Journal of the American Viola Society
Volume 28 Summer 2012 Online Issue

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

of the

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Kilbourn Hall

June 3, 4, 5, 1977

CONCERT PROGRAMS

Journal of the American Viola Society

A publication of the American Viola Society
Summer 2012
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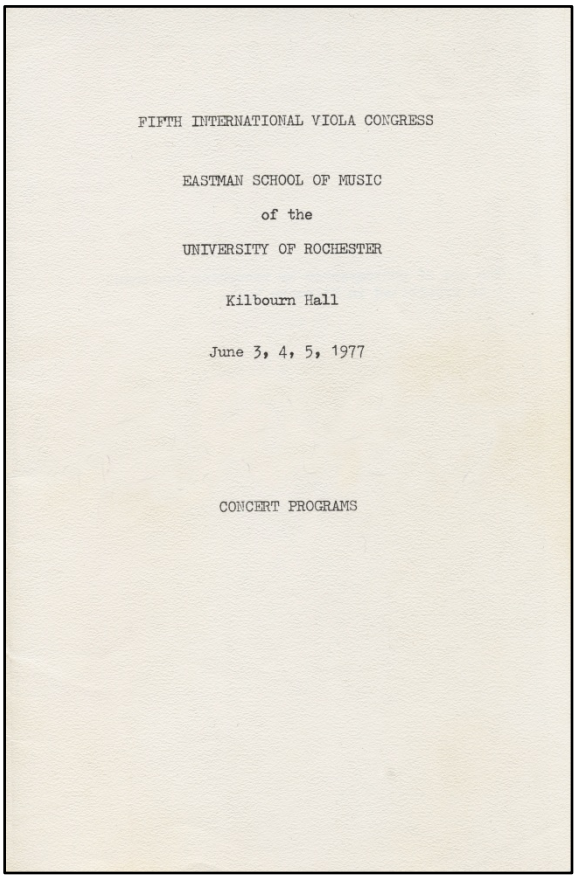

On the Cover:

Cover of the program booklet for the Fifth International Viola Congress in 1977 (Courtesy of Dwight Pounds)

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From the Editor

For the upcoming Fortieth International Viola Congress, the hosts at Eastman have selected, "What's past is prologue," a quote from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as the theme. The quote honors the return of the congress to Eastman, which hosted the Fifth International Viola Congress in 1977. We are getting in the spirit of the theme with this special issue of the *JAVS* devoted to Eastman's "first" viola congress.

Viola congresses were still in their infancy when Louise Goldberg, a violist and librarian at Eastman's Sibley Music Library, committed to hosting the fifth congress. With the assistance of Myron Rosenblum and Francis Tursi, she organized a stellar congress with a diverse selection of violists, repertoire, and events. The 1977 congress warranted not one, but two reviews in the November 1977 issue of the American Viola Society's (then called the Viola Research Society) *Newsletter*. Maurice Riley called the event an "unqualified success" that "constituted another milestone in the inexorable progress of the viola toward parity with the other members of the violin family." Franz Zeyringer extolled the organization and accommodations:

"The organization was in the hands of Dr. Louise Goldberg, who mastered the tremendous workload with unusual effort and took care in an excellent way for the frictionless running of the congress. The viola students of the Eastman School who assisted her should be mentioned here. The facilities were ideal. These were the large, beautiful and acoustically fine concert hall, Kilbourn Hall; the church-like Cutler Union with its auditorium; Sibley Music Library, where there was a great, extensive exhibition of viola works; and the dormitory—a castle-like building built in the English Style."

Attendees of the 2012 congress will have a chance to experience many of these same facilities as well as to examine Eastman's new wing, which includes Hatch Recital Hall.

Our issue begins with Myron Rosenblum's "Reflections on the Fifth International Viola Congress." Myron's article, which originally appeared in our Spring 2008 issue, provides insight on aspects of the congress, particularly attendees and programming. We follow this with a copy of the original viola congress program from 1977.

Our last article is devoted to one of the high-points of the fifth congress: a lecture by William Primrose. Appearing on the final day, Primrose entertained the audience with a speech covering viola repertoire, aspects of his career, and the notion that the viola is an instrument "without a tradition." After his prepared speech, he answered questions from the audience. We are pleased to provide both an audio recording of that lecture, as well as a transcript of the lecture in this issue.

I hope that you enjoy this glimpse into the recent past of viola history, and may Eastman's 2012 viola congress motivate us to an even greater future.

Cordially,

David M. Bynog
JAVS Editor

REFLECTIONS ON THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS JUNE 3,4,5, 1977 THE EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

by Myron Rosenblum
Sunnyside, NY

Historic photos by Louis Ouzer, Rochester, NY (restored by Dwight Pounds)

After the remarkable 3rd International Viola Congress at Eastern Michigan University in 1975, the second viola congress on American soil, the 5th International Viola Congress, took place two years later on the campus of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Initial efforts to hold the congress in Banff, Canada, suddenly fell through; so with the assistance of Louise Goldberg (violist and librarian at the Eastman's Sibley Library) and Francis Tursi (Eastman's viola faculty), the congress was arranged and took place in June 1977.

This congress featured an almost entirely new roster of viola soloists and teachers, and, like the 3rd congress, highlighted William Primrose as honored guest and speaker. In addition to Mr. Primrose, this congress was graced by the extraordinary talents of Francis Tursi, Walter Trampler, Paul Doktor, Michael Tree, Jacob Glick, Martha Strongin Katz, and Heidi Castleman. Other violists who appeared as performers were William Berman, Robert Coleman, Harold Coletta, Myron Rosenblum, and Robert Slaughter. Well-known violists Lillian Fuchs, Ernst Wallfisch, William Lincer, Abraham Skernick, and Karen Tuttle were invited to participate, but for various reasons declined and we can only speculate how much better this wonderful congress would have been with their presence.

Walter Trampler performs Rolla with Air Force Chamber Orchestra

The opening event was a concert of unusual concertos for viola with orchestra. Assisted by the United States Air Force Chamber Orchestra, Robert Coleman was viola soloist in Sir William Herschel's Concerto in F; Harold Coletta, violist, was featured in Roman Hoffstetter's Concerto in E-flat; and Robert Slaughter, viola, and Myron Rosenblum, viola d'amore, were the two soloists in Christoph Graupner's Double Concerto in D. For those who still believed in the dearth of Classical-period viola

William Primrose during his formal talk

William Primrose surrounded!

concertos, it was a revelation to learn that Herschel, whose legacy remains as a famous astronomer (he discovered the eighth planet, Uranus), and Hoffstetter, who is now known as the true composer of the Haydn, Op. 3 string quartets, each composed three viola concertos. Graupner, a contemporary of Bach and Telemann, was fond of both viola and viola d'amore. Not only did he write two concertos for viola d'amore and viola soli with strings, but composed a Sinfonia for soli viola d'amore, cello, and bassoon with three violas and basso, as well as employed viola in a solo capacity in two operas—*Dido* (1707) and *Antiochus and Stratonica* (1708).

The turnout at this congress was somewhat smaller than at Ypsilanti but still impressive. The directory made available to all members at the congress listed a total of 250 attendees, performers, and speakers. Nevertheless, the prevailing dynamism, excitement, and general enthusiasm at the EMU congress continued at Eastman. As in Ypsilanti, the presence of William Primrose electrified us all and to have the opportunity to hear him speak and mix informally with all of us was a unique experience.

Solo recitals were given by, in chronological order: Walter Trampler (Rolla's Rondo in F and Joh. Amon's Concerto in G—both with orchestra—plus Shostakovich's Sonata); Paul Doktor (Sonatas by Schubert, J. S. Bach, P. Locatelli, and Brahms, plus John Biggs's *Invention for Viola and*

The Cleveland Quartet performs Mozart with Francis Tursi

Walter Trampler and William Primrose

Tape); and Francis Tursi (Sonatas by Verne Reynolds and Brahms, plus Bloch's Suite). A concert of music for multiple violas offered music by James Fry and Raymond Helble. Among the fine violists who performed in these multiple viola pieces were Sally Banks, Jeffrey Irvine, Leslie Blackburn, Karen Griebling, and Marna Street.

The Cleveland Quartet—Donald Weilerstein and Peter Salaff, violinists, Martha Strongin Katz, violist, and Paul Katz, cellist, performed the Ravel Quartet and Mozart's wonderful D Major Quintet with Francis Tursi as guest violist. How gratifying it was to hear Katz and Tursi play Mozart so wonderfully together.

Other events of note included a lecture by John Celantano (Viola Pedagogy—High School and College Level) and lecture-demonstrations by both Carleen Hutchins (Violas from 12 to 20 Inches—Their Research and Development, which was impressively illustrated by William Berman playing Persichetti's *Infanta Marina* on Ms. Hutchins's 20-inch viola) and Jacob Glick (Music for Viola and Tape Since 1970, in which Glick performed intriguing music by Jean Ivey, Joel Chadabe, Diane Thome, and Thea Musgrave). Glick was a fine violist and musician who had a passion and a commitment to contemporary music and dedicated a good part of his professional life to it. Heidi Castleman's Some Seldom-Considered Aspects in Playing the Bach Suites had fascinating and thought-provoking insights, focusing on aspects of tempo, meter, phrase length, rhythmic patterns, bow strokes, and the background of French and Italian styles in the Baroque and dance steps of

the period. Two excellent Castleman students—Mary Ruth Ray and Allyson Dawkins—illustrated Ms. Castleman's theories and approach to this superb music, played on viola with much enthusiasm and conviction.

Paul Doktor's master class focused on Brahms's Sonata op. 120, no. 2, Bach's Gamba Sonata No. 1, and Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher*. Leslie Blackburn, Nina Falk, Jeffrey Irvine, and Paul Silver were the impressive students with whom Doktor worked.

