Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 35 Number 2

Features:

Weinberg's Viola Sonatas

Viola d'amore in the Baroque

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.

Eligibility:
All entrants must be members of the American Viola Society who are currently enrolled in a university or who have completed any degree within twelve months of the entry deadline.

General Guidelines:
Entries must be original contributions to the field of viola research and may address issues concerning viola literature, history, performers, and pedagogy. Entries must not have been published in any other publication or be summaries of another author's work. The body of the work should be 1500–3500 words in length and should adhere to standard criteria for a scholarly paper. For more details on standard criteria for a scholarly paper, please consult one of these sources:

Bellman, Jonathan D. *A Short Guide to Writing about Music*. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson, 2007.
Herbert, Trevor. *Music in Words: A Guide to Writing about Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
Wingell, Richard J. *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009.

Entries should include relevant footnotes and bibliographic information and may include short musical examples. Papers originally written for school projects may be submitted but should conform to these guidelines; see judging criteria for additional expectations of entries. Any questions regarding these guidelines or judging criteria should be sent to info@avsnationaloffice.org.

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

Entries will be judged according to scholarly criteria, including statement of purpose, thesis development, originality and value of the research, organization of materials, quality of writing, and supporting documentation.

Submission:
Entries must be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word by May 15, 2020. For the electronic submission form, please visit http://www.americanviolasociety.org/Competitions/Dalton.php.

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

Journal of the American Viola Society

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News & Notes

Feature Articles

Departments

On the Cover:
Wang Dalin
***A Viola & a Drawing Stand in Field* (2012)**
Oil on canvas, 100x80 cm

Wang Dalin was born in Shanghai in 1949 and is recognized for his horse paintings, abstract figure drawings, and square apple sculptures. He is the art curator at the Shenzhen Art Museum, and designed the museum's interior. He has exhibited his works throughout Asia, North America, and Europe. He is represented by Alisan Fine Arts: http://www.alisan.com.hk/en/

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

The *Journal of the American Viola Society* is published in spring and fall and as an online-only issue in summer. The American Viola Society is a nonprofit organization of viola enthusiasts, including students, performers, teachers, scholars, composers, makers, and friends, who seek to encourage excellence in performance, pedagogy, research, composition, and lutherie. United in our commitment to promote the viola and its related activities, the AVS fosters communication and friendship among violists of all skill levels, ages, nationalities, and backgrounds.

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JAVS welcomes articles from its readers. Submission deadlines are December 15 for the Spring issue, April 15 for the Summer online issue, and August 15 for the Fall issue. Send submissions to the AVS Editorial Office, Andrew Braddock *editor@americanviolasociety.org* or to Madeleine Crouch, 14070 Proton Rd., Suite 100 Dallas, TX 75244

From the Editor

When all the work of putting together an issue is complete, I relish in the opportunity to reflect on the issue as a whole. This issue gives us a view of extremes: from both very old music (Lanson Wells's exploration of Baroque viola d'amore) to very new (David Wallace's guide to a newly commissioned piece), from little known works (the Weinberg sonatas) to well-worn classics (*Märchenbilder* and Rachmaninoff's sonata).

In addition to featuring a wide array of music, this issue runs the gamut from first time contributors to *JAVS* veterans. We're delighted to publish one of our recent winners of the Dalton research competition. This annual competition offers a glimpse into the vital world of student viola research. Please see the inside cover for details of this year's competition.

From the other side of the spectrum, I'm especially grateful to have a contribution from one of the most respected violist-scholars in the world, Myron Rosenblum. He brings his insightful perspective and breadth of knowledge to his interview with Richard Wolfe. Myron was the founder of the Viola Research Society (VRS), which later became the American Viola Society, and he was the founder and editor of the VRS Newsletter, the predecessor to this journal. It's an honor to publish more of his scholarly work.

In a similar vein, David Wallace's article about the new work *Submerged* is his final article as the editor of the Eclectic Violist department. He's served in the position since 2008, and his body of work in *JAVS* is a true education for anyone seeking the infinite varieties of viola music. He's written about electric viola/violists, looping pedals, a guide for blues playing, and improvised variation, just to name a few. If you're seeking specific idea, or just needing some inspiring variety for your practice, check out David's articles, beginning in volume 25. Thank you to David for all of your enlightening contributions.

While each issue takes a huge amount of planning, there are always delightfully unexpected moments leading to its creation. One of those occurred with the two articles in this issue about Weinberg's sonatas. Several years ago, I became transfixed by Julia Rebekka Adler's recording of Weinberg's complete viola sonatas, in part because of her stellar playing, and also for the gripping nature of these pieces. I knew that *JAVS* needed to highlight the sonatas in some way, but I wasn't sure how until I met Krzysztof Tymendorf after attending his lecture at the Rotterdam Viola Congress. I seized on the opportunity to ask him to write about the sonatas for *JAVS,* and he enthusiastically penned the article featured here. A few months after receiving his article, Viacheslav Dinerchtein contacted me and sent along his reflections about recording the complete sonatas. This little bit of luck allowed me to pair together these two articles, each exploring the sonatas from completely different viewpoints. On one hand, Tymendorf delves into the history of Weinberg and his sonatas while sharing Weinberg's fascinating views of the viola. And on the other, Dinerchtein brings his first-person perspective of why we as performers throw ourselves into such daunting and unknown projects, and what it means for a work to be a "masterpiece." I feel so lucky to have stood at the convergence of the efforts by these two great violists and writers, and to have to opportunity to share it with you. I hope that their articles spur an even greater interest in these works for years to come.

Finally, *JAVS* is seeking applications for the newly-created Assistant Editor position. If you, or anyone you know, are interested in contributing to the management of this journal, please see the description in the Announcements section on page 5 for further details, and feel free to contact me at editor@americanviolasociety.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew Braddock
Editor

From the President

The holidays are past, and schools are back in session, the days are slowly getting longer, and we can look forward and see spring on the horizon. I really hope that everyone is looking positively toward the future.

Have you been to the AVS website recently? If so, I hope you have found it easier to navigate. Adam and Brian spent a lot of time reworking it to make it more user-friendly.

What's next on the horizon for the AVS, well the 2020 Festival of course. Hillary Herndon, the AVS President-Elect is hosting the Festival at The University of Tennessee-Knoxville. We are looking forward to a Festival filled with great sessions, master classes, competitions and more. For more information about the Festival you can go to the AVS website. You will find the AVS Festival listed under the News & Events tab. There is information on presenters, a link to register online or simply print the PDF form and send it in. The form also offers you a good deal for on campus housing and meals. The AVS has always prided itself on providing relatively low cost accommodations and meals for Festival attendees.

We have closed the application process for the 2022 Festival Site Search and are now in the process of making a decision. Stay tuned for the results.

We don't have much to report yet on the 2021 Primrose International Viola Competition. Keep practicing!

I'm approaching the end of my term as AVS president. Hillary will be taking over as president on July 1 and so we are holding elections soon for a new President-Elect and four Members-at-Large. Keep an eye out for your ballot information. Thanks to all who have agreed to accept nominations or have self-nominated.

One of the challenges of keeping the website up-to-date is having current information on the status of local viola organizations. Whether you are a member of a statewide society, a local city group, a college or university viola class, or any combination of organizations, the AVS would like to be able to keep the website updated with your group's current information, including a Facebook listing. Please send me an email with updates and your website URL if you have one. Send the information to me at mpalumbo45@gmail.com. Also remember to join the AVS Facebook Group if you haven't already. All you have to do to join is go to www.facebook.com/groups/americanviola and click on the Join link. You will be asked three simple questions to assure us you aren't a robot.

As I close this letter, I want to thank you personally for your continued support of the AVS. Membership is the lifeblood of any organization, and every member is equally important in sustaining this great organization that we call the American Viola Society.

Warm regards,

Mike

Mike Palumbo
AVS President

Advertiser Index

Announcements

Assistant Editor of *JAVS*

The *Journal of the American Viola Society* is seeking applications for the role of Assistant Editor. The duties of the position may include writing and soliciting articles, copyediting, proofreading, and communicating with authors. The assistant editor will work closely with the editor in the production of two annual print issues and a summer online issue. Workflow will vary depending on the issue but should average no more than fifteen hours per issue. Experience with image editing and music notation software (Finale or Sibelius) is beneficial. Interested applicants should send a cover letter to editor@americanviolasociety.org by February 29, 2020. Compensation is $500 per year.

AVS Executive Board Nominations

I. The Nominations Committee of the AVS Executive Board is seeking nominations for President-elect and four Member-at-Large positions commencing **July 1, 2020**. Any AVS member in good standing who is a U. S. citizen and/or U. S. resident is eligible to be nominated.

II. Nominees should be highly motivated and prepared for significant service assignments and committee work to further the aims and programs of the society. In keeping with the AVS's commitment to serve a diverse constituency of violists and viola enthusiasts, the AVS especially encourages nominations from groups currently underrepresented within its membership, such as music educators and amateur violists. Nominations of individuals with expertise in development, finance, social media/web development, and organizing events (such as festivals and workshops) are also encouraged. Nominees for President-elect must have served three years as either an officer or a board member within the last nine years as of the date of assuming office.

AVS members are encouraged to send recommendations for nominees (self-nominations are allowed), and all nominees must be AVS members. Non-AVS members are encouraged to join or renew their memberships to be eligible to participate in the process.

To submit a nomination or self-nomination, send an email to Michael Palumbo (nominations@americanviolasociety.org), chair of the Nominations Committee, **by January 31, 2020**. The email should have the subject "AVS Nominations" and should include the following information:

- Name of the nominee
- Email address of the nominee
- Name of the nominator (if not a self-nomination)
- Personal statement by the nominee (up to 500 words) addressing (1) his or her relevant experience and qualifications and (2) what he or she would contribute to the board. Nominees are encouraged to consult the information provided below about AVS board responsibilities and needs, in order to provide specifics about how he or she fits these criteria.
- A bio (up to 100 words)

Visit https://www.americanviolasociety.org/AVS/Nominations.php for detailed nomination guidelines, eligibility requirements, board responsibilities, and an explanation of the nominations and election process.

Additional questions about the nominations process or the responsibilities of AVS officers and Executive Board members may be addressed to Michael Palumbo, chair of the Nominations Committee, at nominations@americanviolasociety.org.

American Viola Society Festival
June 3–6, 2020
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

Held at the Natalie L. Haslam Music Center at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville, the festival will feature established and emerging viola performers, educators, composers, scholars, luthiers, and enthusiasts in concerts, competitions, masterclasses, lectures, workshops, seminars, and exhibits.

Special guest artists include Jennifer Stumm, Victoria Chiang, David Perry, Yizhak Schotten, Mathew Lipman, Dmitri Murrath, Doris Preucil, Karen Ritscher, Ellen Rose, 2019 Concert Artists Guild Competition winner Jordan Bak, 2018 Primrose Competition winner Haesue Lee, the Nashville Symphony Viola Section, and many more.

Large Group Performance Opportunity: All attendees are invited to participate in the world premiere of a viola ensemble work commissioned for the 2020 American Viola Society Festival. Christian Colberg, Principal Violist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, is composing this year's mass ensemble work and will be on hand to lead the group. Rehearsals are Thursday-Saturday mornings of the festival, culminating in a Saturday afternoon premiere performance.

Masterclasses at the 2020 AVS Festival will be given by: Ralph Fielding, Dimitri Murrath, Doris Preucil, Karen Ritscher, Yitzhak Schotten, Jennifer Stumm, Juliet White-Smith, and Emerging Artists Andrew Braddock, Eve Mondragon and Jacob Tews.

The 2020 AVS Festival will take place in Knoxville, Tennessee, a vibrant city within driving distance of much of the Eastern United States and only twenty minutes from McGhee Tyson Airport.

The 2020 AVS Festival features two special opportunities to experience Knoxville. First, catch up with old friends and make new ones on our **Sunset Welcome Cruise**, sailing right after our early evening concert on Wednesday, June 3. Your ticket includes a full dinner, dessert and non-alcoholic beverages as you enjoy the sunset on a full two-hour Tennessee River cruise on *The Star of Knoxville*, an authentic paddlewheel vessel. Then finish your 2020 AVS Festival experience with a **Taste of Knoxville**! Your $20 ticket includes a commemorative AVS Festival pint glass, plus discounts at some of the hottest restaurants and brewpubs in Knoxville's Central District. Please come join us in Knoxville!

Register here: http://www.americanviolasociety.org/News-And-Events/AVS-Festival.php

Mieczysław Weinberg and the Future of the Viola

Krzysztof Komendarek-Tymendorf

Mieczysław Weinberg in his studio in 1982. Photos of Weinberg provided by Tommy Persson; copyright: Olga Rakhalskaya.

