Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 28 Number 1

Features:

IVC 39 Review

Bernard Zaslav: From Broadway to Babbitt

Sergey Vasilenko's Viola Compositions


"What's past is prologue"
William Shakespeare, The Tempest
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Journal of the American Viola Society

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Spring 2012
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Contents

On the Cover:

Karoline Leal *Viola One*

Violist Karoline Leal uses her classical music background for inspiration in advertising, graphic design, and printmaking. *Viola One* is an aluminum plate lithograph featuring her viola atop the viola part to Dvořák's "New World" Symphony. To view more of her art, please visit: www.karolineart.daportfolio.com.

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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 was founded for the promotion of viola performance and research.

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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, David M. Bynog dbynog@rice.edu or to Madeleine Crouch, 14070 Proton Rd., Suite 100 Dallas, TX 75244

From the Editor

It seems as if I learn something new about the viola every day. While much of what I learn is indeed "brand new" (a contemporary composition or the name of a new instrument maker), much of it is information that is decades, if not centuries old. *The Journal of the American Viola Society* has long been a valuable source for presenting both "brand new" and "newly rediscovered" material about the viola, and this issue is guaranteed to provide even our most veteran readers with their daily dose of new information.

We begin with our review of the 39th viola congress in Würzburg, Germany. Viola congresses are also great sources of new information on the viola, and the 2011 congress offered an array of artists from around the world. Participants Andrew Filmer and John Roxburgh share their thoughts on the activities from the inspirational to the controversial.

One of the pleasures of the 38th viola congress in Cincinnati was a performance of a little-known viola sonata, written in 1923, by the Russian composer Sergey Vasilenko. Now, violist and musicologist Elena Artamonova has released a CD showcasing all of Vasilenko's works for viola; seven pieces in all. Artamonova introduces both the composer and these works in her article on the "Unknown Sergey Vasilenko." Covering a wide range of styles and technical challenges, Vasilenko's works should not remain unknown for long.

Bernard Zaslav is a familiar name in the viola world, known for his recordings as part of the Zaslav Duo as well as his work with a number of prominent string quartets. Zaslav recently published his memoir, *The Viola in My Life: An Alto Rhapsody*, which is a fascinating and entertaining read. In his "Bowing for Dollars" article, Bernie includes several anecdotes excerpted from his book, primarily from his days working in New York. If you've read his book already, there is still plenty of new material in the article, capped off with his edition of the Dvořák-Kreisler *Slavonic Dance No. 1* for you to enjoy.

Two of our departmental articles feature interviews. Our In the Studio department takes us to Thailand to meet Ajarn Choochart Pitaksakorn. The Thai violist and teacher discusses the viola in his country, his multiple-viola ensemble *The Viola Lovers*, and his receipt of the National Artist Prize, Thailand's highest honor for its artists. In our Student Life department, Deborah Price chats with six talented young violists who have appeared on the popular radio and television show *From the Top*.

With this issue, we are also introducing a new department: With Viola in Hand. This department will feature short articles on diverse activities by violists. Our first article is by George Andrix, who has spent his career playing on a viola alta. In addition to Andrix's account of the instrument, we are pleased to include the first of a series of *Romantic Sketches* he has written for the viola alta (which is also playable on the viola).

Lastly, our In Memoriam section includes a moving tribute to William Magers, a popular and beloved teacher in Arizona. Readers who would like to know more about Magers can also read about him in a 1988 article by Rosemary Glyde in our online *JAVS* archives at: http://americanviolasociety.org/journal/files/2010/04/JAVS-4_1.pdf.

Cordially,

David M. Bynog
JAVS Editor

The David Dalton Viola Research Competition Guidelines

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

Entries must be original contributions to the field of viola research and may address issues concerning viola literature, history, performers, and pedagogues. Entries must not have been published in any other publication or be summaries of other works. The body of the work should be 1500–3500 words in length and should include relevant footnotes and bibliographic information. Entries may include short musical examples. Entries must be submitted in hard copy along with the following entry form, as well as in electronic format using Microsoft Word. Electronic versions of entries should be e-mailed to info@avsnationaloffice.org. All entries must be postmarked by May 15, 2012. A panel of viola scholars will evaluate submissions and then select a maximum of three winning entries.

The American Viola Society wishes to thank AVS past president Thomas Tatton and his wife, Polly, for underwriting first prize in the 2012 David Dalton Viola Research Competition.

Send entries to:
AVS Office, 14070 Proton Road, Suite 100, LB 9
Dallas, TX 75244.

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

1st Prize: $400, sponsored by Thomas and Polly Tatton
2nd Prize: *Bartók's Viola Concerto* by Donald Maurice and Facsimile edition of the Bartók Viola Concerto
3rd Prize: *An Anthology of British Viola Players* by John White and *Conversations with William Primrose* by David Dalton

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David Dalton Viola Research Competition Entry Form

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

Name _____

Current Address _____

Telephone _____ Email address_____

Permanent Address _____

University/College _____

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

Topic _____ Word Count _____

Current AVS member? Yes / No
If you are not a current AVS member, please join AVS by including $23 student membership dues with your submission, along with a membership enrollment form, which can be found in the current issue of JAVS.

