

Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 29 Number 1



Features:

Rossini's Viola Solos

**Nadia Sirota and
Nico Muhly**

**Performance
Practice Issues in
*Harold in Italy***

**Tabuteau's
Number System**

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On the Cover:

Kevin G. Wong *Photographic Sketch of a Dieudonne Viola*

Composed when Kevin G. Wong was still a viola student at The Juilliard School, Pre-College Division, *Photographic Sketch of a Dieudonne Viola* is an early personal work. Inspired by the velvety quality of the viola’s tonal timbre, he sought to capture the same richness and beauty that he saw in the instrument’s craftsmanship.

Kevin is the founder and managing director of Seventhwall, a boutique creative services company specializing in photography, post-production services, and digital asset management. For more of the artist’s work, please visit www.seventhwall.com and www.kevingwong.com.



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AVS National Office
14070 Proton Road, Suite 100
Dallas, TX 75244
(972) 233-9107 ext. 204

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dbynog@rice.edu
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FROM THE EDITOR



I vividly recall playing my first opera in college. It was Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, a work that seemed long and tedious. The production was plagued with problems, rehearsals were inefficient and demoralizing, and there was plenty of offstage drama to rival the drama onstage. I vowed that if I never had to play another opera, I would be a lucky man. But things improved with the next opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and by the time we got to *Tosca*, I was hooked. Having now played nearly three hundred performances of various operas, I am glad I reconsidered my first impression.

I also vividly recall listening to the music of Nadia Sirota and Nico Muhly for the first time. I had ordered Nadia's CD *First Things First* shortly after its release in 2009 and immediately listened to it upon its arrival. I was captivated both by the playing and the music, particularly Muhly's *Étude 1A*. Three years later, in preparation for our interview with these two musicians, I revisited the recording and again

marveled at the freshness and ingenuity of the music.

These two experiences demonstrate that while some things grab us immediately, other things take time for us to appreciate. Many factors affect our tastes and views, with parents, teachers, and friends often taking a guiding role in developing our preferences, but our tastes are constantly evolving. Specific experiences may also greatly affect our tastes: a song or movie might be loved because of an association with a momentous event, while a certain bad experience might forever taint a book or food that we might otherwise enjoy. In some instances, we only reevaluate our negative opinions when forced to, and there are some things for which we know we will never gain an appreciation.

For many, the viola—and its music—is an acquired taste (in the words of Nico Muhly, “Appreciating a great violist is like saying, “That movie has a great sound engineer”), and our solo repertoire often proves challenging to audiences. So we violists are all too familiar with trying to expand people's tastes. This issue is all about expanding horizons, opening ourselves to new experiences, and reevaluating existing preferences. In addition to two articles about the viola in opera and our interview with Muhly and Sirota, this issue offers a diverse range of articles to expand your horizons:

- Joyce Chan, the first-prize winner of the 2012 Dalton Competition,

explains what an oboist can teach us about musical phrasing using numbers.

- Amanda Wilton, the second-prize winner of the 2012 Dalton Competition, offers suggestions on performance practice issues in *Harold in Italy*, including innovative placement options for the soloist.
- Our Eclectic Violist department looks at worship violists, including an interview with Diana Christine Clemons.
- Our Student Life department showcases three composers who use political, religious, and multicultural themes in their music.
- A new department, Retrospective, looks back and reevaluates music by Leo Sowerby and Alvin Etler.
- Our With Viola in Hand department revisits IVC 40, from the perspective of several Chilean violists who were getting their first taste of a viola congress.

I hope that this issue will inspire you to broaden your horizons or perhaps give that piece of music that you abandoned five years ago another go. After all, you don't move forward by standing still. ☺

Cordially,

David M. Bynog
JAVS Editor

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 using Microsoft Word. Electronic versions of entries should be e-mailed to info@avsnationaloffice.org. All entries must be postmarked by May 15, 2013. A panel of viola scholars will evaluate submissions and then select a maximum of three winning entries.

The American Viola Society wishes to thank AVS Past-President Thomas Tatton and his wife, Polly, for underwriting first prize in the 2013 David Dalton Viola Research Competition.

Send entries to:

AVS Office, 14070 Proton Road, Suite 100, LB 9
Dallas, TX 75244.

Prize categories:

All winning entries will be featured in the *Journal of the American Viola Society*, with authors receiving the following additional prizes:

- 1st Prize:** \$400, sponsored by Thomas and Polly Tatton
2nd Prize: \$200
3rd Prize: Henle edition sheet music package including works by Schumann, Reger, Stamitz, Mendelssohn, and Bruch, donated by Hal Leonard Corporation
-

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 _____

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 \$23 student membership dues with your submission, along with a membership enrollment form, which can be found in the current issue of JAVS.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Beloved AVS Members,

Happy spring! I hope it has been a lovely year for all of you. It was great seeing many of you at this year's ASTA convention while bringing new members into the fold. It was also lovely cultivating relationships with other organizations and businesses. I enjoy letting them know the exciting activities we've been up to.

Last fall our membership committee, spearheaded by President-Elect Kathryn Steely, focused on contacting lapsed members. Thank you to D'Addario for their generous offer of string sets for our membership drive. We are proud to announce that eighty-four past members returned, and overall membership has increased by 20% since June 2012!

Membership is vital to the ongoing mission of the AVS. If your membership has recently lapsed, please renew online at <http://americanviolasociety.org/support-avs/join-avs/>. We need you! Invite your friends to join. The board actively pursues member growth and retention, and your help in encouraging friends, students, and all those interested in promoting the viola is much appreciated.

Come celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Primrose International Viola Competition! The next competition will be held January 12–17, 2014, in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Primrose Festival, which includes the Las Vegas Viola Fest, will be held January 15–17 and will be our congress-type event for the year. We are proud to collaborate with the Las Vegas Philharmonic, the Nevada School of the Arts, and the Las Vegas Council of Cultural Affairs. This promises to be a memorable week, and I look forward to seeing all of you there. If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities, please contact me to discuss. We need your support to make this event great!

We are in the midst of our first Orchestral Excerpts Competition. The prizewinners will be announced June 1. Thank you to both our preliminary and final jurors for providing such a wonderful opportunity.

We are seeking support to help our organization update its content man-

agement system and website. This is a priority. It would allow a more seamless approach and provide you with many perks, including members' only access to the website, access to premium web content, the ability to update your member information online, the ability to take over conference registration functions, and other streamlined operations for our society. We welcome and need your support in this modernization of our operations.

We have implemented many things from last year's strategic plan, including more frequent board meetings. Rather than an annual meeting, we have met quarterly online, and it has improved our efficiency. We are also moving forward with endowment building, also outlined in our strategic plan, with emphasis on the Dalton Fund. We must think ahead one, five, and ten years so that our organization and its offerings will not only survive but prosper.

The next international viola congress will be hosted by the Polish Viola Society September 12–15, 2013, at the Kraków Academy of Music. It promises to be an incredible event!

Best wishes to all of you this spring, and I look forward to a great year with viola projects worldwide. B

Most Sincerely,
Nokuthula Ngwenyama



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IN MEMORIAM



*Mary Ruth Ray (photo courtesy of Brandeis University
Photographer Mike Lovett)*

Mary Ruth Ray (1956–2013)

On January 29, 2013, esteemed violist Mary Ruth Ray died after a long battle with cancer. I first met Mary Ruth at the Castleman Quartet Program where we were both students. She was a mere teenager, and I was in my early twenties. She became a viola hero to me immediately as I was drawn to her gorgeous dark tone and her impeccably clean technique. Later

we were both college students at SUNY Purchase where we both studied with Heidi Castleman. I remember spending part of an afternoon in the dormitory just listening to her practicing Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher* and marveling that the piece could sound so easy and beautiful.

Mary Ruth and violinist Judith Eissenberg (also a Castleman Quartet Program alumna) co-founded the Lydian Quartet and joined the Brandeis University faculty in 1980. The quartet spent decades teaching at Brandeis and during that time built a large discography of both standard repertoire as well as contemporary American works. In 1984 they were awarded the prestigious Naumburg Chamber Music Award. Mary Ruth was made chair of the music department at Brandeis in 2005.

In 1977 Mary Ruth became a member of Emmanuel Music, led by Craig Smith. The group was renowned for its complete cycles of Bach's cantatas as well as chamber music by Debussy, Brahms, Schubert, and Schoenberg.

Mary Ruth Ray will be held in the hearts of all she touched with her warm personality and her irresistibly beautiful viola playing and musicianship.

— Allyson Dawkins, Principal Viola,
San Antonio Symphony

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IVC HOST LETTER

Dear violists and members of the AVS,

As host of the 41st Viola Congress, I would like to invite you to take part in the event from September 11–15, 2013, in Kraków, the most beautiful city in Poland. Plans are still underway, and the event will focus on East-European viola music. Please visit www.amuz.krakow.pl in the coming months for more information. There are ample places to stay near the Music Academy building (św. Tomasza 43 / 43 St. Thomas Street), and here are a few suggestions:

- Campanile Hotel: św. Tomasza 34 / 34 St. Thomas Street; opposite the Music Academy building. www.campanile-cracovie.pl.
- Hotel Classic: św. Tomasza 32 / 32 St. Thomas Street; opposite the Music Academy building. www.hotel-classic.pl.

- Hotel Wyspiański: ul. Westerplatte 15 / 15 Westerplatte Street. www.hotel-wyspiański.pl.
- Hotel Amadeus: ul. Mikołajska 20 / 20 Mikołajska Street; behind the Music Academy building. www.hotel-amadeus.pl.
- Music Academy, offering sleeping places in a student hostel: ul. Przemyska 3 / 3 Przemyska Street (about 1200 meters from the Music Academy) for \$25 US dollars.

I hope to see you in Kraków.

Bogusława Hubisz-Sielska
Music Academy Kraków
President of the Polish Viola Society

New AVS Pedagogy Blog: “From the Studio” americanviolasociety.org/studio

The AVS is pleased to announce a new blog devoted to teaching: “From the Studio.” Hosts for the blog’s inaugural season will be the Juilliard viola studio of Heidi Castleman, Misha Amory, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Steven Tenenbom. These teachers and their students along with teaching assistants and recent alumni will address issues of technique, repertoire, interpretation, pedagogy, and outreach. Their thoughts, experiences, and discussions on specific topics will appear daily throughout the academic year, Monday through Friday. To submit questions for consideration, please write to Adam Cordle, AVS Media Coordinator, at usviolasociety@gmail.com.

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A DOUBLE-BARRELED ROSSINIAN VIOLA STORY



Gioachino Rossini

by Carlos María Solare

One of my favorite summer spots is the sea resort of Pesaro, on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Not just because of the sea, I hasten to add, but also because every August it hosts the Rossini Opera Festival (ROF) (Rossini, of course, was born there in 1792). Since its inception thirty-three years ago, the ROF has been quietly working its way through Rossini's output, operatic and otherwise, always performing from the critical editions that emerge regularly from the archives of the Fondazione Rossini, also based in Pesaro. This past August, the ROF presented an opera that had never before been performed there: the biblical blockbuster *Ciro in Babilonia*, which deals with the defeat and overthrow of the blasphemous Babylonian king Belshazzar by the Persian ruler, Cyrus. The one thing most Rossinians know about this opera, even if they have never heard a note of it, is an anecdote relating to its first perform-

ance, which took place in nearby Ferrara on March 14, 1812. Here it is, as told many years later by Rossini himself to the German composer Ferdinand Hiller:

For one opera, *Ciro in Babilonia*, I had a terrible second soprano. Not only was she ugly beyond belief, but even her voice was well below decency. After a thorough examination I discovered that she possessed only one note that did not sound awful, the B-flat on the third line of the staff. So I wrote an aria for her in which she had to sing just this one note, I put all the musical argument into the orchestral part, and since the piece was liked and applauded, my *mono-tonous* singer was thrilled by her triumph.¹

In the Italian operatic world of Rossini's time there were many rules, both written and unwritten, and one of them specified that the *seconda donna* of a cast was entitled to a solo number. This was always placed in such a way as to provide a few minutes' rest for the principals, and the audience traditionally used it to sneak out for some refreshment, hence the name *aria di sorbetto* by which it was usually known. This particular aria in *Ciro in Babilonia* is accordingly placed toward the end of the opera, just before the title character's final scene. I knew the piece only by reputation but had never actually heard it performed, so I was particularly keyed up as the aria approached. The recitative was over, and the orchestra struck up an agreeable *ritornello*, scored for strings. And then it happened: after a few bars, a solo viola raised its voice for several bars of serene E-flat-major bliss. I was expecting just about anything at this point, except for a viola solo! Presently the singer came in on her B-flat and did all that could be done with it, with the solo viola continually coming back to comment on the proceedings. Not even when the *tutti* returned did the viola fall silent: it doubled the first violins at the lower octave, and even had the last word at the aria's end. (Exs. 1a–1c.)

Example 1a. Gioachino Rossini, *Ciro in Babilonia*, Act II aria, “*Chi disprezza gl’infelici*” [Argene], viola solo, mm. 4–11.

Example 1b. Gioachino Rossini, *Ciro in Babilonia*, Act II aria, “*Chi disprezza gl’infelici*” [Argene], viola solo, mm. 32–37.

Example 1c. Gioachino Rossini, *Ciro in Babilonia*, Act II aria, “*Chi disprezza gl’infelici*” [Argene], viola solo, mm. 57–60.

As you can imagine, discovering this aria made my day (or rather my night)! After the opera was over, I happened to run into the orchestra’s principal violist outside the Teatro Rossini, and of course I congratulated him on the solo. “You know,” he said, “I have by now played twenty-four Rossini operas, but this is the first time that a solo has come my way.” I wonder what was going through Rossini’s mind; he had a singer who could sing just one note, and he went and framed this one note within—of all things—a viola solo! Could the aria’s text have prompted Rossini for his inspired choice of instrument? It goes like this:

Chi disprezza gl’infelici,
Chi il suo pianto non ascolta
Sa punire il Ciel talvolta
Dell’indegna crudeltà.

Those who despise the unhappy,
Who don’t listen to their laments
Heaven often knows how to punish
For their unworthy cruelty.

I am not aware if viola jokes were already circulating in 1812, but whether they did or not, there can be few more subtle than this one.

* * *

As fate would have it, the opera that the ROF presented the following evening also had a violistic connotation. You will search in vain the score of *Matilde di Shabran* looking for a viola solo, but at the first performance, which took place in Rome on February 24, 1821, one was heard, and it must have been something very special.

The opera's genesis had been fraught with more than its fair share of problems; lack of time forced Rossini to farm out some of the music to his friend Giovanni Pacini, and at the last minute the librettist wanted more money than had been agreed. To make things even worse, the conductor suffered a stroke a few days before the first night. Luckily a replacement was at hand who happened to be a good friend of Rossini's and also had some experience as a conductor from his previous activities at the ducal court of Lucca: Nicolò Paganini.



Nicolò Paganini

Paganini happened to be in Rome at the time and had indeed spent some of the Carnival nights walking the streets with Rossini, both of them disguised as beggars and singing a mournful ditty of the latter's authorship in a double act worthy of Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello. An eye-witness recalls that Rossini had filled out his already ample frame with bundles of straw, while Paganini remained "thin as a lath, and, with his face like the head of his fiddle."²

Misfortunes never come singly, and on the very day of the opera's premiere, the first horn—for whom Rossini had written an especially challenging solo—was taken ill. Ever game, Paganini undertook this chore as well. Since, however, horn playing wasn't among his many talents, he performed this passage on the viola. The instrument he used on the occasion, made by Davide Tecchler in 1742, is kept at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, but I recall seeing it at an exhibition mounted in Pesaro for the bicentennial of Rossini's birth.

Unfortunately, the viola version of this solo never made it either into print or into the performance practice of *Matilde di Shabran*. After Paganini had rescued the premiere and also conducted the two following performances, the original conductor and horn player showed up again to complete the run. The passage in question consists of an extended instrumental prelude featuring a horn cantilena, after which the solo instrument contributes several interjections during the aria itself (which was variously sung by a mezzo-soprano or a bass during the opera's early history, before settling on the first alternative). The piece is in E-flat major and includes several low B-flats, a whole step below the viola's C string (ex. 2). I wonder how Paganini solved this: Did he transpose the relevant phrases an octave higher, or modified the melodic shape, or used a scordatura tuning to allow for this note? This we will surely never know, but this aria, as well as the one-note number previously mentioned, are well worth the attention of violists wishing to indulge in some Rossinian *bel canto* in their recitals. And, come to think of it, that B-flat from *Ciro in Babilonia* should be within the vocal range of most piano accompanists, too!

Example 2. Gioachino Rossini, *Matilde di Shabran*, Act II aria, “Ab! Perché, perché la morte” [Edoardo], horn [viola] solo, mm. 4–22. Note the low B-flats.

Notes

¹ Ferdinand Hiller, “Plaudereien mit Rossini,” in *Aus dem Tonleben unserer Zeit* (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1868), 2:41–42. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

² Massimo D’Azeglio, *Recollections of Massimo D’Azeglio*, trans. Count [Andrea] Maffei (London: Chapman and Hall, 1868), 2:150.

Carlos María Solare is an Argentinian violist, viola d’amore player, and musicologist based in Berlin. He writes regularly for The Strad and Opera magazines and has contributed to MGG (Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart) and Grove Online. His main research fields are the musical theater of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the history of performance practice of string instruments.

“MEET PEOPLE & HAVE A NICE TIME”:

A CONVERSATION WITH NADIA SIROTA AND NICO MUHLY



Nico Muhly performs with Nadia Sirota at a December 7, 2012, concert (photo courtesy of Peter Butler)

by Alexander Overington

*At some point in October I received an e-mail from composer Nico Muhly wondering if I would perform as interlocutor for an interview he and violist Nadia Sirota had been asked to submit to “a viola publication.” When we gathered on November 14, 2012, to attend our sixth performance (collectively) of Thomas Ades’s *The Tempest* at the Met, we stopped first for a pre-concert meal at Blue Ribbon Sushi on 58th street, where Nadia promised we’d “eat the whole ocean, slowly.” Over a few bottles of saki and an almost criminal amount of uni, we discussed careers, commissions, and the viola.*

NM: First of all, cheers and thank you.

NS: Cheers!

NM: What we should talk about is entrepreneurship as an idea—because I think this is really interesting,

because I think we both share a lack of really specific capital C, capital A “Career Ambition,” and it’s more like project ambition.

NS: Yeah, but what I think, with regards to entrepreneurship, is that that’s literally all it is. Like, for me I realized that I would feel successful if my entire life I get to continue to do cool projects with my friends. That is a successful career for me.

NM: Right, me too. I think there are a lot of people, particularly soloists, who have in their mind this arc of how their career will look and that there are these points you have to hit along the way. They’re like, “A solo recital at Carnegie Hall,” there’s a “this and a that”—and that that’s something you achieve—like, the getting of the concert itself is the achievement.

NS: That works for some people, and good on them—but that mindset implies that there is a *them* who are the people who run music and *they* can make you successful and they can approve of you or they can not approve of you, and really it’s all just people—there’s no them; there’s no classical music committee or whatever.

NM: And in fact, one of the interesting things about what you and I have learned is there are just “allies,” and that’s kind of all you get. But it operates at the level of the individual.

NS: It very much does, and I don’t know if that’s like, [because of] the Internet or whatever, but I’m very happy with what I get to do right now because it all feels very much like friendship blossoming into everything else.

NM: Right, it's organic—but the other thing that's interesting [*waiter comes by*] (sorry that's sea urchin), the other thing that's interesting—that at the end of the day, you play the viola.

NS: That's totally true!

NM: Which is kind of amazing because the viola is the, it's the kind of—

NS: Be careful! You're like, talking to a lot of violists.

NM: But I mean, you know, it's a strange—what's the word? I mean it's the instrument that has more problems than it does “not problems.”

NS: But I think it loves having problems.

NM: It loves its problems.

NS: It's a budget opera, you know what I mean?

NM: Yeah. Right; it's a regional theater.

NS: It's a very creative regional theater!

NM: [*Waiter comes by.*] (Oh my God! That's the ocean. Thanks *very* much.)

NS: (Should you just take a picture of this for the article? I want it.)

NM: (Oh my God.) So anyway, one of the reasons why I started writing for the viola is because I knew you would play it. And you know writing for the viola is a tricky business because there's nothing in terms of range that it can do that another instrument can't do.

NS: That having been said, it can *do* all the stuff that you might want either a violin to do or a cello to do.

NM: Right, well that's what's so interesting—it occupies a strange registral thing. It goes five notes below the violin—

NS: I can literally sing 100% of the range of my instrument.

NM: And because you were born a violist—

NS: I was not born a violist!

NM: Oh, you converted?