Supported by musicological analysis and aesthetic impressions, Mieczysław Weinberg's legacy has put the viola on an equal footing with other instruments. More than that, it has proven that the viola is an instrument of the future. Four Sonatas for solo viola, the transcription of the Sonata for clarinet and piano, a Piano Quintet, seventeen String Quartets, a String Trio and a Trio for flute, viola and harp are all convincing proofs of artistic, performance, and expressive qualities of the viola in Weinberg's rendition. While he composed for the viola, he also wrote for specific performers. He claimed that the performance itself offers inspiration, stimulating in turn the imagination and vision of the composer himself. He treated the viola as a "liberated" instrument, exceptionally melodious, without technical limitations and with a great future.

Weinberg's Fate

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996) was a Polish Jew who spent his childhood and early years in Warsaw. He was brought up in a musical family: his father was a conductor, violinist, and composer while his mother played the piano. From an early age he lived in close contact with music, showing great interest in it and making attempts at composing. Until the age of twenty,

he received music education in Warsaw where he was a student of the best piano pedagogue in Poland, Józef Turczyński of the Warsaw Conservatory.

By the mid-1930s, Weinberg already had several compositions to his name. In September 1939, however, the happiest period of his life ended. He had to escape from Warsaw, and after many grave and dangerous experiences, he managed to get to the USSR. He continued his composition studies at the Conservatory in Minsk where his teacher was Vasily Zolotariov. Several of his main influences and inspirations were Sergey Rachmaninov, Józef Hofmann, Artur Rubinstein, Fryderyk Chopin, Karol Szymanowski, Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky and Dmitri Shostakovich. While in Minsk, he also continued to study and perform as a pianist. After graduating from the Minsk Conservatory, Weinberg went east to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In October 1943, thanks to Dmitri Shostakovich's help, Weinberg moved to Moscow, where their friendship and cooperation in the field of music flourished.

After the war, Soviet artists' situation was difficult as they did not have the freedom to create. Weinberg was arrested by the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) and accused of "Jewish bourgeois nationalism." After Stalin's death, the situation improved: in music as in other areas of culture there was a political "thaw." Despite adversities of fate and tragic experiences both during and after the Second World War, Weinberg's music heritage is enormous.

Weinberg's inspiration came from three worlds: Polish, Jewish, and Russian. This is evidenced by his selection of texts and themes, melodies and rhythms, as well as his approach of borrowing music from all three traditions. He acquired a very good musical education, drawn from the music of famous artists, but he himself created music as he heard and felt. He believed that melody was the most important element in music and no doubt music was his refuge during the war and his life in the USSR. During his lifetime, Weinberg's works were performed by the Soviet music elite: Kiryl Kondrashin, Mstislav Rostropovich, David Oistrakh, Rudolf Barshai, Fyodor Druzhinin, Emil Gilels and the musicians of the Borodin String Quartet.

Weinberg's Works for Viola

Mieczysław Weinberg was fully aware that Dmitri Shostakovich's musical farewell in his last work—the Sonata for viola and piano in C major, op. 147 (1975)—was a real tribute to the viola. Weinberg's works for viola represent another, perhaps even greater, tribute to the instrument.

Before composing four sonatas for solo viola, Weinberg had written voluminously for solo string instruments, including two sonatas for solo violin, three sonatas for cello, twenty-four preludes for solo cello, and a sonata for solo double bass. Weinberg composed the cycle of Sonatas for solo viola over a dozen years, 1971–1983. In the four solo sonatas, the viola is presented as a singularly melodious instrument.

The composer dedicated each sonata to an outstanding viola player. He dedicated Sonata no. 1, op. 107 to Fyodor Druzhinin in 1971, who developed this piece and gave its premiere. Sonata no. 2, op. 123 was dedicated to Dmitri Shebalin, the violist of the Borodin Quartet in 1978. It was performed for the first time in 1982 in Moscow by Mikhail Nikolaevich Tolpygo. The third and fourth sonatas were composed in August 1982 and December 1983, respectively. They received further opus numbers and both were dedicated to Mikhail Nikolaevich Tolpygo, who was Vadim Borisovsky's and Fyodor Druzhinin's best student. Tolpygo was the principal violist of the USSR State Symphony Orchestra and a popularizer of Weinberg's works.

One of the most interesting and also the longest is Sonata no. 3 (1982). The five-movement construction of the Sonata is certainly the Polish artist's creative entry in genera of the sonata. This valuable initiative demonstrates that it is possible to find an alternative to one of the most perfect forms, composing at the same time a piece whose reception is sensible and legible in the scheme of its parts. The sonata is a five-part form in neoclassical style. This is the only sonata in the whole cycle which has five separate, very demanding parts that are juxtaposed to each other. They are all devoid of tempo markings in Italian, only numbered I, II, III, IV, V. In the first bars of each part, there is no meter defined by the composer.

In the sonata cycle we can find all the features of Weinberg's music: melancholy, sadness, nostalgia, distance, suppressed colors, pessimism, darkness, decadence, horror, mistrust, irony, and the grotesque. There are, as well, Jewish melodic motifs, an avoidance of pathos, attention to detail, emotional depth, the fullness of expression of themes (Weinberg had an outstanding melodic sense), and all this in a classically balanced form. In the viola sonatas, it is clear that the composer wanted, with full conviction, to use and present the viola as an instrument with great artistic value and technical and expressive possibilities in a surprisingly versatile and deep way.

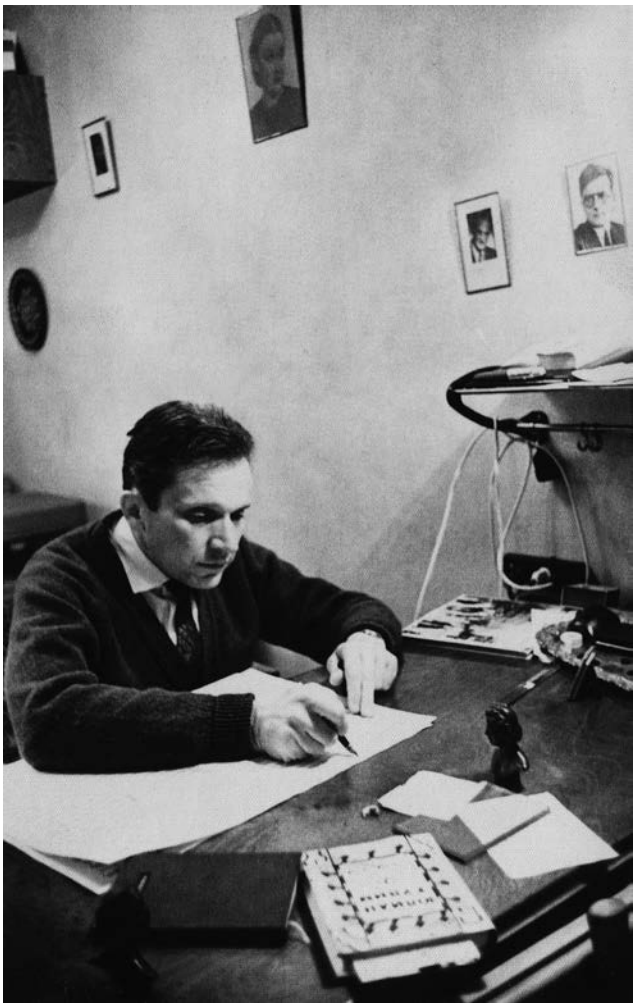
It is in Weinberg's chamber music that the viola's voice becomes particularly important, virtually equal to the other instruments of the ensemble. This is evidenced by the transfer of all qualities and recognizing its distinctive role through a large number of solo sections. To those who have not yet become acquainted with Weinberg's chamber music, I suggest catching up quickly; I assure you that you will be exceedingly positively surprised.

If the reader of this article is interested in the entire list of works of the composer with detailed information about first performances or dedications, consult David Fanning's *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: In search of freedom*[1] and Danuta Gwizdalanka's *Mieczysław Weinberg: Composer from Three Worlds*.[2]

Weinberg on the Viola

It is worthwhile to note here an interesting and valuable interview conducted with Mieczysław Weinberg by the violist Stanisław Poniatowski on June 18, 1978. The composer emphasizes the importance of the viola and its artistic, performance, and expressive possibilities. He disagrees with those who say that the viola in the low register sounds worse than the violin, and that the nasal, oboe shade appears in the upper register. Above all, Weinberg treats the viola as an instrument with high melodious capacity. He deems the viola sound to be more piercing than the violin and claims that a good performer will render all the mystery, enigma, and sublimity of the viola sound.

In the same interview, Weinberg emphasizes the importance of the works of such artists as Berlioz, Bartók, Hindemith, and Shostakovich for the development of the viola. He mentions that when he wrote for the viola for the first time, it was with the wonderful viola player Fyodor Druzhinin in mind. In his works entitled "Sonata," there are no sonata allegro forms, instead there is a suite form, so the parts have to be put together. He further points to the groundbreaking meaning of Shostakovich's "Sonata", which reveals the great concert possibilities of the viola.



Weinberg in his study (in the flat at Tverskoy Bulvard, Moscow) in 1962 composing his song cycle Old Letters, Op. 77, eight romances to words by Julian Tuwim, for soprano and piano. Weinberg dedicated this song cycle to the eminent soprano Galina Vishnevskaya. However, to this day there is no record of whether she ever performed it. Julian Tuwim, who like Weinberg had to flee his native land in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland, was Weinberg's most beloved poet. Weinberg set several of Tuwim's poems to music, as well in song cycles as in two of his Symphonies (Nos. 8 and 9, composed in 1964 and 1967. Photos of Weinberg provided by Tommy Persson; copyright: Olga Rakhalskaya.

After familiarizing oneself with the above-mentioned interview, it should be concluded that Weinberg valued the viola greatly and did not see any limitations of that instrument compared to the violin or cello. He believed that the viola is a "liberated" instrument, its solo repertoire is widening, the achievements of violists are growing, and they feel themselves to be full-fledged concert musicians, and that contemporary composers have shown great interest in the instrument. He was convinced of the great future of the viola as a solo instrument due to its great artistic and expressive possibilities.

The Viola as an Instrument of the Future

The viola pieces mentioned above are mostly undiscovered, as they have yet to enter the standard viola repertoire. (There are, however, two recordings of the complete sonata cycle: Julia Rebekka Adler's from 2010, and Viacheslav Dinerchtein's in 2019). One reason for their relative absence in concert performance is that they require high technical skills and outstanding musical imagination from the performer. Weinberg was fascinated by the masterful performance of soloists-violists: Vadim Borisovsky, Fyodor Druzhinin, Mikhail Nikolayevich Tolpygo, and Dmitri Shebalin. He created various musical forms for this instrument with great passion and hope for the future.

Undoubtedly, Weinberg's works belong to the most intriguing 20th-century pieces for the viola. His music combines different emotions and styles, while being accessible to every music lover. It is difficult not to hear the artist's life experiences and his dramatic fate in these works. While interpreting his music, we owe it to him to communicate his emotions which he wanted to present through his musical talent and power.

I am glad that the interest in Weinberg's music has been growing steadily. In concert halls around the world, his works are heard more and more often. Even until recently, he was known to the average listener as the composer of film music for "The Cranes Are Flying", operas "Passenger" and "Portrait" performed at the Grand Theater in Warsaw, and the music for animated children's films such as Toptyszka *Boniface's Holiday* or *Winnie the Pooh*. But now, his chamber and concert works can be heard with ever-increasing frequency.

I have been interested in the legacy of twentieth-century viola composition for a long time, with particular emphasis on Weinberg's work. I have included his works in my permanent concert repertoire.

I am enthusiastic about the fact that contemporary composers write in such a way that performers can use the entire viola diapason: the instrument has become "liberated" and autonomous. The viola requires mastery and possession of innovative means of expression in order to show the real artistic-expressive richness of the works written for it. I fully agree with Weinberg that the viola is an instrument of the future.

Dr. Krzysztof Komendarek-Tymendorf has for many years been among the eminent Polish musicians of his generation. He currently works as an adjunct assistant professor at Stanisław Moniuszki Academy of Music in Gdańsk. He earned a doctorate in July 2018 and has studied with Irena Albrecht, Wolfgang Klos, Ulrich Schönauer, and Alexander Zemtsov among others. He is a laureate of numerous competitions, prizes, awards and scholarships. He made his debut as a soloist with a Polish Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Sopot. For more information, visit his website at www.tymendorf.com

Notes

[1] David Fanning, *Mieczysław Weinberg. In search of freedom* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2010).
[2] Danuta Gwizdalanka, *Mieczysław Wajnberg: kompozytor z trzech światów* (Poznań: Teatr Wielki im. Stanisława Moniuszki, 2013).

