge Records 2005  
Bridge 9175

The live recordings made by the Budapest String Quartet at the Library of Congress between 1940 and 1962 have long held a special place in the hearts of chamber music aficionados. This very attractive disc features longtime Budapest violist Boris Kroyt and renowned

collaborative pianist Artur Balsam in a 1966 performance of the Hindemith Op. 11, No. 4 sonata. Kroyt, who joined the quartet in 1936 and died in 1969, was a child prodigy violinist who left his childhood home in Russia to study in Berlin in the first decade of the twentieth century. He had no formal viola training and seldom performed outside of the quartet setting, so the two live recordings the 1960's at the Library of Congress are particularly valuable. Pianist Balsam was Nathan Milstein's favorite recital partner for many years and also performed with other string luminaries of the period while maintaining a solo career.

Kroyt offers an impassioned, romantic performance of the Op. 11 #4 Sonata with strong support from Balsam. Recorded when Kroyt was almost 70, only three years before his death, this live recording makes a strong case for Kroyt as an outstanding musician and brilliant technician. Kroyt produces a clear, powerful, tenor sound with his instrument and attacks the sonata with astonishing warmth and vigor. This reviewer wishes Kroyt had devoted more time solo performance. Even with the many fine recordings of Op.11 #4 made in the last twenty years, this historic live rendition belongs in every Hindemith collection.

Also included on this disc is the horn trio of Brahms and Shostakovich's piano quintet both in live performances from the early

50s also in Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress.

## **Soaring Spirit**

Music of Tchaikovsky, Benjamin, Schubert, Brahms, Milhaud, Rochberg, and Shulman

Joseph de Pasquale, viola  
Angelin Chang, piano

Albany Records 2004  
TROY 715

Joseph de Pasquale has been a force on the international viola scene for over five decades. As a soloist, chamber musician, orchestral player, and pedagogue, de Pasquale's legacy includes numerous recordings, commissioned and dedicated works, editions of standard repertoire, and students who perform worldwide. This CD, recorded in 2002, pays tribute to de Pasquale's teacher William Primrose through three transcriptions by Primrose himself, and two works dedicated to him- Arthur Benjamin's light-hearted From San Domingo and the powerfully melodic Sonata for Viola and Piano(1979) by American composer George Rochberg. Other works on the disc are prolific French composer Darius Milhaud's First Viola Sonata (1944), and Baltimore-born composer Alan Shulman's Theme and Variations (1940).

De Pasquale presents the miniatures with straightforward old-

world romanticism and a bur-nished warm tone. Though not perhaps as technically assured as in his prior recordings, de Pasquale still displays considerable com-mand and a lack of pretension that can perhaps come only through years of performance. The Milhaud is a charming work in a neo-classi-cal style supposedly based on “anonymous 18th century themes.” However, as is the case with Stravinsky’s Italian Suite, we never for a moment lose sight of Milhaud’s personal harmonic vocabulary or 20th century French sensibility. De Pasquale premiered the Rochberg, commissioned in honor of Primrose’s 75th birthday, at the Seventh International Viola Congress in 1979. It is, in this reviewer’s humble opinion, one of

the best viola compositions of the last half century. De Pasquale pre-sents the virtuosic and lyrical sonata in dramatic and assured fashion with able collaborator Angelin Chang. The recording closes with Alan Shulman. Like the Milhaud, Shulman’s tuneful, modal work harkens back to an earlier time with noticeable English influence. Overall, this is an enjoyable CD performed by one of the great vio-lists of the twentieth century.

## Viola View

Music of Vaughan Williams, Lutoslawski, Clarke, Otto Luening, Piston, and Roy Harris

Paul Cortese, viola

Herwig Coryn, cello  
Artanios Roc, piano

Crystal Records  
2005, CD833

According to the liner notes, American violist Paul Cortese origi-nally intended this album to feature American works for viola and piano. However, after meeting Flemish cellist Herwig Coryn, he included four duos for viola and cello, which add considerable interest to this recording project. The American duo in that group is by

New England composer Walter Piston and is one of his first works that prominently features viola. Witold Lutoslawski’s *Bucolics* for violin and cello was originally a work for piano four hands but was transcribed by the composer for famed cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. Two additional gems by British composer Rebecca Clarke round out the string duo selections. Cortese also performs another English work, Vaughan Williams’ *Romance* for viola and piano, pub-lished posthumously but probably written for Lionel Tertis.

More than twenty minutes of this disc is devoted to American works for viola and piano and Cortese has chosen lesser known pieces that certainly deserve further hear-ing. The first is by Wisconsin native Otto Luening (d.1996), who ran the CRI recording label and was a pivotal figure in the electronic music movement.. This acoustic Suite was originally writ-ten for cello and piano but was subsequently re-issued by the com-poser in a version for viola; this is its first recording. Also featured is Roy Harris’ (d.1979) *Soliloquy and Dance* for viola and piano written for William Primrose and pianist Joanna Harris, the composer’s wife.

Certainly the most interesting works on the disc are the duos for viola and cello; in particular the Lutoslawski *Bucolics* which are reminiscent of Bartok’s *Romanian Folk Dances*. The two Clarke miniatures are typical of that composer with the *Grotesque* sure to evoke memories of the viola sonata. Walter Piston’s little-heard *Duo* is deserving of more frequent perform-

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ance, with attractive melodic writing for both instruments. Roy Harris' Soliloquy and Dance proves the more interesting of the two American works for viola and piano on the disc.

Minor intonation smudges aside, Cortese plays throughout with a clear and focused sound and a great deal of rhythmic energy and personal flair. Tone quality in the upper register occasionally sounds pressed but the overall recording quality is natural and well balanced. Herwig Coryn and Artanios Roc prove admirable partners. This is a disc well worth owning for the little heard repertoire and dynamic viola and cello duos.

### **The Art of Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano**

Johannes Brahms Two Songs, Op. 91

With Ellen Mack, piano, Karen Tuttle, viola, Timothy Day, flute, and Stephen Kates, cello

Bridge Records 2005  
Bridge 9176

This album pays tribute to mezzo-soprano Elaine Bonazzi, who had a long and successful career in opera and oratorio and as a recitalist. The previously unreleased material on this disc comes from 1985 when Bonazzi was teaching at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. Karen Tuttle was also on the faculty at the time and the tracks of primary interest for violists feature Tuttle, Bonazzi, and pianist Ellen Mack performing the Two Songs, Op. 91 of Johannes Brahms. Other offerings on the

CD feature Mack and Bonazzi performing works of Monteverdi and Britten and the Chanson Madécasses of Ravel, for which they are joined by Timothy Day, flute and Stephen Kates, cello.

The Brahms Songs are inspired works and always worth hearing in any setting. Here Gestille Sehnsucht is offered in a somewhat ponderous rendition. Karen Tuttle plays with a throaty and intimate quality but mezzo-soprano Elaine Bonazzi's voice sounds too present and overly dramatic. In Geistliches Wiegenlied Bonazzi again sounds as if she is performing grand opera rather than chamber music, but Tuttle and pianist Ellen Mack offer sensitive accompaniment. Some of the fault may lie in the microphone placement as Bonazzi seems at times to overpower the recording levels.

This CD is valuable for Karen Tuttle's sensitive performance, a small part of a legacy from an artist who taught and influenced generations of violists.

### **Easley Blackwood Chamber Music**

Viola sonatas Op. 1 (1953), Op 43 (2001)

Easley Blackwood, piano  
Charles Pikler, violin and viola  
Gary Stucka, cello

Cedille Records 2005  
CDR 90000 081

This disc spans almost 50 years of works by eminent Chicago compos-

er Easley Blackwood. Blackwood, a longtime faculty member at the University of Chicago, also performs on this disc with Chicago Symphony principal violist Charles Pikler. Following almost a decade in the CSO's first violin section, Pikler was appointed to the post of principal viola in 1986.