Needless to say, one of the highlights of this congress (as with the 3rd International Viola Congress at EMU) was the presence of William Primrose. The attendees were invited to submit questions to Mr. Primrose, and so for two hours we were graced by the inspirational, often witty, perceptive, and experiential commentaries of one of the great string players of the twentieth century who was, along with Lionel Tertis, surely the "Father" of modern-day viola playing.

Louise Goldberg gave two events of interest: Virtuoso Viola Music Around 1800 in which Marna Street performed Georg A. Schneider's *Solo for Viola No. 5*, Hoffmeister's Concerto for Viola in B-flat Major (yes, another Hoffmeister viola concerto!), and Giacomo Zucchi's *Tema con Variazioni*. Immediately after Doktor's solo recital on the second night, there was a "mini-concert" of viola d'amore music from the Huberty Collection, a MS that exists in the Sibley Library and which Dr. Goldberg edited and had published. This music was played by Dr. Goldberg, E. Markus, and Marna Street.

Walter Trampler, looking as elegant and dapper as always, held an open discussion with the audience and gave much insight into practical aspects of viola technique, practicing, and performance. Michael Tree, a crossover violinist and now a strong proponent of the viola, talked on The Viola in the String Quartet. Questions from the audience were invited in both talks.

A business meeting of the Viola Research Society (the predecessor of the American Viola Society and the American chapter of the international society, the Viola Forschungsgesellschaft) took place on the first day, and the many productive discussions held that day would lay the groundwork for the next stages of the American Viola Society, such as the establishment of chapters, future elections of the Executive Board (Marna Street and Ann Woodward were accepted as temporary secretary and treasurer; Louise Goldberg was already acting as temporary vice-president), newsletters, more student involvement, exhibits of new violas, future congressses, and a composers' showcase for new viola compositions.

Michael Tree

It is intriguing to see some of the other important violists, viola teachers, and AVS-affiliates who came to the congress as attendees—Roberto and Manuel Díaz, Nathan Gordon, Karen Dreyfus, Burton Fine, Baird Knechtel, Robert Oppelt, Guillermo Perich, Dwight Pounds, William Preucil, Maurice Riley, Karen Ritscher, Thomas Tatton, Lawrence Wheeler, Ann Woodward, Eric Chapman, and Franz Zeyringer. Many of these have gone to positions of greater prominence in the viola world.

Though the Eastman congress was less glamorous than its predecessor in Ypsilanti, it was still outstanding, largely owing to the superb artists who performed. To have William Primrose, Paul Doktor, Walter Trampler, and Francis Tursi all together for these few days provided an exceptional experience for us all. It is with some sadness to note that most of these viola soloists who took center stage at Eastman are no longer with us. But their legacy continues in their recordings and their many pupils who have filled that void in today's viola world.

It was the role of both the 1975 and 1977 congresses to set the stage for the many impressive International Viola Congresses that followed, and it is most gratifying to see how these musical events have grown and blossomed, to offer great violistic and musical experiences, abounding with outstanding viola talent. As William Primrose said in his 1975 talk at Ypsilanti, "You've come a long way, baby!" Yes, indeed!

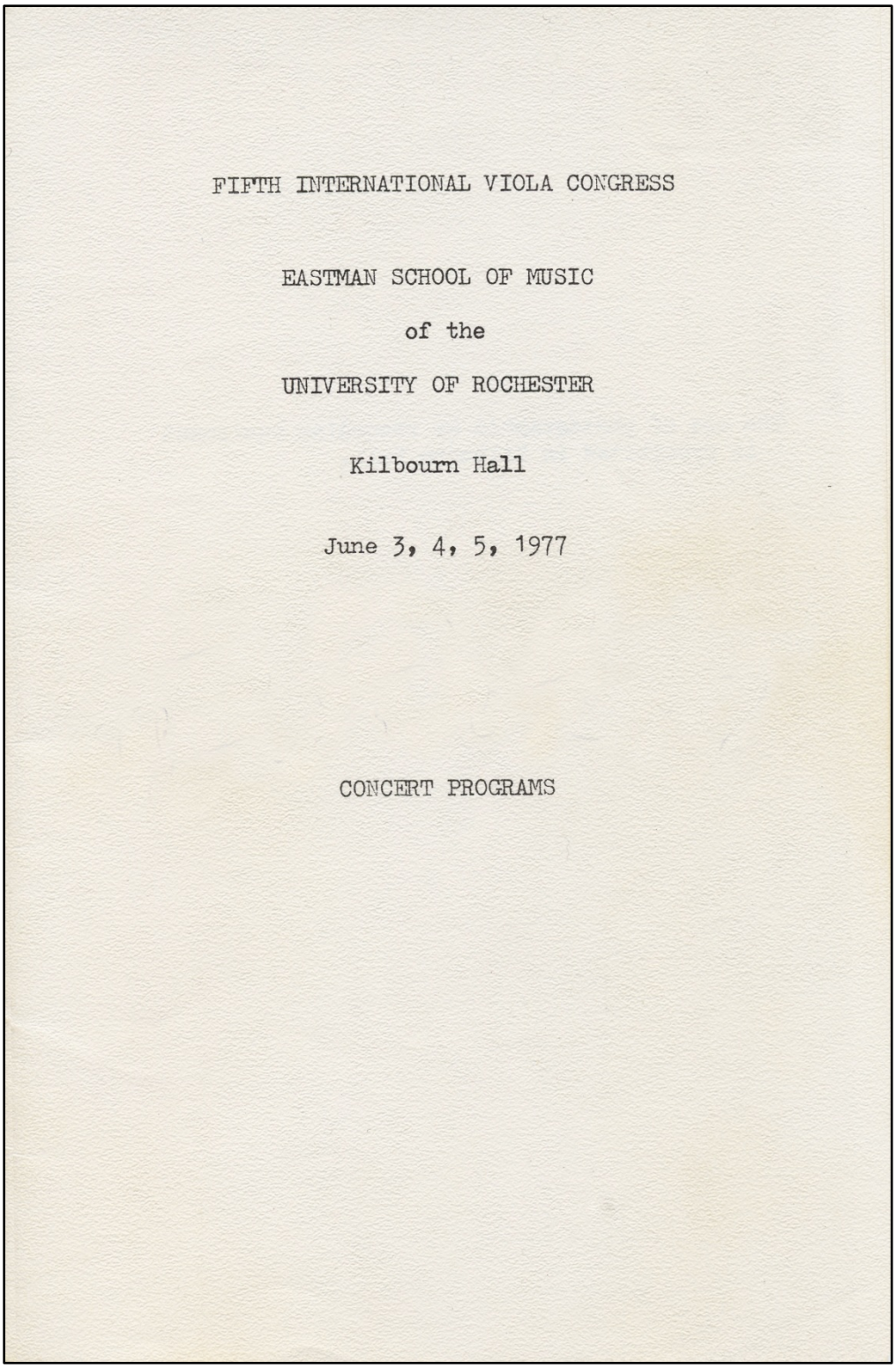
– Myron Rosenblum, violist/viola d'amore player, was the creator and founder of the Viola Research Society, the predecessor of the American Viola Society and the first president of the AVS. His viola studies were with Lillian Fuchs, Walter Trampler, and William Primrose. He has appeared at many International Viola Congresses as speaker and performer and was intimately involved in the programming of the first two congresses on American soil, at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, in 1975 and the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, in 1977.

Paul Doktor and Franz Zeyringer

Harold Coletta tries out an instrument

1977 Eastman Congress

Concert Programs



FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

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of the

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Kilbourn Hall

June 3, 4, 5, 1977

CONCERT PROGRAMS

THE CLEVELAND QUARTET

Donald Weilerstein, violin
Peter Salaff, violin
Martha Strongin Katz, viola
Paul Katz, 'cello

Francis Tursi, guest artist

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

June 3, 4, 5, 1977

Kilbourn Hall

Friday afternoon, June 3, 1977, at 2:00

THE CLEVELAND QUARTET

The Cleveland Quartet was founded at the Marlboro Music Festival in 1969 and has since won acclaim from press and concertgoers around the world as one of the greatest string quartets of our time. In the past four years their RCA releases have won national recognition including two Grammy nominations and four Best of the Year Awards from Time Magazine and Stereo Review.

In addition to regular tours of the United States, Canada and Western Europe, they have played in South America, Greece, Italy, Israel, and have upcoming tours of Australia and Japan. Since 1973, The Cleveland Quartet has annually played the Complete Five Concert Beethoven Cycle in Lincoln Center, Tully Hall and is currently recording these 17 masterpieces for RCA. Their 100 concerts annually have included a Beethoven Cycle at London's Elizabeth Hall and performing in the Herkulessaal of Munich, The New Theatre of Jerusalem, Carnegie Hall, The Library of Congress, The Kennedy Center, and in January, 1977, a White House performance for the Inauguration of President Jimmy Carter.

Dedicated teachers, as well as performers, they are Quartet in Residence winters at the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester and summers at the Aspen Music Festival.

The unauthorized use of recording equipment or cameras in this auditorium is not permitted.

PROGRAM

Quartet in F Major — Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Allegro moderato, Très doux
Assez vif, Très rhythmé
Très lent
Vif et agité

String Quintet in D Major K. 593 — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Larghetto ; Allegro
Adagio
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Allegro

RCA Victor Records

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

and the

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Kilbourn Hall

Friday afternoon, June 3, 1977, at 3:30 P.M.