The Butterfly Effect: An attempt to understand why I recorded the Four Viola Solo Sonatas by Mieczysław Weinberg

Viacheslav Dinerchtein

The cover of the author's recently-released recording of Weinberg's Sonatas.[1]

Not long ago I came across an entertaining little story. As it goes, Picasso was once challenged to define what makes for a true masterpiece—a *chef-d'œuvre*—and what separates it from a work of a skilled dilettante. To that, Picasso made some random scribble: "This could be a work of a skilled dilettante." He then autographed it, adding, "And now it is a *chef-d'œuvre*." This anecdote, true or not and amusing as it is, raises some not so amusing—indeed, rather uncomfortable—questions. Can a true work of art stand on its own without any external backing? Can it defend itself through its own virtue? The first outcry from most of us believers is, "Of course it can!" Yet one cannot help but wonder how many genuine masterpieces fell into eternal oblivion because they lacked a Picasso signature.

How could it happen, for instance, that Schubert's unquestionable genius was not so unquestionable to his contemporaries? Or that Van Gogh sold but one painting in his entire life? And are we certain the world would have inherited Van Gogh's legacy, were it not for his sister-in-law, who, after Van Gogh's death and that of his brother, worked tenaciously for years to build his name, which in turn brought the recognition his work deserved?

And what about Kafka, who died in misery and unsure of his literary talents—after all, there was nobody but his best friend to find merit in his work. Would we not lose one of the most original literary contributions of the twentieth century, were it not for the fact that his friend, instead of burning Kafka's work as stipulated in his will, took the opposite tack and published it instead? Let us not forget, doing so took years of arduous effort as well. The opposite can happen too. Telemann, far and away the most revered composer in his lifetime—even by Bach and Handel—was thrown into a virtual nonexistence that lasted two centuries, arguably by way of one acerbic, influential critical comment.

Mieczysław Weinberg came to experience the best and the worst of all worlds. He did see a time when his music was embraced by the most prolific interpreters of the day—Oistrakh, Kogan, Rostropovich, Gilels, Richter, Barshai, the Borodin String Quartet, occasionally with Weinberg himself on the piano. He later fondly referred to those as his "starry years." On the flipside, Weinberg saw his music abandoned by both the Soviet musical establishment and the newer generation of performers, to be eventually forgotten. Today, he has been unexpectedly resurrected and is at the height of his popularity. What lies behind this meteoric comeback? Is it the inherent force of Weinberg's

music? Is it the chaotic and aleatory undercurrents that seem to seep into the natural selection of the fine art history? Is it perhaps the several highly devoted Weinberg enthusiasts who quietly, behind the scenes, persevered in bringing about this extraordinary revival? Or perhaps it is the catalysing effect of Weinberg's rising glory that is now propelling his music further and further?

Along those lines went my conversation with an accomplished violist, who chose to abstain from getting to know Weinberg's viola solo sonatas, dismissing the entire growing "Weinberg craze" as a trend. "Pages and pages of obscure complex music—can be done, but . . . *why*!?" Clearly, the music itself had no say in the decision making. But that aside, I had to acknowledge there was a point. Indeed, *why*? If nothing else, learning the music alone is a major time investment that does little to advance the human species—it does not contribute to world peace, it does not feed nor provide shelter. Learning those "pages and pages of obscure complex music" appears to be, in fact, devoid of any down-to-earth measurable value or purpose whatsoever.

Oh, that dreaded *why,* which so many in the artistic field will struggle to answer! The whole nihilistic doctrine seems embedded into it, plain for all to see. Even Shostakovich, when asked to shed light on his enigmatic quotations of Rossini's *William Tell* and Wagner's *Ring* in the Fifteenth Symphony, found nothing better to say than "I don't myself quite know why the quotations are there, but I could *not*, could not *not* include them." He then proceeded to contemplate the enigma of the creative process, on how it lives by its own rules, not always explicable through logic.

As with Shostakovich, Weinberg never actively concerned himself with such rhetorical nonsense—and perhaps less so in the later period of his life when the viola sonatas were written. It was a period plagued with difficulties: declining health, a rapidly shrinking circle of lifetime friends and distinguished colleagues; the Commission of the Ministry of Culture's decision to stop purchasing his scores—an important source of income; and, with avant-garde fashions taking over, a shortage of performers of his music. (As Mikhail Tolpygo, the dedicatee of the Third and Fourth Viola Sonatas recalls, "When the sonatas were written, it was not an out-of-ordinary event for me. I played them in a concert and just moved on to the next piece in line.") Towards the end of his life, Weinberg retreated more and more into the solitude of . . . just composing. In his own words: "So long as I am writing, the work interests me. When the piece is finished, it doesn't exist anymore. Its fate (whether ostracization by the Philharmonic Societies, lack of performances, silence in the press, scorn from the music critics) is all the same to me." All the same or not, Weinberg, the USSR State Prize laureate, must have surely noticed that his 75th anniversary, which by tradition ought to have been honoured with a ceremonial concert, went by completely ignored and unnoticed. Without a shadow of a doubt, Weinberg died in full conviction that his music was dying with him.

And so, returning to our initial question: Can a true work of art—here, a piece of music—rely on its own merits to find its place? For as much as we wish it might be otherwise, the answer seems to be "No, it cannot. Not until the work in question is experienced by others", and even the Picasso signature—here, Weinberg's blooming recognition—is helpless for as long as the score is lying on the shelf. And that is the *raison d'être* of my recording. There is a good chance that you are unfamiliar with this music. I invite you, I encourage you, I dare you to embrace this opportunity, unique and fragile, to open your ears and your heart to this new exotic world. I dare you to listen without prejudice, comparisons, and other mundane noise. This music does not require a prepared listener but, yes, an attentive one, and if you allow yourself to dive into it with your head, I know you will experience that little bit of Weinberg's universe, a universe of lights and shadows and conflicts and sensations. It is a very honest and very human universe, which is perhaps what pulled me into it in the first place. All the same, already in the early stages of my becoming acquainted with these sonatas, I knew I could *not*, could not *not* share them eventually, through a recording.

Viacheslav Dinerchtein has appeared in recitals and chamber music concerts throughout North and South America, Europe and Asia. He is President of the Swiss Viola Society and an editor for music publishing houses Ovation Press and Amadeus Verlag, and has long been recognized for his efforts to promote the unattended viola repertoire. He resides in Zurich, Switzerland, with his wife and two children.

Notes

[1] Mieczysław Weinberg—Complete Sonatas for Solo Viola. Viacheslav Dinerchtein, viola. 2CD centenary edition; Solo Musica / Sony Music (SM310)

The Viola d'amore in Baroque Opera, Oratorio, and Cantata

Lanson Wells

Introduction

Truly unique among western classical bowed string instruments, the viola d'amore, with its multiple bowed and sympathetic strings, found its most exalted use in the operas, oratorios, and cantatas of the Baroque period. This article will explore and analyze the most important compositions for this expressive instrument, as well as provide an in depth look at the instrumental techniques employed by the four most important composers to write for the instrument: Attilio Ariosti, Antonio Vivaldi, Christoph Graupner, and J.S. Bach. My hope is that this article will serve as a performance guide for violists and violinists who are interested in performing upon the viola d'amore in either a modern or historically informed context. Additionally, this article will provide a history of the viola d'amore as well as brief biological sketches of the aforementioned composers. I will also give special attention to three important non-vocal works in the canon of this instrument. These will be the *Six Lessons* by Ariosti, the eight viola d'amore concerti by Graupner, and the eight viola d'amore concerti by Vivaldi.

History of the Viola d'amore

The viola d'amore is the only instrument played upon the shoulder in the western art music tradition that features both bowed and sympathetically vibrating strings.[1] As seen in its final form, the viola d'amore appears to be a combination of the construction of at least two families of instruments: combining the sloping shoulders of the viola da gamba and the rounded back of the violin. The viola d'amore has either six or seven bowed strings, as well as a matching set of non-bowed sympathetically vibrating strings. German instruments more often feature a six by six string configuration, and Italian instruments more often feature a seven by seven string configuration.[2] The viola d'amore is traditionally constructed with a scroll in the shape of a cherub with a blindfold over one or both eyes, providing a physical allusion to the adage "love is blind."

Figure 1. A contemporary viola d'amore made for Ann Frederking by luthier Olivia Pelling in 2013. Photo courtesy of Olivia Pelling.

The name of the instrument points toward its genesis story. "Viola d'amore" could possibly be a corruption of "viola de moor."[3] The characteristic sound holes of the instrument are in the shape of the flaming sword of Islam. This is the only string instrument in the western tradition that features this type of sound hole, which points toward a Middle Eastern origin. An Arabic or Moorish origin is additionally supported by the existence of many traditional instruments such as the rebab and the kamāncheh.[4] It is very possible these influences found their way to Europe through either the Crusades of the 13th and 14th centuries or the Silk Road trade route. In Europe, the viola d'amore was likely further developed by luthiers in Salzburg and Munich.[5]

The first description of the use of sympathetic strings in Europe occurs in Michael Praetorius' *Syntagmatis Musici,* which was printed in 1618. This work mentions the use of sympathetic strings on the viola da gamba, proving that sympathetic strings must have been integrated into European musical instrument construction prior to 1618. The first written reference to the viola d'amore is found in the 1679 diary of English lute and viol player John Evelyn. He calls the instrument by name, notes the six bowed strings, and also makes a reference to the tuning of the instrument.[6]

Compositions for the Viola d'amore

This section provides a timeline of the viola d'amore, including the most important compositions written during the Baroque period. The first printed work for the instrument was composed by Heinrich Biber around the year 1674, and his Partita in C Minor for two violas d'amore and continuo is the first to notate a definite tuning for the instrument. Biber suggests a six string C minor chordal tuning, and it is likely that Biber gave the first performance of this work. The next important printed work for the viola d'amore is *Pur alfin gentil viola* by composer and virtuoso string player Attilio Ariosti. This cantata for voice, viola d'amore, and continuo was likely composed between 1688 and 1690.

The first documented use of the instrument in the opera house occurred in a 1697 Dusseldorf production of J. H. Wilderer's opera *Il Giorno di Saluto*. This was the first of several operas composed by Wilderer which use the viola d'amore in an obbligato role. The fact that Wilderer used this colorful orchestration several times means there was a capable viola d'amore player living in Dusseldorf at the turn of the century. The next notable use of the instrument in the opera house comes in Attilio Ariosti's 1707 production of his opera *Marte Placato.* It is very likely that the composer himself played the part in this production.

Around 1715, Antonio Vivaldi began to write for the viola d'amore. Performed in 1716, the oratorio *Juditha Triumphans* featured an aria accompanied by viola d'amore. This appearance was followed by the instrument's use in a 1719 production of the opera *Tito Manlio.* Most of Vivaldi's eight viola d'amore concerti were likely written in the mid-1720s. This same time period saw German composer Christoph Graupner compose thirteen cantatas and numerous other concerti and chamber works which include the viola d'amore as an obbligato instrument.

J.S. Bach wrote for the instrument four times during his landmark career. His Cantata 152 of 1715 includes an obbligato viola d'amore part. *The Saint John Passion*, written in 1723, includes two arias with two viola d'amore soloists. Cantata 205 composed in 1725, and Cantata 36, which was composed in 1730, both include a solo viola d'amore part.

Attilio Ariosti and the Viola d'amore

Composer and performer Attilio Ariosti was born in Bologna, Italy in 1666. Like most musicians of this time period, he received his musical training through the church. During his lifetime, he held positions as an organist in his home town of Bologna, as a composer to the court of the Duke of Mantua, and as a performer in Berlin for Sophia Charlotte of Hanover. Ariosti wrote twenty-three operas, many cantatas and oratorios, and twenty-one sonatas for viola d'amore. He also mounted productions of his operas in Venice, London, and Paris. Ariosti likely died in Italy in 1729 or 1730.

Ariosti's first important work for viola d'amore is the aforementioned cantata *Pur alfin gentil viola*. Ariosti composed this beautiful cantata around 1690, and the manuscript resides in Darmstadt, Germany (Danks, 1979).[7] Written in the early part of the composer's life, this cantata provides several clues to Ariosti's use of the viola d'amore. Though no tuning for the instrument is suggested, the work is firmly written in the key of

C minor. Thus, the composer must have intended a chordal C minor tuning. Ariosti does makes some use of the closely related keys of C major, G major, and F major. Notably, Ariosti uses C, F, and E flat pedal tones. This work showcases the viola d'amore in a more solostic role than his opera *Marte Placato.* The writing in both voice and viola d'amore is florid and melmastic and the instrumental part features many chords. Fast scalar passages are interspersed with melodic motives that provide a backdrop for the soprano soloist. The instrumental challenges of this work are considerable, and certainly demand a high level of technique. I believe that this work was written for the composer to show off his own instrumental abilities, and that the technical challenges of this work would have been beyond many players of the time period.

Ariosti's opera *Marte Placato* provides an entirely different look at this composer's use of the viola d'amore. Composed between 1705 and 1707, and staged in 1707, this opera features two short arias where the viola d'amore doubles the vocal line. These simple parts involve no double stops and no quick passagework. I suspect that these parts were composed so a violist or violinist who was only cursorily acquainted with the instrument could effectively play them. These parts, also in C minor, would also be a wonderful introduction or etude for a student of the viola d'amore.