NS: I converted. I started on violin, but I was a really bad practicer. To a certain extent, I'm still a bad practicer, it's just I'm doing so many projects that I have to play all the time, which makes me better. But yeah, I started on violin and switched to viola when I was thirteen, as one—

NM: As one does, exactly. And the viola, I think, is a specialty appreciation. Like, appreciating a great violist is like saying, “That movie has a great sound engineer,” do you know what I mean?

NS: It's color!

NM: It's color—and it's not considered a solo instrument in that sense, so if you're talking about a string part, it's not like, “Yeah, the violist is really holding it together.”

NS: Although I really do listen to things from the inside out. I was coaching the [Berio] Piano *Sequenza* [IV] the other day, and I was like, “The mezzo-forte line really doesn't have its own voice!” and I thought that it was the strangest thing for me to say.

NM: Yeah, it's a very “viola” thing to say. It's the same thing with singers where it's like the altos are the ones who actually have to know the thing.

NS: Actually, it makes you understand harmony in a very bizarre way because, while I'm still a linear person and I'm still thinking one thing at a time, I'm thinking of a melodic structure that implies so much.

NM: Yeah, and when the alto line is given something delicious, it's the most delicious. It's *more* delicious than a big tune.

NS: But we should just say this again—because I’ve said it a lot in interviews—a viola sounds a lot like a woman singing low or a man singing high. Like, it’s that weird wrong size of thing for its body trapped in the wrong thing—which is really good. Um, so I started working with Nico mostly because it was well-known that he could write quick things if your recital program was too short. So I asked him to write me something because my recital program was too short. And actually that first thing . . .

NM: Was *Keep in Touch*. No, it was the duet—

NS: The duet was the first real piece—for viola and cello.

NM: Right, which is hard and awkward. The first kind of chunky piece was *Keep in Touch* (ex. 1), which basically—I was thinking about what to do for the viola and basically it’s sacred music—it’s a big ol’ passacaglia, it’s very church-y, and it pairs—

NS: It’s got a little organ in it.

NM: It’s got a little organ, and it pairs the viola voice with Antony [Hegarty]’s voice—it’s an interesting thing because a lot of people talk about Antony’s voice as if he’s singing in an androgynous sort of range, but actually his singing voice is low—it just sounds high because of what he’s doing with the color.

Example 1. Nico Muhly, Keep in Touch, mm. 9–33.

NS: Which is exactly right—when you play high on the viola, it sounds higher than it is.

NM: Yeah. Just because of the size of the body and the strings and whatever. And so that was an early (for me) exploration of what the viola can do specifically, and what is the emotional content of an instrument that is kind of between sizes and between, um . . . functions. [Laughs.]

NS: What was also really great about that piece for me was that we had been working together enough at that point that you gave me a lot of freedom in that piece—like, you wrote me lines that I could really—

NM: Own.

NS: Yeah, own. Which has been really great, and I think that has been something that has continued in our collaborations.

NM: And also it was a collaboration that included other people—there was Antony, there was also Valgeir [Sigurðsson]—it was one of those things where it stopped being, “Here’s this,” and started being something much more . . .

NS: Well this is something that you’ve done since I’ve known you, which is that you sort of create

these unbelievable embarrassments of fun people who are talented and have interesting things to say. I'm remembering early on with *The Elements of Style*, which is a project Nico did with Maira Kalman, and like, Isaac Mizrahi, and like, myself, and Abby Fischer and—

NM: Sam Amidon! As a banjo player!

NS: It was the most decadent. It was at the New York Public Library, and I remember that gig very much feeling like it was one of those dreams—it was actually Judd Greenstein who said this—where you're in a very familiar place but with the wrong people, and things just have this bizarre quality.

NM: It did feel strange to have that moment when—we were just doing that additive process where Isaac was spanking that Calvin Klein pillow with a shoe stay, and Maira was up imitating you playing the viola, and like—

NS: It was the most insane thing that ever happened. Anyway, you are talented at getting people together.

NM: Yeah, and trying to have curatorial instincts I think is the right one. And you know, I think you must have found this as a violist, because there is not as much rep, you have to sort of invent the kind of fun projects that you want.

NS: Yeah. Part of the reason I play new music is because I was in a weekly studio class for six years—and let's just say that there is less standard viola rep than violin rep or piano rep or cello rep—and by the end of six years, I really, really knew those pieces, even pieces I hadn't played myself . . .

NM: [*Laughs.*] [*Waiter comes by.*] (Oh, Monkfish liver!)

NS: (Monkfish liver, here we go.) But what I was going to say is, "Okay, I'm done with this rep." I actually never played the Bartók Viola Concerto because I had heard it so many times by that point—

NM: Have you played the Walton?

NS: Yes, Walton I played freshman year. Anyway, so I started asking for other pieces because I wanted to—

NM: And you commissioned a lot of things that weren't just for solo viola. [*Eats a bite of food.*] (Oh, that is *der-liscious.*)

NS: (Yeah. I'm going to eat another one.)

NM: Um, but there's this sense in which you started inventing the projects you wanted to be involved in.

NS: When I was still in college.

NM: Right.

NS: And actually if I have any advice—whenever people say, "What's your advice for students," it really is: you have access to really talented people for free all the time; just do tons and tons of projects!

NM: Before they get expensive.

NS: And people *will* eventually get expensive.

NM: I mean, one of the interesting things about our collaborations is that we work together pretty much four times a month, and yet, it wasn't until this year that we figured out how to make a concerto happen.

NS: That's totally true!

NM: Which isn't happening for *two* years, which is really crazy.

NS: But we've been talking about that abstractly forever . . .

NM: Yeah, yeah, and I've had the opening written since like, 2003. But it's a funny thing because at school, as you said, it is free, and you can get away with weird stuff . . . And that's always the advice I give to young composers: "Find the people who will put up with you and who will answer your questions."

NS: And you were great, though. Nico, 100% when we started working together, was like, “Okay, so explain to me, so you’re tuned in fifths, so each one of your fingers is like a whole step or a half step,” and then he made a ruler with all the strings written on it and physically figured out how to do it.

NM: Yeah, because I was anxious about things being idiomatic, but not too idiomatic.

NS: Nico has a melodic writing style that is often based on fifths—fifth relationships, which can suck for string instruments because fifths are played by the same finger. However, you know what it doesn’t suck as much as? Is like, up-bow staccato. I mean, there are so many things that are hard on the violin, viola, and cello . . . that thing which people are like, “This is not idiomatic,” is still doable.

NM: You can make stuff unidiomatic, but it has to come not from an antagonistic relationship between composer and player, it has to come from, “I write something that musically I know needs to be there,” and not asking for it just to be a pain.

NS: Exactly. And so ultimately that was the relationship that we developed where, if something literally, really was not doable, I would have a conversation with Nico about [how] I understood why he wrote that, because it always had some musical function, and [I would suggest] some things I thought might solve that. And sometimes he would pick one of those and sometimes he wouldn’t. And then, you know, there were other things that were like, “This sucks, but I learned it,” and he’s like, “Great!”

NM: Like *Étude 1a* (ex. 2) is like that—

NS: It sucks, but I totally learned it, and now I can play it and it’s great.

AO: Xenakis talked about complexity and how he tried to write music that was on the verge of the impossible—in the hopes that the performer would then become hyper-involved as a creative problem solver in the piece, which also forces them into more of a compositional role as they try to figure out how idiomatically things are working . . .

Example 2. Nico Muhly, Étude 1a, one measure before figure 90.

The image displays a musical score for a string instrument, likely a violin, in treble clef. The score is divided into four staves. The first staff begins with a measure containing a whole rest, followed by a box labeled '90' above a sharp sign. The music then continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and rests. The dynamic marking 'mf-f' is present below the first staff. The second staff continues the melodic line with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff shows a continuation of the piece with various note values and rests. The fourth staff concludes the excerpt with a final note and a whole rest.

NS: You know what's interesting is that I think that is totally true in Xenakis's music, though I'm not sure it's true in Nico's music, because you never want things to sound . . .

NM: Hard.

NS: Hard. Although there are times in your music where I feel like feeling labor is good, but mostly those things are because I have to like, move up a ninth slowly. But a lot of your music, there are moments where things should feel facile. And actually, to watch you play piano is very demonstrative, and to watch you interact with other human beings is very demonstrative—I think a lot of your gestures come from you.

NM: Make it look easy is almost the thing. It's not always, "Make it look easy," it's something a little more complicated than that. It's like knowing how to chop an onion, just knowing how to do it. And then when you're actually doing it, it's crazy—it's crazy that it's happening, but, you know, it's a skill that you want to be able to do in a "let's not show off way."

NS: That is actually the crazy thing about learning hard music that you then have under your fingers. I was playing Daníel Bjarnasson's piece the other day, and I was like, "Okay, what I'm doing is nuts," but I don't even think about it—I don't think about what this run is anymore. And *Keep in Touch* is the same thing—there's some real passagework in there that I don't, like, think about anymore.

NM: And that's great; that's what you want.

AO: It becomes internalized.

NM: Right, and it doesn't matter that it's hard or easy or whatever. And interestingly, as the pieces that Nadia has played are done by other people, like when I hear other people do *Keep in Touch*, which is so crazy, it's, you know, sometimes they have a totally different relationship to the difficulty of it, and sometimes that ends up with a much more like, labored passagework, but also, what's the word? A

different itinerary through the hardness of it.

NS: My itinerary through that hardness is that there are weird vestiges of my initial climb or slog through it, so there are slides I did that I don't have to be doing, but I like showing my work, you know what I mean? And sometimes I show my work through that piece, and I think there is definitely a version of that piece—if I were to approach it now, and not when I was twenty-one, like I wonder what . . .

NM: You know it's interesting—I've always wondered that if some point we re-record it—should we make a tenth anniversary recording of *Keep in Touch*? [Laughs.]

[*Waiter comes by.*] (Oh what is happening? You're spoiling us with that uni. Where was that caught? Is that Santa Barbara? That is so good. This is gorgeous.)

NS: (Take its portrait!)



Nadia Sirota with a plate of uni

NM: (I'm gonna take its portrait. Nadia, this is so you, this little sardine.)

So the other sort of key thing that we should hit on which kind of goes back to everything, which is like, how have you branched out? Like you can't just commission pieces all the time. How have ACME and yMusic figured into your life as a chamber musician?

NS: Yeah. Exactly. I think it's a reality if you want to be a violist—unless you have a teaching job or a symphony orchestra position that is basically just really steady work—you have to cobble together a lot of things in order to make that happen. The thing that is most important to me is working with composers and commissioning new works and premiering those things. So that is my number one—you can't really make a living doing that—in fact, that has been something that for my entire life prior to like last year actually *cost* me money, whereas everything else made me money. And you know, you do it because you love it. That's turning around finally, which is great. But yeah, I teach, I have a radio show, and my chamber music groups are ACME and yMusic. ACME is a new-music ensemble that is expandable and contractible depending on the project. It is a very project-oriented group itself in a way that really resonates with me because every-

thing else that I do is project oriented. And yMusic is really, really comfortable in a lot of different scenarios, but that's a fixed group.

NM: Right. It's always the same thing, and it's a lot of under-loved instruments—or maybe just viola and trumpet.

NS: It's viola and trumpet and also clarinet and flute and violin and cello. But I love that group just because it's some of my favorite players I have ever worked with in my life, and we're doing creative things. The thing about yMusic is that in some ways we're behaving more like a band than a string quartet. We're trying to book venues that we can fill, the way bands book venues they think that they can fill, sell the number of tickets you think you can sell, get a guarantee from the presenter and do it in that manner where . . . [*waiter comes by*]. (Oh, fried oyster! Mmmm.)

NM: Right now we're all in a position to kind of choose how we make money. If you wanted to you could go teach full-time at MSM or whatever and one assumes to get paid that way—but actually, there's another way to do it that is a little bit more crab-wise—because you lose money on this thing and you gain money on that thing.

NS: Right. It involves a certain elasticity of credit, but it really does work.

NM: In the model of how bands work, like they lose money on tours but then they make money on festivals.

NS: On the other side of this, the sort of non-profit-y side, what's interesting is that there are those who are really excited by what people are doing to create new music and like, those are people you want to hit up



Members of the musical group yMusic; from left to right: Hideaki Aomori, Clarice Jensen, CJ Camerieri, Nadia Sirota, Alex Sopp, and Rob Moose (photo courtesy of Ilya Nikhamin)

for what really amounts to not very large sums of money. You know, the margins are pretty low, and if you're not uncomfortable asking people for money then you're in a reasonable place. There is a general discomfort asking people for money that you just have to get over. People need to give away money, they just need to.

AO: When you write for Nadia, how much of what you're writing is informed by your relationship with her?

NM: Almost all of it. But, you know, at this point there are new directions to be explored that I can start on my own. The third étude is a whole new idea, rhythmically for me . . .

NS: And it's weird—I like embarking on these strange paths.

NM: It is a strange path. And you know, *Period Instrument* (ex. 3) is kind of the first of my *Drones* pieces.

NS: And it's so great. It also took me probably like, three months to develop a version of that piece that I understood.

AO: A lot of your collaborations have been in the studio. How has recording technology influenced your attitude toward composing or performing?

NS: It started with “free money,” which comes from these projects Nico was doing in college—maybe doing instrumental music for a play or something like that where he would just call me to Looking Glass [Studio] and be like, “So check it out,” and write on a piece of manuscript paper the note C and

Example 3. Nico Muhly, *Period Instrument*, mm. 24–47.

The musical score for Example 3, Nico Muhly's *Period Instrument*, measures 24–47, is presented in a single system with five staves. The music is in 3/8 time and features a single melodic line. The first staff (measure 24) begins with a *mf* dynamic and a *respiratory* marking, followed by a *f* dynamic. The second staff includes the instruction "slowly incorporate vibrato". The third staff features a *sf* dynamic. The fourth staff continues the melodic line. The fifth staff (measure 46) begins with a *f* dynamic and a *sub. f* dynamic marking. The score includes various articulations such as slurs, accents, and breath marks, as well as dynamic markings like *mf*, *f*, *sf*, and *sub. f*.

then like, seven different variations and say like, “Start on beat two and play your phone number,” or whatever (ex. 4). There were a lot of games.

NM: On the spot games. It is sort of like clapping games or word games where it’s best done—I have a very strong belief with musicians’ ability to improvise within a structure. And then when I had Abby Fischer in the studio, I was like, “Okay, now say everywhere you ever lived,” you know, then that will have emotional content, whereas if she had thought about what she was going to say, that wouldn’t have worked. That piece turned into *Mothertongue*.

Example 4. An example of “free money” music by Nico Muhly

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a five-line staff. The title 'Free money' is written at the top. The notation consists of several notes on the staff, with some notes marked with a 'p' for piano. Below the staff, there are four numbered instructions:

- ① Notes in order, *ppp*
- ② Notes in any order, $n \leftarrow mf \rightarrow n$
- ③ Notes evenly paced @ $\downarrow 260$
- ④ pizz. out of order @ $\downarrow 296$

NS: Right. If you were like, “Homework assignment: think of everywhere you’ve ever lived and then sing it to me on notes,”—you don’t want that.

NM: You’ve developed a gradual, as we all have, fluency in the language of the studio, which is entirely different from the language of the concert hall and entirely different from the language of the practice room.

NS: And not something I learned in school at all.

AO: But the language of the recording studio for a

big-budget string quartet is identical to the language they would use in the concert hall; the performance style doesn’t necessarily change because the whole idea on classical recordings is to replicate the experience of the concert hall. But when you have a sensitive condenser mic all up in your face, picking up all of your burps and stuff, it’s like putting a magnifying glass on your sound and suggests a different way of playing.

NM: And that’s the crazy thing. *Keep in Touch* must have been the first time—

NS: *Keep in Touch* was the first time I was ever mic’d that closely—and I had no idea. I didn’t know that it was going to sound like that, and actually the first time I ever heard Valgeir’s recording of *Keep in Touch* that ended up being on Nico’s record, I was like, “I sound terrible!” I was so freaked out at the concept of me being mic’d that closely—I had no idea.

NM: It wasn’t just close . . .

NS: It was basically *in* my viola. That was an incredibly freeing moment for me. I listened to that recording maybe seven or eight times and was like, “You know what’s amazing?” What you can *hear*. It was really similar to my experience of actually playing it—from my perspective. And that’s not something that other people have access to. Being somebody who is somewhat of an expressive breather, for example—that’s not something you’d get necessarily in a concert hall, but really you do when you’re amplified. I now play close amplified a lot, and that’s definitely changed a lot of the way I play in a lot of respects. When we talk about recording-studio fluency, it’s also just knowing how to make sure you have edits covered—stuff like that, so you can really be a helpful person to your engineer. On this last record I just recorded, it had nothing to do with the way that a string quartet might be recorded. Hey, I think we should stop this because it’s getting kind of loud in here.

NM: Okay! What else is there—yeah, stay in school—

NS: Just meet people and have a nice time.

NM: Okay, bye.

Nico Muhly's viola compositions can be heard on Nadia Sirota's album First Things First (New Amsterdam, 2009), Nico Muhly's album Drones (Bedroom Community HVALUR16, 2012), and Nadia's new album Baroque (Bedroom Community HVALUR17, 2013). Sheet music can be purchased from G. Schirmer/ Chester Novello
http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2431&State_2905=2&composerId_2905=3071

Alexander Overington is a composer and producer specializing in a genre-bending approach to recorded music. A native of New York City, he holds dual degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and is on the faculty of Composition and Music Technology at California State Summer School for the Arts at CalArts.

Nico Muhly has composed a wide scope of work for ensembles, soloists, and organizations including the American Ballet Theater, American Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Chicago Symphony, Hilary Hahn, Gotham Chamber Opera, Music-Theatre

Group, New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Paris Opéra Ballet, The Royal Ballet, and the Seattle Symphony. Muhly has also lent his skills as performer, arranger, and conductor to Antony and the Johnsons, Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Doveman, Grizzly Bear, Jónsi of the band Sigur Rós, and Usher.

Nadia Sirota, "A stellar young violist who has served as muse to prominent composers" (The New York Times), is best known for her singular sound and expressive execution, coaxing solo works from the likes of Nico Muhly, Daniel Bjarnason, Judd Greenstein, Marcos Balter, and Missy Mazzoli. Her debut album First Things First was released in 2009 on New Amsterdam Records and named a record of the year by The New York Times, and her sophomore album, Baroque, will be released in March on Bedroom Community and New Amsterdam. Nadia also hosts a radio show on WQXR's New Music radio stream, Q2Music, for which she was awarded the 2010 ASCAP Deems Taylor Award in Radio and Internet Broadcasting. She received her undergraduate and master degrees from the Juilliard School and since 2007 has been on faculty at the Manhattan School of Music in their Contemporary Performance Program.



Nadia Sirota performs with Nico Muhly at a December 7, 2012, concert (photo courtesy of Peter Butler)

THE VIOLA IN BERLIOZ'S *HAROLD IN ITALY*



Hector Berlioz

by Amanda Wilton

Hector Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* depicts Byron's anti-hero Harold imprisoned in a life of Romantic isolation. While Berlioz did not explicitly use Byron's epic-length poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as a program for the work, he referenced the title character in order to draw a connection between the literary work and his own identification with the "melancholy dreamer" in the music.¹ Berlioz chose the viola to embody the title character Harold not only because of the instrument's distinctive melancholy sound, but also because the cultural identity associated with the viola and viola players of the nineteenth century ideally personified the character of Harold as distant, isolated, neglected, and the outsider of the orchestra.

After acquiring a Stradivarius viola, Nicolò Paganini asked Berlioz to write a viola work for him to play. Berlioz attempted to combine this request with his new concept for a viola solo with an orchestral accompaniment, which would be written in a way as to "leave the orchestra full freedom of action."² The new approach resulted in a work that was closer to the symphonic genre than that of the viola concerto Paganini was expecting. According to Berlioz, when the violinist saw how little the soloist had to play, he abandoned the project.³ Free to do as he liked, Berlioz carried out this new idea of a symphonic depiction of scenes of Italy with the isolated, Romantic wanderer Harold as a solo viola.

While the unique genre of *Harold in Italy* raises many performance practice issues, this article will focus only on those associated with performing the viola solo and how these issues are important for a historically informed performance. Discussion will focus on the placement of the soloist in relation to the orchestra, as well as who played the solo part during Berlioz's lifetime and who typically plays it today; stylistic concerns in relation to the solo part and an examination of the role of the viola as a solo instrument in the nineteenth century; and the performance of the viola solo with piano, either the transcription by Franz Liszt or the piano reduction by Hugh Macdonald in the *New Berlioz Edition*. Finally, this article will explore the performance of the "Paganini version," an optional passage in the first movement published in the *New Berlioz Edition* and recorded by violist David Aaron Carpenter. By looking at these issues, as well as modern conventions, violists interested in performing this work will gain a historic perspective on these performance issues.