From the President

Spring greetings! I hope you are having a rewarding new year of great success. The American Viola Society has been busy the last few months providing the latest and greatest opportunities for our community.

The Second Biennial Gardner Composition Competition received fifty-two entries from five countries, and at the time of this letter judges were deliberating between six accomplished finalists. I commend the participants, Christine Rutledge, and the Gardner Committee for this success! The prize includes a cash award of $1000 and performance of the work at the 40th International Viola Congress at the Eastman School of Music (May 30–June 3, 2012). I look forward to seeing you at the premiere!

Preparations for this upcoming congress at the Eastman School of Music are accelerating. Carol Rodland, George Taylor, and Phillip Ying have posted exciting program details, travel, and registration information on the Eastman School of Music's website: www.esm.rochester.edu/ivc2012. The 40th International Viola Congress promises to be unforgettable. Please be a part of history and come to Rochester this year.

Applications are available online for the Dalton Competition with a submission deadline of May 15, 2012. This year's prize includes publication of the chosen scholarly article and a cash prize of $400. Inquiries and applications should be directed to Dalton Competition chair and *JAVS* editor David Bynog.

The next time you visit our website you may notice something different. Thanks to Adam Cordle, our webmaster, media coordinator, and technology committee chair, we are now able to advertise online. Please look out for those rates in your e-mail. If you have a business, CD, sheet music, or other products to publicize, we encourage you to advertise online or in *JAVS*; it is a great way to reach our community. We also hope you will support our advertisers, who provide much financial assistance to our organization.

I will be at the national ASTA conference (March 21–24 in Atlanta) representing the AVS. Our festive booth features CDs from many of our executive board. Primrose First Place laureate Jennifer Stumm will give a master class and has agreed to sign CDs at the booth as well. This year, new and renewing members at our ASTA booth will also have the opportunity to win an Arcos bow, and we expect to have an enjoyable time seeing many familiar and new faces.

We have yet to hear from the IRS on our recent application for our national chapters. This was a painstaking yet necessary step for our organization. Nevertheless, the expense of the application has strained our finances. That, in addition to our printing costs and other expenses, has forced the board to enact austerity measures. Our committees are hard at work making difficult decisions to ensure the health and prosperity of this organization.

I extend a heartfelt thanks to our hard-working executive board. Without them none of this would be possible. Please continue to visit our website regularly to submit your events and keep up with our many activities. I hope to see you in Atlanta, Rochester, or somewhere in between.

Sincerely,
Nokuthula Ngwenyama

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Announcements

Viola Bank recipient Maya Johnson

Viola Bank Awards New Round of Instruments

For the second year in a row, the AVS's Viola Bank has loaned out all instruments in its Viola Bank. If you are interested in applying for a loan of an instrument, deadline for receipt of the 2012–13 application along with two letters of recommendation at the AVS National Office is July 30, 2012. For more information on loan applications or donating an instrument or supplies to the Viola Bank, please visit the AVS website at:
http://americanviolasociety.org/resources/viola-bank/

In September 2011, the AVS received this letter from Kathi Johnson, mother of recipient Maya Johnson:

The beautiful viola has arrived safe and sound. It has a wonderful tone, and Maya is just thrilled. Maya's music really SINGS now! Maya has decided to name her Svetla, which is Czechoslovakian for "gift," as the viola was made in Czechoslovakia.

Maya is fifteen and is in the tenth grade. She is part of a new program at school this year, where she attends orchestra classes on campus, but her core classes such as English and Algebra are online, and she completes those classes at home. She has become an expert at taking the city bus to and from school—rain, wind, and soon snow!!

Maya is principal viola for her High School Orchestra and chamber group, and she plays viola in the local college orchestra and viola for the regional symphony orchestra. Maya is the youngest player in the symphony and has been a member for the past two years.

Last year, Maya won the Silver award for the Young Classical Virtuosos of Tomorrow competition for her performance of the Viola Concerto by Telemann. But for the past four months, Maya has been practicing very hard on the Hoffmeister Viola Concerto for an audition for the Young Artist Competition, which will be held in March 2012. The winner will play with the symphony during the annual Christmas concert.

We are thrilled to be a part of the American Viola Society family, and I am so grateful for the generosity of the organization.

Discount Airfares for International Viola Congress XL

The International Viola Society has arranged group discount code rates for anyone traveling to Rochester, New York, to attend this year's 40th International Viola Congress at Eastman from May 30 to June 3. Travelers using the code will receive a discount averaging about 5%. Not only will the savings benefit individual travelers, but use of the discount codes will contribute to additional travel vouchers and savings for the International Viola

Society, allowing the IVS to dedicate more funds to special projects.

American Airlines Code: A9152DA (if booking on www.aa.com, then delete the first "A" for the promotion code)

Delta Airlines Code: NM9BV

For complete rules for obtaining this discount, please visit www.internationalviolasociety.org and look for the Airline Discount Codes info on the main page.