The album begins with the Second Viola Sonata of 2001. By the composer's own admission, this is a "distinctly conservative" work and is by turns reminiscent of Bartok and Prokofieff. But the work certainly cannot merely be termed derivative; Easley's writing is idiomatic for both instruments and he displays a marvelous gift for melody. This is a substantial addition to the viola repertoire as a contemporary but completely accessible work of considerable virtuosity. In complete contrast is Easley's First Viola Sonata, Op. 1 of 1953. This is an austere, atonal work influenced by Easley's studies with Olivier Messiaen and the work of Alban Berg. Here too, Easley's strong melodic command is evident though in a different idiom. The piano writing is spectacular and recalls Berg's Piano Sonata.

This is an important recording on the Chicago-based label Cedille (which is dedicated to promoting the work of Chicago-based musicians and composers) in that it shows both Easley's early work--which gained him a distinguished reputation as a modernist composer--and his later work, which shows his return to tonality. Other works on the album include a violin sonata and piano trio both dating from the

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1960s. Violist Pikler and Easley as pianist make an excellent paring. Tight ensemble, articulation, and clear presentation of compositional structure make listening to these recordings captivating and informative. Pikler produces a lean, focused sound, and shows great technical facility, as well as a commitment to Easley's varying styles. Easley is a more than equal partner and delivers his own difficult piano parts with considerable polish and brilliance.

## Music for Clarinet and Viola

Music by Alexandros Kalogeras, Michalis Adamis, Theodore Antoniou, and Dinos Constantinides

Ioannis Samprovalakis, clarinet and Andreas Georgotas, viola

Amicme Classical 2004

This is an interesting collection of works by contemporary Greek composers performed by two young Greek musicians. Violist Andreas Georgotas was born in Corfu and studied both in his native Greece and in Boston. He is currently a professor at the Ionian University. Clarinetist Ioannis Samprovalakis studied at the Athens Conservatory (where he now teaches) and in the Netherlands. The Amicme label champions Greek composers and performers. These discs are probably most easily found through the company's web site.

Works featuring viola and clarinet are nothing new in the repertory,

but certainly the more familiar ones all date from the 18th and 19th centuries. Trios for viola, clarinet, and piano by Mozart, Schumann, and Bruch as well as Bruch's outstanding concerto for viola and clarinet all attest to the wonderful sonority achieved by pairing the instruments. On this disc, composers Alexandros Kalogeras, Michalis Adamis, and Dinos Constantinides offer three different but engaging approaches to the clarinet/viola partnership.

Kalogeras' *Music for Clarinet and Viola* (2003) is a set of four short etudes of a relatively simple canonic nature. Though designed as educational piece for use by the composer's wife, the duos, like Bartok's, have a great deal of musical worth with each exploring differing aspects of ensemble playing.

In *Eptaha*, 1989, Michalis Adamis evokes traditional music of the Greek island Rhodes. The seven-part work features the clarinet and viola trading modal melodic elements. The repetitive quality and simple harmonies further emphasize the duet's folk origins.

The final work on this album is a four-movement duo by Dinos Constantinides. Like the other works on the disc, it shows definite folk influences in its melodic elements. The second movement is particularly enjoyable with a minimalist-style viola part. The final two movements are melodically charming and idiomatic for both instruments.

Samprovalakis and Georgotas prove equally accomplished part-

ners throughout the disc. They deliver the three duos with enthusiasm and strong ensemble playing.

## Viola Solo

Music of Atar Arad, J.S. Bach, Corigliano, Andrew Waggoner, Stravinsky, Paola Prestini, and Krzysztof Penderecki

Melia Watras, viola

Fleur de Son Classics 2004

FDS 57962

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The young American violist Melia Watras has a passion for contemporary viola music and this debut solo album certainly delivers on that account. The disc begins with the *Sonata for Viola Solo* by Atar Arad, with whom Watras studied. Other new works include Andrew Waggoner's *Collines parmi étoiles...* (*Hills Among Stars*), written for Watras, John Corigliano's *Fancy on a Bach Air*, and Paola Prestini's *Symphatique*. Also included are Stravinsky's *Élégie* and Penderecki's *Cadenza per viola solo*.

This is an interesting and ambitious program of solo works performed with a high level of polish and technical assuredness. Atar Arad's *Sonata* evokes middle-eastern and eastern European music through its use of pitch bending, modal melodies, and improvisational style. The second movement, *Alla Bulgarese*, is particularly memorable and was influenced by Arad's childhood spent in a Bulgarian émigré community in Israel.

Kodaly's transcription of Bach's Chromatic Fantasy has long been regarded as one of the most difficult solo viola works. Here, Watras provides an ending more in keeping with Bach's original intention by playing Arad's revision. She navigates the work's technical hurdles with ease and makes musical sense of the numerous arpeggiated chords.

Fancy on a Bach Air began life as a single variation from a set by a group of composers. Originally for solo cello, Watras has transcribed it for her recording. It is a beautiful extended cadenza stretching Bach's Goldberg theme into almost one unending six minute phrase.

Andrew Waggoner's recitative-like evocation of the cosmos shows off Watras' lush sound, expressive phras-

ing, and facility. She also sounds perfectly at home in Paola Prestini's rhapsodic and challenging *Symphatique*. Penderecki's *Cadenza*, based on elements of his viola concerto, and Stravinsky's *Élégie* have both become standard viola repertoire and Watras' informed readings make a nice addition to this disc. Despite an overly live recording quality that on occasion obscures some clarity, this is an attractive and rewarding collection of solo viola works.

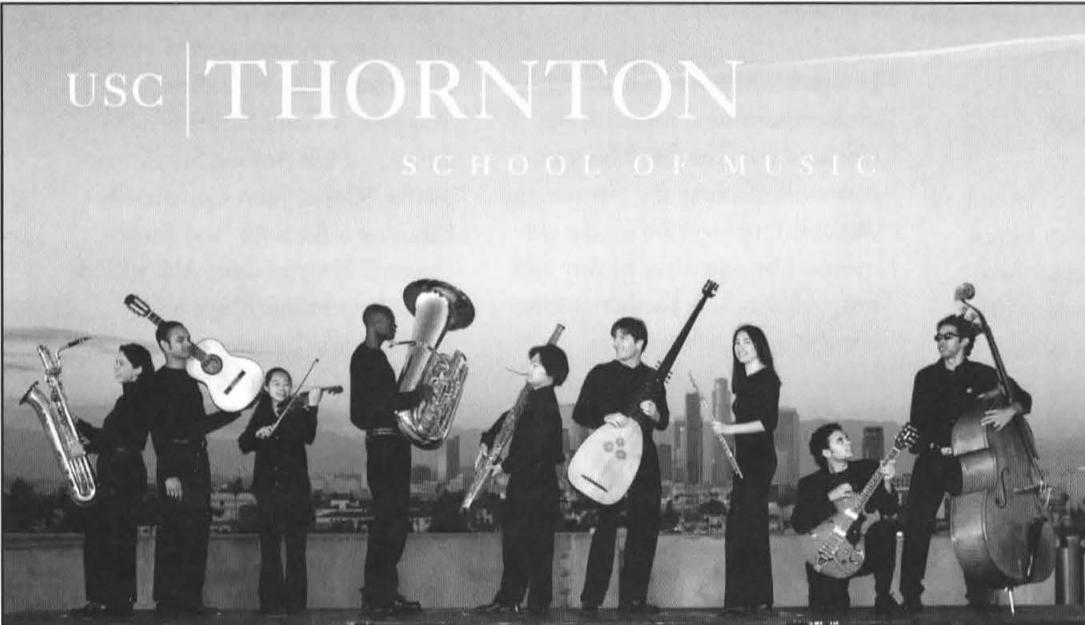
### Sketches From the New World: American Viola Duos in the 21st Century