Placement of the Soloist

Harold in Italy is scarcely known or obsolete in the symphonic repertoire. In Berlioz's time it was

performed quite often: annually in Paris with Chrétien Urhan as soloist, and Berlioz included the piece in his tours. Today, the work ranks as a masterpiece with the *Symphonie fantastique*; yet the score's unique genre as a *non-concerto* presents performance challenges, usually resulting in an awkward stage position for the soloist.

The issue of the soloist's placement should be straightforward, as is indicated by Berlioz's instruction in the score at the first entrance of the solo viola: "The player must stand in the fore-ground, near to the public and isolated from the orchestra."⁴ However, when the soloist has long passages of rest, the very ones that caused Paganini to discount the work, this position becomes awkward. While most contemporary violists sit on a chair or even join the viola section during certain long passages, other orchestras and soloists handle the issue more creatively.

In 2008, the Minnesota Orchestra's clever theatrics emphasized the twofold personification of the solo viola as Harold and the orchestra as the site of the scenes of Italy. As reported in the orchestra's blog, their principal violist, Tom Turner, played the solo part from several different positions throughout the work.⁵ He began the first movement as Berlioz instructed, in front of the orchestra in the typical concerto position. However, for his entrance in the second movement, "Pilgrim's March," he appeared in one of the side balconies overlooking the audience. The rest of the performance continued in this way with "Harold" appearing in different locations throughout the concert hall, emphasizing the spatial relationship between Harold and Italy and Berlioz's idea of Harold as an observer. The reception, at least from the few comments on the blog, was generally good, demonstrating that the audience supported these theatrics in the concert hall.

Another example of a distinctive staging of the work occurred at a performance of the Liszt transcription by violist Avishai Chameides and pianist Tomasz Kamieniak. In this "quarter-staged" performance, the soloist "wandered" to the stage just before the first entrance of Harold.⁶ The violist remained in the conventional sonata position throughout the remain-

der of the piece until the longest passage of rest in the fourth movement, "Orgy of Brigands." At this normally awkward moment for the violist, who must stand with nothing to do for several minutes, Chameides slowly moved to a new position at the far end of the stage. It is from this position that he played the final statement of Harold and wandered out through an open door behind him while the pianist continued.

This quasi-staged performance by Chameides and Kamieniak seems unobtrusive and less distracting than the Minnesota staging described earlier. The violist assumed the persona of the wandering character Harold, just as Berlioz described in his *Memoirs* and when writing to Liszt about the piano transcription:

The viola should not feature in the piano arrangement except in the manner in which it appears in the score. The piano represents the orchestra, while the viola should remain apart and confine itself to its sentimental rambling. Everything else is outside its field, it observes the action but does not take part in it.⁷

Chameides's slow, wandering movements and changes in position exemplify Berlioz's statement about the piece exactly. Berlioz's statement to Liszt also confirms his idea that the viola *is* Harold and the orchestra (or piano) *is* Italy. If Berlioz's instruction in the score was to be ignored, this literary parallel would be missed.

Since Berlioz only indicates that the violist should stand in front of and *apart from* the orchestra at the first entrance of the solo viola, there is some flexibility in how this work can be performed. The violist could play from several different positions as a theatrical interpretation of the literary element and the character of Harold, the outsider—in contrast to the most common option today, standing in front of the orchestra for the solo passages and sitting as a vocal soloist would do with a symphony during long orchestral interludes. An interesting compromise between these two interpretations would be to "wander" on and off stage as the violist did with the Liszt version. All three of these options for the position or

semi-staging of the solo viola would seem to be historically acceptable interpretations for the work based on Berlioz's instructions and comments.

Choice of Soloist

Another performance practice issue that arises because of *Harold's* unique genre is the question of who plays the solo viola part. For a concerto, modern conventions typically involve the hiring of a famous soloist to perform the solo part with an orchestra. However, *Harold* is not a concerto, but a symphony. The convention for symphonic works with major solo parts or instrumental personifications of "character" roles, such as Strauss's *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, normally calls for the principal string player to perform the part.

Today, both options for choice of soloist are feasible: it is not unusual to see a famous viola soloist perform the *Harold* part, such as Lawrence Power's performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in January 2012, but an orchestra more commonly features its own principal violist. However, in Berlioz's time, the choice of using the principal violist was often overruled in favor of the concertmaster, who would reserve the first right to perform as soloist.

In the nineteenth century, the *Harold* solo was often played by a violinist. At that time, to be a viola specialist was practically unheard of, and many viola solos were performed by violin soloists. As Maiko Kawabata observes, "There was no viola faculty at the Paris Conservatoire during Berlioz's lifetime, and no appointment made until as late as 1894."⁸ Moreover, the viola players in the orchestra were usually selected from the worst players of the second violin section, or from those rejected entirely from the orchestra. Berlioz lamented this neglect of the "noble instrument" in his *Treatise on Orchestration* and explained that "when a player could not manage to keep his place as a violinist he went over to the viola, with the result that viola players could play neither the violin nor the viola."⁹

Kawabata asserts that in order to be a viola soloist in the nineteenth century, one must have first secured a

position as a violin soloist, as was the case with many of the musicians who played the solo part of *Harold in Italy* during Berlioz's time.¹⁰ The *New Berlioz Edition of Harold in Italy* includes an appendix that lists eighty performances of the work during Berlioz's lifetime; the vast majority of the soloists were primarily known as violinists.¹¹ There are a few names that are recognizable today, such as Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814–1865), Ferdinand David (1810–1873), and even Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), who performed the solo with Liszt conducting. Karl Müller (1797–1873) performed the solo several times in Brunswick with Berlioz conducting. He was the concertmaster for the duke's orchestra and the first violinist of the Müller Brothers Quartet.¹² The fact that he played the *Harold* solo—and not his brother, the violist of the quartet—further emphasizes the notion that viola players were not considered soloists and ranked below a violin player when selecting a soloist.

Stylistic Considerations

As Berlioz's own descriptions in his *Memoirs* previously revealed, *Harold in Italy* was originally composed for Paganini.¹³ However, when Paganini aban-



Chrétien Urhan (Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Musique, Est. UrhanC.001)

done the project, Berlioz turned to Chrétien Urhan to play the solo viola part. Urhan premiered the work and performed *Harold in Italy* for many years with Berlioz conducting. A violinist in the Paris Opéra Orchestra, Urhan was known as a fine viola player and a devout Catholic. He did not have a reputation as a stellar player or virtuoso but was a solid performer.¹⁴ Several composers at the time, including Giacomo Meyerbeer and Rodolphe Kreutzer, composed special viola and viola d'amore solos in their operas for him to play.¹⁵

It was said that “Urhan’s persona as a performer was closely linked with the solo viola’s characterization as Harold.”¹⁶ The violist championed Berlioz’s work and, as the final part of the discussion will show, embodied the ideal persona for the character of the piece. Berlioz thought highly of Urhan’s manner of playing *Harold* saying he “always gave to that difficult part such melancholy poesy, such sweet color, such religious reverie.”¹⁷

Closely associated with who is playing the solo part are additional performance practice issues that concern style. For a historically informed performance, the accounts of how Chrétien Urhan played, and more specifically, the fact that Berlioz approved of his manner of playing *Harold in Italy*, should be considered and should influence the broad stylistic practices of the viola solo. Critics always described Urhan as the “veritable Harold” and the “Byron of the orchestra.”¹⁸ It was also noted that his well-known dual personifications of religious piety and viola “unvirtuosity” “melded into a unified performance persona” in his performances of *Harold*.¹⁹

Urhan’s style and Berlioz’s choice of the viola as the musical embodiment of the wanderer Harold directly correspond to the cultural identity of the viola and viola players of the nineteenth century. As Kawabata states, “The very idea of the viola’s voice in 1830s Parisian musical culture carried an aura of inconspicuous, understated individuality.”²⁰ Since Berlioz chose this misunderstood instrument to represent his antithetical hero, the style of performance should reflect both the literary character and the instrument’s own isolated character.

In addition to the accounts that Berlioz preferred Urhan’s melancholy and unvirtuosic style for his anti-hero, there is ample evidence in the score to support this idea of style. Besides Berlioz’s use of the non-concerto genre, the general lack of passagework for the viola makes an unvirtuosic style of performance essential. The usual expectations for a concerto are that the soloist is the virtuoso and the hero, venerated by the audience.²¹ *Harold in Italy* does not meet those expectations. The work is not a virtuoso showpiece for the viola, but it is a generic innovation by Berlioz used to highlight the instrument’s beautiful and characteristic melancholy sound. Both Berlioz’s choice of the viola and the literary reference to Byron’s character support the stylistic choice of the performer to exploit the distinctive voice of the viola as well as the isolated nature of Harold.

Editions with Piano

Harold in Italy owed at least some of its success during the nineteenth century to Franz Liszt, who supported his colleague not only with his essay of 1855,

Example 1. Hector Berlioz, *Harold in Italy* (Liszt transcription), *movt. III, mm. 1–31* (viola part).

“Berlioz and his Harold Symphony,” but also with his transcription of the work for viola and piano in 1837. Liszt’s viola part follows Berlioz’s original almost exactly, except in the third movement, “Serenade,” where the viola takes the clarinet parts as a drone for the opening thirty-one bars (ex. 1) and in the return of the same material in measures 136–66.

It is implied in a letter from Berlioz that Liszt wanted to add more music for the violist to play. In their correspondence, however, Berlioz insisted that Liszt keep the viola part just as isolated from the piano as it is in the orchestral version, writing, “Don’t you think the part you give to the viola, being more extensive than the part in the score, changes the physiognomy of the work?”²² Here again is further evidence for the physical separation between the viola and the orchestra, as well as the violist’s style of performance emulating the isolated character Harold, the observer, and not a chamber music partner. As with many of Liszt’s orchestral transcriptions for piano, *Harold in Italy* is a handful for the pianist, and with so little for the violist to do, the work is slightly awkward in performance.

If musicians choose to perform the viola and piano version, the Liszt transcription nonetheless seems more appropriate on a recital program than the piano reduction by Hugh Macdonald in the *New Berlioz Edition*. The purpose of this reduction, according to Macdonald, is to assist violists preparing for a performance with orchestra.²³ Also, since *Harold in Italy* is neither a concerto nor a sonata and does not aim to feature the viola part specifically as would be the case in those genres, Macdonald’s piano reduction does not serve its purpose in public performance. The Liszt transcription, on the other hand, exemplifies the contrast between the virtuosity of the orchestration and the simplicity and isolation of the solo viola. This contrast offers the audience a

more interesting and colorful hearing as well as a more faithful narrative of Berlioz’s literary intent associated with the work.

The Paganini Version

The newest issue to address regarding the viola solo of *Harold in Italy* is the twenty-two-measure episode of Paganini-style passagework for the viola from the original version, which was probably written for the violinist.²⁴ After Paganini abandoned the project, however, Berlioz revised this passage and omitted the virtuosic variation on the Harold theme, reducing it to a simpler statement in octaves. In his *Memoirs*, Berlioz explained his new approach to the work after Paganini’s refusal of the solo part: “Realizing that my scheme would never suit him, I set to work to carry it out with a different emphasis and without troubling myself any more about how to show off the viola in a brilliant light.”²⁵

Since 2001, Macdonald’s piano reduction in the *New Berlioz Edition* has made this version available. This score and part format includes the “alternate version” of measures 73 to 94 of the first movement as an *ossia* passage in the viola part (ex. 2).²⁶ By printing this version above the definitive viola part, the editor makes it a more accessible alternative for violists to play. Without knowing much about the historic background of the work, violists may choose this optional passage instead of the version Berlioz included in the final draft. The choice of performing the Paganini version for these measures is problematic since it mixes a draft version with the definitive Berlioz text.

In August 2011, a recording was released by violist David Aaron Carpenter with the Helsinki Philharmonic conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy, which incorporates this alternative passage. While the Macdonald edition acknowledges the passage as

Example 2. Hector Berlioz, *Harold in Italy* (“Paganini version” passage), *mouv. I*, *mm.* 92–94 (viola part).



“rejected by Berlioz” with an asterisk in the viola part,²⁷ the Carpenter and Ashkenazy recording seems to endorse the version by saying their interpretation “features a more virtuoso soloist part originally written for Paganini’s execution of this movement.”²⁸ While Carpenter and Ashkenazy have thoughtfully paired this version of Berlioz’s work with Paganini’s own viola “concerto,” or showpiece—*Sonata per la Gran Viola*—the Paganini “episode” does not quite suit the rest of the symphony. Kawabata identifies several elements Berlioz uses in order to negate the concerto genre and any virtuosic expectations, which include the viola’s “lack of flashy passagework,” Berlioz’s choice of viola, placement of the violist, as well as the disappearance of Harold in the final movement.²⁹ While Carpenter’s performance is a welcome addition to the list of distinguished recordings of *Harold*, the passage sounds out of place in the context of the entire work and seems to undermine Berlioz’s final intentions for an *unvirtuosic*, *non-concerto* for the viola.

Another reason not to play this Paganini version in a full performance of the work is the unchanging nature of Berlioz’s Harold. The simple eight-bar melodic figure that represents Harold at the first entrance of the solo viola returns throughout all the movements of the symphony. Berlioz explains in his *Memoirs* that, unlike the *idée fixe* of *Symphonie fantastique*, which keeps “obtruding like an obsessive idea” and adapts to the various scenes, the cyclical Harold theme is never altered.³⁰ The solo viola is to be involved “like an actual person, retaining the same character throughout.”³¹ Harold’s isolation and melancholy personality never change; only the settings change with the different scenes of Italy. Playing the flashy Paganini version instead of the simple Harold theme in octaves would be going against the composer’s wishes to depict the simplicity and unchanging nature of his Romantic wanderer. Perhaps a compromise would be to play this excerpt as an encore after a performance of the definitive Berlioz version, or as an example in a lecture recital about the genesis of the symphony.

Conclusion

While there are many performance practice issues associated with *Harold in Italy*, the most relevant issues to assist a violist’s performance of the solo part include the placement of the soloist, whether an orchestra’s principal violist or a guest artist plays the solo part, the importance of embodying the style and character of Harold, and the knowledge of the different versions available, including the Liszt transcription and the Macdonald piano reduction, which contains the Paganini version. Many other issues are associated with the work that would offer yet more historic perspective in performance; however, these elements primarily concern the orchestra. Therefore, further research would be necessary in exploring performance practice issues, including the use of period instruments, which would affect the orchestral color of the scenes of Italy; instrumental variants, such as the use of cornets and ophicleide; and an investigation of the various manuscript sources and early editions, with their potentially revealing information about tempo and metronome markings, which may change the way the work is performed.

The association of Paganini with *Harold in Italy* seems to have overshadowed the literary program, the work’s unusual generic character, and the viola’s personification of the outsider. This connection should not influence style or other issues of performance practice. Instead, Berlioz’s literary reference should enable the performer to explore creative staging and placement of the soloist. The unusual genre of *Harold in Italy* provokes many of these issues, which should be handled just as uniquely in order to realize Berlioz’s ingenious negation of the concerto genre. The clarification of some of these performance practice issues by consulting historic evidence will hopefully encourage both violists and music directors to program *Harold in Italy* more often for live performances.

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Notes

- ¹ Hector Berlioz, *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, trans. David Cairns (New York: Knopf, 2002), 216.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ "L'exécutant doit être placé sur l'avant-scène, près du public et isolé de l'orchestre." Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique and Harold in Italy in Full Score*, ed. Charles Malherbe and Felix Weingartner (New York: Dover, 1984), 151.
- ⁵ Sam Bergman, "Harold in the Balcony," *Inside the Classics, Minnesota Orchestra Blog*, posted November 28, 2008, <http://insidetheclassics.mymnnesotaorchestra.org/2008/11/harold-in-the-balcony-2/> (accessed December 30, 2012).
- ⁶ Avishai Chameides and Tomasz Kamieniak, "Liszt/Berlioz Harold in Italy 1st Movt. part 1 (Harold in the Mountains)," online video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsOl6nCbBhk> (accessed December 30, 2012).
- ⁷ Quoted in Paul Banks and Hugh Macdonald, fore-

- word to *Harold en Italie*, by Hector Berlioz, vol. 17 of *Hector Berlioz: New Edition of the Complete Works* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), x.
- ⁸ Maiko Kawabata, “The Concerto that Wasn’t: Paganini, Urhan and *Harold in Italy*,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 1 (June 2004): 94.
- ⁹ Hector Berlioz, *Berlioz’s Orchestration Treatise*, trans. Hugh Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35.
- ¹⁰ Kawabata, 94.
- ¹¹ Hector Berlioz, *Harold en Italie*, ed. Paul Banks and Hugh Macdonald, vol. 17 of *Hector Berlioz: New Edition of the Complete Works* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), 241.
- ¹² Lynda MacGregor, “Müller,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 17:371.
- ¹³ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 215.
- ¹⁴ Kawabata, 97.
- ¹⁵ Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola* (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1980), 204.
- ¹⁶ Kawabata, 95.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in Kawabata, 95.
- ¹⁸ Quoted in Kawabata, 95. Also quoted in Riley, 205.
- ¹⁹ Kawabata, 68.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.
- ²² Quoted in Banks and Macdonald, x.
- ²³ Hugh Macdonald, foreword to *Harold en Italie*, by Hector Berlioz, piano reduction (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), iii.
- ²⁴ Beginning in measure 73 of the first movement.
- ²⁵ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 216.
- ²⁶ Hector Berlioz, *Harold en Italie*, piano reduction by Hugh Macdonald (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), viola part, 2–3.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ²⁸ Liner notes for David Aaron Carpenter (viola), with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy, Overture to *Béatrice et Bénédict*, op. 27 and *Harold in Italy*, op. 16, by Hector Berlioz and *Sonata per la Gran Viola e Orchestra*, by Nicolò Paganini, Ondine ODE 1188-2, 2011, compact disc.
- ²⁹ Kawabata, 67–68.
- ³⁰ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 216.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- Amanda Wilton is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in viola performance at the University of Houston’s Moores School of Music with Wayne Brooks, Principal Violist of the Houston Symphony. In her secondary area of music history, she has researched several topics under the guidance of Dr. Paul Bertagnolli. Amanda holds degrees from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the University of Maryland, and the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain, where she studied with the Casals Quartet as a Fulbright Researcher.*

FORWARD MOTION: TEACHING PHRASING USING MARCEL TABUTEAU'S NUMBER SYSTEM

by Joyce Y. Chan

Marcel Tabuteau was a French oboist who played with the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1915–1954 and is credited as being the father of American oboe playing. In addition to a successful performing career, he also imparted his knowledge of musicality and expression onto the students of the woodwinds and strings classes at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he taught many up-and-coming musicians, including violist Karen Tuttle.¹ A student of Karen Tuttle's once commented that hardly a single lesson went by without her telling him something that Tabuteau had once told her.² Tabuteau left a strong impression on Tuttle, and his unique approach to teaching the art of phrasing has had a lasting impact on the succeeding generations of musicians.

The ability to convey emotion and expression in one's playing is sometimes considered a natural talent. Many teachers have the tools to teach mechanical technique on their instruments, using various scales and *étude* books and drills with metronomes and tuners. But they often find it more challenging to teach a student how to play musically. There is a common belief that music, which provides so much pleasure, cannot require so much thought and that musicians must be naturally talented to convincingly emote feelings in their playing.³ In a departure to this belief, Marcel Tabuteau developed a systematic approach to teaching phrasing using various numbering systems. His method was not limited to the oboe or even to other wind instruments, and he would often refer to playing techniques of string players and vocalists, proving his method could be just as effective on any instrument. When giving an oboe lesson, Tabuteau would often relate his teaching to string playing, describing how phrases could be shaped using the idea of the natural crescendo of an up bow, which prepared and led to the finality of

the arrival of the down bow.⁴ He believed that up and down bows were analogous to inhaling and exhaling, which allowed music to breathe and have life.⁵ Using numbers, Tabuteau taught students how to give music life, providing a system that encouraged forward motion. There are four main numbering systems that Tabuteau developed for his students to consider in deciding how to phrase a musical line: motion numbers, scaling numbers, rhythmic numbers, and phrasing numbers.⁶ Each of Tabuteau's numbering systems can be readily applied to the standard viola repertoire, and this article provides a general introduction to these systems with practical applications in viola teaching and performance.