International Viola Society Launches New E-newsletter

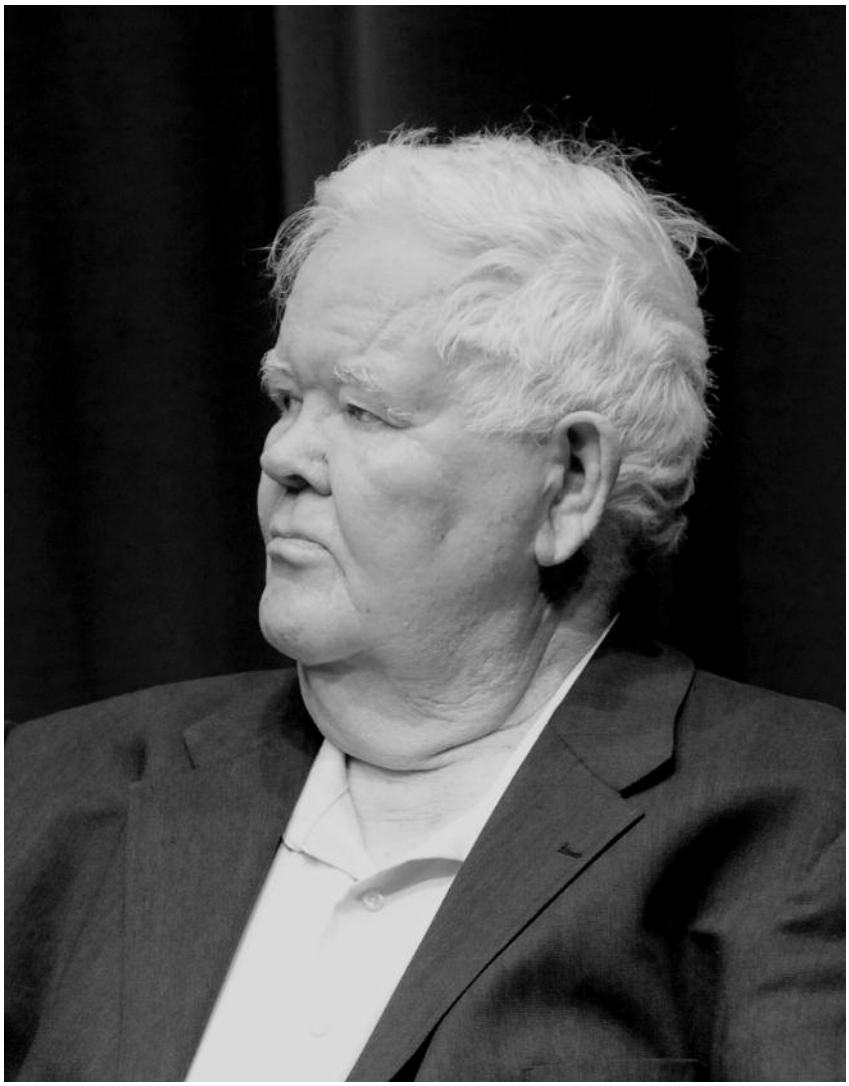
The International Viola Society published its first issue of a new electronic newsletter this winter, with PIVA librarian Myrna Layton as editor. The publication was created to "keep members of the International Viola Society connected, and to provide a platform for the sharing of information among the fourteen sections of the society." The first issue included contributions from the AVS, the German Viola Society, and the Canadian Viola Society. Readers can view the issue at: http://www.internationalviolasociety.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-Jan2012.pdf

In Memoriam

William D. Magers (1934–2011)

The viola world lost a great violist and pedagogue with the death of William Magers on November 5, 2011.

Dr. Magers was born in Horton, Kansas, on February 13, 1934. He attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he studied with Stefan Krayk—student of Carl Flesch and member of the Paganini String Quartet—and he attended the University of Southern California, where he studied with Sanford Schonbach, principal violist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He also studied at various times with Raphael Bronstein, student of Leopold Auer; David Dawson, Indiana University; Dorothy DeLay; Louis Kievman, student of Demetrius Dounis; Paul Rolland; and John Garvey, University of Illinois.



William Magers in 2008, receiving the International Viola Congress dedication (photo courtesy of Dwight Pounds)

Dr. Magers played for four years in the viola section of the Saint Louis Symphony. He taught at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville; New College of Florida; and was a Visiting Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 1971, after graduating from University of Southern California with a DMA in Viola and Music Theory, Dr. Magers was hired at Arizona State University (ASU), where he remained until his retirement thirty years later.

As a member of the Paul Rolland International String Workshops, Magers performed and gave master classes in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England, Switzerland, and Austria. For five years he was on the faculty of the Meadowmount School of Music in Westport, New York, and for two years was Visiting Professor of Violin at the University of New Mexico. With Arizona State University's New Art

String Quartet, he recorded Vincent Persichetti's four string quartets and the Piano Quintet, with the composer performing.

During his tenure at ASU, Magers received several awards including the Outstanding Teacher Award from the ASU College of Fine Arts in 1984, the Outstanding Studio Teacher Award from the Arizona String Teachers Association in 1994, and the Outstanding Service Award from the American String Teachers Association in 1998. In 2008, the International Viola Congress was held on the ASU campus and was dedicated to Dr. Magers.

However prestigious they may be, these accomplishments and accolades do not adequately describe the teacher and mentor that his students knew and loved. It was plain to anyone who knew Dr. Magers that he lived to teach. During his ASU years, he taught dozens of university students, coached chamber groups, and gave workshops at the Arizona Viola Society's "Virtuoso Violas Day." After the university teaching day was over, his pre-college students trooped in one by one until about 7:00 p.m. For several years, ASU Studio Class met during the only time he didn't routinely schedule private lessons: 7:30 a.m. on Saturdays.