Works by Scott Slapin, Gerald Busby, Frank Proto, Patrick Neher, and Richard Lane

Scott Slapin and Tanya Solomon, violas

Eroica Classical Recordings 2005  
JDT 3250

This disc features young enterprising violists Scott Slapin and Tanya Solomon, a married couple who were recently displaced by the tragic destruction of hurricane Katrina. Slapin studied composition with Richard Lane, whose *Four Duos* recorded here were among his final musical compositions. Slapin's *Nocturne* on the disc is dedicated to Lane's memory. It shows Scott's great talent not only as a violist but as a composer and his heartfelt affection for Lane. The rest of the disc features viola duos by living American composers. Frank Proto's *Sonata* for



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Two Violas is a substantial work of considerable virtuosity with beautiful melodic writing for both violas and a complexity of interweaving lines reminiscent of Bartok's quartet. Proto clearly has an affinity for the viola in his work as evidenced by his Soundscapes for Solo Viola recorded by Scott and reviewed in this publication last year. Patrick Neher's Canons and Dances is a modal work with numerous stylistic references to past composers and eras. It is a thoroughly charming and idiomatic work and a great addition to the duo literature. The disc concludes with Richard Lane's Four Duos, which display some wonderfully sonorous melodic writing and nods to past styles. The Tango movement is especially evocative. Slapin and Solomon play with passion, technical brilliance, and great authority on this noteworthy addition to the recorded viola literature. The duos recorded here explore not only the rich sonority created by two violas, but also their virtuosic potential; Slapin and Solomon succeed on both accounts.

## In L'istesso Tempo

Gidon Kremer, violin, Oleg Maisenberg, piano, Kremerata Baltica, The Bridge Ensemble

ECM Records 2005  
ECM 1767

This disc is part of ECM's New Series, a laudable project focusing on contemporary composers. In this instance, the composer in question is the Georgian Giya Kancheli. Dense program notes translated from German unfortu-

nately provide little insight into Kancheli or the works on the disc but are a highly poetical riff on 20th century music in general. The three pieces recorded here for the first time date from the middle 1990's and include stellar performances by the all involved. Kancheli's Piano Quartet In L'istesso tempo(1997) features the Bridge Ensemble, which includes AVS president Helen Callus.

The quartet is almost entirely in a very slowly tempo with suspended harmonies and floating, simple, but ultimately haunting melodic lines. The work projects a tender, wistful, melancholy interspersed by very brief moments of intense pain. The Bridge Ensemble plays with remarkable sensitivity and beauty of sound, creating a delicate fabric of sound. The ensemble exhibits remarkable control during extended quiet and sustained sections.

Listening to this work is an almost mystical experience as events unfold in slow motion and Kancheli's textures paint vivid blocks of color. The other works on the disc, which feature violinist Gidon Kremer, prove equally evocative and make this a release well worth owning.

## In Praise of Dreams

Jan Garbarek, saxophone, Kim Kashkashian, viola, Manu Katché, drums

ECM Records 2004  
ECM 1880

This new ECM disc features works written and performed by saxophonist Jan Garbarek. Once again,

the liner notes provide no insight into the performers, works, or composer but do offer some artistic photos of windswept beaches and the performers in various candid poses. One could consider Garbarek's works to be a fusion of jazz and new-age styles. His own tenor and soprano sax playing soars over synthesizers and a drum track with undulating harmony. Eastern-European inspired melodies feature both Garbarek and an almost electrified-- or at least amplified-- Kashkashian. She sounds terrific and convincing. This is a very cool disc, perhaps one to bring out to impress your non-violist friends with just how very hip the viola can be. Maybe not earth-shattering music, but very well done. Part dance-mix, part meditation, part smooth jazz. An exotic departure from the CD's usually reviewed here.

## Monodia

Kim Kashkashian, viola  
Munich Chamber Orchestra,  
Christoph Poppen, conductor  
Leonidas Kavakos, violin  
Jan Gargarek, saxophone  
The Hillard Ensemble

ECM Records 2004  
ECM 1850/51

Yet another in ECM's New Series, this disc with accompanying 52 page booklet features the work of contemporary Armenian Composer Tigran Mansurian performed by an all-star cast. Kim Kashkashian plays a leading role as soloist in the Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, as duo partner with saxophonist Jan Garbarek(who own compositions

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are featured on another ECM disc reviewed this issue) in *Lachrymae* (1999) and as the lone instrumentalist in *Confessing with Faith* (1998) for viola and four voices.

The viola concerto begins with a recitative-like movement with the viola alternating passages of a more reflective nature with increasingly rhythmic passages containing numerous double and triple stops. The second and final *lento* movement is almost pointillistic with fragments of melody floating through a *pizzicato* texture.

Melodic lines emphasize half-step tension, apparently a characteristic of Armenian folk music.

Harmonically the work is atonally though not serial. Listeners may be reminded of the vocabulary of Schnittke and other prominent Soviet era composers of the 1970s and 80s. The overall mood of the work is bleak but there are certainly moments of beauty.

Kashkashian is a powerful advocate for the work in full command of its technical challenges. She plays with great articulation and an a fitting boldness. The Munich Chamber Orchestra offers wonderful accompaniment.

On the second disc in this release, Kashkashian joins soprano saxophonist Jan Garbarek in Mansurian's duo *Lachrymae*. This highly evocative work draws heavily on Armenian folk music and uses the sorrowful timbre of the two instruments to create an extended *cadenza*-like lament. The two instruments seemingly drift in out of each others consciousnesses in improvisatory fashion.

The final work on the disc is for solo viola, two tenors, and two baritones with a text by 11th century Armenian poet, St. Nerses Shnorhali. It opens with an extended viola solo, then proceeds with three movements of two prayers each. The vocal setting is a combination of monody and polyphony with the viola weaving around the vocal lines. This is a work of extraordinary beauty and powerful impact evoking at times medieval plainchant and at others rich renaissance polyphony. The Hilliard Ensemble and Kashkashian sound, quite simply, magical.

Overall, this is a fascinating two-disc set with the addition of virtuoso violinist Leonidas Kavakos performing Mansurian's *Violin Concerto*.

Though not music of the easy-listening variety, the works of Mansurian offer layers of meaning and depth of emotion that will reward the listener on repeated hearing. ♪

*Reviewer Sel Kardan studied viola with Paul Coletti and Victoria Chiang and violin with Daniel Heifetz and Sylvia Rosenberg. He has served as Executive Director of the Shriver Hall Concert Series in Baltimore, and is currently President of the Music Institute of Chicago.*

# NEW MUSIC REVIEWS

*This column features lesser-known pieces for viola and piano from South America.*

## **Dos Piezas Breves para Viola y Piano (1977)**

La Noche: Lento e misterioso  
Tanguano: Molto marcato

Difficulty: Level 5  
Duration: 9 minutes

Le Grand Tango per Viola e Pianoforte (1982)

Difficulty: Level 5  
Duration: 11 minutes

By Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Surprisingly, the first two works showcased in this issue's column are somewhat unknown among violists, despite being written by a well-established composer of our time. I was only able to locate one recording of the *Dos Piezas Breves* [Chesky CD 190] with Nardo Poy, viola and Allison Brewster Franzetti, piano. *La Noche* is a tranquil impressionist movement that is refreshingly tonal throughout, centering mostly around C Major. The notes are not too difficult in this movement; the challenge comes mostly from trying to perform the big jumps in register in a smooth lyrical fashion, similar to the challenge presented in Milhaud's *Bruxelloise* from the *Quatre Visage*.

The resulting colors from the harmonics and tremolos in this movement are rather refreshing.

*Tanguano* is a bit more challenging technically, as much of it exploits the lower register of the viola, many of the passages working best on the C-string. It is much quicker and more virtuosic in character, with the middle section using many 6ths. Both of these movements are in ternary (ABA) form, as is much of Piazzolla's music. The ending has a cute "button" that has often evoked chuckles from the audiences in my own performances.