Scaling Numbers

Scaling numbers represent the most basic form of Tabuteau's numbering systems, with the purpose of developing levels of intensity within a held note or scale. This method is essentially a tool to develop dynamic range as a way to intensify a line. Although increased dynamics is not synonymous with increased intensity, this is still a good exercise to practice when these two conditions are directly related. In practicing ascending and descending scales from the first to fifth scale degrees, one would start at a lower intensity on the first scale degree and gradually increase until reaching the fifth scale degree, decreasing intensity as one descended down back to the first scale degree (ex. 1). For wind players, Tabuteau insisted on the breath following the climax of the scale, after the first beat of a measure, to eliminate the unnecessary break that may coincide with the appearance of a bar line.⁷ As a violist, where a physical breath is unrequired to phrase, one might practice these scales of five, nine, thirteen, or seventeen notes by using one bow ascending, including the top note, and then another bow descending and then again with separate bows. In both instances,

Example 1. A five-note scale passage using Tabuteau's scaling numbers.



one increases the intensity levels as the numbers increase and decreases the intensity levels as the numbers decrease.

As scales are the foundation of how tonal music has developed, there are many examples in which scaling numbers can be applied. One example of where this can be applied is in Hoffmeister's Viola Concerto in D Major (ex. 2). In the first movement, beginning with the pickup to measure 48, the number "1" is assigned to the lowest note, d, and as the line ascends to the c-sharp", the numbers successively rise to the number "14" and then decrease as the line descends to the a'.

might assume to number the sixteenth notes in each beat "1-2-3-4," to correspond with the first, second, third, and fourth sixteenth note of the beat. But Tabuteau believed that a group was not complete until the next beat had been achieved, or at least implied.¹⁰ Therefore, he assigned the numbers 1, 1-2-3-4 to five consecutive sixteenth notes, including the first note of the next beat, thus making that note of the highest intensity, implying the forward motion *through* the beats (ex. 3). In this case, Tabuteau, whose first instrument was actually the violin,¹¹ might have also described this forward motion using the string bowing "down, up-up-up-down," where a down bow would signify

Example 2. Franz Hoffmeister, Viola Concerto in D Major, movt. I: Allegro, mm. 47-48.



Example 3. A scalar passage using Tabuteau's motion numbers.



Motion Numbers

Motion numbers are the most commonly known application of Tabuteau's number system, which display forward motion within small subdivisions of the beat.⁸ This involves grouping notes together, and within each group assigning ascending numbers to imply forward direction toward the highest number in the group. These numbers show the comparative strength or intensity of the notes. The key to this method is how Tabuteau grouped notes: Tabuteau believed that the beaming of notes together could cause an unnatural grouping of notes.⁹ In a measure of straight sixteenth notes in common time, one

an arrival of the next beat, and the up prepared and anticipated that arrival.¹²

In the second movement of Telemann's Viola Concerto in G Major, the pickup to measure 33 through measure 40 is an excellent example to illustrate the application of Tabuteau's motion numbers to assist with phrasing (ex. 4). The eighth-note pickup is labeled "1," which directly leads to the "2," which is the downbeat of measure 33 and the destination of the pickup note. This also indicates that the pickup g leads and belongs to the downbeat of measure 33 and is not a continuation of the phrase that ended in measure 32. The second sixteenth note

Phrasing Numbers

Phrasing numbers were used by Tabuteau to show the large-scale view of phrasing. So far, Tabuteau's applications of numbers have focused on small subdivisions within a beat. But his numbers function differently in phrasing numbers. Phrasing numbers are always consecutive, and if a number is repeated, it means that the two consecutive notes with the same number are part of different phrase groups. The numbers must be sequential to be part of the same phrase group. This differs from the rhythmic grouping, in which the appearance of a high number immediately followed by "1" just implies the first note of the next group. Low numbers also do not imply low volume, such as with scaling numbers. Phrasing numbers assist in creating a sense of proportion throughout a line. The use of repeated numbers creates "inner intensity" of a motif. One can specify on a micro level various phrase groups and then piece together these smaller groups for a macro view of the line.¹⁶

In the first movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, we can see how phrasing numbers could be applied (ex. 7). The appearance of the sequence at the beginning of the first movement provides an example in which consecutive statements of the motif feature consecutive numbers, but within the motif, there is also intensity built as it is divided into smaller fragments with repeated numbers.

Taking a step back, it is important to remember what elements are in place to affect the intensity of sound on the viola. It is through the dynamic relationship among bow pressure, speed, and contact point in which string players adjust intensity. In reference to his number system, Tabuteau said, "Progression of numbers is not exactly a crescendo or a diminuendo. It is, rather, a scaling of color. To

understand this point, think of the bowing distribution on the violin in the space between the fingerboard and the bridge."¹⁷ Tabuteau was referring to the importance of the right proportions of sound quality factors when considering intensity using his number system. In Robert Dew's article, "In Response to Instinct—Karen Tuttle's Insights into the Coordinated Action—Its Mechanisms, Articulation, and Prerequisites," the author writes:

Marcel Tabuteau . . . made the analogy that merely playing louder was like racing a car engine in neutral; one makes a lot of noise without getting anywhere. This "getting somewhere," this moving forward or pulling back in excitement, is not then simply a matter of "louder" and "softer" or even "faster" and "slower"—although these variants may be simultaneously involved. As intensity builds to its peak, bow speed is decreasing and bow pressure increasing; relaxation in intensity occurs as a result of a speeding up of the bow and decreasing of pressure. . . . Coordination, through its effect on bow speed and pressure, therefore, regulates sound intensity (and small dynamics) so as to reveal an excitation-relaxation wave or pulsation.¹⁸

Again, we see how it is important for a violist to weigh the variables that affect intensity on the instrument. Dew's article also reflects on how Karen Tuttle adapted the teaching of Tabuteau by applying it to the physicality of playing the viola in her Coordination Technique. This is one extrapolation of Tabuteau's number system that has been valuable for many performing violists and teachers.

To introduce the principal form of Tabuteau's motion numbers, violists can apply each variable (pressure, speed, and contact point) individually to an étude, such as Kreutzer's Étude No. 2, and alter the intensity of the variable by the motion number

Example 7. J. S. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, movt. I, mm. 1–3 (viola I part).

1, 1 2 3 2 1 2, 2 3 4 3 2 3, 3 4, 4 5, 5 6, 6 7, 7 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

⁷ Ibid., 72–73.

⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁹ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹¹ Storch, *Marcel Tabuteau*, 8.

¹² Ibid. See also McGill, *Sound in Motion*, 40.

¹³ McGill, *Sound in Motion*, 79.

¹⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹⁸ Robert Dew, “In Response to Instinct—Karen Tuttle’s Insights into the Coordinated Action—Its Mechanisms, Articulation, and Prerequisites,” *Journal of the American Viola Society* 18, no. 1 (2002): 52.

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Joyce Chan is currently working on her Doctor of Musical Arts in Viola Performance degree at the University of Cincinnati’s College-Conservatory of Music. She received her Master of Arts in Viola Performance and Bachelor of Music in Viola Performance degrees from New York University. An active teacher, Ms. Chan is on the faculties of CCM’s Preparatory Department, Wyoming (OH) Fine Arts Center, and Camp Encore/Coda.

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THE ECLECTIC VIOLIST

THE CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP VIOLIST

by David Wallace

The biographies of America's great jazz, country, and pop musicians reveal two common paths to becoming a seasoned performer and improviser:

- 1) Play countless club dates and dances
- 2) Be a church musician

Artists like Miles Davis, Willie Nelson, and Whitney Houston did both.

While many of us play a seasonal *Messiah* or *Kol Nidrei*, growing numbers of violists have found opportunities for creative, versatile, advanced musicianship within today's Christian church—meet the contemporary worship violist!

Typically, worship violists perform with a band that leads congregational singing on Sunday mornings, in addition to providing music for seasonal dramatic productions and outreach events. While contemporary Christian praise songs and choruses form the core repertoire of most worship bands, a typical week's set list can run the gamut from classical to country, Latin to jazz, rock to hymnody, and gospel to hip-hop.

The typical worship violist is fluent in all contemporary styles, not only as a player, but also as a listener, composer, and arranger. In every style, the worship violist must be able to improvise solos, harmonies, and rhythmic accompaniments from a piano-vocal score or chord chart. Well-versed in transposition and playing by ear, contemporary worship violists embody numerous skills expected of a Kapellmeister in Bach and Handel's day.

The viola's range provides tremendous flexibility within a worship team. The violist has the freedom to harmonize or to provide counterpoint above or

below most singers. Similarly, if the congregation needs help finding the melody, the viola can double it in unison or with octaves. Double-stops can provide the illusion of a string section and can fill out missing vocal harmonies. If a team lacks a rhythm guitarist, the viola's riffing and grooving capabilities provide the rhythmic backbone. In rare instances, a violist can even cover bass lines. In other words, the diverse roles a violist enjoys in a string quartet lend themselves naturally to the praise band.

Of course, classical skills and repertoire have their place in a church, too. The worship violist may be the person who introduces congregants to masterworks by Bach, Brahms, Hindemith, Pärt, Gubaidulina, or any number of composers whom we typically program in recital. Classical repertoire is particularly suited for preludes, offertories, and moments of prayer or repentance.

On a more metaphysical and spiritual level, pastors frequently compare the role of the worship team to the priestly role of the Levites, the Hebrew tribe dedicated to temple service and music in biblical times. Taking a cue from Psalm 22:3,¹ congregational worship serves to usher in presence of God. For this reason, serving on a worship team brings the expectation of maturity, personal accountability to pastors and fellow team members, an active devotional life, and a high and often clearly stated standard of conduct.

While some congregations do pay their worship teams, the vast majority of musicians volunteer their time and talents. In working with amateurs,² professionals on a worship team must apply tremendous patience in bridging the gaps between diverse instrumental skills, degrees of musical literacy,³ and comprehensive knowledge.⁴

Worship violists require strong interpersonal skills, in addition to maturity. The blunt or impassioned

discourse that feels comfortable and normal in a professional chamber ensemble can easily bruise fragile egos, sensitive souls, and team members who are insecure about their musicianship.

Meanwhile, congregants are seldom shy about voicing their musical likes and dislikes. Today's multi-genre, multi-cultural worship styles can provoke strong reactions. People may lack knowledge or tact when expressing their distaste for efforts to be inclusive (or when demanding greater inclusivity). By the same token, love, praise, forgiveness, acceptance, and appreciation for musicians flows infinitely more freely than it does in the typical professional environment.

To bring a personal face and voice to the topic, I would like you to meet pioneering contemporary worship violist Diana Christine Clemons. Diana began her professional career as a section violist in the Boise Philharmonic at age fourteen and current-

ly performs as a soloist, chamber musician, and Principal Violist of the Coeur d'Alene Symphony and Chamber Orchestra. A rancher with a therapeutic riding center for special-needs children, Diana has served as a church musician for twenty-five years and currently performs as a worship violist at Real Life Ministries in Post Falls, Idaho.

Diana Christine Clemons: Living Life in a Giant Cadenza

DW: How did you become a contemporary worship violist?

DCC: I have been serving as a worship musician since I graduated from Juilliard in 1987. After I graduated, I taught piano and strings privately and gigged for a living, but I loved playing in a Christian rock band and on my worship team at the Aurora Vineyard Church in Aurora, Colorado. I love God, and I love to play the viola; it was inevitable!



Diana Christine Clemons

I have been extremely fortunate. I currently play at Real Life Ministries, a non-denominational mega-church that has 8,000 members. We have five services every weekend. Because everyone expects me to improvise, I never have to play the same thing twice.

DW: Describe your role as the violist of your worship team.

DCC: I usually take on the role of soloist/lead instrument when I play, even though I can chord and harmonize on the viola as well. The team that I play on currently does not have a lead guitar, so I take all of the lead spots. I also play melodies whenever there is an instrumental interlude. I am fortunate to be able to play by ear; so, when there is something extravagant to be played, I usually get to play it!

DW: How do you balance solo viola with a contemporary worship band?

DCC: I am amplified. I have used everything from a lapel microphone strapped around my viola to every form of stand or boom microphone. Currently I am using Headway's The Band Violin Pickup System, which straps around the belly of my instrument and is completely size-adjustable.

DW: What are some of the challenges (musical, personal, or otherwise) of being a contemporary worship violist?

DCC: Occasionally someone ignorant tells a viola joke . . . but they only do it once.

DW: What skills outside of the standard classical strings training have you developed, and how have they impacted your performing career?

DCC: In retrospect, it is interesting to me that everything in my formal education was about preparing me to play in a viola section, but I never really wanted an orchestral career—I just wanted to be a really great player. At Juilliard, I remember standing in the hall practicing quietly while waiting to go into an ensemble rehearsal. The conductor walked up to me and very rudely snapped at me, “Why are you practicing Bach? You are a violist—you should be practicing orchestra parts!”

I am a theory fanatic. I teach basic jazz chording and improvisation on the piano, and I am also a published writer and composer. I have a production that I do as a fund-raiser for local charities where I play a dozen or so different styles of music; I play that show all over the place.

My life has experienced some drastic changes that I could not control. Those things always impact our plans, but not our callings. I have a twenty-year-old son who has autism. It has caused me to stay home a lot, so I have continued to study even though I am no longer a student.

Honestly, there are very few venues that call for middle-aged solo viola players, so in the past few years, I have just had to create places to play. Last month I played improvised tango music for a hip-hop CD. It was a blast! I have even taught myself how to be a contest fiddler (violins are so dinky . . . they are easy to play). Now I am trying to find a bluegrass or jazz band. I am always looking for something fun and new to do with the viola. I am never bored because there is too much new to do. I play at a lot of nursing homes, and they don't mind if I bring my son along when I play . . . so it's all good.

DW: What do you personally see as the benefits or advantages of being a worship musician?

DCC: I get to enter into a realm of freedom as a performer that few classical musicians will ever get to experience. I have been at my current church for about ten years. Now, most of the time they don't even give me music, charts, or mp3s to study ahead of time; they just set up a microphone, tell me when to show up, and let me do what I do. I live in a world of improvisation that is like living life in a giant cadenza. There is little that I do as a musician that is as fulfilling as the time I get to worship.

Almost every time I play, someone comes up to me afterward and says, “Wow, I have never heard a violin sound like that before. It is so deep, and I could feel it resonating in my heart!”—or something to that effect. I used to explain, “Thanks, but this is not a violin; it is a seventeen-inch viola and the viola is . . .” I learned from the glazed looks that came over their faces to just respond to their gracious words by saying, “Thank you! I'm so glad you enjoyed it.”

DW: What else would you like to share about your experiences?

DCC: In recent years I have begun teaching improvisation to classical musicians at summer camps and at colleges. It is REALLY fun. It has come directly from my time as a member of a worship team. I have two new works for viola that will be released

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this year: a concerto and seven unaccompanied pieces. Both works have come from my diverse background as a musician. I would not change anything!

The sheet music for the first movement from The Viola Canon, seven unaccompanied pieces based on hymns, by Diana Christine Clemons can be found at: <http://americanviolasociety.org/resources/scores/jav-scores/>.

Notes

- ¹ But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- ² In this context, I am using amateur not as a slight, but as a reference back to its Latin origins, which refers to people who are not professional, but who zealously pursue something for the love of it.
- ³ Worship team members typically have diverse and disparate skills relative to understanding theory, playing with stylistic fluency, running a sound system, and reading sheet music or chord charts. Moreover, there is a need to develop a common vocabulary as each musician or genre may have its own idiosyncratic jargon.
- ⁴ A frustrated singer-guitarist worship leader may need help understanding why an E-flat alto saxophonist is struggling, when all the charts are in keys with many sharps.

Dr. David Wallace enjoyed a seventeen-year tenure as a worship violist. He teaches the requisite principles and skills to violists and music majors at Nyack College when he isn't stirring up creativity at the Juilliard School, the New York Philharmonic, Mark Wood Rock Orchestra Camp, and Mark O'Connor/Berklee College of Music Summer Strings Program.

ORCHESTRAL TRAINING FORUM

THE OPERA MUSICIAN

by **CarlaMaria Rodrigues**

There are many directions for a musician to follow in the world of orchestral playing today. The symphony, chamber, opera, and ballet orchestras are all connected as an art form, but the ways in which they are presented can be strikingly different for an audience to appreciate and a musician to master. The distinctions that each medium offers, in spite of several crossovers, is what make the specific genres so fascinating to explore. Being aware of the significant differences in technical approaches to these media can be very helpful and useful to know in preparing for an audition.

My focus in this article is to present to you the diverse aspects involved in playing in an opera orchestra and to hopefully open the door to a genre that is full of richness and challenges in its musical drama in spite of sometimes being perceived as a lesser form of fulfillment than that of the symphonic world. I will also include some examples on how to prepare for an audition in a general sense and what you may need to know in order to survive and enjoy the very long hours of physical playing that comes with performing in an opera orchestra. This will include several specific excerpts from various operas—with suggestions for bowings and fingerings—that often appear on audition lists. They will demonstrate the stylistic and orchestral differences that a composer will use to depict the art form and will directly influence your approach in preparing the repertoire.

Requirements of the pit musician:

As far as playing in an opera orchestra, the reality is that no performance is the same from one day to the next. This also includes the physical setting of an opera. For this very reason, many obstacles have to

be overcome. Consistency in hearing where certain instruments are around you and your need to rely on those voices as they pertain to yours is often curtailed by where you are in the pit and how high or low you are placed in the pit. The ever-changing configuration that can occur either in orchestration or location is just one more dimension that one must adapt to and requires incredible flexibility on your part.

Staging awareness:

On facing the challenge of staging, a stage director who may not be a musician may implement stage action that is completely contrary to the music. This in turn can directly impact you as it relates to the ensemble and intonation between the orchestra and the singers. For example, in any given production difficulties can arise when the singer is being directed to sing so far upstage that the two of you cannot hear each other, and your only option is to rely on the conductor. This can be particularly unsettling as the very thing that identifies a musician's craft, i.e., our ears, is being usurped by circumstances that are not necessarily musically oriented.

Conductors:

It is essential to watch the conductor in any orchestra. However, the conductor is only **one** component in the process of playing in an orchestra and even more so in an opera orchestra. The technical demands required of an operatic conductor are magnified by the various elements he or she will have to bring together in order to achieve the successful outcome of an entire production.

The world of the opera involves many more challenges and technical difficulties to a conductor than the ones emanating from the written score and the

musicians in front of him. For the action coming from the staging can alter his musical goal at any point, and this will directly impact you in the pit. For example, there are performances when even the conductor is forced to go with the stage or risk losing the singers altogether. Because this can happen, you must learn to develop a *sixth sense* and recognize when this is happening and act accordingly.

The conductor has to direct the orchestra, the chorus, and the soloists, and to bring all of these elements together is a huge feat for any one individual. More often than not, the musicians in the pit have to be able to make split-second decisions on whether the conductor is pushing them ahead or pushing a singer on stage. This can lead to disastrous results if the wrong choice is made. So to a certain extent, you have to be very independent and certainly more flexible from performance to performance as the conductor might not be able to give you his full attention.

In circumstances like these, it is even more crucial for you to play with your stand partner and to follow your principal. Making sure that your ears are open to *all* the voices around you becomes equally as important as following the conductor.

Pit conditions:

As I mentioned earlier, pit conditions frequently change, and it is absolutely essential for the musician to learn how to adapt. In many symphony orchestras, the sections within an orchestra are more consistent in their geographical setting with some occasional variants, usually dictated by repertoire.

However, in an opera orchestra, the sections will more often than not move around the pit depending on the opera being performed. A whole new set of challenges is now presented to you, for you may find yourself sitting next to a piccolo player instead of your usual cellist! The voices that you are used to hearing within the orchestra are completely different, and your ears will now have to adapt to hearing an instrument that is not directly connected to you. Another factor to be aware of in playing in the smaller space of a pit is that there are frequent

changes of temperature, and this will directly affect your tuning. For example, in a larger work, as in a Wagner opera, there are far more people in the pit. This not only limits your personal space, but given the additional musicians needed for a work of this scale, it will raise the temperature of the pit considerably. These are all circumstances in which the opera musician has to show incredible flexibility.

Endurance:

The endurance level of an opera musician is extraordinary. Operas are long, and your physical well-being is tested at every turn. In order to survive the hours of playing, you must consider doing some physical training outside the practice room. Sitting for long periods of time can be hard on your body in any orchestral genre, not to mention holding your instrument up for hours. This is more apparent in an opera orchestra, where you are playing for many more hours at a time, as opera productions are much longer than symphonic performances. Exercise—from lifting weights or practicing yoga, to running, weight training, or boxing—are all forms of activity that will only help the longevity of your chosen profession on a physical level. Adequate warm-ups are a **must** for any musician; this is a sport and not to be taken lightly.

It is also important to explore seat cushions and ways in which to stretch your arms unobtrusively while you are sitting. String players are always holding their arms up and stretched out. When you have a break or an intermission, use the time to stretch in a contrary motion, i.e., holding your arms behind you and stretching your shoulders back.