ROBERT COLEMAN, Viola
HAROLD COLETTA, Viola
MYRON ROSENBLUM, Viola d'amore
ROBERT SLAUGHTER, Viola

The United States Air Force Chamber Orchestra
Lt. Lowell E. Graham, Conductor

Concerto in D major for Viola d'amore, Viola, Strings, and Cembalo — Christoph Graupner (1683-1760)
Grave e marcato
Vivace
Grave
Allegro

Myron Rosenblum
Robert Slaughter

Concerto in F major for Viola, Strings, and Cembalo — Sir William Herschel (1738-1822)
Allegro
Adagio
Vivace

Robert Coleman

Concerto in E-flat major for Viola and Orchestra — Roman Hoffstetter (1742-1815)
Risoluto
Adagio cantabile
Rondo: Moderato

Harold Coletta

The United States Air Force Chamber Orchestra

Violin I

Gregory P. Christy
Bruce T. Myers
William F. Slusser
Robert L. Waugh
Teresa A. Hawthorne
Stephanie M. Myers
Dauba D. Rhodes
Daniel W. Adams

Viola

Charles N. Pencoff
R. L. Laffoon
Mary P. Atwood
Judith J. Heath
Richard E. Spencer

Bass

William L. Hawthorne
Vanessa M. Dixon

Horn

John Woody
Jean Parks

Violin II

George M. Riley
Robert E. Atwood
David L. Swanson
James K. Queen
Russel J. Hilmo
David C. Hoff
David L. Greenwalt

Violoncello

Ralph P. Kass
Steven E. Siples
Lauria Y. Riley
Ben W. C. Riley

Flute

Billy E. Watt
Jane Schaub

Bassoon

Theresa J. Turley

Harpsichord
Stephen Lee*

*Eastman School of Music

Concerto in D major for Viola d'amore, Viola, Strings and Cembalo
Christoph Graupner

Christoph Graupner was born in Saxony in 1683 and in 1709 came to Darmstadt under the employ of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt as Kapellmeister, a position he retained until his death in 1760. He was highly esteemed in his day as attested by his being offered the post of cantor at St. Thomas's Church in Leipzig before Bach.

Among his extensive output (there exist more than 1400 cantatas of his in manuscript in Darmstadt in addition to concertos, ouvertures, trio sonatas, and sinfonias) are several works for viola: 2 concertos for viola d'amore, viola, strings, and cembalo (D major and A major), written about 1730 and the Sinfonia in F major for viola d'amore, bassoon, 3 violas, cello, and basso continuo from the year 1741. Graupner also included viola solos or outstanding obbligato viola parts in his operas Dido (1707) and Antiochus and Stratonica (1708).

This concerto follows the slow-fast-slow-fast format of the Baroque trio sonata and successfully combines the tonal timbres of the viola d'amore and viola. While the writing for both solo instruments is not particularly demanding, the work does have a freshness and vitality, typical of the Baroque.

Concerto in F major for Viola, Strings, and Cembalo Sir William Herschel

William Herschel was born in Hanover in 1738 and died in England in 1822. As a young boy he perfected playing skills on the violin, oboe, and organ and performed as oboist in the Hanoverian Guards at the age of 14.

In 1757, he settled in England where he worked as a violinist and composer. Although Herschel was a professional musician, his great interest in astronomy caused him to spend more and more time in that discipline which lead to many important discoveries in the solar system, the most noteworthy being the discovery of an eighth planet—Uranus.

The Concerto in F for Viola and Orchestra belongs to a manuscript in the University of California at Berkeley, one of 3 viola concertos contained in "the scores of 8 Concertos for the Tenor, the Oboe, and Violin. Both the D minor and F major concertos are dated 1759. The C major is undated and was not completed.

An interesting feature of this concerto is the concerto grosso-like use of the orchestra in designated violin I and II solos along with viola and cello obbligato parts with the ripieno parts.

Robert Royce has written of this work: "It is one of the more ambitious creations of his early period and is, in fact, a veritable patchwork quilt of myriad stylistic elements combined to produce a work of great textural diversity and beauty."

Thanks go to Robert Royce for making his fine critical study of Herschel and his performing edition of the F major concerto to this writer.

Concerto in E-flat major for Viola and Orchestra Roman Hoffstetter

The Benedictine monk Roman Hoffstetter was born in 1742 in Laudenbach and entered the Benedictine monastery of Amorbach in 1763. Among his many musical acquaintances was the Swedish composer, Joseph Martin Kraus, the author of a fine duet for flute and viola and the "Bratschenquartett" in which the viola, in the slow movement, is the leading instrument, while the two violins and cello gently accompany it.

He is credited with having written 12 string quartets, 4 symphonies, 10 masses (one dedicated to Haydn) and 3 viola concertos (E-flat, C and G). This concerto favors the upper strings of the viola and in several places reaches high E flat and F (in the first movement, one octave above the third position B flat and F; in the second movement, C, 2 octaves above middle C—rather unusual hieghts for the viola

at this time). Despite Hoffstetter's limited harmonic language, the work shows a good gift of melody and exhibits much charm.

A recent and as yet unresolved musicological dispute is whether Hoffstetter may have been the composer of the string quartets which are generally attributed to Haydn as his Opus 3. Whether or not Hoffstetter did indeed compose these quartets, it is apparent that he was a musician of considerable gifts and added music of worth to the viola repertoire.

Notes by Myron Rosenblum

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

and the

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Kilbourn Hall

Friday evening, June 3, 1977, at 8:00 P.M.

WALTER TRAMPLER, Viola
MARIA LUISA FAINI, Piano*

The United States Air Force Chamber Orchestra
Lt. Lowell E. Graham, Conductor

Rondo in F major for Viola and Orchestra — Alessandro Rolla (1757-1841)

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 147 — Dmitriĭ Shostakovich (1906-1975)
Moderato
Allegretto
Adagio

Intermission

Concerto in G major for Viola and Orchestra, Opus 10 — Johann Andreas Amon (1763-1825)
Allegro moderato
Adagio ma non troppo
Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

*Faculty, Eastman School of Music

Rondo in F major for Viola and Orchestra Alessandro Rolla

Alessandro Rolla, who lived from 1757 to 1841, was one of the most prolific composers for the viola in early nineteenth-century Italy. His Rondo for Viola and Orchestra is one of over a dozen compositions he wrote for viola and orchestra. As it has come down to us in a manuscript in Milan, the Rondo seems to be complete in itself, and not part of a larger work. Edited by Franco Sciannameo from the manuscript, this piece fits the rondo-form perfectly.

The writing for viola is very much in the virtuoso style, using arpeggios and other passage work to display the performer's virtuosity. The orchestra provides background and support.

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 147 Dmitrii Shostakovich

Shostakovich completed his sonata for viola and piano only two months before his death in 1975. Although the actual publication date came after his death, the sonata had already received the opus number 147. There is much in the sonata which marks it as coming from Shostakovich's pen, especially the dry humor and rhythmic twists in the second movement. But there is also something perhaps new—what seems to be a romantic turn in the last movement. One might look between the lines and see a change in feeling toward the end of the composer's life.

As in many works by Shostakovich, the notation leaves much to the performers' interpretation, thus giving the artists a chance to contribute their individuality to the work.

Concerto in G major for Viola and Orchestra, Opus 10 Johann Andreas Amon

Johann Andreas Amon (1763-1825) was born in Bamberg. While a young man, he toured France and Germany as a violinist and horn player. He had to give up the horn, however, and he then devoted his time to violin, viola, and piano. From 1789 to 1817, he was Music Director in Heilbronn, where he founded a publishing house, and from 1817 to the end of his life, he was Kapellmeister for the Prince of Oettingen-Wallerstein.

The viola concerto is only one of a number of works Amon wrote which feature the instrument. It is his only viola concerto, and was published (a set of parts) in 1799 or 1800 by Pleyel in Paris. The key was A major; the solo viola was to be tuned a step higher: BEAD. The solo part was written in G and therefore sounded in A. As this tuning is undesirable for today's violas, the decision was made to leave the viola part played as written, but sounding in G, and to transpose the orchestra down a step. The viola part thus retains effects such as open strings, harmonics, chords, bariolage, etc., as the composer intended them.

The performing edition was prepared by Louise Goldberg.

The solo viola part is both challenging and rewarding, and confirms Amon's intimate knowledge of the instrument. The entire range is used fully, including numerous passages to high D and two to high G. The contrast in the piece between passage work and many lyrical themes is supported by a rich harmonic language, and the work effectively combines elements of late Classical and early Romantic styles. The concerto is a welcome addition to the viola repertoire.

Louise Goldberg

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

and the

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Kilbourn Hall

Saturday afternoon, June 4, 1977, at 2:30 P.M.

WORKS FEATURING MULTIPLE VIOLAS

Variations—Veni Creator Spiritus — James Fry

Paul C. Phillips, Conductor

(First performance)

Theme with Diverse Variations for Violas, Violoncellos, Basses, Horns, and Harp — Raymond Helble (1949-)

I. Tema: Religioso
II. Variation: Beethoven—Adagio; Allegro con brio
III. Variation: Bruckner—Langsam
IV. Variation: R. Strauss—Sehnsucht
Va. Variation: J. S. Bach—Adagio
b. Variation: J. S. Bach—Allegro

Raymond Helble, Conductor

Participating violists

Sally Banks
Leslie Blackburn
Glenna Chance
Stanley Chepaitis
Karen Griebling
Michael Grinnell
Sherrill Hannusch
Catherine Horn
Charles Hott
Jeffrey Irvine
Anastasia Jempelis
Melissa Matson
Warren Powell
Paul Silver
Marna Street
Suzette Whiting

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

and the

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Kilbourn Hall

Saturday evening, June 4, 1977, at 8:00 P.M.