*Le Grand Tango* (written for Rostropovich) has been a highly celebrated contemporary work in the cello literature, and recorded numerous times (including Yo-Yo Ma); however, most violists are surprised to find out that Piazzolla intended it to be for cello or viola. The viola version is quite nice, and works equally well. The notes in this one are again not too difficult (never going above the high B, just above the harmonic A); probably the most difficult passage would be the thirds at m54 (F#-D to G-E on the D and A strings). The work is highly charged rhythmically, very fun to play, and deserves the same popularity with violists as it has already with cellists.

Both of these pieces are available through:  
ALMA Inc.  
6602 Arbor Meadow Dr.  
San Antonio, TX 78256  
1-888-275-ALMA

## **Santa Teresa for viola and piano, Op. 5 no. 1 (2000)**

Difficulty: Level 3  
Duration: 5 minutes

By Francisca Aquino (b. 1956) and Ricardo Vasconcellos (b. 1955)

This attractive work co-written by this Brazilian husband-wife duo is deeply rooted in these composers' native Samba tradition. Reading the work, I pictured myself performing in a South American café or salon. The piano and viola parts are professionally idiomatic. The music is attainable on the first hearing, its goal apparently not in harmonically innovation. While perhaps a little repetitive in its melodic material, this is most likely intentional as the Samba traditions are more suited to dancing than concert listening. At just under five minutes the material is still always welcomed, and overall the work can be a refreshing concert "aperitif" with its light style and charm.

## **Nazareth para todos (Compiled 2003)**

Apanhei-te, cavaquinho!  
Brejeiro  
Confidências  
Correcta  
Eponina  
Escorregando  
Nenê  
Odeon

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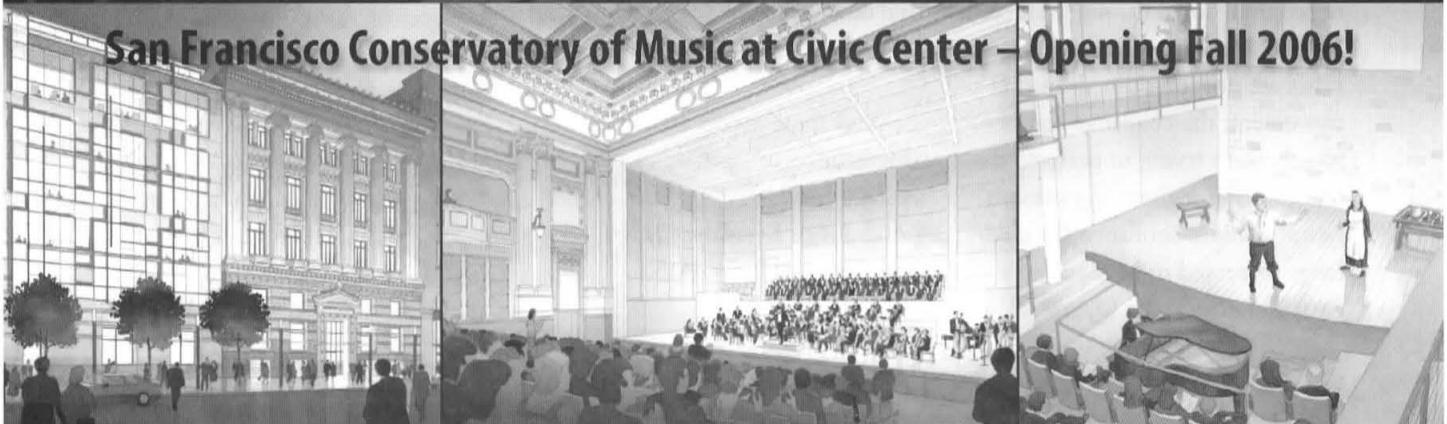
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Difficulty: Level 4/5  
Duration: about 2 to 4 minutes  
per movement

By Ernesto Julio de Nazareth  
(1863-1932)  
Arranged by Francisca Aquino

This compilation has been published for flexible solo instrument and piano. The viola version is quite successful and convincing, which is why I have included it in this column. These short diverse pieces may be performed in a set or as individual short diversions or encores in recital performance. They come from various genres such as the tango, the waltz, and the polka. According to the notes in the music's preface, Darius Milhaud recalls being fascinated and intrigued by rhythms of Brazilian music in his memoirs: "There was an imperceptible suspension in the syncopation, a slothful breathing, a subtle stop that was very hard for me to capture." Nazareth was one the Brazil's most accomplished composers of the time, and Milhaud had heard his music on several occasions in Rio de Janeiro.

Playing through these works, I was pleasantly surprised with how well these works worked on the viola. The entire range of the instrument is exploited, and only rarely does the upper range go past our harmonic "A" on the a-string. The "C" above that harmonic is used three times, and the music never stays in one are of the range for too long. I particularly enjoyed the Eponina, which had a couple interesting curiosities – 5 and 6-note grace notes melismas—in the movement. All in all, these are

well-arranged works, and highly welcomed to our repertoire.

## **Duas Miniaturas Brasileiras (arranged 2000)**

Lua Branca  
O Corta-Jaca

Difficulty: Level 2  
Duration: 4 minutes

By Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935)  
Arranged by Francisca Aquino and  
Ricardo Vasconcellos

We have here two curious miniature pieces from a lesser-known Portuguese/Brazilian female composer from around the turn of the century. These pieces are also very cute and completely playable for violists of a wide range of expertise. These pieces could even prove to be interesting to young viola students whose teachers want to depart from the Vivaldi, Bach or Mozart found in many of our beginning method books. The piano part is very well written, and slightly more advanced than the solo part. The Lua Branca has a nice lyrical expressiveness to it while the O Corta-Jaca is much more upbeat and of a "Bolero-like" character. These works are certainly an interesting addition for violists' libraries, but because of the easy technical writing they may not be as successful on a professional program.

After having gotten to know the three works above, I became curious about this husband/wife duo that co-wrote and arranged them. Such a collaboration, while more common in popular music, is most rare in the classical tradition.

When asked how they do this, they said that it is difficult to fully describe the process; but because they play together so often, it is easy for them to interact with each other. They often start with a small theme, and a second theme can be composed later. Once enough of it has been written out, they then decide on the form and add sections as needed.

The three Aquino-Vasconcellos works (Santa Teresa, Nazareth, and Duas Miniaturas Brasileiras) are available at:

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520 Tel/fax 55(61)3477368  
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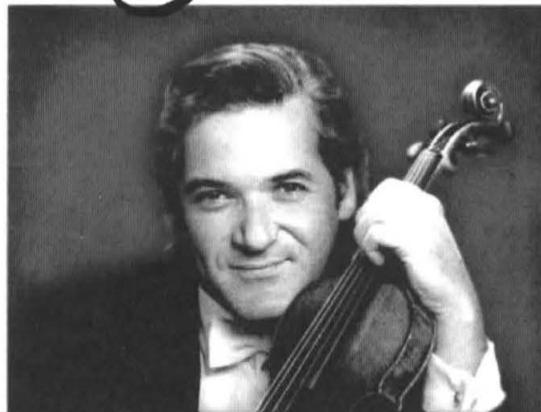
Key to the Difficulty level chart:  
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3 Intermediate  
4 Somewhat Difficult  
5 Difficult  
6 Very Difficult