Likely composed in 1724, Ariosti's *Six Lessons* are among his most important compositions. Dedicated to England's George I, these works were composed to persuade violinists to take up the viola d'amore. Arisoti crafted six sets of pieces in sonata form, which are written for a four-stringed instrument. These pieces cover five possible tunings for the viola d'amore and are comparable to the *Mystery Sonatas* of Heinrich Biber. For these works, the composer devised a complicated system of scordatura notated via movable clef signs. Sadly, Ariosti left only a single unfigured bass line, meaning that the intended harmony is lost to time. The combination of unusual notation and an unfigured bass line have meant that to date there is no modern edition of this work.

Figure 2. Donald Maurice with his viola d'amore. Photo courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

Antonio Vivaldi and the Viola d'amore

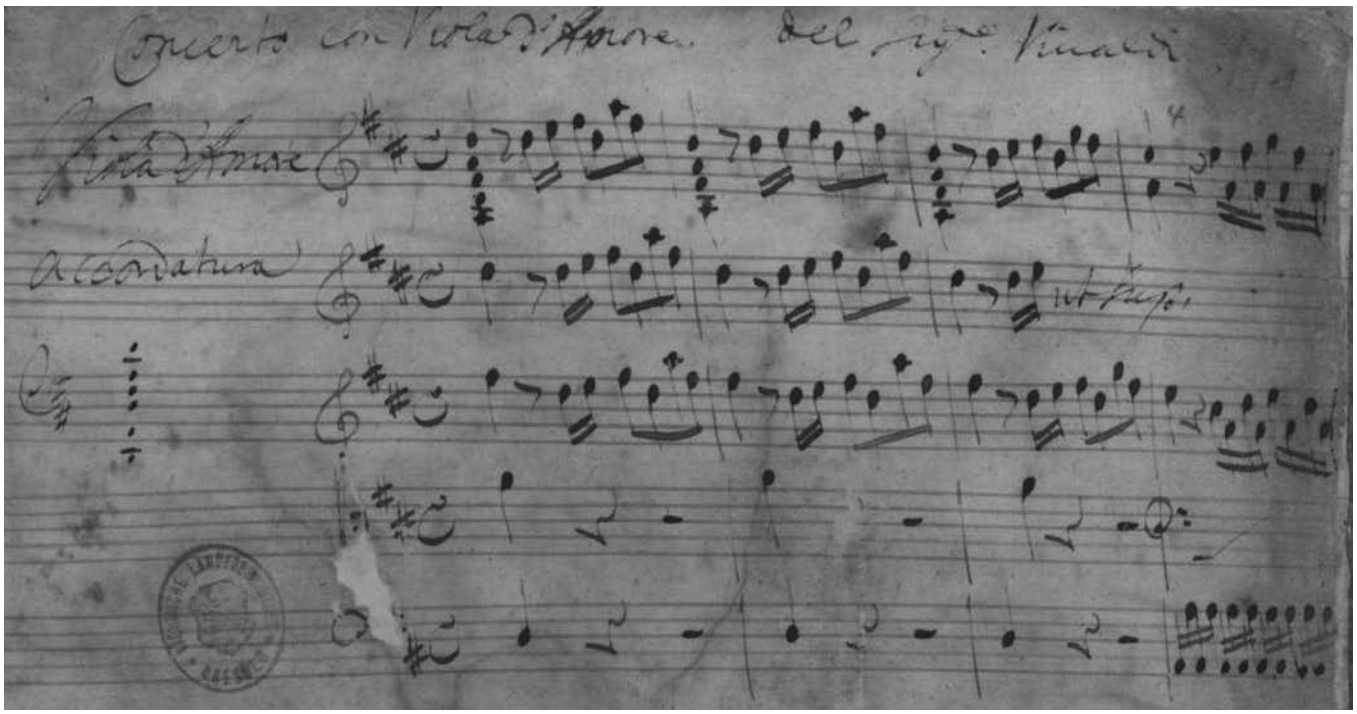
Composer and violinist Antonio Vivaldi was born in Venice, Italy in 1678. Vivaldi began violin lessons at a young age, studying primarily with his father, a professional violinist. At age fifteen Vivaldi entered the priesthood, and he was ordained at age twenty-five. Throughout his life, Vivaldi likely suffered from asthma, which led him away from a career as a cantor to a career

as a performer and teacher at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. Though well-known for his violin playing and string concerti, Vivaldi also composed over thirty operas, some of which were performed as far away as Prauge and Vienna during the composer's lifetime.

The first written reference to the viola d'amore in Vivaldi's life occurs in 1708 when he requested funds from the Ospedale della Pietà to purchase special wire viola d'amore strings. This request is especially telling, giving us a reference that the viola d'amore the composer was using would have certainly had wire sympathetic strings.

Vivaldi's earliest composition using the viola d'amore is his 1716 oratorio *Juditha Triumphans*. This work includes two arias, both of which are written in D major, along with Vivaldi's indication to use a D major tuning. These works include an obbligato solo part that is nearly a concerto, with passagework and scalar writing that mirrors the famed violin concerti of the composer. The next documented use of the viola d'amore in Vivaldi's oeuvre is the 1719 production of the opera *Tito Manlio*. This work includes a single aria for soprano that features a viola d'amore solo. The solo, written in D minor, is more lyrical and languid than the part found in *Juditha Triumphans* of 1716. Vivaldi conducted the premier of this work, and it is likely that he played the solo from the orchestra pit. Vivaldi adapted the solo from this aria for violin so it could be performed without the composer present. Like the easier works of J.S. Bach, this solo would be ideal first repertoire for the beginner student of viola d'amore.

The eight concerti for viola d'amore by Vivaldi are a significant portion of the instrument's concert repertoire. Six of the concerti are scored for viola d'amore and strings, one for viola d'amore, lute, and string orchestra, and one that uses the instrument as part of a concerto da camera. Like the many famed violin concerti of Vivaldi, these works feature difficult fast passagework. Vivaldi clearly notates the tuning of the instrument for each of these concerti. Nearly all first and third movements of each concerto feature double, triple, and quadruple stops. Vivaldi's lyrical Italian operatic writing can be found in the typical slow second movements of these concerti. The slow second movements are usually devoid of chordal or double stop playing, and the viola d'amore takes center stage with lyrical lines, often played on only a single string. Vivaldi's exciting performances of these concerti are recorded in many contemporaneous sources, making him one of the most important proponents of the instrument in his time. The extremely idiomatic string writing of Vivaldi for the viola d'amore is the panicle of the use of the viola d'amore in the Baroque era.



Example 1. Antonio Vivaldi, Concerto for Viola d'amore in D major, RV 392. The opening measures of the first movement in the composer's manuscript. The viola d'amore is the upper line.

J.S. Bach and the Viola d'amore

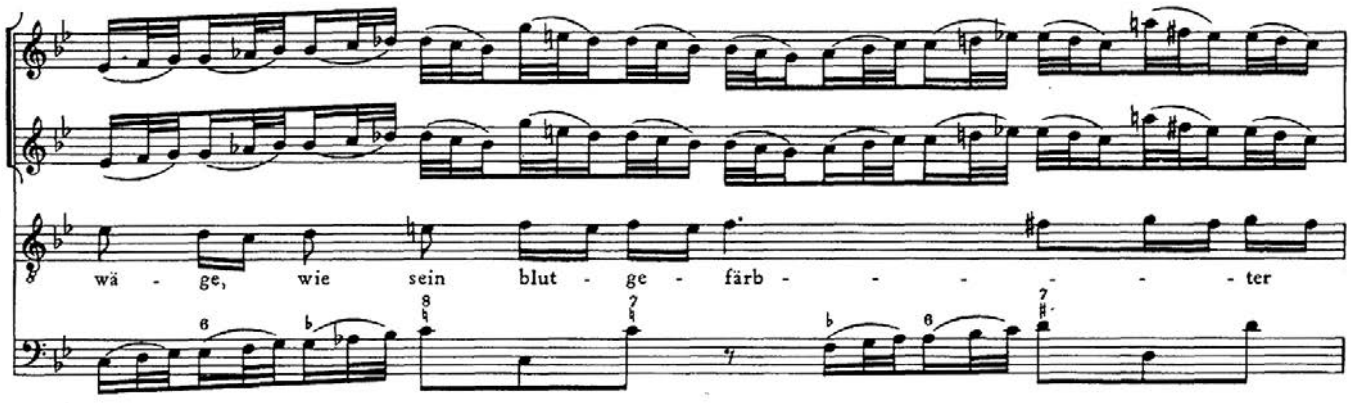
Johann Sebastian Bach wrote for the viola d'amore only four times throughout his career. Though the masterful composer of solo works for violin and cello did not write an unaccompanied work for the viola d'amore, he did use it in four sacred works: three cantatas and one oratorio. The technical demands placed on the soloist in all four compositions are minimal. Despite the unique tone color of the instrument, as well as the chordal and arpeggiation possibilities, Bach chose to write simple, single string melodic phrases. No chords, double stops, or bariolage arpeggiations are used in any of the four works.

The first use of the viola d'amore in Bach's oeuvre is found in Cantata 152, which was composed in 1714 during his employment in Weimar. Bach scores the instrumental ensemble for this cantata for flute, oboe, viola d'amore, and viola da gamba. The viola d'amore plays an ensemble role throughout the cantata, but its highlight is a contrapuntal duet in the aria no. 4. This aria in D minor features both flute and viola d'amore in obbligato roles. The beautiful but undemanding part should be played in a D minor tuning, thus making many of the aria's melody notes fall on open strings.

Bach's second use of the viola d'amore, and the most often performed of these works, is found in the *St. John Passion.* This work, which was composed in Leipzig around 1723, features two arias that use the viola d'amore. These two arias (no. 31 and 32 in the work) are scored for voice (bass and tenor respectively), two violas d'amore, and lute. They are composed in C minor and G minor respectively. For this work, the violas d'amore should be tuned in a C minor tuning, which will allow the most important notes in theses keys to resonate with an open string. Throughout both arias, Bach writes lilting melodic lines in the intervals of thirds and sixths. All of the motivic material in aria 31, and the vast majority of that in aria 32 is in rhythmic unison.

In 1725, Bach again wrote for the viola d'amore in Cantata 205. As in Cantata 152, the viola d'amore is given an accompanying role with the ensemble, as well as a featured obbligato role in one movement of the work. The fifth movement is an aria for tenor, viola d'amore, viola da gamba, and harpsichord. In this work, which is written in D Major, Bach puts the tenor voice on nearly equal footing as the viola d'amore. Though the instrument can use many open strings because of the choice of key, this movement includes the most scalar passage work and quickest divisions of the beat in any of Bach's writing for the viola d'amore. This composition is his only work that would demand a studied player of the viola d'amore.

Bach's final use of the viola d'amore is found in Cantata 36c, composed in Leipzig in 1730. In this work, unlike the other two cantatas, the composer only uses the instrument in an aria, and not as part of the instrumental ensemble. During the sixth and seventh movements of the work, the viola d'amore doubles and reinforces a soprano solo. This unassuming and lyrical part, written in the key of D major, would make an ideal study for a new student of the viola d'amore.



Example 2. J.S. Bach, St. John Passion*, "Erwäge, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken," Aria 32 for two violas d'amore (top lines), tenor, and basso continuo.*

Christoph Graupner and the Viola d'amore

Christoph Graupner was born in Hartmannsdorf, Germany in 1683. He received his initial musical training from his uncle Nicolaus Kuester, who was a local parish organist. He furthered his musical education under Johann Kuhnau and studied law at the University of Leipzig. In 1705 Graupner took a position as harpsichordist of the Hamburg Opera, where between 1705 and 1709, six operas of his own were produced. In 1709, Graupner took a position serving the court of Hesse-Darmstadt, where, until his death in 1760, he would compose and perform music for the court chapel.

Graupner included the viola d'amore in more compositions than any other composer during the Baroque period. These compositions include eight concerti, twelve suites with overtures, seven trio sonatas with flute and continuo, one sinfonia, and thirteen cantatas.[8] These works were composed from 1710 to 1748, the largest span of any of the four composers considered in this article. Though only a small portion of Graupner's scores have been published in modern editions, many of his instrumental viola d'amore works have been included in these editions. Many other viola d'amore works, including that cantatas, are available through copies of the composer's autograph score.

A survey of Graupner's concerti and trio sonatas includes only the keys of C major, C minor, D major, D minor, F major, G major, and G minor. It is important to note that all of these works could be played using either C major or C minor, and D major or D minor tunings. This suggests that Graupner must have had an in-depth knowledge of the application of scordatura and string playing.