PAUL DOKTOR, Viola
ROBERT SPILLMAN, Piano*

Sonata in A minor ("per Arpeggione") — Franz Schubert (1797–1837)
- Allegro moderato
- Adagio—Allegretto: Rondo

Sonata No. 2 in F major — Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
(Sonata in D major for Viola da gamba)
- Adagio
- Allegro
- Andante
- Allegro

Sonata in G minor, Opus 6, No. 12 — Pietro Locatelli (1695–1764)
- Adagio cantabile
- Allegro
- Alla Siciliana
- Allegro

Intermission

Invention for Viola and Tape — John Biggs

Sonata in F minor, Opus 120, No. 1 — Johannes Brahms
- Allegro appassionato
- Andante un poco adagio
- Allegretto grazioso
- Vivace

*Faculty, Eastman School of Music

Encore: Marais: Five Old French Dances (unaccompanied)

Sonata in A minor ("per Arpeggione") Franz Schubert

Written in 1824 for an instrument invented and built by the Viennese violin-maker Stauffer in 1823, this sonata appears regularly in programs of string players—violists, cellists, and bassists. Originally called the Guitar d'amour by its maker, it had six strings on a body resembling a cross between a guitar and a viola da gamba, and it was played cello-fashion. The ease with which double stops and arpeggios could be performed on it brought about its nickname "Arpeggione." Schubert's manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris from which Mr. Doktor made his edition for G. Schirmer already incorporates the nick-name as the official name. The beauty of the instrument's tone obviously inspired Schubert to some of his most Viennese writing, but the instrument's construction limited its dynamic range, so the "Arpeggione" soon was forgotten and the sonata survives today, luckily thanks to its playability on other string instruments.

Sonata No. 2 in F major Johann Sebastian Bach

Although the three sonatas written by Bach for viola da gamba and harpsichord have long been a part of the violist's repertoire, certain problems of range have been created by the differences between the viola and the viola da gamba. Mr. Doktor has transposed the sonata in D major into F major in order to avoid break-ing the melodic continuity. This edition is published by Worldwide Music Services.

Sonata in G minor, Opus 6, No. 12 Pietro Locatelli

This sonata is probably one of the last of Locatelli's violin works. Mr. Doktor made the arrangement for viola for International Music Company and wrote the two short cadenzas for the first movement. In its syncopated fast movements this sonata seems to be far ahead of its time.

Invention for Viola and Tape John Biggs

The Invention for Viola and Tape is the fourth in a series of such compositions written by John Biggs for various ensembles or solo instruments and tape. The compo-ser strives for a clear, direct, and simple language, in contrast to the complex idioms one often associates with "tape" music. In this piece, the intent is clear from the opening in which a simple folksong—"A Young Man Picked up his Bow One Day and Fiddled Away"—is sung by children's voices. This small phrase is dramatically used to punctuate the form and feeling of the piece. Contrary to other compositions with tape where an engineer turns on a tape when required, in this work the tape keeps running, and it is the tricky duty of the soloist to keep time with his unseen partner or find it after a lengthy viola solo.

Sonata in F minor, Opus 120, No. 2 Johannes Brahms

This is the first of a pair of sonatas Brahms wrote for the concerts he played with the famous clarinetist Mühlfeld. It was Brahms himself, however, who wanted the two works performed also on the viola. The first edition of these sonatas, published during Brahms' lifetime, featured the piano score with both clarinet and viola parts. These sonatas, therefore, should not be considered a transcription, but the composer's own alternate version.

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL VIOLA CONGRESS

and the

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Kilbourn Hall

Sunday afternoon, June 5, 1977, at 3:15 P.M.

FRANCIS TURSI, Viola
BARRY SNYDER, Piano*

Sonata for Viola and Piano	Verne Reynolds (1926-)
Diversity	
Velocity	
Calm	
Retorts	
Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 120, No. 2	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Allegro amabile	
Appassionata, ma non troppo allegro	
Andante con moto	

Intermission

Suite for Viola and Piano	Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)
Lento—Allegro	
Allegro ironico	
Lento	
Molto vivo	

*Faculty, Eastman School of Music

Sonata for Viola and Piano Verne Reynolds

Verne Reynolds' Sonata for Viola and Piano was written especially for Francis Tursi and Barry Snyder, and was completed in December, 1975.

The composer has supplied the following descriptions of the four movements:

I. Diversity: Put tersely, this contrasts loud and soft, high and low, fast and slow, short and long.

II. Velocity: A motion piece, but hardly perpetual, since it lasts but 2 1/2 minutes.

III. Calm: Complete absence of tension or agitation.

IV. Retorts: Argumentative responses punctuate a dispute between the instruments, becóming more gentle toward the end of the movement until the conflict is resolved.

The sonata is full of demanding writing for both instruments, particularly in the Velocity movement, with its playful and tricky interchanges.

Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 120, No. 2 Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms came very close to not writing his two sonatas for clarinet or viola and piano, Opus 120. In 1890 he was beginning to feel that he had completed his lifework; then in 1891, he listened to the Meiningen orchestra and was deeply impressed by the playing of the clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld. Revived, he picked up his pen and wrote both a trio and a quintet for Mühlfeld. In the summer of 1894, Brahms returned to the clarinet, partnering it this time with the piano. Brahms himself prepared the alternative version for viola which has become a staple of the repertoire.

Suite for Viola and Piano Ernest Bloch

Ernest Bloch composed his Suite for Viola and Piano in 1918-19, and the work promptly won the Berkshire Chamber Music Festival competition. Bloch arranged the accompaniment for full orchestra the following year, although the work is rarely heard in that form. Bloch wrote in his published note on the Suite that he was inspired by "a vision of the Far East . . . Java, Sumatra, Borneo—those wonderful countries I so often dreamed of, though I never was fortunate enough to visit them in any other way than through my imagination."

Bloch made further comments on the Suite to Glennes Jones Garlick, a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music who was preparing an analysis of the work. The letter, reproduced in Ms. Garlick's thesis, glows with the composer's engaging charm and his almost mystical love of the art.

> I think you are right and that I called this work a "Suite" for lack of a better, more appropriate title! I always had difficulty in finding titles for my Music—whereas so many composers do write the titles before the music is composed (!!)... In fact, it is a Suite of four symphonic Poems . . .
>
> But what matter do titles?
>
> Words or labels cannot describe music—
>
> Music begins where words are impotent—
>
> And it is such a suggestive and, organically, so complex language, that it is impossible to adapt a "programme" to it. Imagination there rules supreme.

With thanks to Ralph P. Locke

Without a Tradition: William Primrose's Lecture at the1977 Eastman Viola Congress

Transcribed by Adam Paul Cordle

[Editor's Note: The following is an edited transcript of a lecture given by William Primrose at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, June 5, 1977, at the University of Rochester's Cutler Union during the Fifth International Viola Congress. The original audio recording of the lecture may be found at: http://americanviolasociety.org/journal/javs-archives/online-issues/]

William Primrose meets with congress attendees at his lecture (photo courtesy of Louis Ouzer and Myron Rosenblum)

Primrose: I must thank you all very much for your kind welcome. [The] experience being here has been quite gratifying in this respect: that I made quite a long trip to be with you, and it was my profound wish that I *should* be with you. My itinerary called for me to travel between Sydney, Australia, and Tokyo, Japan, with a detour to Rochester, New York, and I think that's quite a considerable detour. I have to leave for Tokyo tomorrow, so you don't have to worry too much—I can't hold you up until tomorrow.

I have to offer an apology. Some of you may know that about twelve years ago I had a massive heart attack. There's been no return of it since, and I think that's largely due to the fact that I followed my physician's admonitions fairly rigidly. And one of them was that I should take as

much rest as possible. Those of you who have been in the same condition will know what I am talking about, and that is why I have had to miss some of the seminars, some of the lectures, some of the recitals, occasions which I would have liked very much to attend. But I've had to miss them, and to those of you who took part in them, I offer you my sincere apologies, and I hope that you will accept them and forgive me.

When I arrived and looked at the program—a fascinating program, by the way (at least I think so)—I was *appalled* by one thing. And that was to find out that I had to lecture to you—of all things lecture to you for two hours. I couldn't lecture [for] two hours on any given subject! Anyhow, what I have done is to put down here a few notes, and the questions have been handed to me this morning and they're fascinating. Those of you who propounded the questions, I thank you, for they are very, very interesting. So let me plunge into this right away.

I had to think quite a bit to settle on a topic, because to lecture to such very learned people as yourselves, a topic has to be a little exotic, shall we say that. So, I started off by saying that [ours is] an instrument without a tradition. And if that bold statement brings to you a sense of shock, a moment of reflection may dissipate it. After all, our history of any importance does not precede the advent of Lionel Tertis. And that does not go back more than some eighty-odd years, because it is only about eighty years ago that as a young man he sort of, so to speak, appeared above the horizon. Casals, born on the same day and on the same year as Tertis, did for the cello what Tertis did for the viola. But here is the cardinal difference, in my opinion—there were, after all, cellists of no little distinction before Casals, but I can think of no violist of equal distinction before Tertis. That he was able to light a torch and later to find among us those who would bear it aloft after him is worthy of note and rejoicing. But it does not obscure the fact that we have no tradition, in the ordinary acceptance of the term.