With great patience he coaxed the best out of his students, encouraging them to constantly refine details of their performances. As students flourished under his guidance, he helped them plan degree programs and navigate the intricacies of the university system to graduation.

Dr. Magers was a wonderful role model. He treated his students as if they were members of his family. He helped students get scholarships to camps, buy instruments and bows, and find jobs. He always had an extra viola and bow, and for years kept a second car, in case a student needed a "loaner." He remembered them on the overseas trips he loved so much, bringing back little trinkets as well as wonderful, funny stories. Most importantly, Dr. Magers gave students honest, sound advice—whether they asked for it or not—on most aspects of their lives.

Students of Dr. Magers inevitably became lifetime members of his "studio family." Lessons in his dusty, eclectically decorated office were often interrupted by phone calls from former students and colleagues. "Hellooooh?" he would say into the phone in his rich baritone. "DEAR! My goodness, how are you?" The "family" became so large over the years that Dr. Magers called everyone "Dear" or "Cookie" so he wouldn't have to remember all of their names.

This irreplaceable man will be sincerely missed by those whose lives he touched as a colleague and mentor and second "father."

— Katherine Black Shields, DMA

2012 Congress Host Letter

Dear Friends,

Despite the winter chill, things are heating up here at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, as we prepare for the 40th International Viola Congress, which will be held here from May 30–June 3, 2012. We most cordially invite you to join us, as IVC 2012 promises to be a joyous once-in-a-lifetime celebration of all things viola.

Eastman hosted the 5th International Viola Congress in 1977. Since this is the first time that a congress is being held at a repeat venue, we were inspired to choose "What's past is prologue," a quote from Shakespeare's ***The Tempest***, as our theme.

The spirit of this theme is reflected in our programming as well. We have been inundated with an astonishing range of proposals from artists from all over the world wishing to participate, and we will be covering the gamut from the Baroque to the newly minted. IVC 2012 will open with a recital by Baroque-specialist from England Annette Isserlis, and our first evening concerto concert will feature former Berlin Philharmonic principal violist Wolfram Christ, as conductor and soloist, as well as Atar Arad, Kim Kashkashian, Paul Neubauer, and Nokuthula Ngwenyama. Two of our subsequent evenings will be in collaboration with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and will include performances by New York Philharmonic leading ladies Cynthia Phelps and Rebecca Young in Sofia Gubaidulina's ***Two Paths*** and the world premiere of African-American composer Olly Wilson's ***Viola Concerto***, as performed by Marcus Thompson.

In addition to myriad performances of great music old and new, including special "Viola after Dark" concerts in informal venues (with food and drink available!) and the traditional "play-in," IVC 2012 will also offer lecture-demonstrations by luthiers and string specialists as well as by composers Margaret Brouwer and Kenji Bunch. Panel discussions on a wide range of topics and daily "Wellness Sessions for Violists" will also be offered.

Student opportunities abound at IVC 2012. Inspired by IVC 2010, we will hold a Young Artists' Competition for violists aged 16–22. Prizes will include the Benoit Rolland Award of a new bow made by the master bow-maker as well as significant cash prizes donated by The String House of Rochester, Signorelli String Instruments Ltd., and Nocon and Associates. Themed master class offerings will range from solo Bach to orchestral audition preparation and standard repertoire. For younger violists and educators, we will be hosting a "Community Viola Day" on June 2.

Our complete artist-roster and the schedule for the congress can now be viewed on our website. Eastman's facilities are absolutely world-class, and we look forward to sharing with you the historic Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre, the historic Kilbourn Hall, and our brand new wing, which includes the stunning Hatch Recital Hall. Vendors will have a wonderful exhibition space in our new wing, so if you are looking to purchase a new viola or are in need of any viola-related accoutrements or sheet music, IVC 2012 is the place to come!

Rochester is easily accessible by car, plane, train, or bus, and we have reserved rooms for you at the Hyatt Hotel or in the University of Rochester's River Campus Dormitories. Please register early and keep checking the website, as we will post updates continuously (www.ivc2012.com).

We look forward to seeing you this spring in Rochester!

Warmest regards,
Carol Rodland
George Taylor
Phillip Ying

Associate Professors of Viola and Chamber Music at the Eastman School of Music and
Co-hosts of the ***40th International Viola Congress (IVC 2012)***

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Theodore Thomas
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Canon for Two Violas. AVS 004

Three Violas

Scott Slapin
Capricious. AVS 012

Viola Ensemble (four or more)

J. S. Bach
Sinfonia from the Cantata: Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt. AVS 005

Matthias Durst
Adagio for Four Violas. AVS 001

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
Adagio from String Sinfonia VIII. AVS 011a

Max von Weinzierl
Nachtstück für 4 Violen, op. 34. AVS 009

Mixed Ensembles

J. S. Bach
Chorale: Ich, dein betrubtes Kind, for Soprano, Viola obligata, and Continuo from the Cantata Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut. AVS 013

Ergieße dich reichlich,du göttliche Quelle, Aria for Tenor, Viola, and Continuo from the Cantata Wo soll ich fliehen hin. AVS 014

Sinfonia from the Cantata: Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt. AVS 005