An analysis of the string techniques in Graupner's viola d'amore concerto in D major GWV 317, viola d'amore concerto in A major GWV 339, and his Trio Sonata in D major GWV 205, reveal very similar stylistic traits. Each composition contains quick exterior movements, with fast, but not difficult passage work, and a slow-paced interior movement which feature lyrical lines in quarter and half notes in the viola d'amore solo. The string writing found in these works is reminiscent of that found in Vivaldi's concerti, though notably there are no double stops or chords in any of these works. It is justified to say that Graupner wrote for the viola d'amore in exactly the same fashion he wrote for the other instruments of the string family.

Examples of Graupner's use of the viola d'amore from his cantata repertoire show very similar compositional techniques. A survey of these works, using copies of Graupner's autograph scores, of three cantatas, *Halleluja Dank und Ehre* GWV1109, *Erwacht ihr Heiden* GWV 1111, *Kommt Seelen seid in Andacht stille* GWV 1119, provide further proof that Graupner wrote for the viola d'amore without taking advantage of any of the idiomatic traits of the instrument. In comparison to his concerti, there is less quick paced passage work and more homophonic writing in these three cantatas.

Graupner left the largest oeuvre of viola d'amore works of any composer of the Baroque period. In his compositions he presents a middle ground of instrumental writing, blending fast passage work (similar to the works of Vivaldi) with simple instrumental lines (similar to the works of Bach). As Graupner did not include double stops or chords in his works, I believe that that the composer must have been drawn to the unique tone color and large pitch range of the instrument. For the student, these works can bridge a gap between the simple arias of Bach, to the more complex concerti of Vivaldi.

The Viola d'amore and String Pedagogy

The viola d'amore presents several technical challenges to both professional string players and interested students alike. Due to the large physical proportions of the instrument, I would recommend that anyone interested in the viola d'amore should already be an advanced violin or viola player. Challenges such as navigating a fingerboard that is more than double the width of a violin or viola, holding up the much heavier scroll, and learning to cope with a peg box that is more than twelve inches long are only the beginning of the "rebalancing" necessary for a new viola d'amore student. Common single string exercises such as those by Ševčík or Schradieck would certainly help any string player to learn the geography of the viola d'amore's wide fingerboard. The large and curved bridge, which has much closer string spacing than that of a violin or viola, is one of the largest technical challenges to the instrument. Direct and careful study is needed to master string crossing and bariolage on the viola d'amore. Sadly, at this point in time, there is not

Figure 3. A selection of repertoire for viola d'amore ordered by difficulty level.

Difficulty Level	Composer	Title	Tuning
Easy	Ariosti	Arias from *Marte Placato*	D Major
Easy	Bach	Cantata 152	D minor
Easy	Bach	*St. John Passion*	C minor
Easy	Bach	Cantata 36c	D Major
Easy	Vivaldi	Arias from *Tito Manlio*	D Major
Moderate	Graupner	Concerti	C Major, C minor, D Major, D mionr
Moderate	Graupner	Orchestral works	Various
Moderate	Graupner	Trio sonatas	C Major, C minor, D Major, D minor
Moderate	Graupner	Cantatas	Various
Moderate	Vivaldi	Arias from *Juditha Triumphans*	D Major
Difficult	Ariosti	*Pur alfin gentil viola*	C minor
Difficult	Ariosti	*Six Lessons*	Various
Difficult	Bach	Cantata 205	D Major
Difficult	Biber	*Partita for two viola d'amore*	C minor
Difficult	Vivaldi	8 Concerti	D Major, D minor, A Major, A minor, C minor, violin tuning

a modern etude book that can supply the student with etudes specific to the viola d'amore. The final challenge to learning the viola d'amore is navigating several different tunings for the instrument.

To aid students and teachers of the viola d'amore, I have compiled the repertoire addressed in this research document into the chart below, which indicates each composition's level of difficulty as well as its correct tuning.

Conclusion

The operas, oratorios, and cantatas of Arisoti, Bach, Graupner, and Vivaldi represent the finest use of the viola d'amore during the Baroque era, and I believe the instrument survived into modern times largely due to its use by these composers. It is my hope that the distinctive tone color of the instrument continues to attract curious string players, and that the amazing depth of repertoire (some of which has yet to be printed in modern editions) will continue to be discovered and developed.

The skills that any string player would gain from studying the viola d'amore will certainly prove to be a worthy asset on their main instrument. A violinist or violist who embarks upon devoted study of this instrument would soon find that their string crossings are more crisp, their left hand more agile, and that their overall physical strength is greater. A strong understanding of scordatura is not common among modern string players, and obtaining this skill would open an entire world of repertoire to any violist or violinist.

It is my hope that this article can provide a much-needed collection of information on the viola d'amore, as well as serve to guide any performer interested in the delicate, beautiful, and unique timbre of the viola d'amore.

Lanson Wells is a violist and librarian who holds viola performance degrees from the University of North Carolina School for the Arts and UNC Charlotte. He recently completed a Masters in Library and Information Sciences at Kent State University, and he currently works in the music library at Baldwin Wallace University.

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[1] Myron Rosenblum, "Viola d'amore" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd edition. London: Macmillan, 2001

[2] William Monical, *Shapes of the Baroque: The Historical Development of Bowed String Instruments* (New York: American Federation of Violin Makers, 1989), 32.

[3] Harry Danks, *The Viola d'amore* (West Midlands: Bonner, 1979), 11.

[4] Danks, 11.

[5] Monical, 31.

[6] Rosenblum.

[7] Danks, 17.

[8] Rosenblum.

Let's Play *Submerged!*

David Wallace

Composer Miguel del Aguila. Photo by Donna Granata.

Origins and Background

When my flute-viola-harp trio, *Hat Trick,* began plans for our debut CD,[1] we resolved to commission a new work.[2] After much discussion, listening, and research we reached out to Miguel del Aguila.

Why del Aguila? As a group, we loved his chamber music and admired his skilled harp writing. We also knew that he could contribute a work to our genre that was authentically Latin American, modern, yet accessible to any audience.

The resulting composition, *Submerged,* did not disappoint! Miguel del Aguila's *Submerged* is a *tour de force* combining Andean traditional influences, haunting classical harmonies, compelling new instrumental techniques, and imagery from Spanish lyric poetry. The dancing rhythms, beautiful melodies, evocative birdsong, and drama consistently captivate every audience who hears it.

As the work continues to gain popularity with international performances, I wanted to share more insights into the work, its unique viola part, and approaches for successfully navigating its challenges and extended techniques.

Poetic Inspiration

Because two works on our CD centered on poems,[3] we invited Miguel to consider choosing a poem for his inspiration. Without hesitation, he chose Alfonsina Storni's "Yo en el Fondo del mar" from her 1934 collection, *Mundo de siete pozos.*

As Del Aguila comments in his program note:

> On the surface, both the poem and music seem innocent and light-hearted, but one feels differently when the author's fascination with the sea, and her later suicide by drowning in it, are taken into consideration. The piece follows the form of the poem except for the lively introduction and coda, which illustrate the poet's childhood near her native Argentine Andes, and in Switzerland.

Scordatura

The first challenge violists must navigate is del Aguila's scordatura. To obtain the maximum resonance and richness from the harp, Del Aguila composed *Submerged* in A flat minor. We must tune our violas down a semitone, which increases our tone's resonance and richness, but also helps us to imitate the sound of a charango.

"Yo en el fondo del mar" By Alfonsina Storni (1892–1938)	"Me at the Bottom of the Sea" Translation by M. del Aguila
En el fondo del mar hay una casa de cristal.	At the bottom of the sea is a house made of crystal,
A una avenida de madréporas da.	at the edge of a coral-lined street.
Una gran pez de oro, a las cinco, me viene a saludar.	A big golden fish comes to greet me at five;
Me trae un rojo ramo de flores de coral.	it brings me a red bouquet of coral.
Duermo en una cama un poco más azul que el mar.	I sleep on a bed a little bluer than the sea.
Un pulpo me hace guiños a través del cristal.	Through the glass now an octopus winks.
En el bosque verde que me circunda —din don . . . din dan . . . — se balancean y cantan las sirenas de nácar verdemar.	In the green forest that surrounds me sway mermaids who sing —ding, dong . . . dong, ding— in their nacre and aquamarine.
Y sobre mi cabeza arden, en el crepúsculo, las erizadas puntas del mar.	And above my head glow in the twilight the prickling pins of the sea.

In a way, though, we "have it easy" by playing scordatura. Instead of navigating and fingering a part written in seven flats like our flutists do, we simply read and play *Submerged* as though it were written in A minor. With the looser tension, we are also less likely to break a string, which may not be the case for scordatura pieces for which we tune up.

In concert performance, the scordatura creates a few minor logistical issues. If you are retuning your instrument mid-concert, allow time for your instrument to settle into the new pitch. Usually a minute or so is adequate, but tune twice: once to adjust the instrument to the lower pitch spectrum, and a second time to fine-tune or readjust for any string stretching or pitch changes that may result from retuning.

When *Hat Trick* plays *Submerged*, I usually tune as flutist April Clayton introduces the piece. We typically program *Submerged* as a concert finale or the last work before intermission. That said, *Submerged* works very well as a concert-opener, and starting the concert with scordatura allows ample time for the instrument adjust. If you need to tune back up to concert tuning, follow the same process, i.e. tuning twice and allowing a minute or two for the instrument to adjust.

Playing in scordatura may initially pose mental blocks for violists who are unaccustomed to it. Violists with absolute pitch or limited experience with transposition, microtonality, or alternative tuning systems tend to experience the most difficulty, but take heart!

Because the noteheads are in the same place on the staff as they would be without scordatura, we do not experience quite the same visual cognitive dissonance that we can when reading Mozart's scordatura part for *Sinfonia Concertante* in D major.

Simply invest some time in the new tuning. Play some scales, and listen to the new timbre of your viola. Play some familiar etudes or pieces down a half step. Before you know it, your ears, eyes, and fingers will gain comfort with navigating a fingerboard with a different pitch spectrum.

"Like a charango"

Del Aguila uses the viola to evoke the charango, a South American plucked instrument that traditionally used an armadillo shell as its resonating chamber. For most of the piece, we hold our violas in "guitar position," leave the bow down, and strum. If you are unfamiliar with Andean folk music or the charango, your first task is to do some research, watching, and listening.

You quickly will discover a variety of traditional and contemporary styles, as well as differing techniques according to country and region. In realizing del Aguila's instruction "Pizzicato molto sul tasto downwards with the thumb, upwards with the index. Like a charango," I found videos of Oscar Miranda and Jaime Torres particularly helpful in understanding the strum. By now, many excellent video examples are available of both strumming and fingerpicking charango playing.

Practice the strum on a single chord, until the rhythm becomes free, grooving, and automatic. Keep the right wrist and fingers loose, and allow your forearm to rotate with the strum.

The trio Hat Trick. *Left to Right: harpist Kristi Shade, violist David Wallace, and flutist April Clayton.*

In terms of left-hand chords and intonation, you will have better luck with the fifths and double-stops by supinating your left forearm so that your fingers are more perpendicular to the strings than in your usual playing position—almost like a guitarist playing barre chords. Using the left thumb to slightly dampen the C string will help you to realize Miguel's instruction, "IV corda always softer than the others."

As is often the case with chamber music, the violist's rhythm drives the piece. As Miguel wrote me when first he sent the parts, "It's not about the beauty of your sound; you are the entire 'percussion section' here." Just go for it!

Calluses and fingernails

When Miguel sent the first draft, he warned "You may get blisters from practicing this too much at the last minute, so start slowly." I have to admit, I was so excited by his music that I quickly developed a thumb blister on the first night. Undaunted, I continued playing until the blister's demise, then spent the two weeks wishing that I had followed his advice. Please take the time to develop proper calluses!

These days, I spend enough time strumming chord changes on my viola that the skin on my thumb and index finger don't need too much help getting back into shape. Still, I usually give myself a week or two of building up my calluses before a *Submerged* performance.

If you are new to strumming, a good rule of thumb is to practice strumming only up to the point that your fingers are feeling tender, but never past it. Come back the next day. If you still need to rehearse, but you feel a hot spot developing, substitute a thin guitar pick or a felt ukulele pick to give your skin a rest.

Some violists have opted to use a plectrum for the duration of *Submerged*. However, I strongly recommend using your fingers and skin. You will be hard pressed to find a traditional charangista using a plectrum; the thumb and forefinger generate an entirely different strum. Nonetheless, I discovered that Miguel's introductory chords speak much more clearly and are easier to project when I use a thin guitar pick (see fig. 1). Miguel incorporated this option into his final score.

On the downbeat of bar nine, you can see that I've penciled in a different voicing. This was Miguel's original chord. When I was still trying to navigate his opening with the thumb and forefinger charango strum, I had told Miguel that this particular chord was not "playable." That is, it seemed impossible to make it speak well so high up the neck. Admittedly, I also was still struggling with the intonation challenges of this voicing. However, when I experimented with strumming the opening nine bars with a plectrum, I learned that Miguel's original voicing can speak very well. I actually prefer Miguel's original resolution to his revision, but either voicing is acceptable.