And do you know [that] perhaps in this regard, we are lucky? Tradition can be a great burden and an obstacle to progress. And heaven knows how much our instrument demanded the services of progress after Tertis established it in contemporary acceptance. And I cannot help but recall that Toscanini used to refer to tradition as being the last bad performance. Not that Toscanini was the final arbiter, but he was worth listening to. To say that we are without tradition may not be too fierce a criticism, because we may feel that we have much greater freedom in finding our own ways than is afforded to those who perform on other instruments. I do not intend at this juncture to go back to the Baroque days, and at this particular meeting we've had an example—at least to me an enlightening example—of how much music we have at our disposal from the Baroque Era. But—I'm not, as I say—I don't intend to go back to the Baroque Era, where we are indeed bound by a very strict fashion of playing, because while a great many works written for other instruments are valid, when used by a violist, we are, after all, indulging to a certain extent in the use of transcriptions. Not that this should dispose some people to look down their collective noses at us—and I refer to the self-appointed purists—but we have to admit that a work written for the viola d'amore, for example, can never, because of the different string tuning and differences in sonority, can never sound on the viola today as it sounds (or did sound) on the viola d'amore of its day. But, as there exist all too few performers of merit on the viola d'amore in our era, I am disposed to believe in this event that we do no harm in presenting works on the viola which were written for the viola d'amore. There are some few works, such as the Friedemann Bach Sonata, which were composed for the viola, and here we are bound by the

tradition of playing that existed, or was founded, which found its origin in those days. [I should] say we are bound by this tradition so far as we feel we are willing to be bound by it, or not. (Bound by [what] Toscanini said was the last bad performance.)

That is a type of performance, in my opinion, which tries to hide its deficiencies and sundry horrors behind a cloak of so-called authenticity. This is a common practice indeed, though our valid repertoire belongs to the twentieth century and indeed not to the early part of the twentieth century. When Tertis ventured forth, there was almost no repertoire for his instrument, and he constantly admonished his disciples to pester their composer friends to write works for them. His own pestering brought forth a number of not unworthy works, but nothing of towering stature. To cure this famine, so to speak, he further admonished us to raid the repertoire of kindred instruments in search of transcriptions. Not to put too fine a point on it, he admonished us almost to raid the repertoire of almost any instrument which would furnish grist to our mill. Not that I have anything against transcriptions, so long as they are well-made and appropriate. But to be satisfied with such as a means of filling what appeared to be a woeful want in our repertoire, I regard as being quite as woeful as the apparent want itself. By the time Tertis was in his fourth decade, a positive bonanza of contemporary music was to hand. But here was the rub: like Casals, he had little patience and little understanding of modern music, so called. One might be inclined to protest this assertion—what might almost appear as a slur—and point out such works as *Flos Campi*; the Suite for Viola by the same composer, Vaughan Williams; and the Sonata by Bliss; and some others, and one would indeed have a point of argument and departure. But we must never forget that he disdained the Walton Concerto, and for the works of Paul Hindemith he had no time at all! He didn't even give them short shrift—he gave them no shrift at all!

What an abundance and what a Golconda he spurned. One has only to look into the Professor Zeyringer's monumental work of [viola pieces] to realize and to regret that so great a player, so intrepid and indomitable a pioneer, neglected this bonanza through an all-too prevalent distaste for contemporary music and for the contemporary composer; all too prevalent among those of his time and generation. I can readily recall when I was yet very young, my teacher, a Viennese musician of no little distinction, a pupil of Joachim and Ševčik, who relished having quartet jamborees of a Sunday evening, and my father was called in to be the violist on those occasions. On this one occasion, after a harried reading of the Debussy Quartet, at least one movement of it (and I leave to your imagination what kind of reading that was), my teacher [cast] his part to the floor with ill-disguised diversion and mortal horror exclaiming that he would have no dalliance with such trash. I'm sure all of us can attest to similar experiences, even at a later period.

So to return to my main concern, the matter of tradition and our lack of it, I feel that the riches of our repertoire reside in music written since the advent of Hindemith, with some rare prior submissions. And in that richness, *we* are richer. However, there are a few outstanding works that should by this time have attained to a measure of tradition, or so I believe. The Walton Concerto, first performed by Hindemith some fifty years ago, the Bartók Concerto, first played almost thirty years ago, the Fricker Concerto, which I performed for the first time at the Edinburgh Festival close to twenty-five years ago, and having at this point dragged myself in, screaming and protesting, and brought myself into this whole discussion personally, I am bound to touch on a point which is sensitive and I am bound to add of no little moment. I would have thought that after the space of time I have mentioned in regard to these several works, a certain

tradition might have been established by now. But this doesn't seem to be the case. And the reason appears to me [to be] fairly obvious.

Let me take the matter of the Bartók Concerto to start with. Shortly after I played the first performance in America, I introduced the work to Europe at the Edinburgh Festival in 1950. Following that performance, I was invited to present it in Budapest, an invitation greatly to my liking, you may be sure. However, the Cold War was at its most freezing then and the Iron Curtain well-nigh impenetrable. So these two factors alone with a typical government—and I happened to be in the Allied Military Government—snafu aborted that performance, and I learned later that our esteemed Hungarian colleague Pál Lukás took over the task of presenting the Bartók Concerto in Budapest. Later, I listened to his recording of the concerto, and I must confess that I was shocked. Not at his playing—that was beyond reproach—but his errors in interpretation. I soon realized, however, that these could be readily explained, as the published copy of the concerto is misleading in several instances. I did reflect, however, that he might have taken the opportunity some time or other to listen to the definitive source recording, and, of course, I refer to my own. I do not claim, in all due modesty (and I mean this), I do not claim that he might have listened in order to admire the playing, but with the thought that the work, having been written for me, my having received from Bartók a long letter outlining the problems of performance and interpretation, and further having been closely associated with Tibor Serly in the final deciphering of the manuscript, it could conceivably be regarded as source material for his guidance. However, there is this to be said: because of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain restrictions, it was more than likely that Western recordings were unavailable in Hungary, and the printed part, as I have said, is definitely misleading.

To take one point alone out of many, in the first movement, at bar forty-one, that is where the viola plays about a page and a half of sixteenth notes that are grouped in triplets, if you remember. In the first movement, at bar forty-one, the indication is *un poco meno mosso*. At bar fifty-two, the direction is *tempo primo*. In between these instructions, we may observe *poco a poco accelerando* at bar fifty. Now, anyone listening to the original recording would have realized that these admonitions are out of kilter, so to speak. To begin with, the metronome indication at bar forty-one is 88 quarters per minute, a very slight variation from the opening tempo, and that a performance in this character would appear to adhere to the composer's intention. That is not so. My recording would show that there is a much greater change in the speed in that the *accelerando* leading back to *tempo primo* at bar fifty-two should appear around bar forty-eight. Mr. Lukás does not follow this at all but plays the whole passage almost in the same tempo as the opening. But the indication is wrong, and I have to repeat again that it is wrong.

As I suggested before, this error on Mr. Lukás's part is quite understandable. More than understandable—if he had been working from a faulty, published score and the fact that he had never had any access to what I still maintain was the source recording. So it is quite understandable considering it was more than possible he had no access at the time to the recording that I made with Tibor Serly, and I'm apt to add to that, surely in heaven's name, that might be regarded as source interpretation, if nothing else. I have not heard the recent recording by Mr.—I think his name is Németh—of the Bartók Quartet for what apparently is some sort of Bartók archive. It may not even be available here yet.

[*Primrose inquires of the audience*]: Has it been available? The recording of the Bartók Concerto by Mr. Németh? No. He has recorded it in Hungary, I believe, for this archive. But I wouldn't be at all surprised if the same error is still contained in this recording, which, after all, is going to be in an archive.

William Primrose makes notations in a copy of Bartók's Viola Concerto for an attendee at the 1977 viola congress (photo courtesy of Louis Ouzer and Myron Rosenblum)

So you see what I am getting at when I am talking about tradition. We don't have tradition yet. However, I have heard a sufficient number of misinterpretations from young players to realize that little heed has been paid to what might be considered Bartók's wishes and that therefore a tradition will not be established. But as Toscanini inferred in his … aphorisms, shall we call it, this may be a good thing.

The next and greatest puzzle, the most insistent cause of argument and of all sorts of disagreement, will be the proper presentation of the Walton Concerto. And here everything is against me, even though I must have played it close—or over—150 times in a period of thirty-five years, as compared to some hundred-odd performances of the Bartók since 1949 to 1973. Right from the start of my acquaintance with this now standard classic—I am referring to the Walton, of course—right from the start of my acquaintance with this now standard classic in our repertoire, I was inclined to rebel against the amount of scrubbing that takes place on the lower strings in the fast passages in the scherzo-like second movement. And for that matter, in certain sections of the other two. As you know, Paul Hindemith gave the first performance when Tertis turned it down as being contemporary nonsense and not suited to our instrument. While I was

preparing it for my debut performance (that's why I mentioned Hindemith—don't make any mistake, I wasn't the first performer of the Walton, it was Hindemith, but it was my debut performance with Beecham), I contrived to rewrite these passages an octave higher and so performed them during my association with the concerto lasting over a third of a century. But I do assure you that I did this, not without the full approval of the composer, or so it seemed to me. After all, I did record what one might have assumed [was] the definitive version with the composer conducting in 1946. I played it with Walton on many occasions subsequently and finally recorded it with Sir Malcolm Sargent, and Walton was present at that recording. All this time, nary a peep of protest from Sir William. I'm wondering was he was too modest? Was he too sensible of my pride? Was he afraid to hurt my finer feelings? Was he afraid to tell me to play what was written and not to mess about with *his* ideas? That he was the composer and knows best?"

My doubts were raised when the second edition was published, and I noted that not one of the amendments had been incorporated in the second edition—the second edition was exactly the same as the first except that it was printed over a greater number of pages, and this redounds to the benefit of the bank account of a composer, because as I understand in the matters of broadcasting that the royalties are computed by the number of pages. So, [as I was] outraged when I saw the second edition, I wrote to him when the concerto was listed as one of the set pieces in an international competition when I was one of the jury members. I really did wish to learn the way of it, so that I might judge equitably. After thirty-five years of *laissez-faire*, so to speak, thirty-five years of playing and recording *my* way, assuming it to be the composer's way also, I felt I should be let in on the mystery. I wrote to Sir William accordingly—and mark he's a very old friend of mine, I knew him long before he had his title, I knew him long before he had his honorary doctorate—so I felt that I could write to him quite frankly. So I wrote to him, and his reply was less than revealing. It was only recently that I heard he had told a young player who inquired of him personally that he preferred it in his own original conception, the one as given in the first and second printed editions.