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
Adagio from String Sinfonia VIII. AVS 011

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International Viola Congress
XXXIX in Review

by Andrew Filmer and John Roxburgh

Even as Eastman's upcoming congress plans triple-bookings of sessions, the charm of the smaller 39th International Viola Congress in Würzberg lay instead in a stunning level of diversity in represented nationalities and presentations. It was held at the Hochschule für Musik Würzberg, Germany, October 12–15, 2011. Performances ranged from the Shoshanguve Viola Ensemble—formed from youth who were street children in South Africa—to recitals by Samuel Rhodes and Nobuko Imai and the Pigovat "Holocaust" Requiem, performed by Donald Maurice and the Camerata Louis Spohr. The celebration of diversity included the range of the instrument itself, from the Baroque viola to David Rivinus's Pellegrina and from the five-stringed tenor viola to a controversial presentation on the viola alta.

From left to right: Nobuko Imai and Thomas Riebl (all photos courtesy of Dwight Pounds)

Day One

Preceding the official opening on the twelfth was a master class by Thomas Riebl of the Salzburg Mozarteum, whose common themes were the freedom of the body in playing and its connection to the release of sound. His teaching changed mode somewhat when a student brought forward a movement of Schubert's "Arpeggione" Sonata, the same selection that was to be featured in Riebl's recital the following day, for which he had commissioned the construction of his tenor viola to avoid leaps of an octave. In this, there was a more analytical approach, emphasizing that decisions of slurs were as important as dynamics or any other musical element; he brought laughs when he said, "You have to use your brain sometimes—not all the time, but sometimes it is helpful."

This was followed by a varied concert of viola-piano, two-viola, and violin-viola selections by Bogusława Hubisz-Sielska and Lech Balaban with pianist Mariusz Sielski (Poland) and Steven Kruse with violinist Penny Thompson Kruse (US).

The official opening at 2:00 p.m. included welcoming addresses by IVS President Kenneth Martinson, German Viola Congress host Karin Wolf, the mayor of Würzberg, patron and former Israeli ambassador Avi Primor, and Emile Cantor, who took over the organization of the congress following Ronald Schmidt's unfortunate illness. It was noted that, coincidentally, Würzberg is a sister city to Rochester, host of the forthcoming congress.

The two winning works from the 2009 Walter Witte Composition Competition were performed at a 2:30 p.m. concert. The works were by Roman Pfeifer and Arne Sanders, both written for viola and accordion, with Fabio Marano and Anne-Maria Hölscher performing with attention to detail and with great conviction. The reactions from some of the young South African violists were particularly interesting, as they had never before heard music of this contemporary style. One comment in particular was that of Kgotso Khambula, who said that "it puts your mind in a different place where things are perceived differently."

From left to right: Fabio Marano and Anne-Maria Hölscher perform winning works from the 2009 Walter Witte Composition Competition

Following our own session on Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in lecture and performance (as published in *JAVS*'s 2011 Online Summer issue) were chamber works by *Serenata a Tre*, a trio consisting of Donald Maurice with flutist Barbara Hill and guitarist Giovanni Seneca. This was a slightly lighter selection of music, including music by Piazzolla and a commissioned work by New Zealand composer Anthony Ritchie, culminating in a five-movement *Sonata Latina* composed by the guitarist.

The highlight of the day was the recital by Samuel Rhodes, which started and ended with Hindemith sonatas. The middle section comprised Stravinsky's *Elegie* and two works written for Rhodes: Milton Babbitt's *Play It Again, Sam* and Elliott Carter's *Figment IV*. Babbitt had passed away at the age of ninety-four earlier in the year, and Rhodes wrote in his program notes that the performance would be "particularly meaningful to me as a memorial to him."

Rhodes's playing displayed three prominent characteristics: an impressive timbral variety, a raw energy in sound production—what with three broken bowhairs in the final Hindemith—and a particular attention to the role of rests within the music. The violist seemed to represent a central concentration of musical energy at the center of the stage, emerging only at the call of applause to acknowledge the audience.

Day Two

In the reverse of hearing Riebl first in master class, then in performance, Rhodes's master class provided an insight into the prominence of sound production in his playing, including the use of vibrato, the importance of a *piano* dynamic never losing meaning or "sentiment," an emphasis on the lower strings in conceptualizing the viola as an operatic baritone, and an exercise of scales using only the wrist and fingers at the frog. Most notable was a discussion of posture in relation to the idea of the viola moving into the bow as much as the other way around. With some confusion as to time distribution, Rhodes was particularly gracious, continuing to teach after the official end of his session, when most of the participants had adjourned to the following event.

Riebl's recital followed this, with Schubert's "Arpeggione" performed on his commissioned tenor viola with pianist Hede Hass, followed by a trio for violin, viola, and tenor viola by Sergej I. Tanejew, in which he was joined by violinist Susanne von Gutzeit and violist Alexandru-Mihai Bota. The tenor viola did make a musical impact in regard to tessitura in the Schubert, but it was less clear if made a timbral distinction in the trio. All the string players were first-rate chamber musicians, with Bota's playing standing

out as among the most delightful timbres of the entire congress.