Auditions:

There are many variables in any given audition process. From the different makeup of a committee on any given day, to the journey you have embarked upon in getting there. In my humble opinion, the process itself is not a particularly musical one, however it is the only one we currently have that makes it possible for us to pick a worthy candidate out of the exceptional talent being produced in music schools today.

To continuously repeat passages alone over and over again, more often than not behind a screen, jumping from one excerpt to another, with no one to respond to or adapt to musically, is a challenge to anyone's psyche. To repeat these same passages over and over again without compromising the musical interest of the excerpt is exceedingly hard, and a fearless approach is definitely required. As orchestral musicians, we perform as a whole, but when the audition process isolates us, as it inevitably does, it removes the element of the whole. So the audition process has become the stepping stone in which a committee can see whether someone is competent on the instrument, responds to a committee's direction, and has prepared the material required. The successful candidate's ability to be judged in an ensemble will be tested during the probationary period.

Requirements:

The audition committee is always looking for flexibility in a candidate, and this can only be achieved if the candidate has practiced passages in many different ways, i.e., tempo, bowings, and fingerings.

What does the audition committee mainly look for?

1. Musical identity and character
2. Beautiful sound
3. Excellent rhythm and intonation
4. Technical command

These are required!

Your compatibility:

In the audition room, there is an understanding that anyone can miss a note or fluff an excerpt; this will **not** stop you from advancing from one round to the next. However, repeatedly playing an excerpt having learned it with a wrong note or rhythm will. This speaks to the lack of care in one's preparation.

It is also very obvious to a panel of orchestra musicians when someone has not listened to an excerpt he or she has just played. As I said previously, the

versatility of a candidate in being able to play an excerpt with alternative fingerings and bowings speaks to flexibility, which is an important component for any section to consider. Therefore, homework and research are essential. The Internet has opened up unlimited access to scores and recordings. So I would encourage you to listen to as many recordings as possible with a score, whether it is a complete symphony, tone poem, or an opera.

There are **no** shortcuts to this kind of knowledge. It is a commitment and a time-consuming venture, but in the long run, listening to the Ring cycle or a Mahler symphony to gain knowledge of the style and character that directly impacts your particular excerpt takes up very little time in the overall scheme of what you are aiming for—a coveted position in an orchestra of your choosing for many years to come. Even with a variety of recordings out there, a general sense of knowledge that a candidate has listened to a specific excerpt is very obvious to an audition committee.

Your individual statement:

Every audition requires solo repertoire. This goes a long way in establishing whether you have a command of your instrument both musically and technically. It is a mistake to think that the audition committee will only "hear" the first two or three pages of a concerto! You must prepare the whole work that is required. Remember there are no shortcuts; it just takes one musician on that panel to want to hear the whole movement. Likewise, to try and second-guess what a committee will hear or not hear in any given round is a waste of your energy. Prepare to play everything in all rounds!

Preparing opera repertoire excerpts:

All of the fingerings and bowings in the following excerpts are suggestions only. Please consider that you may be asked to change any bowings or fingerings in an audition. It is also important to remember that if you are a section player of any orchestra you may be shifted around from one stand to another,

Giuseppe Verdi, *Un Ballo in Maschera*: Act I, Scene 2, Number 38

sometimes with no notice. So any fingerings you prefer should be memorized as quickly as possible, for you may not have the luxury of writing them in your new part.

Verdi: *Un Ballo in Maschera*

Incredible legatissimo is required in this excerpt. The quality of sound should be *sul tasto*. In that the whole section plays this as a solo together, find a vibrato that will blend in. Do the research and explore what is happening in the opera at this point so that you can emulate the character required. Always remember to shift into a hand position, especially with the larger shifts; this will go a long way in securing accurate intonation. Keep the bow moving at all times as this will help maintain the legatissimo of the excerpt. Do not stop the bow when you are making a particularly large shift as this will break up the phrase. In the seventh measure of this excerpt, use the first finger and as you shift down, ease up on the pressure of your first finger so that it becomes a

harmonic, and the note will still sound as you shift down. Play close attention to the dynamics in this excerpt. At rehearsal 39, the D is played using the second finger. For the following measure, stay in the same position since you are already there. You do not have to shift down until the last line when you begin on the second finger in third position. Finally, this is a *pp* excerpt until the crescendo to *ff* at the end! The musical tension of this excerpt has to be created within *this* dynamic.

Strauss: *Ariadne auf Naxos*

Style is very important in this excerpt, with the different voices popping out of the phrase. This is a prime example of how listening to an excerpt will go a long way in helping you to understand the characters Strauss depicts here through his extraordinary rhythmic and tonal composition. Again, the bowings should not supersede the original phrasing (see the second example); they are a guide. Legato phrasing and articulated motifs are to be brought out. Toward

Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos*: Overture (Act II), Two Measures before 70

Andante mosso ♩ = 76-88

p *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.*

f *dim.*

p *con molto crescendo*

mf *cresc.*

f *cresc.* *ff*

Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos*: Overture (Act II), Two Measures before 70 (Original Phrasing)

Andante mosso ♩ = 76-88

p *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.*

f *dim.*

p *con molto crescendo*

mf *cresc.*

f *cresc.* *ff*

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*: Act III, “Liebestod,” Seven Measures before Number 89

Etwas bewegter
Poco più animato

pp dolce *dolce* *p* *p* *p* *pp* *dolce* *p* *trem*

the end, a noble element enters with the triplets, so be careful not to rush them.

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Wagner is one of the most significant and important composers you are likely to play in an opera. In this excerpt you will jump from being a subsidiary voice to the main voice. You are the “one man show,” as it were! In the first measure, find the intervals of importance to bring out; the sixteenths are not all equal. Again, do the research to find out what is happening in the opera here. The dynamics are all *pp* and *p* with some hairpins, but the emotional highs are such that you have to restrain yourself from using volume to express the turbulence going on. Find a variety of sounds. There are so many different characters being expressed in this short excerpt—that is why it is often chosen—be careful

not to express the variety of characters by using dynamics that are not written. The *animato* direction definitely implies *rubato*, so please listen to this excerpt to understand the freedom and constraints that are contained therein. Again, from the second measure, you can start this on an up bow and do the remaining passage in the completely opposite direction. Experiment with bowings and fingerings.

Verdi: *Falstaff*

This excerpt is all about how to control your *spiccato* and to play with sudden dynamic bursts. Keep the bow close to the string and turn the bow toward you for a flatter hair stroke. It is also important to realize that you can achieve a *subito f* without using more bow. In a passage like this, you will not have the luxury of using more bow. The *f* will be achieved by having more core to the sound, and by playing clos-

Giuseppe Verdi, *Falstaff*: Act I, Five Measures after Number 18

Agitato ♩ = 120-130

pp stacc.

f *pizz.* *p* *arco*

pp

f

ff

Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser*: Scene I (Overture), Twenty-Five Measures after F

♩ = 76-84

f *ff* *ff* *ff*

er to the string you will keep your *spiccato* within the tempo and style required. In the seventh measure, you could start with an up bow or a down bow; they both have their advantages. Again, practice a couple of different ways. With an up bow in the seventh measure, you will be in the perfect position for the *pp* when it appears a few measures later. Listen to this passage on a recording and make sure you bring the character to your *spiccato*. Phrasing is also very important in this excerpt; in spite of the *spiccato*, the long line is essential. Exaggerate the dynamics, too.

Wagner: *Tannhäuser*

This excerpt is on many an audition list, even symphonic repertoire lists. Bow distribution is very important here especially as it relates to string crossings. Go for the gesture of the motif rather than making each note as important as the other; it's a

sweeping passage. In the seventh measure, you can change bows on the C-sharp or not; either way the rhythm of your left fingers will go a long way in sounding articulate on the D (II) string here. In the fourteenth and fifteenth measures, make sure you aim for the chromatic scale and do not get bogged down on making every note heard. For all of these examples, sometimes using "less" bow with a more concentrated sound can give you **more** volume than using a lot of bow.

Carla Maria Rodrigues has served as Principal Violist of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra since 1996 and previously served as Assistant Principal Violist of the Minnesota Orchestra and Principal Violist of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. A native of London, she was a prizewinner in both the 1984 Lionel Tertis Competition and the 1987 Primrose International Viola Competition.

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RETROSPECTIVE

WORKS BY LEO SOWERBY AND ALVIN ETLER

by Tom Tatton

As violists we live in a most interesting and quite wonderful time! There is a palpable passion world-wide for new viola-centric compositions, and new works are being created at a blazing pace. An examination of the literature programmed at the recent 40th International Viola Congress reveals more than a dozen works written by American composers who were born after 1950! In a five-day period, over two dozen relatively new works were performed. What will become of all these pieces? Of course the standard and ultimately true answer is: the test of time will separate the masterpieces from the rest.

Going in the opposite direction, violists are searching with incredible vigor the dusty shelves of very old libraries. The happy results have been striking! Multiple works by Alessandro Rolla (1757–1841) have recently become available; doctoral dissertations on the viola compositions of York Bowen (1884–1961) are stirring interest; composers the likes of Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729–1774), Johann Gottlieb Graun (1703–1771), and Christoph Graupner (1683–1760), along with a multitude of others are becoming topics of discussion in viola circles. Of course, modern technologies (the Internet, scanning devices, music engraving software, etc.) have made the search for—and sharing of—scarce viola music even that much easier.

Violists themselves are also exploding their common repertoire by creating and performing a multitude of transcriptions. At the 40th International Viola Congress, in addition to the traditional mixture of transcriptions and original works performed throughout the congress, an entire recital was dedicated to transcribed pieces. Add to this mix the

interest in creating works within the framework of new textures with diverse sonorities and colors, including pieces for viola and percussion, viola and gamelan, viola and voice, viola and organ—and then there are those futuristic violists creating electro-acoustic compositions.

Again, what will become of all these pieces? Are we truly evaluating our newfound treasures, or are we continually searching for un-performed works for the novelty of it all? Perhaps we should step back, every once in a while, to reflect, re-evaluate and re-program repertoire. One has only to think of Rebecca Clarke's Sonata, neglected for decades after its composition until rediscovered in the 1970s and now part of the standard repertoire. Of course, just because we celebrate the plethora of our diversity does not mean we must like everything equally well. Styles and tastes change, and in two hundred years hence, enterprising violists will surely rediscover and re-evaluate the pieces we today have seen to abandon.

The purpose of this new department is to provide opportunity for just such a re-evaluation, not only of repertoire, but perhaps neglected recordings and remarkable performers of bygone times as well. Today we stand on the platform created by those violists and composers who came before us. Celebrating our past is an important ingredient in creating our future.

The works we look at here include *Poem*, for viola and organ by Leo Sowerby and Sonata for Viola and Harpsichord by Alvin Etler. Both of these pieces, written in the mid-twentieth century, are by thoroughly American composers who, like all composers, reflect the compositional techniques, note palette, structural templates, and ethos of their time. Both

composers were naturally influenced by their teachers but also by the strong current of compositional popularity of the time—Schoenberg and serialism, Bartók, Copland, Hindemith, and Stravinsky; folk music and the power of nationalism; the magnetic influence of jazz; and, to a certain extent, the electronic experiments beginning in the 1950s. Add to this mix the strong influence that was the restlessness of the “American” spirit that ran through the halls of music schools in the first half of the twentieth century with an unspoken desire to establish a decidedly “American” musical language. That spirit shows itself by the choice Sowerby and Etler made in selecting the accompanying instruments of organ and harpsichord, respectively. Finally, a strong violist—William Primrose and Louise Rood—influenced each composer.

***Poem, for viola and organ by Leo Sowerby (1941)*
Dedicated to William Primrose**

Leo Sowerby (1895–1968), an organist by performance medium and a composer of over five hundred works, gained early recognition as a composer with his Violin Concerto premiered in 1913 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Sowerby can be placed in a school of “American” composers that would include Howard Hanson, Walter Piston, Virgil Thomson, Randall Thompson, William Grant Still, and Bernard Rogers.

Poem is a large-scale work of some fifteen minutes that finds its musical roots in the late Romantic styles of Sibelius, Franck, and Respighi. It was completed on November 8, 1941, and premiered by William Primrose (1904–1982) and E. Power Biggs (1906–1977) on April 5, 1942, at the John Hays Hammond Museum for Biggs’s regular Sunday morning broadcast on the NBC network. The viola part, originally published by H. W. Gray, is well edited including bowings, fingerings, and propitious double stops. The difficulty is that the publisher did not release *Poem* until 1947. By that time Milton Preves (1909–2000), the long-time principal of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, had taken up the piece. We are not sure just who put in the editorial fingerings and bowings or how *Poem* might have devel-

oped between the premiere performance with Primrose and its publication.

What we do know is that Sowerby and Primrose met in 1946, and out of that meeting came the orchestrated version of *Poem*. Primrose performed this orchestrated version at least twice—once with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on July 1, 1948, under the direction of guest conductor Eugene Ormandy at the summer concert series at Ravinia and again with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra on February 14, 1950, with Thor Johnson conducting.¹ Currently Peter Slowik, Director of the Division of Strings and the Robert W. Wheeler Professor of Viola at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, has *Poem* in his repertoire and performed the orchestrated version with the Richmond Virginia Symphony during the 1996–97 season.

This solidly constructed piece explores the entire range of the viola and is never compositionally dominated by the organ. The formal structure holds the piece together in a grand, but somewhat idiosyncratic, rondo form: ABCABA:

- Theme A (ex. 1), quickly imitated in the viola, disintegrates fairly soon into a memorable thematic motif;
- The transition, which is to return later, is followed by Theme B (ex. 2) in the viola accompanied in the organ with shadows of the Theme A motif;
- Theme C (ex. 3), which is stated boldly by the solo organ is actually an inverted variant of Theme A;
- Theme A returns in the viola in a broad soaring melodic development;
- The return of the above transition moves the listener to Theme B in the solo viola. A cadenza-like passage elides into the conclusion;
- Theme A.

Example 1. Leo Sowerby, Poem (Theme A), mm. 1–5, organ part.

Example 2. Leo Sowerby, Poem (Theme B), mm. 60–64, viola part.

Example 3. Leo Sowerby, Poem (Theme C), mm. 106–9, organ part.

Fluid tonal centers and freely chromatic lines never stray far from a tension-release, dissonant-consonant feeling. *Poem* ends on a satisfying C-sharp-major chord.

Two other works by Leo Sowerby ought to be mentioned: the shorter, more accessible *Ballade*, for English horn and organ, with an alternative viola part, and his *Sonata* for Clarinet and Piano, likewise with an alternate viola part.

Companion pieces for programming:

Carol Rodland, Associate Professor of Viola at the Eastman School of Music, and her sister, Catherine Rodland, organist at St. Olaf College, performed a sterling recital of viola and organ repertoire at the

2010 International Viola Congress in Cincinnati. Repertoire included: Sonata in D Major, BWV 1028 by J. S. Bach, *Five French Dances* by Marin Marais, *Sonata da Chiesa for Viola and Organ* by Daniel Pinkham, and *Three Hymns for Viola and Organ* by John Weaver.

Violist Paul Doktor (1919–1989) and organist Marilyn Mason recorded Ernest Bloch's *Meditation and Processional*, Servaas de Coninck's (seventeenth-century) Sonata in D Minor, William Flackton's Sonata in G Major, G. F. Handel's Minuetto, Marin Marais's *Theme and Variations*, G. Tartini's *Andante*, and Leo Sowerby's *Ballade* on the Mirrosonic Records label (currently unavailable).

Other companion pieces for viola and organ include:

Joseph Ahrens (1904–1997): Sonate
Frank Michael Beyer (1928–2008): Sonate
Rayner Brown (1912–1999): Sonata
Thomas Christian David (1925–2006): *Variationen*
Walther Geiser (1897–1993): Sonatine
Lars-Erik Rosell (1944–2005): *Anima*
Otto Siegl (1896–1978): *Weihnachts-Sonate*, op 137
Heinz Tiessen (1887–1971): *Musik für Viola mit Orgel*, op. 59

The Leo Sowerby Foundation re-released the sheet music for Poem (via Theodore Presser; item number 494-02007) in the 1990s.

Sonata for Viola and Harpsichord
by Alvin Etler (1959)
Dedicated to Louise Rood

The lives of composer Alvin Etler (1913–1973) and violist Louise Rood (1910–1964) crossed at Smith College in 1949. From this came the Sonata for Viola and Harpsichord and other well-crafted pieces.

Etler, an accomplished oboist by performance medium, was interested early on in composing; he received two Guggenheim Fellowships for compositional study and wrote two youthful works for the Pittsburgh Symphony at the request of Fritz Reiner. Etler studied with Paul Hindemith and, like many others, was strongly influenced by the music of both Bartók and Copland. Searching for an “American voice,” he explored jazz, serialism, and neobaroque/neoclassicism. Etler found approbation when joining the faculty at Smith College in 1949, where he remained until his death in 1973.

In an otherwise gentleman’s profession, violist Louise Rood can only be described as a strong, enterprising woman with no small amount of pluck. She graduated from Juilliard Graduate School of Music in viola performance in 1934 and taught at Sweet Briar College before joining the faculty at Smith College in 1937. At Smith, her teaching duties included har-

mony, music history, orchestration, music appreciation, and viola! All the while she played with the Smith College and Bennington string quartets (1937–1946). She enjoyed a recital career where she actively promoted new music for the viola and made her successful Carnegie Hall debut in 1957.

Quite an author, Rood contributed articles for music journals including one in 1944 titled “A Plea for Serious Viola Study,” published in the proceedings of the Music Teachers National Association. She wrote for the Smith College archives and authored *An Introduction to the Orchestra Score*, published by Kalmus. As if this were not enough, Rood was the chairman of the New Valley Music Press (dedicated to the publication of American works), and she promoted works for viola including the Telemann *12 Fantasias for Viola Unaccompanied* and *Old Dances for Young Violists*, both still available from McGinnis and Marx.

With Etler’s compositional exploration of neo-baroque/neoclassical styles and Rood’s interest in performing contemporary music and re-acquainting violists with Baroque music, what else could result but a contemporary sonata for viola and harpsichord? In this sonata, Etler exhibits the conflicting symptoms of that generation of American composers who were searching for an authentic musical language. On the one hand Etler writes with classic clarity (including a sensitivity for balance in structure), uses a traditional four-movement construct, creates a chromatic language within the context of continuous motivic manipulation such that it would put a smile on Mozart’s face, and explores the sonorous qualities of the harpsichord, an instrument abandoned long before in favor of the more powerful and expressive pianoforte. On the other hand he uses a thoroughly mid-twentieth century concept of dissonance disassociated from traditional function, employs angular melodic fragments and motivic elements juxtaposed with closely knit chromatic lines, and places disparate speeds of harmonic rhythm as a developmental procedure in a continuous kaleidoscope of imitative development within a fluid sense of rhythmic pulse.

Example 4. Alvin Eiler, Sonata for Viola and Harpsichord, movt. I, mm. 87–100.

87

f

87

91

91

94

cresc. poco a poco

94

97

ff

97

+ coupler

This delightfully textured piece is in four movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Allegro*, *Adagio espressivo*, and *Vivace*. It is well-crafted, fits the violist's hand, is exciting to perform, and is pleasing to the audience.

The first movement ("on B"—starts on b and ends on a B-major chord) carries the intellectual weight of the piece, for both performers and listeners. Using the darker timbre of the viola to good advantage, Etler employs syncopation, various harpsichord couplings, octaves that alter both texture and dynamics, and subtle but certain pulse shifts (6/4, 4/4, 7/4, 5/4, 4/4, and 3/4 within a fourteen-bar section) (ex. 4). The result is a movement of about eight minutes that never lags.

The second movement ("on D") is much like a youthful Mendelssohn scherzo—a quick, witty, two-step dance. The harpsichord is set on the 4' choir on manual I, giving the whole movement a bell-like quality while the viola is muted and moves between arco and *col legno*.

The third movement, *Adagio espressivo* ("on E-flat"), is a long elegiac melody in ABA form with the contrasting B section marked *Più Mosso*.

The final movement, *Vivace*, is a tarantella ("on B") using alternating *detaché* and *spiccato* bowing. It is light-hearted, quick, and exciting to perform.

Companion pieces for programming:

The most popular pairing of viola with harpsichord are the three viola da gamba sonatas by J. S. Bach: BWV 1027–1029. Most other Baroque and Rococo pieces, even if transcriptions, fit the viola well both texturally and acoustically. There are four sonatas specifically for viola and harpsichord written by Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739–1813).

More contemporary works include:

Henry Cowell (1897–1965): *Introduction and Allegro*

Quincy Porter (1897–1966): *Duo* (for viola and harp or harpsichord)

Mark Corwin (b. 1954): *C-19*

Etler's Sonata is available on the AVS website by kind permission of the Alvin Etler estate as part of the American Viola Project at:

<http://americanviolasociety.org/resources/scores/american-viola-project/>

Notes

¹ Members of the Leo Sowerby Foundation, including Francis Crociata, President, and Michael McCabe, Vice President, have been extraordinarily helpful in providing details about the development and early performances of Sowerby's *Poem*.