I am going on to say that there will be no tradition. There will remain two versions—the one that is given in the first and second printed editions and the oral tradition, so to speak, which will have descended from me to my students over the years and thereafter to their students and so on and so on until, like all tradition, it becomes distorted with the passing of time. Perhaps Toscanini was right—tradition *is* the last bad performance. The last performance following decades of wandering from the source material until, as I say, it is distorted beyond the original conception. In case you run away with the idea that I'm trying to promote my own recordings, I can only tell you that you are wrong. Most of them are unavailable nowadays, and I wouldn't care to indulge in such an exercise of futility. But if you think I am trying to impress my ideas on putative performers and that I feel that they are the best ideas, you are right. I wouldn't be worth my salt if I thought otherwise. A man without the courage of his convictions is indeed a feeble creature, in my opinion.

There are two more examples that come to mind. The first is the Milhaud Sonata, the one that is based on the eighteenth century airs, [which] is a good example of avoiding the Walton dilemma. During the war, I was touring—of course in those days we did all our traveling by train—and I

happened to meet Darius Milhaud on a train one day. And he had a manuscript, and naturally, my avid eyes were on it at once, and [I] asked him what it was. And he said:

"I have just written a viola sonata for my old friend Germain Prévost."

I said, "May I look at it?" And I looked at it, and it was this particular sonata, and I was very much taken with it. And I asked him if I could have a copy, and he said:

"You can have this one—this is a photocopy."

It was a photocopy of the manuscript; I still have it. So I set to work to prepare it for the following season, and again, I came up against the same problems as [with] the Walton *Scherzo*: in the second and fourth movements an awful lot of scrubbing in the lower strings, which is not suitable to the viola. (Alright for the violin—they can get away with anything.) On a viola, most of the successful virtuoso passages [like] for the cello are up high on the A string. So again, I transposed (raised an octave higher) quite a number of the passages in the second and in the fourth movement of this sonata. My accompanist, who I'm rather prone to think of as the late and great David Stimer, knew Milhaud better than I did, and when we were starting on our tour the next year, he said:

"Look out. Darius does not like to have his music changed around in any way."

And that particular year, Milhaud was in residence at Mills College, near San Francisco. And I knew that my tour was going to take me to San Francisco and that I'd be giving a recital that included this work. So, as we came closer to San Francisco on the tour, my feet got colder and colder. Eventually, I wrote to Milhaud a rather long letter explaining what I'd done to his sonata and why I had done it. I got back a typical laconic and very brief letter in the French style in which he said in effect:

"Dear Primrose, the octavations are okay. – Milhaud."

So, I've always kept it. The revised part has never been published; one day maybe I'll go to the publisher. [*Primrose inquires of the audience*]: Who's the publisher? Eschig, or Durand? Doesn't matter, I'll probably suggest that they should publish it in this final version, but then I'll not have the trouble I had with Walton, you see, because Milhaud was definite about it: the octavations are okay.

And one other I'd like to talk about—am I keeping you up too long? It's such a lovely day; you should be outside, you know. (Quarter to eleven; not too bad.) I would like to talk for a moment about that hoary old war horse, *Harold in Italy*. There have been many, many recordings of *Harold in Italy*, and I was involved in three of them, which you probably know, and involved in one live performance with Toscanini. The three recordings, in case—again I'm not trying to sell records, again I don't think they are available—but the first one was with Koussevitzky, the second with Beecham, and [the last was] with Münch. But am I trying to establish a tradition in each performance? And I say, "Not at all!" On the contrary, some time ago, [I was] advised

during an absence from Indiana University campus—that's when I was on the faculty, so that goes back a few years—that Berlioz's account of his hero's wanderings had been assigned as the viola concerto in the annual string concerto competition. It's obvious the competition was held every year, and whoever won each particular section would appear in a concert with the orchestra: double bass, cello, viola, and violin. So I was advised that *Harold in Italy* had been chosen as the set piece. Of course, I entered a speedy and instant demurrer in a written protest to the chairman of the string faculty, which read as follows:

> The assumption that *Harold in Italy* is a viola concerto and worthy, in this light, to be ranked with the works chosen for violin, or cello, and double bass fills me with dismay. *Harold in Italy* is by no stretch of the imagination a concerto. It is very much a symphony, and it stands or falls according to the skill and musicianship of the conductor in charge of its performance. The principal demands on the soloist are a fine instrument or the type of player who can make any instrument sound impressive, the performer's gift, and, perhaps this is the most important demand of all, the performer's gift as a thespian, as an actor. The ability to stand as in the last movement for ten minutes, looking handsome and urbane, without in any way being vulgarly obtrusive or distracting attention from the event taking place in the orchestra.
>
> Furthermore, how would one go about teaching *Harold in Italy*? I have never attempted to, and I really have very little stomach to start now. Fingerings and bowings, yes, these I can suggest. But if a student asks me to prepare him for a performance with Toscanini, Koussevitzky, Beecham, or Münch, I *could* do so, and the reason is obvious. However, unless these performances are likely to take place in the hereafter, my guidance would be of little avail. *Harold in Italy* is in no sense a test in the manner that a true concerto should be a test, other than a test of one's discernment and financial status in the choice of an instrument and one's stagecraft. The fact that I made a career of it was fortuitous and a freak and hardly likely to be duplicated. Good luck, like lightning, rarely strikes twice in the same place.

William Primrose chats with Francis Tursi after the lecture (photo courtesy of Dwight Pounds)

So, once again, no tradition. So that is about all, except just one other thing. I was thinking about the Shostakovich Sonata, which is, so far as I know, the last really important work to be added to our repertoire. There may be others since then, but I'm not aware of them. And strangely enough it was Shostakovich's last work, and for viola, just as Bartók's last work was the Viola Concerto. And so we had the gay good fortune of hearing Mr. Trampler play it the other night. I don't see eye-to-eye with Mr. Trampler in his performance, but I will say that I will defend to the death his way of performing it. The reason I bring this [up] at this moment is not in the way of harsh criticism at all. It is simply that Mr. Trampler and Mr. Doktor, last night and the night before, had the opportunity to display their manifold skills and great gifts for you. I don't have this opportunity, because my viola and my wife are waiting for me in Tokyo tomorrow. So, I had to show off in some fashion, and I thought, "If I can't show off on my instrument to the same effect as Mr. Trampler and Mr. Doktor showed off, then perhaps I can show off my erudition." And you will notice that I paraphrased a very famous aphorism, which is originally propounded by a great French satirist, Jean-Marie Arouet, better known to all of you, I'm sure, as Voltaire. So having, as I say, showed off my erudition, I'm quite sure that you will leave here and say:

"Well, we know all about Trampler's playing and we know all about Doktor's playing, [but] we know nothing of Primrose's playing, but my goodness, isn't he a well-read man?"

To go back to Mr. Trampler, as I [said] I didn't see eye-to-eye with him—in his interpretation—but I must confess that as he continued, as the performance continued, I did envy or I did wish that I had been able to see with his eye. You see, here again we have no tradition. I believe that the dedicatee, Mr. Druzhinin, I believe he has made a recording of it, but I would have reservations about that. I've only heard him play in string quartet records, and I still would have reservations. I would be much more likely to repose a tradition in Mr. Trampler's version. Now mark that Trampler knows all that I am saying now because we had lunch together yesterday, and I told him, "I'm going to have some fun with you on the floor tomorrow." And he said:

"I won't be there."

[And I told him I would] say this and that and this and that, and he approved. He made some arbitrary changes in the tempi, in the tempo of the second scherzo-like movement. And I asked him why, and he gave me a very valid reason, a very good reason—so much such a good reason that I might even drift over to that way of thinking myself. So, at the moment, what we have in Shostakovich: we have Druzhinin's version, we have the Trampler version, and perhaps we have the Primrose version, which quite conceivably could become the Trampler version, because it was quite convincing what he did.

Now, this to me is a very great work. It's unique. It's almost unique in the way that the Bach work that Mr. Doktor played last night is—usually just three parts: we have the left hand, the right hand, and the viola da gamba, or in this case, the viola, in between. In Shostakovich, we have very seldom more than three voices, and usually, we violists (and cellists and violinists, too) have to fight when we are playing a sonata. We have to fight the piano. You take a case, a work like the Bliss, you really have to fight hard against the piano! Here we have the Shostakovich: no fighting at all. And everything is said and everything is clear with a very, very, very moving and rather tragic last movement. It's a great joy to have played it, but it's always

different when one listens, and it was a great, great pleasure to hear it—and played *so* beautifully!

Now, I think to finish finally, what the nub of it all is. I have said for a long time that there are two ways to perform a piece of music. One is good and the other is bad. That appears much too simplistic, and what I would go on to say is that when a performance is bad, there's no doubt about it. There are no two ways about it. But when a performance is good—or let me put it this way, there are many good ways of playing a piece of music. If there was only one way, it would be a very dull world for us. You can take half a dozen performances—the great performances of the Beethoven Violin Concerto—they'll all be slightly different. If they drift too far away from the composer's idea, then they enter the category of being bad performances. But I don't think I've ever heard one, and I've heard performances right from Kreisler onwards. They're all different, but they're sufficiently close together not to get into the category of being bad performances. So, again we come back. Maybe the lack of tradition—what I'm talking about all the time is not the fact that the viola is a very ancient instrument. I'm talking about the tradition that attaches to a repertoire and that our repertoire is mostly in the twentieth century, and we haven't lived long enough yet to attain a tradition, [which] I think is probably a very good thing.