As the strumming intensifies, Miguel asks for a change of texture: "With the thumb's fingernail." While charangistas often use their thumbnails for strumming, I found growing out my thumbnail and strumming with it problematic on a number of grounds. Specifically, we need a shorter thumbnail for holding our bows, the wide curvature of our bridges puts more stress on the thumbnail, and our strings are thicker and provide more resistance than a charango.

As a compromise and solution, I developed a technique using my index finger. I brace my thumb against a fairly stiff index finger and use my finger as a makeshift plectrum. On the downstrokes, my fingernail engages the string, and on the upstrokes, the index finger callus and the rigid support of the underlying bone create a similar strum, even without engaging the fingernail. This approach generates the fingernail timbre, but without the risks of using a thumbnail.

The Underwater Section

> In my interpretation of Storni's poem this underwater world is that special place of isolation where many artists withdraw to create, a place and mood that can easily turn into depression.
> —Miguel del Aguila

While Miguel's instructions for the mysterious "submerged" middle section are quite clear, I'll share a few helpful details and answers to questions violists have asked me.

When flutist April Clayton and I first performed the antiphonal, offstage birdsong in measures 145–160, we endeavored (as always) to make exact polyrhythms and to line up our parts, almost metronomically. Miguel advised us that his instruction to the flute—"tempo and intonation quasi ad lib do not match harp's tempo"—carried over to our dialogue.

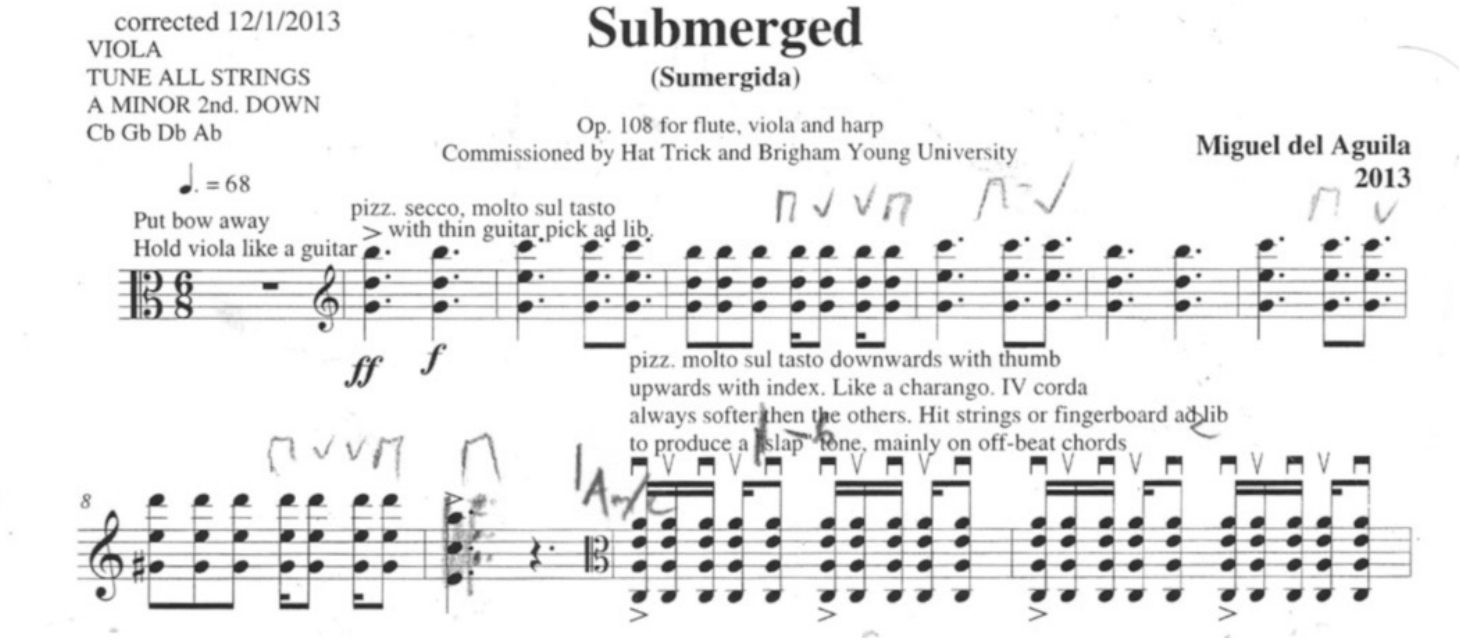


Figure 1. The opening measures of Submerged, with the author's markings.

Here, we should be birdsong, not metronomes. The time, and even the birdcalls should be natural and free. However, when the viola rejoins the harp at measure 160, the rhythm must come into stricter alignment as the composite rhythm hearkens back to the dance section.

For the "woodpecker" effect in measures 154–155, Miguel asks the violist to tap the knuck (screw) of your bow against the tailpiece. If you wish to tap along the length of your tailpiece, you'll be able to change the pitch of the tapping. For a larger or less resonant hall, tapping your bow on your chinrest may achieve better projection.

The most difficult part of the "submerged" section for me is navigating the switch between the arco figures and the behind-the-bridge plectrum birdcalls. If you're extremely quick and have a sturdy stand, you can leave the plectrum on your stand and switch between your bow and your plectrum. I usually feel safer holding my bow more like a club, as I simultaneously hold the plectrum. However, successful arco playing with this technique takes practice! For the behind-the-bridge plucking, I find that a hard guitar pick works best.

Transcriptions

Due to popular demand and commissions from other groups, Miguel del Aguila has made arrangements of *Submerged* for flute and viola duet; flute, violin, and harp; two harps; and three harps. According to Miguel, flutists are the ones who have been spreading the work and programming it. You can purchase parts and a score to *Submerged* by contacting Miguel del Aguila directly at miguel@migueldelaguila.com.

When Hat Trick performed *Submerged* in a showcase at the 2019 National Flute Association convention, I was surprised at the number of flutists who commented, "I would love to play this work, but I'm not sure I know a violist who could do that. . . ."

I'm hoping that as more of us master these totally reasonable and possible techniques, we, too, will spread the word and do our share to see that Miguel's wonderful contribution to our repertoire becomes widely loved and known.

Dr. David Wallace serves as Chair of the Berklee College of Music String Department. For a video tutorial demonstrating the techniques required to play Submerged, visit his YouTube channel. www.youtube.com/docwallacemusic.

Notes

[1] *Garden of Joys and Sorrows* (Bridge 9472), 2016.

[2] We are grateful for a generous grant from Brigham Young University, which co-commissioned *Submerged* and contributed towards the recording costs of our CD.

[3] Toru Takemitsu's *And Then I Knew 'Twas Wind* (based on Emily Dickinson's "Like Rain it Sounded Till it Curved FR# 1245) and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Garten von Freuden und Traurigkeiten* (based on the homonymous poem by Francisco Tanzer).

An Interview with Richard Wolfe

By Myron Rosenblum

Violist Richard Wolfe

When my wife was in college, she became good friends with two sisters—Judy and Dena Wolfe who were living in Queens, NYC. The youngest in the family was Richard, or Ricky as they called him back then. Although music was a big part of all the Wolfe children's lives, Richard was the only one who went on to become a professional musician and make his mark on the music world. Richard retired this past summer as principal violist of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra after 35 years of service. His recording of the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante with violinist Gordon Nikolic, concertmaster of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, will be released soon on the Tacet label.

Although little-known in the USA, Richard has made valuable contributions as orchestral musician, chamber musician and teacher in the Netherlands. And so, I am proud to share this interview with other violists so that you may know some of his intriguing thoughts and insights as violist and musician.

Myron Rosenblum: Although you have been living in the Netherlands for some time now, I know that you are American-born. Tell us something about your family, where you grew up and your early exposure to music.

Richard Wolfe: I am the youngest of five children, born into a family that loved and valued all the fine arts. My father was a graphic artist by profession, and my mother was a dancer in Martha Graham's company. So, my oldest sister studied ballet at the Metropolitan Opera school for 10 years—and then studied art in Paris, and made art her career. My other siblings have all had music in their lives as well, while pursuing other careers. But early childhood was framed by Bach and Schubert on the record player, and the sounds of piano, clarinet, cello, guitar and flute played by all my siblings swirling around me.

MR: You had a relative, Aaron Shapinsky, who was a professional cellist working in New York City. Did he have an impact on you and your early music education?

RW: I consider Aaron to be my guiding spirit. He was my father's nephew, and a marvelous cellist and musician. His initiative to tuck a violin under my chin at the age of 9, at the end of a family dinner, started me on my path in music. And throughout my youth and college years, a high point was always long weekends at the

Shapinsky family house in Hempstead, NY, where I experienced a mini-conservatory: lessons with Aaron and his wife Norma, also a cellist; chamber music with them and their son Ian, a fine pianist; listening to recordings; practicing—it is where I learned that music is an all-embracing passion.

MR: I knew you initially as a violin student and player. Who did you study violin with? What made you change to viola and when did you start playing viola full time?

RW: My strongest early influences were Mara Sebriansky, who later became associate concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony; and Dorothy DeLay, and her assistant at the time, Patinka Kopec. At the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati, I studied with Walter Levin, and had chamber music with him and with the other members of the LaSalle Quartet. In that time, I was 2nd violinist in a string quartet with Jorja Fleezanis. She was also studying with Levin, and later became concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra. That was my first exceptional chamber music experience. I remember that we shocked the LaSalles by playing the Webern *Six Bagatelles* by memory at our quartet final recital—that was their territory, after all! After CCM, I came back to New York for two years, where I had a revelatory experience studying with Gerald Beale. Gerry gave me challenges I had never faced before, and showed me how to surmount them. It was a very intense hothouse—and my last "violin school"—before heading abroad.

MR: Before you settled in Holland, you worked and performed in Israel as violist. Can you tell us something about your viola experience there?

RW: Israel is where the viola started becoming a serious aspect of my musical life. In my third year there I joined the Israel Chamber Orchestra. I had heard them play under their new chief conductor, Rudolph Barshai, who had just arrived from the Soviet Union, and I was mesmerized by the unity and power of that ensemble. In my second year with the ICO an extra violist was needed for the Third Brandenburg concerto, and Barshai asked me to be it. That was my first professional viola experience. Later I joined a string quintet with members of the orchestra, playing viola. So, in that way, the viola got under my skin.

When I arrived in the Netherlands, it was as a violinist. I then had the good fortune to study for a semester with Philip Hirshhorn at the Utrecht Conservatory (where I have been on the viola faculty for the past 20 years), and later to collaborate with him in a number of chamber music concerts. In my second year in Amsterdam, the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra (NKO—Nederlands Kamer Orkest) was having auditions, but only for viola. It was bit of a viola joke: in a section of four, the first three chairs were available! The first auditions brought no results. At that moment I thought, "I may as well try," even though the experience in Israel was still my only professional viola encounter. So, I borrowed a viola from a local luthier, studied like mad for three weeks, learning the Bartók concerto, the Arpeggione sonata, the first Bach cello suite, and the first movement of the Dvorák cello concerto! I loved that concerto, and in my youthful foolishness decided to take my one (and only) opportunity to play it. Well, I did play it, after which the departing principal violist came down the aisle (it was in the small hall of the Concertgebouw), laughing, but saying "I never heard it on the viola—but it's not bad!" So I won the second chair, and a year later, auditioned again (without Dvorák) and was appointed principal viola of the NKO.

MR: Have you been active in any Dutch Viola conferences, workshops or master classes? If so, which and when?

RW: Since joining the faculty of the Amsterdam Conservatory 10 years ago, I have been involved in our bi-annual National Viola Festival, where I give master classes and performances, often in conjunction with students. At the edition in 2014 I gave the Netherlands premiere of Joel Hoffman's solo viola piece, the beautiful and haunting *Krakow Variations*. I have given master classes under the auspices of the Dutch Viola Society, and I performed with a viola ensemble from the Amsterdam Conservatory at the 2018 International Viola Congress in Rotterdam.

MR: What is the state of viola playing in the Netherlands—or at least in Amsterdam—today?

RW: There is an extremely high level of viola playing here. There is a healthy mix of home-grown talent and international students and professionals. I am very curious to see the result of the audition for my position in the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, from which I retired at the end of the season, after a 35-year career there. My final concert was in the Concertgebouw, when I played the 6th Brandenburg concerto. Fittingly, it was on the 4th of July, Independence Day!

MR: In your European career, which violists have you heard or performed with who you consider outstanding?

RW: Antoine Tamestit is a wonderful musician of great integrity, and a great teacher. He has played with the NKO several times, and gave a very inspiring master class at the Amsterdam Conservatory last year, very insightful and practical. And I must mention Nobuko Imai: she is a treasured member of the viola department of the Amsterdam Conservatory, and at the age of 76 is a continuing source of inspiration as a teacher, an artist, and a performer of the highest level.