Thomas Tatton is a recently retired string specialist with the Lincoln Unified School District in Stockton, California. Formerly violist and director of orchestras at Whittier College and the University of the Pacific, he holds a DMA from the University of Illinois. He was President of the American Viola Society from 1994 to 1998 and has served as the Vice-President of the International Viola Society.

ROCKING THE BOAT: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY MUSIC FOR THE VIOLA THAT INSPIRES SOCIAL CHANGE

by Gregory K. Williams

Introduction

Decades from now, historians will look back on the beginning of this decade as a period of significant tumult. When examining our present epoch, we are reminded of past watershed moments: the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the commencement of the French Revolution and a quarter century of war and sweeping changes throughout Europe in 1789; the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand that began World War I in 1914; the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Soviet regime crushing the Prague Spring, and the height of the Vietnam War in 1968; and the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. September 11, 2001, is a day etched in the mind of most Americans; a day that revealed how vulnerable we were. As 2013 springs forward, we have witnessed over four years of economic stagnation in much of the Western world, political volatility in Greece and Hungary, nearly two years of remarkable revolutionary struggles throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and America's first African-American President re-elected to embark on a second term in office.

When one thinks of "classical" music that inspires social change, which composers come to mind? Charles Ives, the American composer of the early twentieth century was an ardent anti-war opponent, who wrote numerous songs for voice and piano expressing his disappointment with the American involvement in World War I.¹ The Great

Depression and the New Deal brought the compositions of Marc Blitzstein to the foreground with his 1938 musical, *The Cradle Will Rock*.² Benjamin Britten, a committed pacifist during World War II, wrote his *War Requiem* as a protest to the devastation caused by war. Luigi Dallapiccola composed his work *Canti di prigionia* as a response to fascism and Mussolini's government, specifically incorporating the vibraphone at a time when there weren't any available in Italy.³ Arnold Schoenberg's 1947 cantata, *A Survivor from Warsaw, op. 46*, was a response to accounts from witnesses who endured the horrors of the Holocaust.⁴ Frederic Rzewski's 1975 work for piano, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, was inspired by uprisings and protests that took place in Chile.⁵

Throughout much of my adolescence and my undergraduate years, I felt I was born into the wrong era. I was in the minority (of Generation Y and the seemingly apathetic American public) when I spent my nineteenth birthday on a bus heading to Washington, DC, on a cold Martin Luther King Jr. weekend to protest the Iraq War, two months before it started. I was chastised by my teachers for not spending that time practicing and scolded by my parents for not spending my birthday with them. At the outset of my college years, I felt too many of my generational cohorts were more concerned about what was playing on their iPod and who posted what on Facebook or Twitter (at times I too have been absorbed by the social media frenzy).

Over the years, I realized that many of my musician friends did have passionate views on certain topics.

Many had strong feelings about religion, politics and political candidates, the environment and the perils of climate change, war, 9/11, the economy, LGBT issues, and civil rights. Over time I have inferred that the “Millennial Generation” is not as apathetic as we were once believed to be.

The pieces and composers that I intend to bring to your attention, I introduce chiefly because of their contributions to the viola repertoire of the twenty-first century. It is not my intention to introduce these composers and their works with the goal of changing one’s political inclinations. However, the nature of the works from these composers is political and must be approached as such. It is largely up to the performer to determine how to program such pieces as they see fit, particularly whether these pieces should be embedded in a more generalized recital setting.

Anthony R. Green



Anthony R. Green

Born in Arlington, Virginia, and raised in Providence, Rhode Island, Anthony R. Green is a composer who has been a champion for the viola. He has studied at Boston University, New England

Conservatory, and University of Colorado, Boulder, with Theodore Antoniou, Robert Cogan, and Lee Hyla, among others. His works have been performed and championed by the Playground Ensemble, the Eppes Quartet (in residence at Florida State University), the Laurel and Providence String Quartets, and Alarm Will Sound. Both Green and his works have been well received throughout the world.

Green has become a passionate proponent for patriotic music, emphasizing the point that America’s historic texts—the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Gettysburg Address—are not the exclusive property of either end of the political spectrum or of any one class or race of people. His 2008 work *Dona Nobis Veritatem*, for soprano, viola, and piano borrows from the Preamble of the US Constitution, and each of the following movements is set around the ten amendments that make up the Bill of Rights. *Dona Nobis Veritatem* was first premiered in 2008 on a shared recital at New England Conservatory with the composer at the piano, Ashleigh Gordon on viola, and Cececilia Allwein as soprano.⁶ In this work, Green ably brings about fanfares and changes the character of each movement as the nature of each amendment unravels.

The Preamble, which comprises the first movement, can be revealed as one such fanfare, opening with the soprano imitating a heralding call of a trumpet, recalling a Handel-esque recitative. The second movement, the “Declaration of Independence: one,” illuminates a scrawling of sixteenth notes beamed in groups of four in the viola, opposite groups of five in the right hand and three in the left hand of the piano (ex. 1). It is as if Green is imitating the calligraphic nature of Thomas Jefferson’s handwriting. Green is often explicit in his directions to the soprano, urging that the text, “When in the course of human events,” be resolute and *marcato*. Contrast this to the movement associated with the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights (Movement IV), which asks the soprano to be *molto marcato* and robotic, as she hammers out the text, “A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state the right of the people to keep and bear arms”

Example 1. Anthony R. Green, *Dona Nobis Veritatem, movt. II: Declaration of Independence: one, mm. 1–2.*

Con sord.

p

mf *resolute, marcato*

When in the course of hu - man e - vents

p

with liberal pedal

(ex. 2). As Green proceeds with the proclamation “SHALL! NOT! BE! IN!-FRINGED!” the viola is commanded to be wild and free, as the audience is forced to ponder what these texts mean.

Green has often commented on his attraction to the viola as compared to the violin. He recently observed:

The violin is the most “diva,” and the personality of violinists goes with the type of playing. Viola is the most “mysterious,” cello is the most “smooth,” and bass is the most “supportive.” With this, the viola is unique because, while it has a personality all its own, it can also play the roles of the other instruments with ease. Not saying that the other string instruments can’t also do this, but it is easy for a viola to be supportive like the bass, smooth like the cello, and diva like the violin . . . therefore it’s the most mysterious.⁷

Political and social awareness and an understanding of how the American government functions are important values that appear often in Green’s compositions. Such was the case in his 2009 composition, *Earned*, for string octet plus speaker. The octet combines reminiscences of patriotic hymns and materials with melodies that have become interwov-

en in the American fabric, while the speaker poses questions that citizens must know when becoming naturalized. Green, through his narrator, asks his audience a question: Are there double standards for what makes something, or someone, American?

In addition to Green’s works featuring the viola that promote social awareness and change, there are several other notable works by him that violists should explore. Among them is *Nachtspiel*, an earlier work completed in 2006 and first performed by violist Clark Spencer. Literally translating as *Night Play*, the work can be viewed as a nocturnal journey, filled with singing, knocking, seagull calls, and other sounds of nature. Several extended techniques are explored—such as trilling on glissandi and playing behind the bridge—and a violent middle section suggests the activities of the night as they escalate. *Nachtspiel* also has very onomatopoeic tendencies, requiring the violist to hum, sing, hiss, and hush, and even to recite a line in German while playing, which is meant to summarize the nature of the piece. Although the act of turning the violist into a more vocal and verbal creature takes much effort, this is a piece that has been well received by audiences, particularly younger audiences that are new to the world of contemporary music.

Example 2. Anthony R. Green, *Dona Nobis Veritatem*, *movt. IV: Amendments II & III*, *mm. 9–12*.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system (measures 9-12) features a Viola part with a long note, a Voice part with lyrics, and a Piano part with a forte dynamic. The second system (measures 11-12) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment with various articulations like *col leg.*, *ord. sul pont.*, *pizz*, *arco*, and *arco, norm.*

Other works for viola by Green are *Scintillation II*, for viola and cello, completed in 2008; noteworthy in that it garnered honorable mention in the 2009 Earplay Donald Aird International Composers Competition and was also performed at the IC[CM] in A Coruña, Spain. Green notes that this piece was inspired by the process of lighting a match:

Therefore, I tried to compose explosive elements into the work, but with the sense of a quick draw

leading into an explosion that quickly settles down. This explains most of the gestures found in the work. Furthermore, because I wanted to incorporate a loose rhythmic environment, I employed a free ostinato-type notation, which is something I have been incorporating in my works since my master's years, with varying degrees of saturation. The gestures also draw on my experience as a gospel musician, meaning that the timing and the feel of the work should be improvisatory.⁸

One of his most recent works for viola is a beautiful tribute titled *Two Pages for Kara*, completed in 2011 while in Leiden, a town in the Netherlands. This short work of about five to six minutes laments the passing of a young girl at the age of seventeen and grapples with the questions of how and why tragedies strike.⁹

Gilad Hochman

Another name to consider when thinking of composers who actively seek to change the world through music is Gilad Hochman. Born in Israel in 1982, Hochman is a rising star who splits his time between Berlin and Israel. As one who has achieved high acclaim in his native country, Gilad was awarded the Israeli Prime Minister award at the age of



Gilad Hochman

twenty-four.¹⁰ His life experiences, notably his move to Berlin five years ago, have been shining examples of a way to bridge and augment Israeli-German relations. As he acknowledged in a 2009 *Deutschland Magazine* article, “I can discern good and sincere attempts to bridge the gap between the two countries. Germany and Israel will always have a strong relationship precisely because of their history.”¹¹ While many of Hochman’s works are inspired by

Jewish traditions and his Israeli origins and make connections to the Old Testament, he seeks to craft his works so that they are more universal. In previous interviews, Hochman evokes the universality of Beethoven’s work by noting, “Beethoven was German and so is his music, but his works express his concept of the human spirit—the individual blending with all humankind, and this concept also guides my own work.”¹²

His 2006 work for viola solo titled *Akeda* was commissioned as an obligatory piece for the 2007 Aviv Competitions.¹³ Yet, when examining this piece, there is little that is obligatory about it, as it stands as a heartfelt, passionate piece that screams to be played. Written shortly after he composed the piece *Lior*,¹⁴ a 2006 work for soprano and ensemble, *Akeda* borrows from the Old Testament parable depicting God’s call for Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. This painful episode is one that has been interpreted by the religious faithful of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike. In the case of *Akeda*, the work offers a pained plea for peace, calling into question why the world’s youth are sacrificed for wars, just or unjust.¹⁵ Hochman notes that this piece revolves around the notion of having an ideal—being willing to sacrifice yourself or loved ones for a cause. Although Abraham is stopped by an angel, Isaac is still psychologically damaged by the ordeal, and his spirit is sacrificed.

Akeda starts out with an *espressivo* tempo; a melancholy call is evoked from the strings of the viola. Largely modal while summoning chromatic and tonal ideas, this work imitates the melodic phrasing of a cantor, repeating lines, and expanding upon them. The first common motifs, an ascending minor second and a half modal scale concluded by an irruptive major seventh interval, appears in the beginning and is recalled again in measure 18 and in measure 34 (ex. 3). Throughout this passage the parable is being expressed, ideally through the gestures of the viola. As our narrator continues, the intensity of the piece builds, with the tempo accelerating at measure 43 and with the rhythm increasing in intensity in the subsequent measures. By measure 46, Hochman inserts *agitato*, balanced by a *poco*

Example 3. Gilad Hochman, Akeda, mm. 1–6.

Espressivo ♩ = 55
sempre rubato

Example 4. Gilad Hochman, Akeda, mm. 47–50.

a tempo

ritardando as the drama unfolds. The violence reaches a boiling point about three measures later, as Isaac is (perceivably) being sacrificed (ex. 4).

The story continues at measure 51, muted and modulated, as Hochman explores the colors and timbres of the C string.¹⁶ By measure 66, the mute is off, and the viola becomes a vehicle for protest. The intensity begins anew starting around measure 76, as anger swells over the loss of life. Hochman inserts expressive motions to convey the building of rage and frustration, with a *più con moto* in measure 79, *più energico* in measure 84, *a tempo ma con forza* in measure 88, and *agitato* and *molto accelerando* by measures 92 and 93. The piece, now wailing after the renewed violence from protests, lets out a cathar-

tic scream in measure 94, illuminating a major seventh that starts *sffzpp* and crescendos into *ff*. “The violence,” Hochman acknowledges, “reaches its peak as the slaughtering takes place,”¹⁷ particularly in measure 98 (ex. 5). These cries of pain continue and diminish over the next several bars, easing into the *Lento* found in measure 103. By this point the viola is again muted, as the mourning continues, but this mourning is different. Here the music is fragmented and the character is more pensive and brooding, with a resigned acceptance of the violence that continues on throughout the world.

In an alternative interpretation of the piece, Hochman observes that the death of Isaac takes place between measures 94 and 98. He perceives

Example 5. Gilad Hochman, *Akeda*, mm. 90–102.

90

92

94

97

(Do)

agitato

molto accel.

a tempo

ff *sfzpp* *ff* *sfzpp*

sffzpp

(switch bows freely)

ff *sfzpp* *ff* *sffz senza dim.* *mp* *p*

that his music is not linear and works to incorporate time jumps and flashbacks in this piece. “The sacrifice already took place even before the piece started, and because I chose the title.”¹⁸ By selecting the title, Hochman is revisiting the pain evoked from this parable and the countless deaths of the world’s youth in war. Even if the parable did not actually take place, the pain evoked by the piece rings out through history, as governments come to the decision that war must take place and the people may be sacrificed.

George Tsz-Kwan Lam

Born in Hong Kong in 1981 and raised in Winthrop, Massachusetts, composer George Lam has been a musician comfortable wearing many hats.

With degrees covering Music Education, Music Theory Pedagogy, and Composition from Boston University, the Peabody Conservatory, and Duke University, George Lam has carved an intriguing niche as not only a composer, but producer, director, and documentarian, using his craft as a composer to help others find their voice and amplify it. His works have been premiered by ensembles ranging from the AM/PM Saxophone Quartet; Christ Church United Methodist of New York, New York; American Opera Projects (of Brooklyn, New York); the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble; and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. Alongside Baltimore-based composer Ruby Fulton, he co-founded and serves as Co-Artistic Director of Rhymes with Opera, a non-profit organization committed to performing new opera works in unorthodox performance spaces along the



George Tsz-Kwan Lam

Eastern Seaboard of the United States.¹⁹ Now living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, George Lam also serves as Producing Associate for the Gotham Chamber Opera and the Music-Theatre Group.

While completing his PhD in Composition at Duke University in 2011, George Lam collaborated with North Carolina playwright John Justice to create a one-act opera, *The Persistence of Smoke*, to chronicle the experiences of workers in the tobacco industry. When Lam and Justice staged the opera in April 2011, they selected a former cotton mill where Bull Durham bags were produced—Golden Belt—as the site of the premiere. George Lam notes:

From the inception of my idea for the dissertation, I wanted to write a piece that was explicitly about Durham, since there weren't a lot of pieces coming out of Duke that acknowledged the location and its rich and conflicted history. And, it was important to me to stage the new opera in a place that was intimately connected to the subject of the work, because I think there's something quite magical about being in a place with a piece of art that makes you see that space in a completely dif-

ferent way. The opera was about how Durham was trying to transform itself from its tobacco past, and Golden Belt was the perfect venue because it was a very prominent symbol of the gradual gentrification that's happening to East Durham.²⁰

Although operatic works have been a focal point in the development of Lam's career as a composer, his background as a violinist has allowed him to focus his energies toward writing pieces for strings. During the summer of 2011, George Lam completed his *Suite for Cello*, which was premiered by cellist Sara Sitzer as part of the inaugural season of the Geshen Music Festival of Emerging Artists in St. Louis, Missouri. Sitzer notes, "We had talked about him writing a cello suite for years, and when I started this festival, which builds bridges between chamber music and Jewish music, I wanted [the festival] to be a little bit more inclusive. Every movement is inspired by Jewish traditions and melodies . . . [with] some influence from the Britten solo Cello Suites."²¹

One of Lam's more recent works is a piece performed by Rhymes with Opera in June 2012, titled *The Love Song for Mary Flagler Cary*, which features two sopranos, baritone, two violas, and piano. This work, premiered in the Mary Flagler Cary Hall at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, is an homage to the life of the heiress of Standard Oil and to her work as a philanthropist. The first viola takes on a significant role, often supporting the soprano who plays the role of one rendition of Mary.²² There are instances where the ranges of the violas go beyond that of their vocal counterparts, which can be seen in measure 81. Perhaps this can be seen as Mary Flagler Cary's philanthropy going a step beyond what she accomplished on her own (ex. 6).

One of George's more intriguing projects is still a work in progress. Titled *The Emigrants*, the work is being designed as a piece for the new music ensemble New Morse Code, which is comprised of cellist Hannah Collins and percussionist Michael Compitello, as well as for violist Anne Lanzilotti. The piece will be centered on the experiences of immigrants to this country as well as American

Example 6. George Tsz-Kwan Lam, *The Love Song for Mary Flagler Cary*, mm. 79–82.

M. 1
79
Give it all a way...

M. 2
This, my e - v'ry - day... E - v'ry - day... This, my e - v'ry day...

H.
pro - gress... pro - gress... pro - gress... pro - gress...

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

expatriates who have experienced life beyond our borders. Lam describes it best when he notes:

For me, the piece is more about trying to expand my work on the documentary, following *The Persistence of Smoke*, and seeing how this can be translated in a chamber music context. I pitched this documentary idea to the trio, where we would go out and interview first, and then I'll come back and figure out how to incorporate the interviews into the piece. The trio liked this and suggested the theme of "expats," since all three of them have spent a considerable amount of time studying and working abroad. I'm an expat myself [who has] been fully assimilated into an American identity, and I was interested in figuring out just what kind of music would go with today's immigrant experience. We're still in the process of collecting interviews, and I'm especially interested in talking with people who are not able to return home.²³

Anticipated to be a three-movement work, the first movement of *The Emigrants* will start out as a prelude, with all three instruments toying with overlapping glissandi, growing increasingly discordant and fractured. Lam begins the second movement with the exclamation of one of the interview subjects: "What did I miss?" He expounds on the memories and nostalgia of those who have been interviewed. Lam notes that "the third movement will focus on the moment that the interviewees were leaving home to go abroad and how it felt."²⁴ Using overlapping and almost-inaudible rumblings in the background, Lam plans to play back the interviews in a variety of ways, even through the instrumentalists' own speaking voices. *The Emigrants*, Lam notes, should be completed by December 2012, with an anticipated premiere in mid-2013.

Conclusion

There are many other composers out there who have devoted their energies to writing works that are meant to spark debate among audiences, and I am certain that there are a myriad of violists who seek to perform pieces that promote change. What Anthony Green, Gilad Hochman, and George Lam have done is take secular texts, sacred parables, and primary sources and reimagine them for the modern world, with contemporary complexities in mind. Their works for viola can encourage listeners to question the nature of the world we live in and how we can go forward in the future.

The sheet music for Two Pages for Kara and Movement VII of Dona Nobis Veritatem by Anthony Green and Akeda by Gilad Hochman can be found at: <http://americanviolasociety.org/resources/scores/jaws-scores/>. Sheet music for The Love Song for Mary Flagler Cary by George Lam can be found at: <http://www.gtlam.com/portfolio/mary-flagler-cary/>.

Notes

¹ When examining Charles Ives's book of 114 Songs published in 1922, it is interesting to note the nature of some of the titles and texts. Among them, Songs 49, 50, and 51 hint at Ives's internal divisions over World War I. Titled *In Flanders Field*, *He Is There*, and *Tom Sails Away*, these three songs show the contradictory forces of Ives's strong patriotism and despair over the casualties war brings.

² In Joan Peyser's *Bernstein: A Biography*, she mentions how a young Leonard Bernstein brought Marc Blitzstein's work to Harvard in May 1939, having staged, directed, and performed the work on piano. She notes how the work, when first performed in 1937 and directed by Orson Welles, pitted Blitzstein against the Works Progress Administration, which funded the project. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had to intervene and state that the show could not go on as planned. See Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography* (New York: Billboard Books, 1998), 42.

³ Luigi Dallapiccola, *Dallapiccola on Opera: Selected Writings of Luigi Dallapiccola* (London: Toccata Press, 1987), 47.

⁴ David Isadore Lieberman, "Schoenberg Rewrites His Will, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46," in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (New York: Garland, 2000), 212.