Over lunch, the Presidency of the IVS performed a *Cassation* by Wranitzky for five violas, and following this Louise Lansdown (UK) presented a lecture on the viola in the chamber music of Hindemith. It was ear-opening to note in particular the viola in early chamber works, and Lansdown's enthusiasm and thoroughness shone through, with samples including a facsimile of a manuscript of a Yale student, who managed to copy an informal work of Hindemith before the composer erased it off the blackboard.

Carl Smith lecturing on Ritter's viola alta

Members of the IVS Presidency, from left to right: Catharine Carroll, treasurer; Louise Lansdown, secretary; Kenneth Martinson, president; Max Savikangas, executive secretary; Luis Magín Muñíz Bascón, executive secretary

The session on Hermann Ritter's viola alta by Carl Smith (Austria) was easily the most controversial moment of the congress. The relevance of the topic was clear—Ritter having come from Würzberg—but Smith's claims that the viola should be held pointing downward to "transition" from violin technique and that a shoulder rest was a necessary accessory caused enough vibrant debate following his session that we missed the Paradiso Musicale recital of Henrik Frendin (Sweden) on the Baroque viola with Dan Laurin on recorder and Anna Paradiso Laurin on harpsichord.

The evening recital featured Nobuko Imai with pianist Hede Hass. The hall was packed to capacity, with additional chairs placed on stage. Imai received the Silver Alto Clef, "For all that you do," in the words of IVS President Kenneth Martinson. Her recital certainly demonstrated not only a great performer, but also the strand of contributions of Imai. Two selections were by Toshio Hosokawa; the first, a transcription of Handel's *Lascia ch'io pianga* dedicated to the performer, and the second, a contemporary work that brought out a range of colors as well as intervals of tenths.

Her recital was framed on both ends by Brahms—but surprisingly neither of them the clarinet/viola sonatas; rather transcriptions of two violin sonatas, with her playing demonstrating a musical if not historical ownership of the music, with deep chords lower in the range giving violinists some real competition for musical value. The choice of an encore highlighted this even further, with Kreisler's *Schön Rosmarin*—in the original key, with no alterations. Imai's distinctive stage presence was apparent throughout the evening, as was a rather individual choice of vibrato, but perhaps the one element that stood out was that the soloist took risks—on the odd occasion this may have resulted in a slip of the bow, but in other instances the effect it had in tone production was inspiring.

Day Three

This part of the congress was designed as a Pedagogy Day, with the only concurrent sessions being the master class of Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot (Canada) and the first improvisation workshop of Reinhard Gagel (Austria) that started the day. Puchhammer-Sédillot used a more metaphorical style of instruction at the master class, emphasizing feeling the emotion or color physically through body language. She was also able to quickly explain certain technical aspects in a more direct and literal manner. Gagel's approach was fairly freeform, seeking to get each violist to explore and reflect on his or her own personality and to explore the performance space.

Hester Wohlitz of South Africa presented a moving lecture on music education in South-African townships. Wohlitz focused on the boys she brought with her to the congress, who formed the Shoshanguve Viola Ensemble. At first, she talked about some of the hardships that they had faced during the ten years she has been teaching them and how she taught them using the Suzuki Method. After this lecture, the Shoshanguve Viola Ensemble performed a number of works, the most moving of which were the arrangements of traditional African folk songs. One could not help but be inspired by the passion and energy these young violists demonstrated.

Hester Wohlitz and the Shoshanguve Viola Ensemble from South Africa

Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the organizers, there were last-minute changes to the afternoon sessions, and credit must be given to Miklós Rakos (Hungary) and Luis Magín Muñiz (Spain), to whom the baton was quickly passed. Rakos's session on the Fibonacci sequence in Bartók's Viola Concerto was rather complex at times, but it was nonetheless interesting to watch a video of shaman drums and to see their place in both the Viola Concerto and in one of the violin duos. Muñiz spoke on the role of the viola at the end of the eighteenth century in Spain (in part connected to his presentation at the 2008 congress in Arizona) effectively illustrating the context of era with a newspaper advertisement translating to the following:

> In the street of Santa Ana number 3 passing the chocolate shop, entering the rastro, to your left, lives a blind person named Francisco Delgado who teaches to play vihuela (guitar), violín, violon (violoncello), and viola.

He noted that the first viola method of José de Herrando in 1760 preceded that of Michel Corrette's treatise and that the first conservatory in Spain was thanks to a violist. Muñiz spent some time relating the conservatory system of the era, noting that aspiring violists had to have violin skills as a prerequisite and that the preparatory material of the day emphasized the real day-to-day skills of the profession: the "now" moment of sight-reading and transposition.

The evening concert featured "Russian-Jewish" works. The first was a sonata for solo viola by Mieczysław Weinberg, performed by Julia Rebekka Adler, whose playing had a distinctive power as well as a great range of colors. This was followed by a sonata by Grigori Frid and one of Shostakovich, both performed by Viacheslav Dinerchtein and Hede Hass.

Day Four

As the improvisation workshop sessions progressed, it was interesting to note the sociological dynamics as new members joined in—some with distinctly extroverted personalities—which added both colorful variety and occasionally conflicting directions as one of the members tried to define form in that which was intentionally built without musical boundaries. Out of all the sessions, these workshops perhaps invited the most collaboration between the participants, getting violists to know each other fairly quickly both through conversation and improvised performance.