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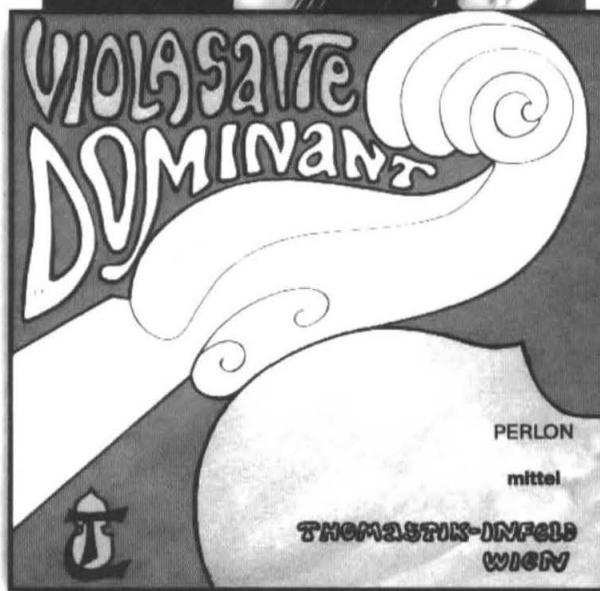
*Special thanks go to Kevin Sharpe  
for his assistance in reading through  
these works.*

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# SAMPLE SCORE:

## AQUINO/VASCONCELLOS: SANTA TERESA

Lento molto espressivo # 72

mp mf simile

This system contains measures 1 through 4. The tempo is 'Lento molto espressivo' with a first ending bracket over measures 1-4. Dynamics include mezzo-piano (mp) and mezzo-forte (mf). The instruction 'simile' is written below the bass staff.

Giacoso # 76-84

rall. mf mp

This system contains measures 5 through 9. The tempo is 'Giacoso'. Dynamics include mezzo-forte (mf) and mezzo-piano (mp). A 'rall.' (rallentando) marking is present over measures 7-9.

pp mf

This system contains measures 10 through 14. Dynamics include pianissimo (pp) and mezzo-forte (mf).

p simile

This system contains measures 15 through 19. Dynamics include piano (p). The instruction 'simile' is written below the bass staff.

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cresc. molto mf

This system contains measures 20 through 24. Dynamics include mezzo-forte (mf) and a 'cresc. molto' (crescendo molto) marking.

f

This system contains measures 25 through 29. Dynamics include forte (f).

p mf

This system contains measures 30 through 34. Dynamics include piano (p) and mezzo-forte (mf).

p simile

This system contains measures 35 through 39. Dynamics include piano (p). The instruction 'simile' is written below the bass staff.

40

mf

f

Musical score for measures 40-44, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mf* and *f*.

60

mp

mf

Musical score for measures 60-64, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*.

45

mp

f

Musical score for measures 45-49, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mp* and *f*.

65

mp

mf

Musical score for measures 65-69, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*.

50

mp

mp

Musical score for measures 50-54, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mp*.

70

pp

Musical score for measures 70-74, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic marking *pp*.

55

f

Musical score for measures 55-59, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic marking *f*.

75

f

mp

molto rall.

Musical score for measures 75-79, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *f*, *mp*, and *molto rall.*

Moderato ♩ = 122

80

pp

espressivo

Musical score for measures 80-84, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *pp* and *espressivo*.

99

mf

f

Musical score for measures 99-103, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mf* and *f*.

85

p cantabile

Musical score for measures 85-89, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic marking *p cantabile*.

104

Musical score for measures 104-108, featuring piano and bass staves.

Giocoso ♩ = 76-84

89

cresc. molto accelerando

mf

Musical score for measures 89-93, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *cresc. molto accelerando* and *mf*.

108

p

Musical score for measures 108-112, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic marking *p*.

94

mp

cresc.

f

Musical score for measures 94-98, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic markings *mp*, *cresc.*, and *f*.

112

mf

Musical score for measures 112-116, featuring piano and bass staves with dynamic marking *mf*.

116

*cresc*  
*f*  
*p*

120

*mf*  
*cresc*

125

*f*

130

*p*  
*poco a poco allargando*  
*mf*  
*simile*

Adagio, a piacere

135

*p*  
*pp*  
*p*  
*simile*

Lento molto espressivo ♩ = 72

140

*pp*

144

*p*  
*simile*

Giocoso ♩ = 70-84

148

*rall*  
*f*  
*simile*

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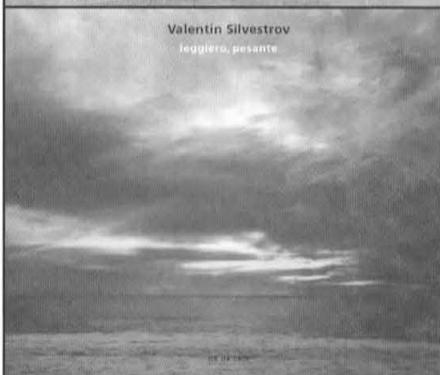
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# MEET THE SECTION

## THE VIOLISTS OF THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY

By Rita Porfiris

Author's note: The Journal of the American Viola Society was to feature the violists of the Houston Symphony as part of its regular feature "Meet the Section..." However, upon arrival at Jones Hall on the appointed interview day of September 19th,\* the AVS representative suddenly and inexplicably found herself set upon by a mob of unruly and bloodthirsty pirates. After much waving of what looked suspiciously like viola bows but were being referred to by the strange bunch as "cutlasses," our interviewer was promptly bundled up and hauled onto the deck of a very odd ship. The following is a transcription of the only audible portion of the tape that was found, along with pieces of dried kelp, broken rosin, half-eaten chocolate doubloons, and a bit of a dirty red sash, washed up on the distant shores of Myanmar (Burma).

*\*JAVS has since found out that September 19th is International Talk Like A Pirate Day*

AVS: The interview aboard the Ship o' the Festerin' Callus. My research show that most of you became viol...I mean pirates, at the age of 11 or 12. Why were you drawn to this life?

Pegleg Jack: lootin' and pillagin'.



*L to R: Candy Casey Bloodletter ("For sure, Dan Strba, I'd recognize that steely-eyed glint anywhere..."); Rabid Betsy Rackham ("That disfiguring scar is very sinister- Phyllis Herdliska?"); Joy "Bane 'o the Sea" Plesner (newly Ret.); Dirty Mary Cutler ("Hard to tell through all the dirt- but I think it's Fay Shapiro!"); Bloody Bess Kidd ("Is that a woman? Looks like Johnny Depp in 'Pirates of the Caribbean"); Iron Roger Hacke ("Nice hat-is that George Pascal?); Iron Anne Frankenberry ("Linda Goldstein? I thought she was allergic to parrots"); Dread Pirate Vane ("A dead ringer for Joan DerHovesepian, except for the mustache and the artificial leg"); Calico Tom Bonney ("That has GOT to be Thomas Molloy"). Cap'n Morgan Flint (sotto voce: "bears a strange and disturbing resemblance to Wayne Brooks") and Pegleg Jack Cotton ("Wei Jiang-I always thought he had piratical tendencies") were out pillaging at the time of this photo.*

Rabid Betsey: Pillagin'. (cries of assent in the background: "Lootin!!" "Pillagin!" "Th' grog!" "Aye! Arrr!" "Lootin!!!" "Yarrgh!!")

AVS: Okay...but aside from looting and pillaging...

(silence)AVS: Did any of you play any other...INSTRUMENTS... before you became pirates?

Bloody Bess: (whispers) Lass, me

dirty little secret is that I used to be a violinist afore I was led into the piracy light.

Iron Roger: Harrr! I was a lousy violinist! From th' time I picked up me first cutlass, thar's been no lookin' back.

Dirty Mary: Violinist, pah! (spits) They tried ta get me ta play that lily-livered bilge-box, but 'twas the call o' the grog that was stronger!

Rabid Betsy: 'Tis nobler to have the piratey sound, yarr!

Dread Pirate Vane: Aye!! Wha' wi' the call of the piratey sound, an' this useless artificial leg, th' choice was obvious... no chorus line fer Dread Pirate Vane!