⁵ A 2008 *New York Times* article written by Matthew Gurewitsch indicates that Rzewski's compositions have tackled subjects beyond war and protests against dictatorships; one work recollects the Attica prison riots of 1971. See Gurewitsch, "Maverick With a Message of Solidarity," *New York Times*, April 27, 2008 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/27/arts/music/27gure.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

⁶ At a March 2008 concert in Rochester, New York, dubbed *Irate on Iraq* (marking the five-year anniversary of the Iraq War), I performed the movement based upon Amendment IV, having to do with search and seizure, with soprano Marielle Murphy. The piece can be well received in both its entirety and with the performance of individual "Amendments."

⁷ Anthony R. Green, e-mail message to author, August 12, 2012.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The piece is dedicated to the memory of Kara Lynn Williams, who passed away in 2010 at the age of seventeen. She was the younger sister of the author of this article, Gregory K. Williams. *Two Pages for Kara* was premiered on April 5, 2012, in Elebash Recital Hall at the CUNY Graduate Center, in New York.

¹⁰ <http://www.giladhochman.com/>.

¹¹ Christopher Nielsen, "New Creative Paths," *Deutschland Magazine*, January 15, 2009.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Supported by The Adele and John Gray Endowment Fund of the American-Israel Cultural Foundation.

¹⁴ Hochman notes that *Lior* was a composition written out of grief, in memory of his friend Lior Zilbermintz, who perished in 2006 at the age of twenty in an accident. Hochman writes, "I think this might also be a gateway to the viola piece since they share a very similar motif, which for *Lior*, symbolizes her two-syllable name." Gilad Hochman, e-mail message to author, August 13, 2012.

¹⁵ In an August 11, 2012, interview at the Felix Austria Cafe in Berlin, Germany, Hochman made a reference to a Lao Tzu quote, "A war is but a march of coffins and nothing more to it."

¹⁶ In the August 11, 2012, interview, Gilad Hochman observed this juncture as "the path not taken."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Gilad Hochman, e-mail message to author, August 13, 2012.

¹⁹ Other company members include sopranos Elisabeth Halliday and Bonnie Lander and baritone Robert Maril. Additional information regarding Rhymes with Opera can be found at <http://www.rhymeswithopera.org>.

²⁰ George Lam, e-mail message to author, November 24, 2012.

²¹ From a telephone interview between Gregory K. Williams and Sara Sitzer, November 14, 2012.

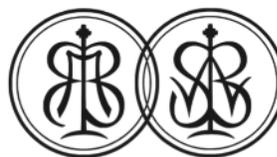
²² <http://issuu.com/gtlam/docs/cary/3>.

²³ George Lam, e-mail message to author, November 24, 2012.

²⁴ Ibid.

Gregory K. Williams is currently pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts in Viola Performance degree at the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he studies with Karen Ritscher. Previous studies were at the Eastman School of Music and Boston University. Currently a Graduate Teaching Fellow at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, City University of New York, Williams has become a nascent pedagogue and advocate for contemporary music.

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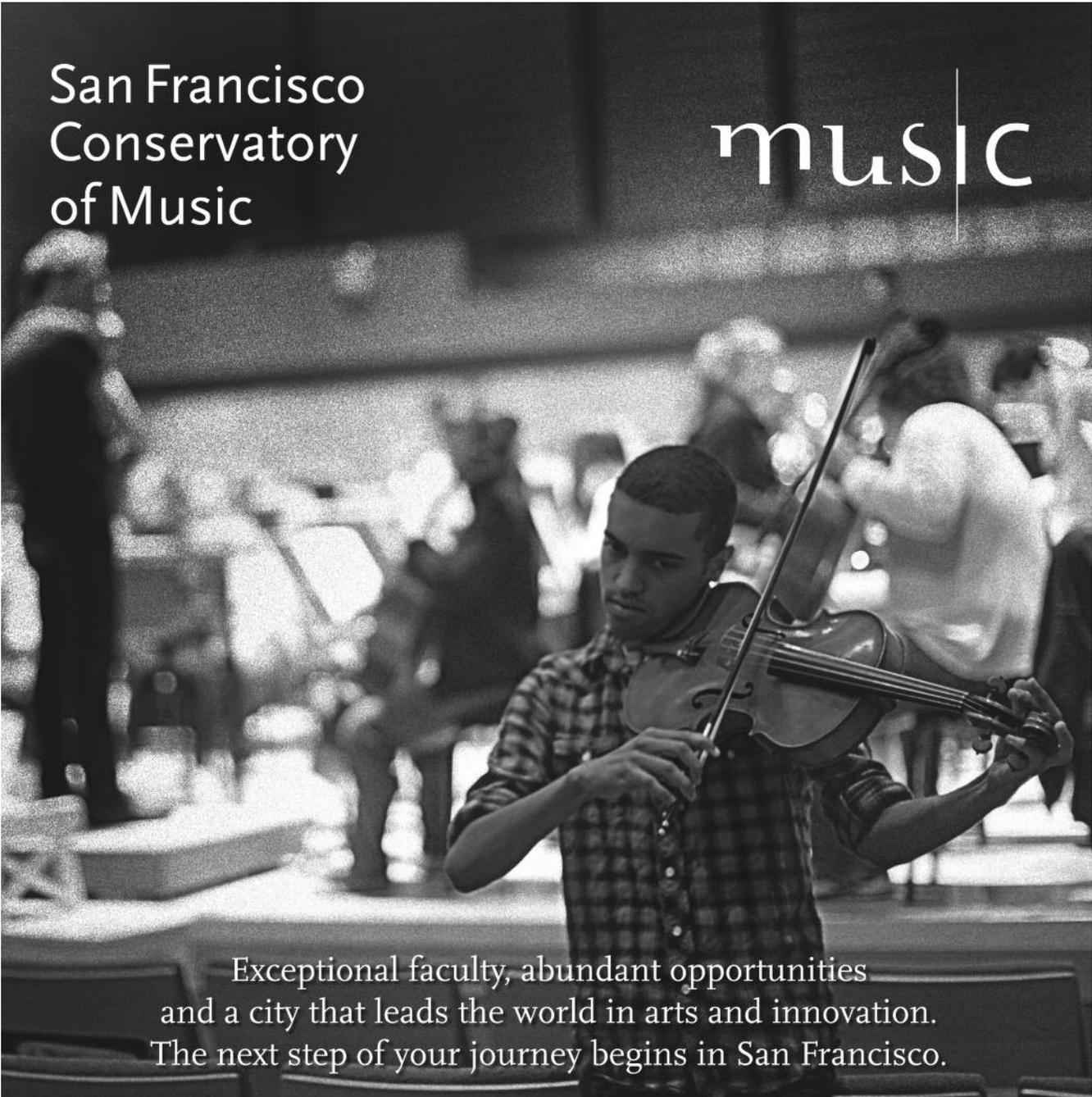
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WITH VIOLA IN HAND

THE ROCHESTER VIOLA CONGRESS: CHILEAN PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBE IT IN THEIR OWN WORDS



From left to right: Penelope Knuth, Georgina Rossi, Noemí Alegria, Mariel Godoy, Carlos Brito, and Sergio Muñoz

by Penelope Knuth

When I learned that the Rochester viola congress was offering students the opportunity to play in master classes, I urged several of mine to send recordings. One was my daughter, Georgina Rossi, a former Catholic University of Chile pre-college division student, now a sophomore at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) studying with Karen Dreyfus. The students were nonplussed when they received invitations to participate in master classes with faculty from Korea, China, London, and New York. I warned them to get visas immediately, and their reply was: “*Profe*, we don’t have passports!” They speedily got their paperwork together, and, with a lot of goodwill from Carol Rodland and her colleagues, they (and my daughter) attended the unforgettable congress.

We were thrilled to learn that another former Catholic University pre-college student, Sergio Muñoz, a student of Kim Kashkashian’s at New England Conservatory (NEC), was a semifinalist in the Young Artist Competition. Thus, on every day of the congress a Chilean violist performed. Revelations for me included performances by Wolfram Christ, Kashkashian (a privilege to be able to hear a live performance of the entire Kurtág cycle), Atar Arad, Dimitri Murrath, the

wonderful works of Nicolas Bacri, the concerto performance by Cynthia Phelps and Rebecca Young, meeting local luthiers, stocking up on music and CDs (Rodland’s among them), and the superb performances at the Young Artist Competition.

What the Chilean players had to say:

“Hearing the world’s finest violists daily was highly motivating! I found the master classes fascinating. When it was my turn to perform in Karen [Ritscher’s] master class, it was a big challenge to play for a hall filled with excellent violists. Happily I felt eager to play, and the experience was really useful. I constantly keep in mind the suggestions she gave me. It was wonderful to attend the Young Artist Competition, in which Chile was outstandingly rep-

resented by Sergio Muñoz. The violist who surprised me the most was Dimitri Murrath, and we're excited that he will be a Visiting Professor at our university in August."

Mariel Godoy, Catholic University of Chile
Sophomore Viola Performance student

"The viola congress was a chance to attend recitals by important artists, hear new repertoire, perform in master classes, discover luthiers and archetiers, and buy accessories and scores; a viola feast. The organization was outstanding. I was surprised there were not more Latin American violists attending. The high quality of the activities offered and the performers and teachers featured made it well worth traveling so far."

Noemí Alegría, recent Catholic University of Chile graduate in Viola Performance

"This was my first trip to the USA, and I was overwhelmed by the friendliness of the people. The teachers were great: Prof. Rohde especially impressed me. Performing in the master class was very educational. I proved to myself that I could perform in front of violists from all over the world. The recitals, including Prof. Murrath's, were unforgettable. I was so proud that Sergio Muñoz was a semifinalist among the superlative young artists; we all liked the Liptak premiere. Eastman School of Music has a wonderful



From left to right: Sergio Muñoz and Georgina Rossi remain upbeat even while trapped at JFK airport

campus, with amazing halls and beautiful dorms."

Carlos Brito, Catholic University of Chile
Junior Viola Performance student

"The congress was superb. Because of bad weather on the East coast, three of us were forced to spend the day and night before the congress at JFK [airport]. As this meant I would arrive just an hour before I was scheduled to perform in Isserlis's master class, I used some of the time we were trapped practicing at a lonely airport gate, which helped me keep calm. Prof. Murrath's performance was the most

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astounding experience for me. I will definitely attend future congresses.”

Georgina Rossi, MSM Viola Performance student, former Catholic University of Chile precollege student

“This was my first viola congress. I had not even heard about them before, since last year was only my third year in the US, the first of which was spent in a boarding school in northern Michigan, where I did not hear about a few things from the ‘outside world.’ My main reason for attending the congress was the Young Artist Competition. My teacher mentioned it at the beginning of the school year, and I thought I’d give it a try. I never imagined I would get past the first round; I was pleasantly surprised to be a semi-finalist. Although I did not make it to the final round, I appreciate the opportunity I had (I was very excited that my family in Chile could watch me perform on the live webcast!). It was a learning experience from beginning to end: from having to spend a night at JFK because a storm made my flight get canceled to casting lots for the competition, keeping the nerves at bay, and staying focused for my performance among all the festivities. This really felt like a celebration of the viola. It was very exciting to see so much going on, sometimes simultaneously (kudos to the Eastman viola faculty for the great organization!). I tried to go to as many performances, presentations, and panels as possible, but sometimes I felt that I may have missed out on a few things (such as listening to my former classmates from Ms. Knuth’s class) because of the competition. From the things I could attend, I really enjoyed Mr. Klorman’s lecture on the relationship between

Brahms’s Sonata in F Minor, op. 120, no. 1 and Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* (two very significant pieces in my life), as well as the panel on the legacy of Karen Tuttle. It was beautiful to see all of the famous Tuttle teachers together, almost like siblings; seeing them sitting right next to each other made me think: ‘Wow! These are THE people you want to learn from!’ In spite of my limited participation at the congress and my occasional decisions to stay in to practice or get sleep, I don’t regret anything; as a ‘first-timer,’ I took everything as a learning experience.”

Sergio Muñoz, NEC Viola Performance student, former Catholic University of Chile precollege student

Penelope Knuth, a native New Yorker, studied first at the Dalcroze School with Eugenie Dengel. After high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy, she received the Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University (Bloomington) and the Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School. Her viola teachers have included William Lincer, Walter Trampler, David Dawson, and Emanuel Vardi. Knuth has held the position of Principal Violist of the Chile Chamber Orchestra since 1994 and has served as Associate Professor of Viola Performance at Chile’s Pontifical Catholic University since 2006.



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NEW MUSIC REVIEWS

by Dwight Pounds, Andrew Braddock,
and Hartmut Lindemann

Concerto in E-flat Major for Viola and Orchestra
by Joseph Schubert (1757–1837)

Edited by Andrew Levin

Middleton, WI: A-R Publications

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Reviewed by Dwight Pounds

Opening Andrew Levin's edition of Joseph Schubert's Concerto in E-flat for Viola and Orchestra is more like opening a book than a piece of printed music. Eight pages of historical perspective and formal analysis and four plates greet the reader before the first page of Schubert's score is seen. These pages are an expansion of Levin's article on this concerto published in *JAVS*, vol. 16, no. 3, in 2000.¹ Rarely is a performer privy to the depth of information pertaining to a given work before the first note is played.

Joseph Schubert (1757–1837, and no known relationship to Franz Schubert) obviously was a contemporary of Mozart (1756–1791) and was also heavily influenced by the Viennese high Classical style. He was a violist in the court orchestra of Dresden for nearly fifty years, from 1788 to 1837, lending credibility to Franz Zeyringer's suggestion that capable—though unheralded—professional violists in addition to Carl Stamitz were active in Europe at this time,

despite the reputation of the viola as a *pensionsinstrument*. Schubert proved himself to be more than a sectional player, however. Levin writes:

Schubert supplemented his income by composing works for both theater and church for both orchestra and chamber ensembles. His work was respected, though not widely disseminated, and includes two viola concertos, one in C major and one in E-flat major. The former . . . is a charming but lightweight piece. The latter work, however, is much more substantial and is a welcome addition to the modern violist's repertoire.²

The C-major concerto mentioned by Levin has been the more well known of Schubert's concerti, owing to Schott's 1967 edition and Gérard Caussé's 1993 recording.

Levin's approach to the concerto is very methodical, academically correct, and scrupulous as he exhausts every possibility in reconstructing the concerto in as close to its final form as possible. His task was to closely examine four extant copies of the concerto (not all of them complete), then determine the order in which they were written by examining changes and additions to the most basic of the copies. Changes among the copies included an expanded orchestra, and additions included added and/or altered measures, trills and other ornamentation, and adjusted orchestral instrumentation, presumably by the composer himself. It is interesting to note that numerous fingerings and other performance markings—at least two layers—were available to the editor, but a set of "original" parts listed in the Zeyringer lexicon as located in the archives of Hug & Co. Musikverlag in Zurich, turned out to be a false lead as no trace of such parts could be found, depriving Levin of a valuable resource.

Schubert doubles the solo viola part in *tutti* sections with those of the orchestral viola or cello/bass line in the full score throughout the concerto, though con-

siderable latitude doubtless is at the soloist's discretion regarding when or when not to play. The concerto calls for a relatively large orchestra, an unusual feature given the viola's "limited powers of projection," especially on the lower two strings.

The first of the three movements with 345 measures is the longest by far and will require in excess of eleven to twelve minutes of performing time. The solo viola is featured in both exposition statements, which are followed by extended development and recapitulation sections. Arpeggios, rapid scalar passages, and a few double stops at high range mark some virtuosic challenges for the performer in this movement.

The second movement at 90 measures and probably six minutes of performing time anticipates somewhat the Romantic approach to melody, and perceptible drama competes with lyricism throughout. Levin likens it to an accompanied recitative with the solo passages performed with relative freedom. In one of his later alterations of the original concerto, Schubert concluded the second movement with a cadenza in the solo part, terminating on a dominant seventh chord and leading *attacca* into the final movement. This was not a standard feature of concerti from the time and represents another "forward-looking" quality of the work.

The third movement, 289 measures and eight to nine minutes of performing time, is a large rondo in ABACADA–Coda form with the sections clearly delineated. It features an extended virtuoso passage of diatonic scales, scales in broken thirds, arpeggios, rapid crossings over two and three strings, and bariolage. The melodies, like those in the first two movements, are at once compelling and challenging.

The technical skills required for a convincing reading of this concerto are simple mastery of the basics: scales in various configurations, arpeggios, and firm bow control. Performing such passages on the C and G strings in what Primrose called the "muddy" tessitura of the viola will also be a challenge, but well worth the effort, as will be adding Schubert's Concerto in E-flat to one's repertoire. Though this work is later and arguably more challenging, I would

group it with the Hoffmeister and Zelter viola concerti, possibly some by Rolla, and a personal favorite from this period, Lillian Fuchs's transcription of the Mozart K. 216 for viola and piano.

Notes

¹ Andrew Levin, "Viola Concerto in E-flat Major by Joseph Schubert: A New Addition to the Late 18th-Century Repertoire," *Journal of the American Viola Society* 16, no. 3 (2000): 19–30.

² Andrew Levin, preface to *Concerto in E-flat Major*, by Joseph Schubert, ed. Andrew Levin, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era*, 89 (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2013), vii.

Selected Works for Viola and Piano by William Alwyn (1905–1985)

Edited by John White

Huntingdon, UK: William Alwyn Foundation

ISBN: 9790708087021

Sonatina No. 1 (1941)

Two Preludes (1922)

Three Negro Spirituals (1935)

Two Pieces: Solitude and Dance (1923)

Sonatina No. 2 (1944)

Reviewed by Andrew Braddock

William Alwyn was Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London for nearly thirty years. During his time at RAM, Alwyn got to know the pre-eminent Scottish violist Watson Forbes. He would go on to write several viola works for Forbes, including the sonatinas presented in this volume and the previously published *Ballade*. While Alwyn's viola music is somewhat less well-known in this country, his works have enjoyed popularity in the United Kingdom. Recently, the renowned violist Lawrence Power performed Alwyn's *Pastoral Fantasia* for viola and strings while on tour. This album is the first publication of each of the five works included here, and it completes the publication of all of Alwyn's viola pieces.

Alwyn's two sonatinas are easily the most substantial and compositionally refined works in the volume.

Each of these four-movement works is around nine minutes long, and Alwyn reused the two middle movements from the first work as the two middle movements in the second, reversing their order (they are essentially identical, with the exception of a few notes here and there). The outer movements, however, differ markedly: No. 1 contains serious and well-wrought sections, while No. 2 embraces a tuneful quality with folk-like melodies. The first sonatina begins with a rhapsodic and almost through-composed introductory movement that is probably the most harmonically advanced in the collection. This movement takes brief and refreshing chromatic excursions before returning to a D-minor tonality. The fourth movement opens with a broad and sweeping flourish and is the most technically demanding work in this volume. Yet, the sixteenth-note runs and double-stop passages all fit the hand very comfortably, making this work easily accessible to the typical college violist.

Alwyn's talent shines most clearly in his lyrical and songlike pieces. The slow middle movement, *Andante piacevole*, from each of his sonatinas and *Solitude*, the first of his *Two Pieces*, display his gift for sentimental melodic writing. The former work consists of a murmuring chordal accompaniment and a rhythmically varied viola line that moves calmly through the instrument's entire range. In *Solitude*, Alwyn harmonizes his meandering melody with some great parallel fourths and fifths passages, briefly giving the work an impressionistic quality reminiscent of Debussy's early piano works. These movements allow ample opportunities for *rubato* and personal expression, and I find them to be the most musically satisfying pieces in the collection.

Both the *Two Pieces* and *Two Preludes* were written before the composer turned eighteen. They are early examples of his superb lyrical writing, but they also display a derivative style typical of young composers. The first prelude—*Andante (Poco adagio)*—features a flowing melody that sounds similar in both mood and shape to the opening of Hindemith's Sonata, op. 11, no. 4. The second prelude—*Andante rubato*—displays a greater amount of metrical creativity than the first. Alwyn divides the 3/4 meter into a sara-

bande-like quarter and half note pulse. Upon this framework, he writes a halting and tentative melody, typified by tenuto eighths and large leaps. This work's tender and hesitant mood calls to mind the theme of Elgar's "Enigma" Variations and is a hauntingly charming—if somewhat unrefined—artistic statement.

Viewed from a pedagogical perspective, the *Three Negro Spirituals* is a valuable and much-needed contribution to the advanced intermediate student's repertoire. Alwyn's inventive arrangement of *I'll Hear the Trumpet Sound* offers the opportunity to develop a crisp *spiccato* stroke and allows the student to utilize first-position double stops. The third work, *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?* features a propulsive rhythm and rich countermelodies that showcase the viola's lowest register. My favorite of the three is a tender arrangement of *I'm Trav'ling to the Grave*. Along with a simple chordal harmonization of the melody, Alwyn successfully exploits the viola's plaintive and yearning sonorities with carefully controlled double stops and a brief passage in higher positions on the A string. This E-flat major setting reminds me of Primrose's arrangement of Schubert's *Litany for All Souls' Day*, and it could serve perfectly as an elegant and understated encore piece.