The Awardees Concert of the Walter Witte-Wettbewerb competition featured three distinct musical personalities, from the intense drive of Lydia Rinecker, to the grace of Georgy Kovalev, to the youthful energy in the performance of Sara Kim. Kim was awarded Second Prize, and Rinecker and Kovalev received equal Third Prizes. Over lunch, Catharine Carroll and Dominic DeStefano related behind-the-scenes internal workings of putting together the 2010 congress, developing into a discussion with those who had similar experience that included fundraising, budget decisions, design concepts, and fire codes. The afternoon recital that followed soon after, by Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot and Hartmut Lindemann, featured works for viola and piano by Enescu and Milhaud.

The presentation and demonstration of the violas at the exposition (minus Rivinus, who had to leave the previous day) was conducted by Emile Cantor, and this session drew the largest crowd outside of the evening performances. An instrument of Zvi Dori was the clear favorite, and Cantor made two points: First was the high level of subjectivity present within any popular vote of this nature. Second was that on the flip side, considering the margin of victory for Dori's viola, that a great sounding instrument could be a deciding factor in an audition if the players' abilities were equal.

The final concert featured two works of Bruch: the Romance and the Concerto for Viola, Clarinet, and Orchestra with violist Estelle Spohr and clarinetist Andreas Reinhard and the Camerata Louis Spohr conducted by Bernd Fugelsang. Estelle Spohr then gra-

Luthier Zvi Dori with a display of his instruments

Clarinetist Andreas Reinhard performs Bruch at the final concert

ciously took the principal viola role in the orchestra for the "Holocaust" Requiem of Israeli composer Boris Pigovat, performed by Donald Maurice (New Zealand).

The cultural and historical significance of the German premiere of a work depicting the largest massacre of World War II could not be overstated, and Fugelsang announced at the start that the performance was dedicated to all the victims of the war. The technical demands of both soloist and orchestra were impressive. The solo viola demonstrated calisthenics in extreme intervallic leaps and a diverse range in tonal palette, while the orchestra's percussion section required at times three players on the tubular bells and two on timpani, with crashes on the piano depicting the honky-tonk instruments in concentration camps. The performance ended with a deafening and prolonged silence preceding the enthusiastic applause; a pregnant moment when a German audience was slightly unsure how to applaud a work that signified such a dark moment in the country's history.

In conversations following the performance, Maurice mentioned a special bond with the German orchestra, which took on the task of the performance with a particular understanding of its historical significance, despite there being little in terms of a common language during rehearsals.

The 39th International Viola Congress lived up to the sense of internationalism—not only with the number of nationalities present and active, but in the diversity within musical significance shared: from the eighteenth century Spanish violist to a present day Japanese composer celebrating a pre-eminent violist whose musical language spans all cultures. In addition to this, there was a certain significance to the host country: from the timelessness of Bach, to the experiments of a Würzberg violist, and finally the "Holocaust" Requiem.

Beyond all this, two significant parts of the congress to us personally happened quite by accident: a chance lunch with Ronald Schmidt and his wife right before both of us left Würzberg and sharing the company of an institution within the institution—the ever vibrant Dwight Pounds.

Andrew Filmer has written articles in JAVS, String Praxis *in Australia, and is due to be published in* Crescendo *in New Zealand; additionally, his edition of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 is published by Comus in the UK. He is a first-prize winner of the David Dalton Viola Research Competition and holds a Master of Music degree from Indiana University where he studied with Anthony Devroye of the Avalon Quartet. He is currently a New Zealand International Doctoral Scholar researching the effects and application of scordatura, under the supervision of Donald Maurice.*

John Roxburgh recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Music at the New Zealand School of Music, and he is looking forward to starting a Master of Musical Arts degree at the same institution under the supervision of Donald Maurice.

From left to right: Donald Maurice, Karin Wolf, Louise Rider, New Zealand Ambassador to Germany H. E. Peter Rider, Boris Pigovat, and Emile Cantor after the conclusion of International Viola Congress XXXIX

Bowing for Dollars:
From Broadway to Babbitt

by Bernard Zaslav

Poster from Bernard Zaslav's 1962 Carnegie Hall debut

During the 1980s I served as faculty violist for Kneisel Hall's annual Chamber Music Festival, located in the pretty coastal village of Blue Hill, Maine. Perhaps the longest ongoing such entity in this country, Kneisel Hall's rich musical tradition dates back to 1885, when the celebrated twenty-year-old Austrian violinist Franz Kneisel came to the United States to become concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It was there, too, that he founded the Kneisel Quartet, which reigned supreme from 1885 to 1917.

I noticed in the parking lot that my cellist colleague, Jerry Grossman, principal of the Metropolitan Opera, had "Bowing for Dollars" writ large on his auto's license plate. In view of the Met's notoriously heavy schedule of rehearsals and performances (*Meistersinger* might top out at six hours), Jerry was making a valid point. I'm co-opting his *kvetch* to describe my own years as a pit-dweller on Broadway. Far from grand opera—or grand anything else—my performances during those years included Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and many lesser musicals of the 1950s and 60s.