Candy Casey: Ye're a bonny lass...ye remind me of me own mother, who bless her cursed soul thought she was doin' a fine thing when she made me lay down me beloved guitar to sail th' high seas..."no son 'o mine will become a rock star.." said she, as she chained me viola bow, I mean, cutlass, into me 12 year old hand.

Cap'n Morgan: I, also, played th' violin, 'til one day me wee mate became a buccaneer. So to annoy 'im I stuck me bow, I mean hook, in 'is face, plucked out 'is eye, an' took over 'is place on th' ship. 'Tis a fine feeling, doin' things fer spite.

Iron Anne: I was 19 when I laid down me fiddle an' thought to meself, "Self, a parrot would make this outfit e'en finer; 'tis a pirate's life for me!"

Calico Tom: When I was a lad in school, they were long on cursed fiddlers but short on buccaneers. So becomin' one was the natural choice. Did ye know, the word "Pirate" first appeared in French literature in 1254 and was plundered ("Yarr!" "Plundered!!" "Avast!") from the Latin word, "Pirata" meaning "sailor or sea robber?" The Latin, of course was looted ("Lootin' arr!" "Yarrgh!!") from the Greek word, "Peirates" literally meaning "one who

attacks" from the root word "peira" meaning, "trial, attempt, attack." The word "peril" has the same root heritage.

Pegleg Jack: Would it be "peril" I'd be in if I lashed Calico to the riggin' and left a cod in 'is belly so the gulls could peck out 'is talkative insides? I also came ta be a pirate via th' scurvy violin route... then I realized how much I liked lootin' and pillagin'.

AVS: Why and when did you join the Ship o' the Festerin' Callus?

Pegleg Jack: I came in th' summer of '99 fer lootin' and pillagin'. Yarr!! (He picks his teeth with what looks like a gold bow tip)

Bloody Bess: 'Twas th' bitter winter o' '94 when I took a hard look at me own festerin' calluses. It seemed ta fit.

Candy Casey: One day in '92 I had just finished plunderin' wi' the dread crooner "Ol' Blue Eyes." I stopped fer some grog, then, th' next thing I know, I'm aboard th' SOTFC...I think 'twas gypsies.

Cap'n Morgan: I love intense, scorchin' heat and humidity. So as soon as I got out o' th' brig-L.A.- I packed up and left fer th' SOTFC. Avast! But 'twas years of plunderin' an' mutiny I had to do afore I became Cap'n.

Iron Anne: Aye, the humidity, 'tis good for th' complexion.

Calico Tom: Lass, I been sailing wi' th' SOFTC since 1964. When I joined, half these swabbies tweren't even knee deep in their own bilgewater! They will have to pry me

cutlass out of me cold dead fingers afore I e'er leave this ship.

Rabid Betsy: That can be arranged, matey! Blimey! Always goin' on about history.... Me, I got th' post straight out o' buccaneer school... th' Juilliard School fer Piratical Studies.

Dirty Mary: The grog had a reputation fer bein' better here than in Oklee Homa. Yarrgh! Pass th' grog!

Iron Roger: I was Cap'n aboard th' Denver Sea Foamy when I sensed a mutiny afloat. I knew 'twas time to leave, but first I sunk my cutlass into each and ev'ry one of those TREACHEROUS DOGS! I FIX'D TH' LOT OF THOSE BISCUIT-MAGGOTS TWIXT TH' KEEL AND SHOALING WATER, WITH CRABS FOR MATES!

I---Dread Pirate Vane: Easy, lad, ha' some grog... I'd been sailing on a ship off th' coast o' Charleston when I heard about th' opening on th' SOTFC-known far and wide fer its good singin', lootin' an' grog.

AVS: The average length of service on the SOTFC is 18 years! Why have you been together so long?

Pegleg Jack: (nonchalantly polishing an intricately carved ivory tailpiece) Th' lootin' and pillagin'! Did ye not notice that we're one o' th' finest looking and most friendly crews around?

Cap'n Morgan: Aye, like family we are... (grabs for the tailpiece)

Iron Anne: We ha' eerie respect fer ea' other (deftly plucks the tailpiece from Morgan and stashes it

in her pocket).

Dirty Mary: (gulping sounds)  
slurs: I love me mates! We cook a  
bit fer ea' other too! Who wants  
chum-brownies?

Rabid Betsy: Hurl one o'er here, lass!

Calico Tom: (full mouth) Ngwe  
mmnph camaraderie (random  
sounds of munching and agree-  
ment: "Arr!" "Close-knit crew!"  
"mmm! Good brownies!" "Avast!  
Th' family I never had!")

Candy Casey: I know where  
Bloody Bess keeps 'er candy stash.

Bloody Bess: (affectionately) Scurvy  
cur! If I din't like yer nancy-Broadway  
singin' ways, I'd plant me cutlass in  
the top of yer pointy head.

AVS: "nancy-Broadway singing  
ways"?

Dread Pirate Vane: Aye, on slow  
plunderin' nights our lad Casey  
moonlights wi' th' Best Little Klezmer  
Band in Texas, an' Bloody Bess may  
keep a banjo or two in the brig.

Candy Casey: Yarrgrh, an' now  
we'll have to make ye walk the  
plank fer knowin'

Iron Roger: (giggles) THA'S  
WHAT HE SAID!!!! YE POX-  
FACED--- (sounds of glugging)

AVS: Uh, speaking of hobbies,  
what are some of your hobbies?

Rabid Betsy: Lootin'.

Candy Casey: Pillagin'.

AVS: Aside from looting and pil-

laging-(long silence)

Pegleg Jack: Photography... of th'  
lootin' and pillagin'.

Calico Tom: Ha' ye heard me  
weekly radio show, "Home Prairie  
Pillagin' wi' Calico Tom?"

Dread Pirate Vane: (spears a chum-  
brownie with the tip of a bow) I  
do lawnmower art...

Dirty Mary: I do enjoy a wee bit o'  
beadwork now and again...wi' me grog.

Iron Roger: Plunderin' an' baseball.

Cap'n Morgan: Always liked bringin'  
up West Highland Terriers... (apol-  
ogizing) They's tougher'n they look!

Iron Anne: Craftin'- see? Me parrot  
is made from beads and macaroni.

Rabid Betsy: I raise bulldogs, arr!!  
Because they go "arr!!"

Bloody Bess: Bulldogs? Th' best  
pet fer a buccaneer is a can o'  
stewed turnips in chum sauce!

AVS: I have to say, all this talk of  
candy and chum sauce is making  
me hungry....is there anything.....

Candy Casey: 'Ere you go me pret-  
ty, 'ave some candy.

Bloody Bess: Sink me! Get yer bar-  
nacle-crustrud hooks off me candy!  
Try these stewed turnips in chum  
sauce....damn! I ate me pet!

Dirty Mary: A tot o' grog'll do ye  
quite nicely, lass.

Cap'n Morgan: Tote me a wee tot  
too, Mary...

Iron Roger: Break out the barrel!  
I've a fierce burning in me belly to  
buckle me swash!

Calico Tom: Yarrgrh!! Me swash is  
already buckled! Pass th' grog!!

Dread Pirate Vane: Harrr! Harr! Avast!!  
Pass me those fried parrot-legs, laddie!

Pegleg Jack: Yarr, arrrr, harrgrh!  
(sings, to the tune of a Brahms  
Viola Sonata) "STICK yer  
CUTlass in my BILGE-bucket..."

Iron Anne: (glug glug glug)--

The tape ends here, degenerating  
into various noises of glugging,  
swash-buckling, and snatches of sea  
shanties-- strangely all in the keys of  
E-flat major and F minor. The AVS  
representative, along with the entire  
crew of the Ship o' the Festerin' Callus,  
was never seen again. Recently, on  
clear nights off the coast of Burma  
(Myanmar), reports have been made  
of strange flickering lights, smells of  
chum-brownies, and snatches of snig-  
gering laughter, punctuated by the mys-  
terious phrase "Tha's what SHE said!"