This publication was edited by the scholarly violist John White and is another of his valuable contributions to the rich body of British viola music. It includes an informative biography of Alwyn, a brief essay by White titled "William Alwyn and the Viola," and a listing of recordings of Alwyn's viola works. It is very clearly printed and organized, with easy page turns, and is thankfully devoid of unnecessary fingerings and bowings.

Despite remaining unpublished until now, these works are not altogether unknown. In addition to Watson Forbes's recording of the *Spirituals* for Decca in 1942, Sarah Jane Bradley recorded Sonata No. 1 for Naxos in 2010, and Martin Outram included Sonata No. 2 on his 2012 album *The Scottish Viola: A Tribute to Watson Forbes*, released by the Nimbus Alliance label. The publication of this handsome collection makes these five

works an immediately accessible and welcome addition to any violist's repertoire.

Sonata No. 2 in A Minor for Viola and Piano
by John Ireland (1879–1962); arranged by
Lionel Tertis

Edited by John White

London: Boosey & Hawkes

ISBN: 9790060124501

Price: £25.99

Reviewed by Hartmut Lindemann

Once asked if he was a great composer, John Ireland answered, "No, not a great composer, but a good composer." Could anyone have answered such a provocative question more eloquently? Ireland was born in Bowdon near Altrincham, Manchester, on August 13, 1879, and died on June 12, 1962, at Rock Mill, Washington, Sussex (he had retired there in 1953 to live in a converted windmill). From his composition teacher Charles Villiers Stanford, John Ireland inherited a thorough knowledge of the music of Brahms and other German nineteenth-century composers. He also appreciated the music of Ravel and Debussy, which is later reflected in his own impressionistic style.

John Ireland's Second Violin Sonata was written during the First World War. It is a dramatic and tuneful work that deserves, in this highly successful Tertis arrangement, to be part of the violist's repertoire. By the end of the twentieth century, the sonatas of Arnold Bax and Rebecca Clarke were well established. I consider the Ireland sonata to be of similar appeal and hope it will also achieve worldwide recognition. For those who need initial aural persuasion, there is a recent commercial recording of the viola version of this work available, played excellently by Roger Chase (Dutton CDLX 7250, 2010). It was recorded on Tertis's own Montagnana viola. In the interesting program notes by Richard Masters, it is described as "a triptych of the war experience: war, remembrance, homecoming."

Ireland began the composition of his Sonata in A Minor in 1916 and finished it in January of 1917.

The premiere, by Albert Sammons and William Murdoch, took place at the Aeolian Hall in London on March 6, 1917. The work attracted their mutual friend, the great violist Lionel Tertis, who was always on the lookout for new repertoire. Tertis, who perhaps attended the premiere, did not waste any time and quickly persuaded the composer that his sonata would lie equally well on the viola. In this assumption he was correct.

Tertis and Ireland performed the viola version at Wigmore Hall in March 1918. A quote from a *Daily Telegraph* review of a later performance reads: "After Lionel Tertis' magnificent performance of his transcription for viola of John Ireland's second violin sonata last night . . . a violinist in the audience who played the work in its original form, declared the transcription to transcend the original." I had exactly the same impression of the transcription when I listened to the Sammons/Ireland recording, while following the music from the Tertis edition of the viola part. The violin tessitura lies so high that it is often possible, even advisable, to transpose long passages down an octave. Tertis does this in places either where it is practicable or in order to underline the solemn mood of a particular passage. He frequently uses double-stopped octaves to increase the dramatic impact.

As is customary with John White's editions, the piano part shows the original Tertis fingerings. The study of these fingerings is most rewarding and constitutes a free viola lesson from the master himself. Tertis always chose the most appropriate finger to achieve strength in climaxes or for special color effects. He worked on the basis of the weakness and strength of each individual finger and made musical and instrumental use of it.

Primrose in *Playing the Viola* commented on Tertis's fingerings: although he found them "bewildering at first," on closer scrutiny they made sense to him. They are especially fascinating, because Tertis was self-taught as a violist. His choice of fingerings shows a very individual approach, one which is quite different from any other player's.

Example 1a. John Ireland, Violin Sonata No. 2, movt. II, mm. 33–40, viola part (Tertis version).

Example 1b. John Ireland, Violin Sonata No. 2, movt. II, mm. 33–40, violin part.

The opening of the first movement, *Allegro*, already seems more convincing in the more resonant and somber register of the viola. The second movement, *poco lento quasi adagio*, makes a deeper emotional impact on the listener by opening in the lower octave. The first high A-string violin *cantilena* sounds like a distant lark, quite remote from the world, whereas on the viola's D string it becomes the heart of the narrative and offers consolation to the listener. From measures 33 to 40, Tertis has a completely new distribution of notes and intervals (exs. 1a–1b), which gives this passage a new and slightly different significance; another variation of the same truth!

This example demonstrates Tertis's deep understanding of the composer's intentions. His transcriptions should be understood as a written-out "master interpretation."

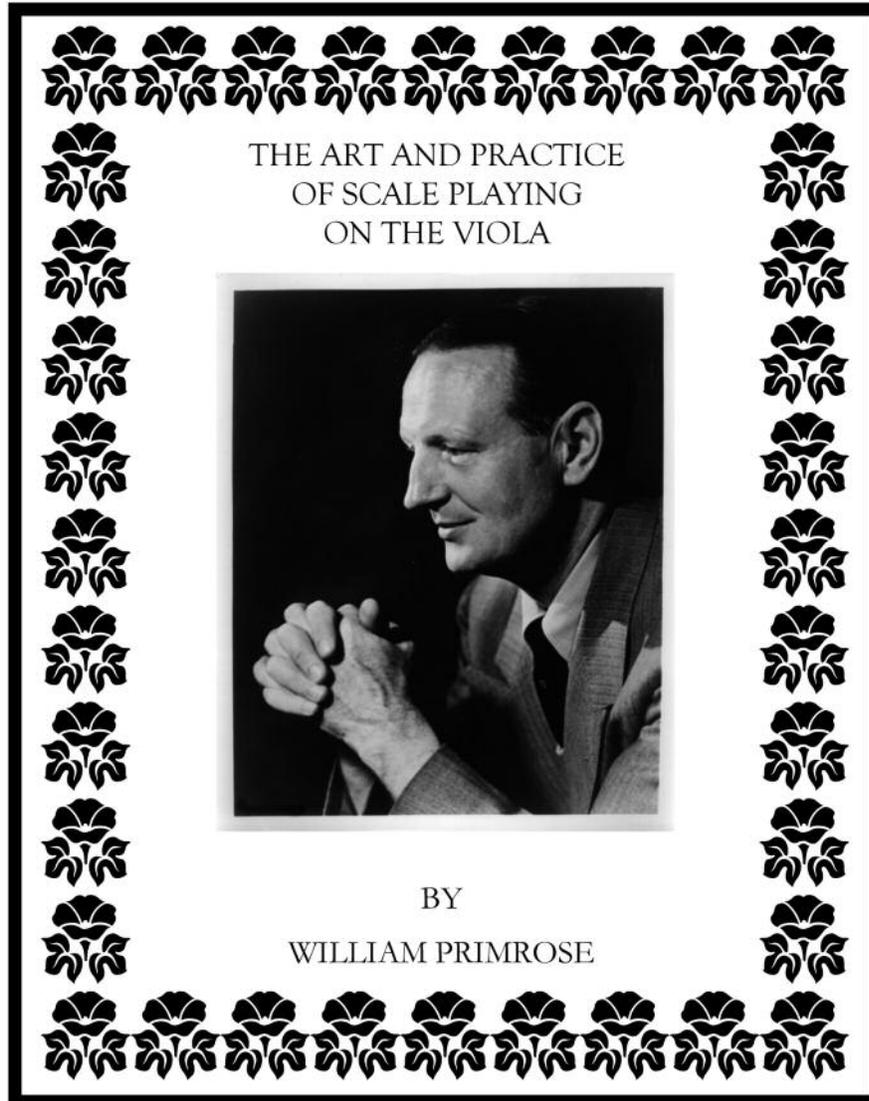
The third movement opens in the original register, and the fingering indicates the use of the outer and stronger C and A strings. The viola's characteristic timbre renders this theme even more impressive and authoritative than on the violin.

John White's preface to this edition contains an abundance of useful background information for the performer. The printed pages are comfortably spaced. The parts for both viola and piano are easy to read. The music is printed on good quality paper.

For violists interested in more Ireland, there exists the perfect encore piece: *The Holy Boy*, Ireland's most popular solo piano work, transcribed for viola and piano (in *Lionel Tertis: The Early Years*, book 2, also edited by John White). This sounds particularly convincing on the viola and will beautifully complement a performance of the Ireland Sonata.

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RECORDING REVIEWS

by Carlos María Solare

Prokofiev: Suite from Romeo and Juliet, arranged by Vadim Borisovsky. Matthew Jones, viola; Rivka Golani, viola; Michael Hampton, piano. Naxos 8.572318.

Matthew Jones has written in detail about his discovery and research of Vadim Borisovsky's transcriptions from Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* for viola and piano in the Fall 2011 issue of *JAVS* ("A Labor of Love: Borisovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* Transcriptions," vol. 27, no. 2, 29–40), so I can refer the interested reader to that article for the background to this comprehensive recording. The present CD includes the thirteen movements that Borisovsky arranged at different periods, plus two movements adapted from David Grunes's transcriptions for violin or cello, and one more arranged by the performers themselves in the same spirit. The result is an hour of music including most of the famous motifs from this well-loved score. Jones and Hampton, aka The Bridge Duo, bring plenty of variety to their performance, so that any risk of monotony is avoided, at least for this violistically-biased pair of ears. Although he doesn't always keep to Borisovsky's admittedly idiosyncratic fingering choices, Jones masters the inordinate technical demands of these transcriptions most successfully, with just a very occasional lowering of the guard during some obnoxious octaves. The tempo for "Juliet as a Young Girl" is cautiously moderate, but every note is in place. As, by the way, they are in Jones's own transcription of "Death of Tybalt," which is taken at a breakneck pace. Only in this movement did I feel that the viola-and-piano medium was just not enough to do justice to Prokofiev's cataclysmic climaxes. Did Borisovsky feel the same when he kept his hands off it? A more resonant acoustic might have helped, too: the sound is beautifully focused but a tad on the dry side (nothing to worry about, though). Rivka Golani puts in a welcome cameo

appearance in the two movements that require a second viola. How about a sequel including Borisovsky's transcriptions from Shostakovich's ballets and film music?

Fuchs: Sonata, op. 86, Phantasiestücke, op. 117; Joachim: Variations, op. 10; Dvořák: Romance, op. 11. Patricia McCarty, viola; Eric Larsen, piano. Ashmont Music 1012.

All the music in this CD stems from composers from Brahms's circle of personal and professional acquaintances. Both Robert Fuchs and Antonín Dvořák were among the promising younger composers that Brahms recommended to his publisher, Simrock, and Joseph Joachim was, of course, a life-long friend. If Fuchs's music can't quite emerge from beneath the great man's shadow, there are certainly worse shadows to be under! His *Sonata*, written in 1899, faithfully observes the time-honored conventions of the sonata form, calling to mind the much-quoted compliment Brahms paid to his younger colleague: "Fuchs is a splendid musician; everything is so fine and so skillful, so charmingly invented, that one is always pleased." The *Phantasiestücke* date from 1927 (the year of Fuchs's death) but look even further back: the theme of the concluding variations wouldn't be out of place in a Mozart sonata. Although he also uses traditional forms, Joseph Joachim is too much his own man to be anyone's epigone. *Variations on an Original Theme* is one of two viola compositions he wrote in 1854 (the other being *Hebrew Melodies*, op. 9). Both are important contributions to the repertoire that deserve to be much better known. The fiery Hungarian Joachim unashamedly shows his roots even when varying a chorale-like theme (two of the variations are indeed marked "Gypsy" and "Hungarian"). In a detailed commentary of the composition, Schumann concluded that it is "one of the greatest of masterpieces."

Antonín Dvořák's *Romance* was, of course, originally written for violin and orchestra, and I'm afraid it

loses not a little by being transposed a fifth down and played with piano. Nicely played as it is here, I can't help wishing that the CD time had rather been used to respect Joachim's changing scheme of repeats in the *Variations* (none are observed here).

Be that as it may, I enjoyed this recital very much. Patricia McCarty is a stylish performer who effectively uses the beautifully dark tone of her viola to characterize the music to its best advantage. She and Eric Larsen achieve some moments of breathtaking beauty that are all the more convincing for the viola being realistically balanced within the sound picture (the recording was made at the Meadowmount School of Music, where both artists teach).

All Viola, All the Time: Music for Multiple Violas by Scott Slapin. All parts performed by Scott Slapin and Tanya Solomon, violas. Available via digital download. For information, visit scottslapin.com.

This latest recording by the ever-enterprising Scott Slapin—a download-only product—includes compositions for violas in varying numbers, from unaccompanied to (in P. D. Q. Bach's immortal phrase) "an awful lot" of them. In a technical *tour de force*, all parts are played by Slapin and Tanya Solomon. I was glad to catch up with *Recitative*, a piece commissioned by the Primrose Competition in 2008 and widely played since; here it is eloquently performed by the composer in a recording from 2007, the ink as it were still fresh on the manuscript. *Capricious*, Slapin's witty homage to his late teacher Emanuel Vardi, was performed to great acclaim at the concluding concert of the Rochester Viola Congress. It would be nice to know who plays which of the three parts here, but it actually doesn't matter: balance and ensemble are perfectly unanimous, and the multiple quotations of twelve Paganini caprices come through loud and clear. The four-movement *Suite for Solo Viola and Four-Part Viola Ensemble* sounded vaguely familiar, and on closer inspection it turned out to be identical with the *Suite for Two Violas* featured in a previous Slapin CD, *Reflection*. The enlarged instrumentation doesn't add anything essential, but it's fun to hear, as is *Sketches*, a five-minute viola quartet that kept reminding me of John Denver's *Annie's Song*.

Although Slapin doesn't require its separate parts to be played in the published order, *Five Pieces for a Memorial Concert* works very well as a succession of variously scored pieces of a mostly melancholy hue (they were written for a concert in memory of Slapin's mother, who passed on in 2008). At the group's heart is the unaccompanied *Elegy-Caprice*, beautifully intoned by the composer, and the four-part *Postlude* pays homage to his mother (a cellist) by alluding to the Sarabande from Bach's D-Minor Suite. Slapin's unashamedly tonal music, needless to say, fits the viola like the proverbial glove and, equally obviously, receives here ideal performances from both players in their various roles. The recording quality is agreeably life-like.

Rolla: Viola Sonatas in E-flat Major, op. 3, no. 1; D Minor, op. 3, no. 2; and C Major; Duetto in A Major for Violin and Viola, op. 18, no. 1; 3 Esercizi. Jennifer Stumm, viola; Connie Shih, piano; Liza Ferschtman, violin. Naxos 8.572010.

Alessandro Rolla has to be the most productive composer of viola music who ever lived. Alone, the listing of the relevant works in Michael Jappe's indispensable *Viola Bibliographie* fills thirty-six pages; it includes concertos and other orchestrally accompanied pieces, sonatas with basso continuo, duos with violin or cello as well as for two violas, and a smattering of études. The latter three categories are represented in Jennifer Stumm's enjoyable recording, which obviously can only be a drop in the proverbial bucket. Whether in duo or on her own, Stumm plays with precise articulation, elegance, and beauty of tone. Rolla's music makes continual excursions to the viola's highest register, and Stumm takes these gallantly in her stride. She is well matched with violinist Liza Ferschtman in a duo that presumably was chosen because Rolla has the viola start every movement to the violin's accompaniment! It also includes a thirty-second "preview" of the Finale between the first two movements ("*Allegro bizzarro*," indeed!). In the basso-continuo-accompanied sonatas, the piano part has been realized by the Italian scholar Franco Tamponi, who produces the odd passage of two-against-three rhythm that sticks out in this context (for all his industry, Rolla wasn't the world's most

adventurous composer). Never mind, the three sonatas included are great fun, especially when played as brilliantly as they are here. The three unaccompanied “Exercises” are more interesting than their name suggests, being in the spirit of Paganini’s more melodious caprices, albeit tailor-made for the viola. This is a very attractive, beautifully played taster of Rolla’s copious production.

Manto and Madrigals. Duos for violin and viola by Killius, Scelsi, Holliger, Bartók, Skalkottas, Davies, Martinů, Nied. Thomas Zehetmair, violin; Ruth Killius, viola. ECM New Series 2150. 476 3827.

The one more-or-less well-known piece in this adventurous selection of music for violin and viola is the title-giving *Three Madrigals* by Bohuslav Martinů, written in 1947 for the brother-and-sister team of Joseph and Lillian Fuchs. They are performed here by a husband-and-wife duo with a brilliant virtuosity that, however, lacks that ultimate identification with the music’s syntax, which is apparently the sole preserve of Czech players (Jiří Novák and Milan Škampa from the Smetana Quartet remain unbeatable in this work). No such reserves apply to the rest of the program, which has in part been written for the present players, who perform it with unshakeable technical aplomb and a remarkably wide tonal palette.

Heinz Holliger’s *Three Sketches* from 2006 were initially commissioned as an encore to be played after Mozart’s *Sinfonia concertante*, and they accordingly employ that piece’s scordatura tuning for the viola. In any event, their harmonic language makes them somewhat unconventional for that purpose, but the three short movements are fascinating explorations of, respectively, natural harmonics, rhythmic intricacies, and polyphony. In the third movement, titled *Cantique à six voix*, both players are required to contribute their summing voices to make up a six-part texture.

A similar device was used by Giacinto Scelsi in *Manto* for unaccompanied viola (written in 1957), in which the player impersonates the eponymous Greek

prophetess. The Greek composer Nikos Skalkottas wrote his *Duo* in 1938 after studying with Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin, as the intricate language of its three compact movements shows.

Aural relief from this demanding repertoire is provided by Peter Maxwell Davies’s *Midhouse Air*, a piece inspired by Orkney Islands fiddling; by Bartók’s forty-four-second student prank in which both players perform from the same part, one of them reading it backward (the piece’s autograph manuscript is reproduced in the booklet); by Johannes Nied’s three-note rhythmic obstacle course, *Zugabe* (Encore); and by Rainer Killius’s setting of—of all things—an Icelandic drinking song. Recording quality and presentation are well up to the label’s usual, sophisticated standards.

Kurtág: Signs, Games, and Messages; Ligeti: Sonata. Kim Kashkashian, viola. ECM New Series 2240. 476 4729.

The brightest musical highlight of last year’s international viola congress at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, was for me Kim Kashkashian’s performance of the complete *Signs, Games, and Messages* by György Kurtág (b. 1926). This is a continuing series of isolated movements written—and continually revised—by that post-Webernian miniaturist during the past quarter century (two of them date from as far back as 1961). None of these movements surpasses the five-minute mark, with most being roughly around one minute in length.

Kashkashian has lived with this music for decades, and the notoriously fastidious composer has indeed revised several movements with her in mind. At Eastman, she played the nineteen pieces in chronological order, dividing them into several blocks, between which she illuminatingly commented on the pieces’ genesis, their position within Kurtág’s *œuvre*, and the evolution of the composer’s style. For this recording, she has devised a performance order that springs back and forth in time, providing a nicely contrasting sequence of roughly thirty minutes.

“Easy listening” it ain’t, but definitely worth the effort: this is some of the most intense music written in the past few decades, and Kashkashian has internalized every detail of Kurtág’s concentrated scores—that can include more words of instruction than notes—so that in her hands they sound as natural as a folk song or a nursery rhyme.

The six movements of Ligeti’s Sonata were also composed piece-meal, between 1991 and 1994, but together they form a monumental modern counterpart to Bach’s unaccompanied string masterpieces. There exist masterful recordings of this piece by Tabea Zimmermann (who first performed the complete work in 1994), Garth Knox (who premiered *Loop*, the first part to be completed, in 1991), Zimmermann’s disciple Antoine Tamestit, and Lawrence Power. Now Kashkashian joins them with a highly personal performance that transcends the printed page and sounds completely at home in the piece’s several different idioms, be it the gypsy-like C-string meditations of the *Hora Lungă*, the swinging *Loop*, or the obsessive *Chaconne chromatique*. ECM’s lifelike recording brings Kashkashian as it were into one’s own music room. Her tone, which can reach almost unbearable heights of expressiveness, is faithfully captured within a warm acoustic.

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