Question and Answer Period

And now I will come to the questions that were submitted to me, questions which are very interesting. One question was thrown at me many, many times when I was on tour. It used to be the fashion, or a habit in every town that I reached, that I was faced with a radio interview. And invariably, the interviewer would say:

"Mr. Primrose, will you kindly tell our radio audience exactly what is the difference between the violin and a viola?"

And I would take the question apart very seriously and talk about difference in pitch, difference in timbre, difference in the approach in playing, and so forth and so on. And one occasion, the devil got into me—an imp got into me—and the question came:

"Mr. Primrose, will you kindly tell our radio audience exactly what is the difference between a violin and a viola?"

And I said, "Certainly! The viola, you see, is a violin with a college education."

Let me start here now. Well, this is a very common question. **"Do you think it is wise for a young person to start on the violin or on the viola?"**

Oh geez … I'm sure this question has been propounded to most of us. I think it depends very largely on the desire of the student. If you find a youngster—it's unlikely—but if you find a young student who had a keen desire to play on, to learn the viola, I would suggest that they go right ahead. Their only trouble is, and this is obvious, if [they] play on a very small instrument, or as they do in some cases, on a violin tuned down a fifth, they are not presented immediately

with the tone production problems. This is a problem that cannot present itself until they're playing on a reasonable-sized instrument—at least sixteen inches. There are some (I've had a few) under sixteen [inches] that are reasonably good. I'm not height-bound as Tertis was—Tertis wouldn't allow anybody to play anything under sixteen and three-quarters. So, many ladies were eliminated just right there and then. Not so much am I talking about [their height as their] hand. So this question of starting out on the viola or the violin is a moot point. I have met some students who started out on the viola, but usually their physical attributes were conducive to such a venture. So that's about as far as I can answer this question. I think it has to be left very largely to the teacher and to the enthusiasm of the student. If the student starts out on an instrument that does not present the tonal problems or problems with sonority, then at least they can—I was going to say "learn the repertoire"; no—they can learn the viola parts of all the string quartets, and that's one thing they should do.

William Primrose and Dwight Pounds discuss fingerings in Bach's Suites (photo courtesy of Louis Ouzer and Myron Rosenblum)

[*Primrose takes out another question*.] Hmm, this is a honey! **"Would you discuss your basic beliefs about the most important technical principles of the right and left hand?"**

You know, my plane for Japan is at 9:50 tomorrow, I don't think I can do it in this time! Basic beliefs? Well, let me put it this way, I think on the bowing—first of all, bowing. If the right arm is high, it's fatal. Again, you'll find many violinists who are playing up here, but as I say, the violinists can get away with anything. In other words, the violin speaks so readily that a cardinal error in bowing technique wouldn't affect very much, but in the viola, it does. We have to remember in the viola tone production, it's very much [like] on the cello—it's what the French

call the *tirez* and *poussez* (the pull and push, and never the press). So that would be one of the basic things. As far as the left hand is concerned, I just say, "Practice."

"If there is only a little bit of warmup time before a concert, what exercises would you recommend to make the left hand flexible and loose?"

Well, first of all, I think if one is in constant practice that the left hand will nearly always be flexible and loose. But one exercise regarded—what Carl Flesch used to call his "school of velocity in the waistcoat pocket"—and that's Kreutzer number, what is it, number nine? [*Primrose verbalizes a few measures of said piece*.] Is that number nine? Yeah, number nine. If you have time, a couple of times through the conventional fingering—that's one and three—and then [*verbalization*] a couple of times through here [*verbalization*] … that'll loosen up the hand. It'll either loosen it up or wreck it!

You'll pardon me, those of you who posed a question, you'll have to forgive me if I treat them in a rather short fashion, because the time is passing. There are quite a number of questions.

"Please talk to us about practicing," again, another large subject, **"and how would you practice a difficult passage? How much importance do you place on scales, and what is your daily routine?"**

How do you go about practicing a difficult passage? Well, it depends very largely in whether the difficulty resides in this hand or here, because I've found very often when a student is getting very confused, I'll look at the actual consecutive use of the fingers and find there are very few problems. I'm talking about an [x-type] of passage. And then I will find from that, that the real difficulty lies in the bow pattern, the crossing of the strings, in which case I eliminate all the notes, the left-hand notes, [and] write out the bow pattern on the open strings until a student can do this with the greatest of ease, and then I add the notes. But if it's really sort of transcendental execution in the left hand, again it's only a matter of if you just practice and practice and practice. And practice with a purpose. Just to keep on repeating is rather ridiculous.

I had this pointed out to me in a very vivid way on one occasion. Rather late in life, I took up the game of golf avidly. Being a Scotsman, you would have thought this bug would have bit me long before. It did, but I never had time. And a funny thing happened on this occasion. Shortly after I took the game up, I began to get this tendon sticking out—it happens to many people—and my doctor happened to see it once, and he says:

"Oh, Mr. Primrose, I think we'll have to do surgery."

This is twenty-five years ago. And I said, "Why?" He said:

"Well, you know, in time to come, your hand will start …"

I said, "Doctor, I've been trying to do that for forty years! Why should I …" So as I said to … oh, I was going to tell you about the golf. I was out on the driving range once at the country club

to which I belong. I take out a ball and bang it, put out another ball and bang it, and the pro came up to me and he said:

"Mr. Primrose, what do you think you're doing?"

I said, "I'm practicing my swing." He said:

"You're not; you're splattering the county with golf balls."

That is why I say that this constant repetition without thought is bad. I learned it through golf. You have to practice with a purpose. I have (and of course it's obvious that in practicing a passage for the) [*Primrose inquires of the audience*]: are you having difficulty here? You can hear? I'm sorry. Please hold up your hands, my words are so important, I'd hate any of them to be missed.

I realize that as far as left-hand passages—virtuoso passages—are concerned that it's obvious that repetition is necessary. And I came, quite arbitrarily, on sixty repetitions, and you'll see how this works out. Then, of course, the problem was presented, and I play[ed] through a passage once or twice or three or four times, and by the time I came to the fifth repetition, I might not be sure where I was, if I wasn't chalking it up on a blackboard. Then I thought, "Well, wait a minute. Supposing I take sixty different bowings, I'll be killing two birds with one stone. I'll be getting my left hand practice along with the …"

To save time—or not to save time, but to save a lot of confusion—in the matter of bowings, I take ten bowings: practice at the frog, middle, and point, starting with down-bow; frog, middle, and point, starting with up-bow, that will give me sixty repetitions. And mark you further, if I had a set amount of time, in which I do some practice, and supposing a passage took half a minute to practice, then the sixty repetitions would take half an hour, more or less. So I could say that if I had a certain amount of time left to practice—suppose [I] had thirty-five minutes [that] I had time to practice in—well I could practice that passage, because it only takes less than thirty-five minutes to practice sixty times. So, the whole thing was *very* practical, very economical, and again, lastly, very Scotch. So, as I say, this is a system of practice that can be used.

"How much importance do you place on scales?" Great, great importance. I don't know whether I attach as much importance as Mr. Heifetz does. If he has an hour to spare, he practices scales fifty minutes. And he imposes the same task on his students.

"Would you say a few words about your *Technique is Memory*?"

This book—I don't know how many of you have seen that book? [*Audience members show hands.*] Well that's why my royalties were so slim last year. That is why … [*Primrose points to audience member showing a copy of the book.*] He has it. How much did you pay for that?

Audience Member [1]: $11.75

Primrose: Eleven, oh I made a dollar out of that. Thank you very much!

Audience Member [2]: [I purchased] mine years ago for $6.00 dollars.

Primrose: Well the dollar was worth more in those days, wasn't it? *Technique is Memory* is really—I don't quite know what to say about that either. Do I appear very ignorant this morning? Because it's all in the Preface. It's all in the Preface. There's one error—I've never gotten around to correcting it. It says in the second column, and it refers to diminished sevenths, and it says how difficult they are to play in time. Well, of course, that's a lot of nonsense; how difficult they are to play in tune, that is what was meant. I knew that violists, being very superior people in intelligence (the book is written for violin—this was the publisher's idea because it was less economic[al] to publish a book just for viola), as I say in the Preface, violists being of a superior intelligence, it is very easy for them to transpose a fifth down. So as I say, all of the instructions are pretty well in there.

It says here: **"What is it like to play with Heifetz?"**

Well, obviously, a very great experience and maybe interesting to some of you, a very easy one. I've never known anyone less prone to impose. Of course, we were playing chamber music most of the time, and he was always conscious—[especially] when Feuermann was in the group or Piatigorsky—Heifetz was always conscious of the fact that he was, to a certain extent, the amateur. We had had vast chamber music experience compared to his, and he was more likely to defer to our opinions, not less. If they interfered, or if they contradicted what he sincerely believed to be a musical fact or point, then there could be a certain amount of argument. But he was very, very easy to work with, and, of course, with his *superb* playing, that made it even still easier.

I couldn't help but be deeply interested—recently Yehudi Menuhin sent me his latest recordings of the Bach Suites (you know what I mean by the Bach Suites, the Sonatas and Partitas). He records them every ten years, so he tells me, and he sent me a copy from England, autographed, and I'm sure he's waiting to hear my opinion. So I played them, and then I played a Szigeti version, then I played the Heifetz version, and the difference is *so* incredible. Heifetz does many naughty things musically, but the playing is so superb, with such ease, and such charm, such love—loveliness—one is constantly smiling as one listens to them. Whereas with Yehudi and Szigeti, I regret to say, they sound like carthorses, particularly in the fugues; and how much they distort the thematic material in order to accomplish the chords. And to me this is all wrong. The main part of any Bach fugue surely is the thematic material and the things that develop from it. The chords are not so all that important; if it's a four-part chord and you miss a note, what does it matter? If your listener can't supply the extra note or even observe the lack of it, then he shouldn't be listening, in my opinion. I hate to hear the [*verbalizes the beginning of the fugue from Bach's Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001*], usually played much slower, and when they come to the chordal passage something like [*verbalizes later part of the fugue with rough chordal sounds*]; I mean, what sort of music is that? What sort of music is that? I understand that my very old and very dear friend Oscar Shumsky has recently recorded them; I'll be very interested to hear those, because I'm sure he'd be more like the style of playing that Heifetz gives us—and Milstein. Nathan Milstein, superb performer of Bach—unaccompanied Bach—but the people who are supposed to be the great ones, I say Menuhin and Szigeti, I'm afraid apart from the slow movements, which do not involve problems of chord playing, I just don't approve.