*Rita Porfiris (Bloody Bess Kidd), a  
member of the Houston Symphony  
viola section (Ship o' the Festerin'  
Callus) since 1995, was born to lily-  
livered landlubbers. She received  
both her BM(blimey mate) and  
MM(mizzenmast) in swash-buck-  
ling from the Juilliard School for  
Piratical Studies. In addition to her  
plundering duties on the SOTFC,  
she also teaches young impressionable  
buccaneers the fine art of buckling  
swash at the University of Houston.  
Arrrgh!*

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# AT THE GRASSROOTS

*Please send items of interest regarding viola activity at the grassroots to:  
Louise Zeitlin, AVS Secretary,  
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## Idaho

Idaho Viola Day, Feb. 12, 2005 on the campus of Boise State University: We started the morning with a master class led by Dave Johnson (Boise Philharmonic member and viola professor at Albertson College of Idaho) and Linda Kline Lamar (viola professor at Boise State University), followed by an Alexander Technique Workshop with Marisol Mayell (certified Alexander Technique teacher and Qigong instructor in Boise), then we had free lunch! After lunch we had a viola ensemble session in which we read Stamitz viola duos en masse.

Idaho Viola Day, Mar. 5, 2005 on the campus of Albertson College of Idaho: We began with a session called "Marketing and Managing Your Ensemble Yourself" led by Jen Drake (violinist in Darkwood Consort--who performed at the Iceland Congress!--and the Boise Philharmonic). This was followed by a master class led by Tom Tompkins (principal violist of the Boise Philharmonic and a member of the Sun Valley Summer Symphony). Then, you guessed it, free lunch! We ended our day with an ensemble reading of Marshall Fine's arrangement of Bach's "Prelude and Fugue, BWV 1005" for Viola Trio.

Idaho Viola Day, Oct. 15, 2005 on the campus of Boise State University: Nothing is planned yet. That's how

we do it: get a date, then plan it at the last minute. It's worked for us so far!

Idaho meets Peter Slowik, Feb. 15-22, 2006: A week of hourly viola events, concerts, classes, workshops, clinics, and very little sleeping. We can't wait!

Melia Watras (professor of viola at the University of Washington), March 21, 2006: Master class TBA.

— Linda Kline Lamar

## Iowa

On October 17th, 2004 the Iowa Viola Society hosted its fourth annual Viola Day, held at the University of Iowa. The day began with the IaVS's 3rd annual viola competition for high school and college students. Emma Hornick, a student of William Preucil took first place in the high school division, winning a \$250 gift certificate from William Harris Lee of Chicago and music supplies from Reck Violins in Coralville, Iowa. First place winner in the college division was Julia Immel, a student of Christine Rutledge. Julia won a \$200 cash prize and a \$50 gift certificate from Eble Music in Iowa City.

The day continued with a recital by the Iowa City Viola Quartet (Nathalie Cruden, Michael Kimber, Elizabeth Oakes, and Christine Rutledge). The program of Kimber's "La Folia" Variations, York Bowen's Fantasy Quartet, and Bach's Chaconne was well received.

After the lunch break IaVS member Kenneth Martinson gave a master

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Patricia Cosand, president  
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### Central Texas Viola Society

Ames Asbell, president  
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### Chicago Viola Society

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### Idaho Viola Society

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### Iowa Viola Society

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### Minnesota Viola Society

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### North Carolina Viola Society

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### Rocky Mountain Viola Society

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### Southern California Viola Society

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### Utah Viola Society

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### Viola Club of MD/DC & VA

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### Virginia Viola Society

Constance Whitman Gee, president  
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### Seattle Viola Society

LeeAnn Morgan, president  
violas\_rule@msn.com

class for high school and college students. The day concluded with a star-studded evening recital that really showcased the incredible viola talents of the Iowa Viola Society. Emma Hornick, winner of the high school division competition, performed the last movement of the David Concerto. Other performances included a trio by Telemann for 2 violas and double bass with Kenneth Martinson, Christine Rutledge, and bassist Volkan Orhon. Martinson performed beautifully Joachim's Variations on a Hebrew Theme. Michael Kimber gave a great performance of one of his original compositions for solo viola. Luiz Vargas, violist at Morningside College in Sioux City, played the Barcarolle from the Vieuxtemps Sonata for Viola and Piano. Nathalie Cruden, principal violist of the Cedar Rapids Symphony and Iowa City native treated the audience to a performance of Penderecki's Cadenza. The evening ended with a great rendition of the Hummel Potpourri by Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra principal viola Michael Strauss.

This year's IaVS activities will begin with a new event, ViolaFestMidWest, on February 4 & 5, 2006 at the University of Iowa. The 2-day festival will include performances, lectures, and master classes by violists around the region. Details about this event can be obtained by emailing Christine Rutledge at [vlaprof@mchsi.com](mailto:vlaprof@mchsi.com). The IaVS's annual viola competition will take place in the spring. Details of the competition will be available soon.

Other news about IaVS members includes performances by two IaVS members, Kenneth Martinson and Christine Rutledge, at the International Viola Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland in June, 2005. Considering our membership numbers, it seems that our chapter was very well represented!

– Christine Rutledge Russell

## Minnesota



*MNVS violists read at Lake Harriet.*

On April 23, The Minnesota Viola Society hosted its Second Annual Potluck-Play-In at Lake Harriet United Methodist Church in Minneapolis. About 30 people enjoyed playing viola music together, sharing a meal, and general viola camaraderie. We played several viola ensemble pieces including some great pieces by Michael Kimber. While we ate dinner, we watched the video of The Four Violas from last year's Congress. The setting at Lake Harriet was sublime! This will undoubtedly be an annual event in Minnesota.

Upcoming events:  
The MN Viola Society will host a Viola fair on Oct. 8th at Macalaster College in St. Paul.

Christine Rutledge will present "Viola: Bach's Favorite Instrument." Also at this event there will be a member recital, a mass viola reading session and an annual meeting.

To ring in the New Year, on Friday, January 13, 2006, the Minnesota Viola Society will present a master class to be given by Roberto Diaz.

– Dave Arnott

## New York

On March 6th, at the Manhattan School of Music, we were treated to a fascinating recital by violist Csaba Erdélyi and pianist Laura Melton. These superlative artists performed two works arranged

by Mr. Erdélyi: Brahms' Sonata Opus 78, originally for violin, and a suite from Manuel de Falla's ballet El Amor Brujo. Rounding out the program were Paul Chihara's Sonata for Viola and Piano (subtitled "de Profundis"), in its 1999 revision, and the Sonata for Viola and Piano by Bohuslav Martinu.



*Erdélyi and Melton in NYVS recital.*

The choice of pieces emphasized a range of expressive opportunities for the viola as an instrument and for these remarkable players: the wistful and moving lyricism of Brahms in what is sometimes referred to as the “Rain Song” Sonata; the melodically expansive Chihara, performed here with the composer in the audience; the grand yet propulsive Eastern European flavor of the Martinu; and the passionate, extravagant and edgy dances of the de Falla, which showcased the artists’ abilities to project a seemingly endless array of colors and timbres.

Our last event of the season took place on May 1st in a venue new to NYVS, Gallery ArtsIndia, which is devoted to works by contemporary artists from India. This evening, one of our collegial events, featured works from several centuries and many different countries. Movements by the Italian Baroque composer Giacomo Zucchi were performed by Rebecca Osborn on the solo viola part with Andrea Andros on viola, Nancy Reed on violin and Allesandro Benetello (editor and publisher of these works) on cello. Ms. Osborn and Adria Benjamin played the Duo in A Major by Jean-Marie Leclair. Ching Chen Juhl performed a Chinese song “The Moon Mirrored on the Er Spring” by Yanjun Hua in a solo viola arrangement by Ding Zhinuo and Ms. Juhl. Christine Ims and pianist Yi-Fang Huang played Philipp Schwarenska’s Sonata, and Melissa Reardon presented Penderecki’s Cadenza and Wieniawski’s Scherzo-Caprice. In

addition, there were two recent works by George Quincy, Fanfare for a Choctaw Soul and Callisto, a Moon of Jupiter, performed by Joel Rudin, flutist Mary Barto, and the composer at the piano.