MR: I heard you in a fine chamber concert on Roosevelt Island, New York City a few years ago. Has chamber music been an important part of your performance activities?

RW: Chamber music is for me the essence of what it means to be a musician, and the source of my greatest inspiration. The reason I have always gravitated to chamber orchestras as my "steady" job is because it is an orchestral format which most closely resembles a chamber ensemble. (In the early days of the Israel Chamber Orchestra, until around the time of Barshai, local musicians would refer to it simply as "The Ensemble"). After my retirement from the NKO, my focus will be more time for chamber music!

For the past 15 years, the NKO has had a remarkable journey by becoming an ensemble which plays without conductor, led by our charismatic concertmaster, Gordan Nikolić. Gordan is an extraordinary musician who is always searching for the deepest meaning behind every phrase, every harmony, and asking each of us to take the freedom to explore for ourselves, to develop antennae which we didn't even know we have, and to come together from that perspective, to form a true ensemble.

MR: What are your options about a violist starting on viola, or would you suggest that one start on violin and then make the transition later?

RW: I do feel that having begun on the violin was an enormous advantage. As I began to seriously approach the viola, I felt that I had a certain technical reservoir which facilitated the move to the viola. Even though I had a lot to learn, I did have the confidence of being able to run up and down the fingerboard with aplomb. But obviously, there are many fine viola players, more and more in fact, who began at an earlier age, or even directly, on the viola. I see no contradiction in starting on the viola and becoming a wonderful violist. What I would say is, however, in defense of starting on the violin: a violist who has not had the violin training is missing out on such an exquisite musical experience, not only in terms of solo repertoire, but also in chamber music. It is just so much fun to sit down with a first violin part of a Haydn quartet, and try to make sense of it. And that is certainly a source of treasures which I would not have missed for the world.

MR: As one who has played both violin and viola, what would you say are the important differences between playing both instruments? Violinists do not always transfer to viola successfully, as good as they might be.

RW: The timbre of the viola: that is the heart of the matter. It seems to me that to transfer successfully to the viola, one has to begin with just one thought: What is the color I am looking for? If one is drawn in the first place to the magical world of viola sound, that is already the largest hurdle taken. After that, one is (hopefully) able to let one's fingers, arms, shoulders make the subtle adjustments in speed, angles, weight, to let the viola's voice come through. One of the nicest compliments I ever had was after a house concert in a village in Burgundy, France, when one of the guests said, "You are not making sound, you let the viola speak."

The ease and pleasure with which Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven went from one instrument to the other seems to me a good litmus test for what I would hope to achieve: music-making, in whatever context presents itself. Of course, specializing in the one or the other has its own advantages. But at one of the most successful institutes for young string players here in Holland—the

Fancy Fiddlers, run by Coosje Wijzenbeek—all the violin students also learn viola from the very first years, and they are all learning string quartets together, and are all taking turns playing first violin, second violin, and viola. (One of those young students of Coosje was Janine Jansen, who is also a marvelous violist.)

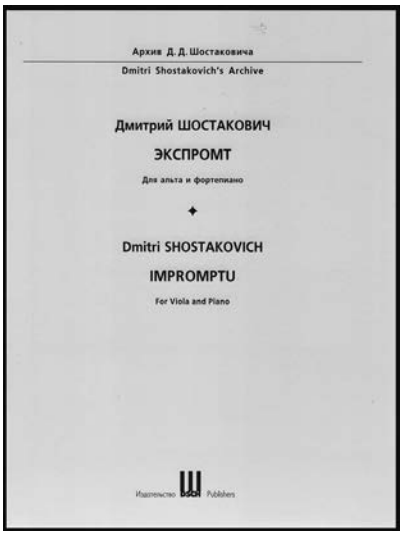
MR: In an earlier International Viola Congress in the USA, William Primrose was somewhat critical of big-name violinists with ongoing careers who took up the viola as a solo instrument at the same time. He felt that they were taking away potential playing opportunities from full-time viola soloists. Do you have any feelings about this point of view?

RW: Perhaps at that time it was more of an issue. In our time we have created a wealth of opportunity for performing, in every sort of venue and context, even as it remains a struggle for individuals, ensembles and larger arts organizations to make ends meet. And I see that performers in the classical music field at every level are creating and renewing, and opening the doors to this wonderful banquet of music to more and more diverse audiences. It seems to me that precisely because the viola is now seen so much more as an equal player next to the violin, the need to fear for a "hostile takeover" of the violist-only status diminishes. Ultimately, if a violinist turned violist-for-a-day plays gorgeously on the viola, it is only to the greater glory of the viola. However, if said violinist plays badly on the viola, heaven help him or her!

Myron Rosenblum, violist and viola d'amore player was born in New York City and has degrees from Queens College and New York University. He studied viola with Lillian Fuchs, Walter Trampler and William Primrose. He has edited music for viola, viola d'amore, and chamber works by Christoph Graupner, Alessandro Rolla, Ignatz Pleyel, Richard Lane, Franz Schuchbauer and has written articles for many journals. He is the founder and first president of the American Viola Society and is the co-founder and Co-Director of the Viola d'amore Society of America. He is the founder of the VRS Newsletter, the predecessor to this journal.

Music Reviews

Lauren Hodges



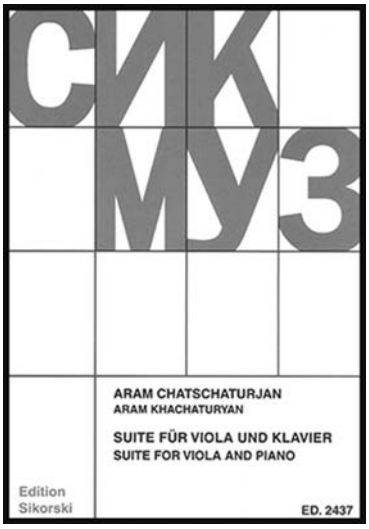
Impromptu, Op. 33
(1931)
Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906–1975)
DSCH Publishers
2”

“On September 25th, 2017, which would have been Shostakovich’s 111th birthday, it was announced that this Impromptu for viola and piano was found in the papers of the great Russian violist Vadim Borisovsky – held in the Moscow’s central archive …” [1]

The Impromptu, a newly discovered miniature for viola and piano, was composed in 1931 by the great Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich. Written 44 years before his viola sonata and eight years before his first string quartet, this piece is both lyrical and quirky in character. Shostakovich would continue to develop the voice of the viola in many of his later chamber works. The Impromptu was most likely written in memory of Aleksandr Mikhavlovich, the violist of the Glazunov quartet and a mutual acquaintance of Dmitri Shostakovich and Vadim Borisovsky, the violist of the Beethoven Quartet. In 2003, Borisovsky’s widow submitted a number of family papers to the Moscow Central State Archives, but this manuscript was miscatalogued as a printed edition and essentially ignored until musicologist Olga Digonskaya rediscovered it in 2017. The work was most likely written in one sitting while visiting friends. Shostakovich used the opus number 33 which was later assigned to the sweeping Romantic music that he wrote for the film called *Counterplan*. Digonskaya describes the piece as “slightly reminiscent of some of Shostakovich’s ballet music due to the combination of lyricism and somewhat grotesque scherzo-like lightness.”[2]

Paul Neubauer and Wu Han gave the United States premiere in May of 2018 at Lincoln Center and then repeated the performance at 2018 Music@Menlo summer music festival. The video recording from the Menlo performance is freely available on YouTube. Neubauer said that the Impromptu “has a delightful simplicity that was characteristic of his lighter compositions. The opening has a poignant feel, whereas the brief faster section has a whimsical flavor albeit with a hint of sadness.” The viola community should be excited to explore this charming little work for viola and piano by Shostakovich, adding a new dimension to his well-known orchestral and chamber works like the string quartets and Viola Sonata.[3]

The work is in G minor with two contrasting sections: a lyrical Adagio and a scherzo-like Allegro. Only two minutes in length, it could be used as a recital opener or as a short contrasting work between major sonatas. For those looking for short teaching pieces, this work would be appropriate for students at the intermediate level and beyond. The first section could be useful working on for vibrato, expression, and intonation in a minor key. Students would need to be familiar with third position, with additional color possibilities to explore sul-D for those who are so inclined. The Allegro section is marked spiccato and is mostly comprised of sixteenth notes that are playable in first position except for the last eight bars which venture into treble clef and require a knowledge of third position. Since intermediate and late-intermediate level repertoire is often sorely lacking, this piece is a great find for the advancing violist!



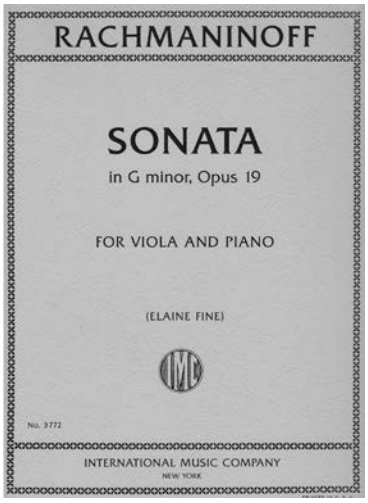
Suite for Viola and Piano (1929)
Aram Khachaturyan (1903–1978)
Sikorski
11”

When thinking of the Soviet-era composer Aram Khachaturyan, famous works like the Violin Concerto and *Sabre Dance* come to mind. I was delighted to explore this lesser-known Suite for Viola and Piano (1929), a two-movement work that Khachaturyan wrote at the age of 26 while studying at Moscow Conservatory. This work was originally withdrawn by the composer because he did not consider it to be up to par with his other compositions. Although there are metronome markings stated at the beginning of each movement, further directions for tempo, dynamics, articulations, and bowings are sparse or lacking, particularly in the viola part. With some imaginative editing by the performers, this short piece could be worthwhile addition to any recital program.

The first movement is marked at 92 to the eighth note, and it is written in ternary form with two folksong sections that frame a viola cadenza. It is centered around A-flat although there are six flats in the key signature, and the first section features many embellishments and runs that seem to be written out vocal improvisations on an Armenian folk melody. To emphasize this folk-like character, the piano sometimes functions like a drone with a repeated perfect fifth on A-flat in the bass. The central viola cadenza switches into a dance-like character, featuring rocking triplet rhythms that initially begin over a sustained G half-diminished chord in the piano and then continue unaccompanied for twenty-two additional bars. Khachaturyan takes full-advantage of the viola's resonance by writing rolled chords using many open-strings as the cadenza builds. He then brings back the same rocking triplet figures to end the cadenza section. When the song-like material from the opening returns, the viola part is altered rhythmically but accents preserve the desired inflections. After ten measures, the music modulates and the piano drone moves up by step to A, finishing off the remainder of the movement with only one friendly sharp in the key signature!

The second movement, also in ternary form, is marked at 69 for the quarter note. After a piano introduction, the viola enters with a folk-like melody containing augmented seconds and ornaments that lend greatly to the expression. The middle section passes through a variety of techniques including whole bow legato, rolled chords, repeated double stops, and spiccato. The transitions between these techniques are abrupt, but advanced or professional players can certainly make sense of them musically. There is an excellent recording of Maxim Novikov, viola, and Armine Grigoryan, piano, digitally released on their 2016 album called *Aram Khachaturyan, Chamber Works* and posted as videos on YouTube. It is interesting to note Novikov's choices for slurs, dynamics, and rubato as well as some actual edits. He removed octaves in m. 36 and changed the repeated sextuplet chords to triplets in mm. 53–58. The folk-like melody from the opening returns in m. 71, but this time it leaps into the high register in m. 77 for a dramatic finish. Oddly, there is a two-measure codetta marked Lento at the end of the piece that seems to end in G-sharp minor except for the E-sharp in the final pizzicato chord in the viola part.

In terms of playability, the key, ornaments and runs in the first movement might pose some difficulties, but the range does not extend beyond fifth position and the chords in the middle section are quite playable. The second movement has more difficult double stops and chords as well as a brief foray into the high register at the end of the piece. This piece would be an excellent way to introduce advanced students to twentieth-century music that is tonally centered around a pitch rather than in a traditional diatonic key. Overall, the level required would be late-intermediate to advanced.