And I will tell Menuhin when I see him. So to come back to the playing with Heifetz, it was a very, very great joy, and I feel terribly sorry to have learned that he's not playing anymore, [be]cause of an injury to his shoulder.

"How do you feel about shoulder rests? Do you hold the viola with the left hand?"

That's quite right, that's where you hold it, or any instrument. I don't use a shoulder rest because of my beliefs that [the viola] is held here [*Primrose demonstrates the location*]. I will never force a student to do without one, because some people—although [whether] it's a Freudian complex or not, I don't know—are just incapable of holding without. Kolitsch and later Menuhin tried to get around the disadvantages of a pad, which acts as a sort of mute, or *sourdine*. They got around this by having the shoulder rest which does not touch the [bottom]. The only thing that I have against that—first of all, it looks to me a little unprofessional, but that's snobbism on my part—also, you can't move the instrument this way [*Primrose demonstrates the movement*], which I think is a very important movement in playing, to be able to move the instrument around.

And Milstein—he's actually my oldest friend in the profession because we were students with Ysaÿe at the same time—and Milstein has a very, very natural approach to everything in his playing; very common sense. And I was discussing this with him one day. I met him in Seattle on this occasion—whenever you met Nathan anywhere, you went upstairs to his room, and the fiddle would go all day long, discussing fiddle playing, and problems, and so forth. And I brought up this, because I had tried to explain to students about holding without a shoulder rest, and I got much too involved. The poor creatures didn't know what I was talking about at the end; I was being much too scientific about it. And I said, "Nathan, how would you explain this to students?" [And Milstein replied]:

"Very simply, you hold it in your left hand."

Which is true, because [if] we think of the country fiddler who plays here [*Primrose demonstrates the location*]; he's holding it in his left hand and [doing a great deal of similar playing to ours] excepting that he doesn't move from one position to another, that's all. So we're a little more sophisticated, we lift it up here, hold it with the left hand, and … There are little tricks, of course, to prevent it from falling, I mean especially when one is descending; when one is ascending it is obvious that you are pushing the instrument into your neck—it won't fall out. And this is the fear of people who use pads; a very, very common fear that the instrument is going to fall. And I think if the instrument is sufficiently expensive, nobody will let it fall.

So to get on, briefly, again, **"Would you talk about your concept of the second elbow?"**

Where did anybody ever learn about that? Who sent in this question? [*Audience member raises hand*.] You? Did you read about it in the book?

Audience Member [3]: No, I heard it from you.

Primrose: Oh, right. When I said read about it in the book, I added a short part to a book that

Menuhin wrote recently. It's called *Violin and Viola*; I believe it's obtainable here. Can I get a—you know every juggler who appears in vaudeville always has an assistant. Somebody come up from the audience. [*Primrose points to audience member Robert L. Oppelt*.] You can do, I've known you long enough.

You know, I'm very, very keenly aware of the importance of these two fingers. I always hold the bow with a very close contact with these two fingers. Not tight, you can't be tight. And I refer to this as the second elbow. Now if Mr. Oppelt will forgive me taking a liberty with him [*Primrose demonstrates with Oppelt's right arm*]: this is the first part of the arm, this is the second, and the bow is the third. Now he's put the third part of his arm away, and I take—I can't separate them, the only way I could separate that from that is with an axe. So, thank you very much, you're very kind.

So I refer to this as the second elbow; it cannot be [tight]. Because if this first elbow is tight, you couldn't play. Sometimes, they get a condition, which I believe the medical people call ankylosis, which tightens up the joints. You can't play. So, it cannot be separated it's a very, very firm and strong joint, but it is very flexible. So this has to be the same way so that the bow is free to move. And when a person is not holding with sufficient strength—no, I must get the right word, because it has nothing to do with tension—I can usually tell from the sound, there's a slight flimsiness in the sound. It doesn't have the body like a good wine, for instance. Does that answer your question? I'm glad.

[*Primrose inquires of an audience member*]: Did you set all these questions here?

Audience Member [4]: Yeah.

Primrose: Not all of them! **"Could you tell us of the story of the Bartók Concerto?"**

Well, really, ladies and gentlemen, I suppose I could revert to a Roosevelt saying and say, "My fellow violists, it's now twenty past eleven, I think I should get ready to call it a day."

Now, let's briefly look at the other questions. The story of the Bartók Concerto you all know. There was a great deal of doubt cast on its origin, like an unwanted child, and Tibor Serly recently wrote a very, very learned review of the whole history of the work. I think it was published in *Musical Quarterly*; it was published in Europe by now. This can be obtained; I think at the very worst, you could write to Tibor Serly to obtain it. It tells the whole history of the work. And I have seen the original short score; he has the original short score and he's not supposed to have it. There's been a tremendous battle going on ever since Bartók's death between the Bartók estate and the archives. It's still in litigation. One can see the full score, because Serly wrote this out himself. But, he has Bartók's short score, and he lectured about it and exhibited it at the Banff Festival two years ago. The rest of the story everybody knows, just as it says in the Preface.

This is a very interesting one: **"Could you offer suggestions regarding position in working with a student with a double-jointed thumb?"**

This doesn't often happen, but I know it can be very, very trying. There was one player—many of you remember the Griller Quartet. Well, Sidney Griller had this, and he solved his problem by holding the violin on this side [*Primrose demonstrates position to audience*]. You can't get everybody to do this. And I had one student at Indiana—I had many students at Indiana, but most were poor. That was why I was glad to leave the place [where I] could get to Tokyo where I was limited to ten [students], but good. But I had one student there, one of the good students, who had this. It was a girl student, usually it's a woman that has this, and I just made her practice—I put a mirror here—I just [was] sheer slave-driving, and I said, "Now, you just practice and keep an eye on that thumb, and when it collapses, bring it out again." So eventually, I don't know why it happened that she was able to cure her infirmity. Probably through this constant repetition, she started to develop a different kind of muscle. But I don't think there's any cure for it.

[*Primrose points to an audience member*.] Yes?

Audience Member [5]: I have a double-jointed thumb, and I press on the inside of this knuckle.

Primrose: Could be. Why don't you demonstrate?

Audience Member [5]: [*Demonstrating*.] If you push on my thumb here, it goes in. And I played for a long time like this until the teacher said:

"No, and you'll have to work something out."

And I pushed here, and I could play. So rather than being able to do vibrato in the way that other people do, I have a very low thumb on the neck, and the pressure goes here. So if you have a double-jointed thumb, that may help.

Primrose: Thank you very much!

And another very nice one: **"Frequently, students are troubled by a bouncing bow."**

Aren't we all? I've often said to students who have discussed that old, old question about nervousness, and I always say, "Only bad players are not nervous." And it's true. So, the bouncing bow, well this usually happens if there's a nervous tremor—the tremor will incline the bow to do this. How do you cure it? I don't know. If you're playing with a high elbow, it'll be even worse. If you're playing with a low elbow, then the power of gravity will take over. But, several players, like Szigeti, *never* cured that. I remember one occasion when I was playing with him, and—at the Edinburgh Festival, actually—he came into the artist's room before the concert and put his hands up inside my sleeve. And they were ice cold. He said:

"Now you know what I suffer."

I must confess that if I had suffered like that, I don't think I would have gone through with this profession. There are other lucrative professions around. And, of course, Yehudi has it. He still hasn't gotten over this tremor of the heel. You know, he tried everything—yoga and all sorts of things. This is a physical thing; I don't think that this is nervousness at all. But he had been—he

has a fine mind, this young man (I call him young man, because he's ten years younger than I am)—he had in slow movements been able to coordinate his left-hand vibrato with this right-hand tremor. It's fascinating if you can sit close and listen to this, as I did last year in Gstaad. He played perfectly beautifully. But I was able to listen; he came up with this little tremor. And I didn't ask him how he did—[because] I think this would have been a rather rude and personal question—but he was doing that. At least that was my diagnosis.

Our final question is, **"Have you finished editing the Bach Suites?"**

You know this question is like, "When did you stop beating your wife?" I have finished editing the Bach Suites, and that's why I was very, very sorry to miss [Ms. Castleman's] lecture this morning. I was very anxious to be there so that if I learned I had made any egregious errors in my own edition, I could have withdrawn it. It will be published by Schirmer in time to come. I've only edited the five—the first five. The sixth does not belong to the viola, it hardly belongs to the cello with a very few exceptions. The average cellist playing the sixth suite is apt to fill us with the Aristotelian—what is it, terror (and in the instance of drama)?—terror and repulsion, or something like that. There are few cellists I would allow to play it. On the viola, Bruno Giuranna has transposed it down a fifth and done a very good job, very ingenious, indeed. But, I don't like to hear it down a fifth. I have absolute pitch, and it just disturbs me. I'd just leave it alone. If you can play the first five adequately, you're doing alright.

So, having listened to me so patiently, and for such a long time, and with such kindness and understanding, I will say "thank you," and, as we say in Japan, "*sayonara*!"

William Primrose receiving applause from the audience at his lecture (photo courtesy of Dwight Pounds)