Finally, NYVS is pleased to announce the recipients of Rosemary Glyde Scholarships for 2005: Daniel Hedinger from Clark, New Jersey, a student of Dr. Laura Mount, and sisters Shani and Asha Paul from Staten Island, New York, students of Judith Insell. We congratulate them, and wish them success in their musical and other endeavors. We also congratulate their teachers, who have done such excellent work in teaching these wonderful, talented young people.

For more information about these and our other activities, visit the New York Viola Society’s website: [www.nyvs.org](http://www.nyvs.org).

— *Kenneth Johnson*

## Ohio

The Ohio Viola Society has been busy growing its community. Last May the OVS presented a Viola Day at the Cleveland Music School Settlement that brought together close to forty violists for a day of playing, listening, and learning. As local dealers set up displays of instruments and bows in the lobby, the event (organized by Lembi Veskimets) began with a lecture-demonstration on viola repair and maintenance by Cleveland luthier Reese Williams, followed by viola ensemble section coachings. The final program featured wonderful multi-violas works by Shostakovich, Wranitzky, and Sousa, conducted by Deborah Price. Also performing on the concert, in works for two violas, were Laura Kuennen-Poper & Louise Zeitlin and Laura Schuster & Lembi Veskimets. The concert concluded with a superb reading of the York Bowen Fantaisie Quartet by Kate Cinelli, Amber Smithson, Julianna Day, and Kaycee Fitzsimmons.



*Holiday Greetings from Arcos Brasil USA*

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On October 16, 2005 we will be presenting OHhhh Viola! 2005 at the Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music in Berea, OH. Organized and hosted by Jeffrey Irvine and Louise Zeitlin, this day-long event will feature a master class by New England Conservatory's Carol Rodland. Also planned for the day are demonstrations of new instruments from a variety of regional dealers, and performances and additional master-classes. As we continue to thrive we are grateful for all of our members who donate their time and considerable talents toward making these outstanding events so successful.

– *Laura Kuennen-Poper*

### **Ohio, Part Two: 2005 OVS Competition**

The annual Ohio Viola Society Competition was held at Oberlin Conservatory again this year, on March 13, 2005. This was the second year that we had a college level competition, and it was a success all around. There were 10 contestants in the college division, 8 in the high school division, and the 13 and under division. It is our goal to increase the number of applicants every year.

Our College Division top prize went this year to Yu Jin, student of Jeffrey Irvine. Second prize went to another student from CIM, Caitlin Lynch, also a student of Jeffrey Irvine. An Honorable Mention went to Di Lu, who studies with Peter Slowik. The Donald Crossley Memorial Prize (first place for Division II, 14 years and

up) went to Annalisa Boerner, age 17 from Columbus who studies with Deborah Price. Second prize went to Erica Zappia, age 15 of Strongsville, student of Peter Slowik. Also a student of Peter, 15 year old Georgina McKay Lodge of Oberlin, won our Best Bach Prize for Division II contestants. The Larry F. Bradford Memorial Prize (first prize for students 13 and under) went to Abby Elder age 10 of Pepper Pike, student of Louise Zeitlin. Matthew Weinert-Stein of Solon, age 12, won second prize, student of Laura Shuster. Two Honorable Mentions were awarded, one to Sarah Poe of Bainbridge, age 12 and student of Laura Shuster, and Nicholas Bobbs, age 10 of Pepper Pike, student of Lembi Veskimets.

Congratulations to all of the winners, and many thanks to our judges!

– *Laura Shuster, 2005 OVS Competition Chair*

### **Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma Chapter has a busy season planned for our violists. On October 22nd we are sponsoring a Master Class with visiting artist Scott Lee. Four of our local chapter members will be performing for Mr. Lee for this class, which will be from 10:00am until noon. The following day, on Sunday, October 23rd, Mr. Lee will be performing a recital at 3:00pm. Both of these events are to be held at the University of Central Oklahoma.

On January 28th, 2006, the OKVS will sponsor our third annual Viola Day! This will be a day of viola-related activities, from a Master Class with visiting artist Julia Adams, to workshops, a viola play-in of brand-new, home-grown pieces, and a concluding recital of viola works performed by Ms. Adams and some of the OKVS members. Viola Day 2006 will be held in the Bass School of Music of Oklahoma City University.

– *Donna Wolff Cain*

### **Welcome, Central Texas!**

The Central Texas Viola Society was formed in Spring 2005 with a series of three informal potluck viola ensemble play-ins. Our first activities as an official chapter will be to host a set of workshops (in September and October) to help high school students in the Austin area prepare for the Texas Music Educators Association All-Region and All-State Orchestra auditions.

Plans for this year include: organizing a quarterly recital series to provide more performance opportunities for area violists; forming a high school viola ensemble that rehearses and performs regularly and is coached by professional area violists; and organizing a spring viola gala concert and reception featuring at least 3 new short compositions for viola ensemble by area composers.

– *Ames Asbell*



*RMVS violists Cassandra Mueller (l) and Ashley Holmberg (r) at work and play.*

## Rocky Mountains

In April, the Rocky Mountain Viola Society hosted its fifth *Viva la Viola Day* in Ft. Collins, Colorado. More than 100 violists from Colorado and Wyoming attended. Our guest was Carol Rodland from NEC who gave an inspiring master class for college students from the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, the University of Wyoming, and Metro State College of Denver.

This year we invited instrument dealers to come, which was a big hit with the high school and college students. Coaches for the groups came from Colorado, Wyoming, Massachusetts, and S. Carolina. College students assisted the coaches with rehearsals, and also served as mentors to high school violists considering a career in music. A grand day! Our guest next year will be Peter Slowik, who will be giving a recital as well as coaching.

The Rocky Mountain Viola

Society will also be hosting a recital by Jennifer Stumm, winner of the recent Primrose Competition.

— *Margaret Miller*

## SoCal

It is Summer 2005, one season down, another coming up fast. It is time to evaluate. What has the Society done this year? We had a great Christmas (2004) viola reading-in party at Pamela Goldsmith's lovely home high in the Santa Monica Mountains. We presented a Spring Fling at USC in May 2005 in which many young people (mostly students of Helen Callus) performed as well as several of our own members - and Helen herself. We helped co-sponsor the Master Class of Robert Vernon on June 9, 2005. Individually, we have practiced, performed, enjoyed our unifying love- the viola. We plan more events - especially small reading parties. Do you have a home where this might take place? Let us hear from you. Call us or email us.

Our goal is to publish (at least) three newsletters a year. In the meantime, thanks to all!

— *Lori Ives*

## Virginia

The Virginia Viola Society begins its second official year in 2005-2006. Our meetings so far have consisted of solo performances, master classes, viola ensemble playing and always some tasty treats to finish things off. We will continue with this format in the coming year. Our biggest project, *Violas on the Lawn* (a performance of Terry

Riley's *In C*) has yet to come to full fruition. Hopefully we'll be able to make this happen this spring. Much to everyone's delight, The University of Virginia sponsored a master class last spring given by Amadi Hummings. This year we hope to be able to invite a few more guests, but have no confirmations right now. We are currently working on a project to involve the UVA composition students either in writing new works for our ensemble or for making arrangements of pieces for us. We're now looking for more works for viola ensemble. If anyone has suggestions, we'd be most appreciative!

— *Constance Whitman Gee*

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