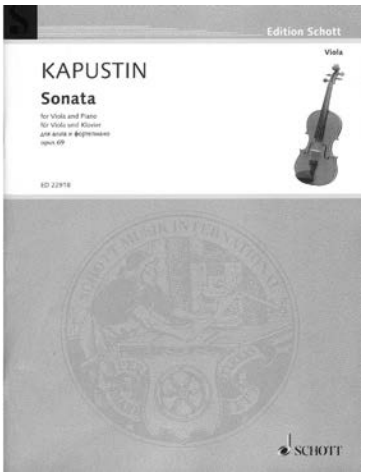
Sonata in G minor, Op. 19 (1901)
Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
International Music Company
34”

The Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata is one of the best-loved Romantic chamber works, and this transcription gives viola players the chance to play it without any changes to the piano part, which is the same as the IMC edition for cello and piano edited by Leonard Rose. Elaine Fine, a Juilliard-trained flautist who now works as a violist and composer, completed the viola transcription. Having played violin as a child, she returned to the viola in her thirties. Fine has composed three operas and more than 150 pieces of chamber, vocal and orchestral music, and she has a particular interest in transcribing lesser-known cello works for viola.[4]

In this edition, the viola part is very clear and easy to read. It is widely-spaced on the page with well-placed page turns, and it provides many piano cues during sections where the violist rests. Slurs and bowings are indicated clearly, but there are little or no suggestions for fingerings. In comparison with the more well-known transcription for viola and piano by famed Russian violist and pedagogue Vadim Borisovsky, currently available from Master’s Music, many passages are written either an octave higher or lower to keep the violist in the most comfortable registers. In the original part, many of the most climactic moments are notated in tenor or treble clef, and the cellist is able to soar passionately out of the texture in its high register. Fine chooses to drop the viola part an octave at the beginning of each of these sections so that the violist plays on the original pitches, comfortably in the mid-range register and mostly in first position. Her octave transpositions show a preference for lower positions, keeping the viola part largely within the middle of the range and rarely shifting beyond the third position. The limited range of the transcription makes it quite playable and accessible at the early-advanced stage of the young violist or for the amateur player with a case of cello envy. Although the piece necessitates advanced musical maturity and ensemble skills, the viola part is suitable for a casual read-though.

For a recital performance by the professional player, the Borisovsky transcription would be my choice. In my opinion, too much of the emotion and drama are lost when the violist is confined to the mid-register exclusively, and there is danger of a balance problem if the violist in the middle registers gets buried in the texture of the piano. When comparing a passage from the middle of the first movement (mm. 181–204), the Fine edition is easily playable, but the slurring and octave displacement lose the gesture and contour of the line. The lower octave here lacks power and drama compared to the Borisovsky version one octave higher.

Some passages have additional differences beyond the octave displacements. Perhaps the best example is the Vivace section at the very end of the last movement. Borisovsky added double-stops and reinforced the piano part to increase the drama building up to the end of the piece. Although Fine’s transcription is closer to the original cello part, Borisovsky’s added virtuosity more than makes up for the balance problems that often plague violists in a Romantic work of this scope.



Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 69 (1992)
Nicolai Kapustin (b. 1937)
Schott
17”

Russian composer and pianist Nicolai Kapustin composed the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 69 in 1992. An unfamiliar name to me, I was surprised to discover that he has 154 compositions to date, including a Sonatina for Viola and Piano (2015) as well as a variety of other concerti, piano and chamber pieces. Kapustin was born in the Ukraine in 1937, began composing at age 13, and moved to Moscow to study piano the following year. While a student at Moscow Conservatory, he composed and premiered his Op. 1 *Concertino for piano and orchestra.*

He was a member of several big bands during his student years and beyond, and the flavor and style of jazz music popular in the 1940s and 1950s made its way into his classical compositions. Like William Grant Still and George Gershwin, Kapustin used jazz idioms in classical formal structures. In regards to Kapustin's compositional style, one commentator wrote, "in chamber music the classical structures are radically transformed by principles which are specific to jazz thinking, namely improvisation and refinement in the development of rhythm and modal harmony."[5] Eliesha Nelson, Alaskan-born violist in the Cleveland Orchestra, recently released an album of American Music called *Permutations,* and she chose to include the Kapustin Viola Sonata because it incorporates elements of American jazz. Although the music is all precisely notated, Kapustin captures the improvisatory nature and spirit of jazz music. The Kapustin sonata is for the advanced player, largely because of intricate rhythms that create difficult ensemble between the two instruments.

The first movement of the Viola Sonata is an Allegro marked at quarter note equals 138. It begins with a piano introduction that repeats four times, with straightforward quarter notes in the left hand the first two times and with jazzy-sounding but precisely notated triplets and ties for the last two. When the viola enters, it continues the swung-sounding triplet figures that originated in the left hand of the piano. In spite of the quick tempo, this opening sounds laid back, dreamy and lyrical. When the violist breaks out into a sixteenth-note passage at rehearsal twelve and dissonant chords at rehearsal fifteen, the part sounds much more like Western Art Music of the twentieth-century. The jazzy elements remain, however, in the rhythmical complexity and syncopation in the piano part. At rehearsal fifteen, the piano part actually sounds like a walking bass line straight out of jazz! The violist finally gets a chance to sing in the two sections marked Meno mosso, accompanied by jazzy rhythms in the piano. Although the opening theme returns three times with different accompaniments, it isn't particularly memorable or compelling to me, and the piano part often sounds like unrelated music material.

The second movement is by far the most musically satisfying, and its expressive melody is well-suited to show off the viola's lovely mid-register timbre. The piano part provides an accompaniment that is mostly confined to the low register so that it does not cover or compete with the viola melody. As in the first movement, the rocking syncopations in the piano part provide jazzy character and an underlying rhythmical energy. There is a short section after rehearsal five that could be considered call and response style playing between the two instruments. Aside from a short section of *portato* sixteenth-notes at rehearsal seven, the viola part is lyrical and singable throughout, with scoops and slides indicated as grace notes or glissandi.

The third movement is a lively Vivace marked at 144 and comprised mostly of sixteenth-note runs with tricky chromaticism. Again, the piano part sounds jazzy and the viola part reads more like a twentieth-century etude with many chromatic alterations across the full range of the instrument. The two-note slurs added around rehearsal five make for fun phrasing inflections, and this idea returns shortly before rehearsal thirteen. As the movement progresses, it becomes increasingly spirited and fun with added glissandi, raucous string crossings, pizzicato and runs that sound like improvised jazz riffs. The last page features many double-stops using droned open strings to thicken texture and increase resonance.

Lauren Burns Hodges is currently Assistant Professor of Viola at the University of Florida. Passionate about promoting the viola and engaging with the community, she hosts an annual viola day at UF and serves as a board member-at-large for the American Viola Society. She expects to release a CD in 2020 containing the first commercial recordings of two sonatas for viola and piano by American composers Gustav Strube and Arthur Foote.

Notes

[1] "New Music Tuesday: Paul Neubauer & Wu Han – Shostakovich's Recently Discovered Viola 'Impromptu' [2018]," last modified February 5, 2019, https://theviolinchannel.com/violist-paul-neubauer-pianist-wu-han-shostakovich-impromptu-viola-piano-recently-discovered-premiere-2018/.

[2] Digonskaya, Olga. "An Unknown Piece by Dmitri Shostakovich: Impromptu for Viola and Piano." Moscow: DSCH Publishers, 2018: 15.

[3] "New Music Tuesday."

[4] Elaine Fine, *Preface,* Sonata in G minor, Opus 19 for viola and piano, New York: International Music Company, 2017 (Viola Part).

[5] Grigoryeva, Alla Vladimirovna. 2001 "Kapustin, Nikolay Girshevich." *Grove Music Online.* 6 May, 2019.

Recording Reviews

Carlos María Solare

Ascent – York Bowen: *Phantasy* op. 54; Clarice Assad: *Metamorfose*; Robert Schumann: *Märchenbilder* op. 113; Garth Knox: *Fuga libre*; Dmitri Shostakovich: *Impromptu*; Franz Waxman: *Carmen Fantasie*. Matthew Lipman, viola; Henry Kramer, piano. Cedille CDR 90000 184

Having been greatly impressed by Matthew Lipman's playing at several AVS events over the past few years, I approached his debut recording with great expectations. Already from the first, unaccompanied C-string phrases of the *Phantasy* by York Bowen, his attractive sound and authoritative phrasing command the listener's attention. The piece's contrasting parts are nicely characterised, both players displaying a light touch in the scherzando passages while letting rip in the Rachmaninov-like climaxes, replete with some sonorous double-stopping from Lipman, whose sound when soaring high up on the A string in the slow central section has a beautifully silvery shine.

Schumann's *Märchenbilder* receive a rather dark-hued reading from Lipman and his tried-and-true piano partner, Henry Kramer. Not all the fairies in this particular forest are beneficent ones, as the menacing horn calls of the second movement and the aggressive spiccato of the third one seem to tell us. The nicely flowing final lullaby does, however, bring on a "happily ever after" ending. Quickly becoming a staple of modern repertoire way beyond its frequent appearances as a competition set piece, Garth Knox's *Fuga libre* becomes in Lipman's hands a kaleidoscope of variegated timbres, crystal-clear harmonics and *ponticello* sounds.

Clarice Assad's composition was commissioned by Lipman as a tribute to his late mother, to whose memory the album is dedicated. A metaphor for life going on under different forms, the piece's Portuguese title translates as Metamorphosis, and its two sections are named *Crisálidas* (Chrysalises) and *Dança das Borboletas* (Dance of the Butterflies). Within a mainly traditional sound world, Assad employs some slightly unorthodox instrumental techniques, as when some glissandos through the natural harmonics of the viola's strings dovetail nicely into a passage of plucked piano strings. The composer's Brazilian background shines through most agreeably in the final, buoyant dance.

Assad's *Metamorfose* is, of course, a first recording, and another one is at hand with Shostakovich's *Impromptu*, recently found among the papers of the great Russian virtuoso, Vadim Borisovsky (see Lauren Hodges's review in this issue). Lipman dispatches this two-minute morsel in an appropriately heart-on-sleeve manner. Although Waxman's *Carmen Fantasie* is advertised as a "first recording on viola," I can think of at least three previous ones: two by Michael Kugel and a further one by his student, Dana Zemtsov. Be that as it may, Lipman's rousing rendering—which stays closer to the original

version than the Kugel arrangement—makes for an exhilarating conclusion to this most impressive, well recorded recital.

Sonoran Storm – Nokuthula Ngwenyama: *Sonoran Storm*; Rebecca Carke: *Morpheus*; Byron Adams: Sonata for viola and piano; Franz Liszt: *Romance oubliée*. Nokuthula Ngwenyama, viola; Eckart Sellheim, piano. EDI Records EDI1359

This latest CD from Nokuthula Ngwenyama includes two first recordings of pieces that have kept me returning to them way beyond the reviewer's call of duty. The soloist's own composition, that gives the album its name, is a 10-minute tour de force of toe-tapping rhythms that combine with Bachian sequences in a tripartite sequence that develops an exhilarating momentum. Needless to say, the writing is tailor-made for the viola and receives a definitive performance from its creator. Spiccato passages spring joyfully across the strings, double-stopping lies perfectly under the fingers, bits of bariolage and harmonics make full use of the instrument's resonance. But it is the piece's exuberant rhythmical life that makes it such sheer fun. It comes as no surprise to learn that its 2016 world premiere took place as a ballet performance. For the record, there exists an alternative version for solo viola, strings, harp and percussion that is in its own way equally effective.

Byron Adams's Sonata, written in 2011 and premiered a year later by the present players, is an important addition to the repertoire. Attractively and idiomatically written, it treads clearly defined formal fields. In the sonata form first movement, a stormy beginning is followed by a more peaceful second subject. The development section includes some fast pizzicato playing but the main mode is one of wistful lyricism. After a lilting intermezzo, there follows the work's most intense part, a sad monody that includes some haunting veiled viola sounds during a muted section, followed by resounding sixths at the movement's emotional climax. The final rondo reprises the previous movements' themes, beautifully rounding off a piece that deserves to be widely taken up.

Rebecca Clarke's *Morpheus* and Franz Liszt's *Romance oubliée* are well-known repertoire pieces that Ngwenyama endows with well-focused, lean sound throughout the instrument's register. The Liszt piece includes an alternative, higher reading that I take to originate in the piece's violin version. The recording is very direct, which results in some notes up on the A string occasionally "catching" the microphone, and the balance with the piano impresses as slightly artificial (nothing to worry about, though). Eckart Sellheim is highly sensitive to the heady harmonies of *Morpheus*, and he carefully voices the chords in the "*Harold in Italy*" section of Liszt's late piece. He is a most empathetic collaborator throughout.

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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.

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All entrants must be members of the American Viola Society who are currently enrolled in a university or who have completed any degree within twelve months of the entry deadline.

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Entries must be original contributions to the field of viola research and may address issues concerning viola literature, history, performers, and pedagogy. Entries must not have been published in any other publication or be summaries of another author's work. The body of the work should be 1500–3500 words in length and should adhere to standard criteria for a scholarly paper. For more details on standard criteria for a scholarly paper, please consult one of these sources:

Bellman, Jonathan D. *A Short Guide to Writing about Music*. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson, 2007.
Herbert, Trevor. *Music in Words: A Guide to Writing about Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
Wingell, Richard J. *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009.

Entries should include relevant footnotes and bibliographic information and may include short musical examples. Papers originally written for school projects may be submitted but should conform to these guidelines; see judging criteria for additional expectations of entries. Any questions regarding these guidelines or judging criteria should be sent to info@avsnationaloffice.org.

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