The first chapter of my memoir, *The Viola in My Life: An Alto Rhapsody*, describes how my totally unexpected transition from violin to viola came about. Just two weeks after graduating from Juilliard in 1946 as a certified *vile-inist* (as violists are wont to think of them), I was called to play viola for a six-week summer gig with Raymond Scott's band at the Paramount movie house on Broadway. This was the era of Sinatra and the bobby-soxers; adoring fans of our own curly-haired lead singer blocked the Paramount's stage door day and night. Held virtual prisoner backstage between shows as a consequence, I began digging into that forty-dollar student viola I had purchased for this gig to keep my sanity. After six dedicated weeks of intense practice on this new, but now seductive instrument, I determined to make my switch to viola permanent and to search for a teacher.

Honest-to-God violists seemed rather thin on the ground at the time. After one further year of study on viola with my former Juilliard teacher, Mischa Mischakoff, I became a member of the Cleveland Orchestra at age twenty-one under their brilliant new conductor, George Szell. This was an auspicious introduction into the orchestral world under the most demanding of conductors and a never-to-be-forgotten learning experience. But after two seasons I knew that a life in chamber music was the reason I had made the switch to viola in the first place.

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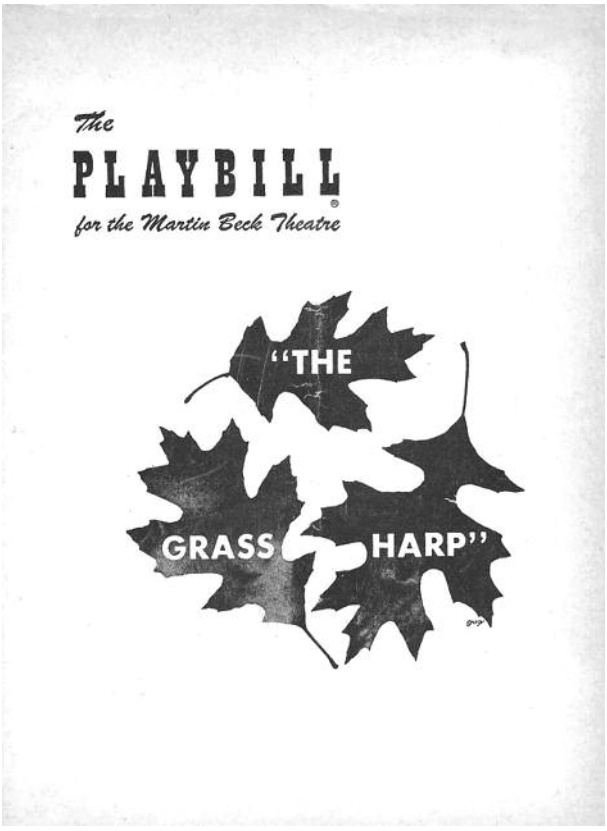
Returning to New York, I phoned Morris Stonzak, the contractor who had set up my audition for Szell (nobody auditioned in front of a committee in those days), to tell him that I was once again "available." Mr. Stonzak mentioned that he had a Broadway show based on a Truman Capote novel called *The Grass Harp* that was opening at the Martin Beck Theatre on March 27, 1952. He told me that if a big-shot ex-symphony orchestra member like me might deign to lower myself, he would give me a shot. I jumped at the chance, just about kissing his hand through the phone. So began my entrée into the Great White Way.

The Grass Harp tells the story of an orphaned boy (perhaps Capote himself) and two elderly ladies who observe life while nonchalantly sitting up in the branches of a Chinaberry tree. Virgil Thomson wrote about ten minutes of "come-to-Jesus" hymn tunes for flute, violin, viola, cello, and harp. Flutist Claude Monteux, son of the famed French conductor Pierre Monteux, was our leader and conductor. Rather than sitting in a pit, our little band sat in the dark—backstage behind a curtain—while relying on a small work-light to signal our cues. Curtain time was 8:00 p.m., but since our first cue came at around 10:15 p.m., I had enough time to close the plumbing supply store on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn (my day job, so I could support my family), grab a bite, and drive to Manhattan in search of a parking space close to the theater. I recall that union scale for this, my first well-paying Broadway show, was about $110 per week, but sadly, it closed after only thirty-six performances. However, that was long enough for romance to flower between the cellist and the harpist, who had been sitting next to each other for thirty-six nights (in the dark). Claude and I merely remained close friends.



1952 program from The Grass Harp*, with music by Virgil Thomson*

My next Broadway outing was the long-awaited revival of George Gershwin's brilliant *Porgy and Bess,* an American folk opera that first appeared on Broadway in 1935. We opened on March 9, 1953, at the Ziegfeld Theatre on Sixth Avenue and West 54th Street. Much of the original music that had been cut from the premiere was restored for this production, with Alexander Smallens, the opera's original conductor, at the helm. Every lush harmony of the original score, every one of Gershwin's thrilling songs like *Summertime* and *It Ain't Necessarily So* really did have the audience humming the tunes as they left the theater. An astonishing young soprano named Leontyne Price burst into the limelight on opening night, singing the part of Bess. William Warfield played a marvelously touching Porgy, and Cab Calloway was "Sportin' Life," a role that was conceived with him in mind. The poet Maya Angelou played the part of Ruby.

The Ziegfeld Theatre's orchestra pit was unusually large for Broadway, big enough to hold six violas, though union rules allowed management after the first six weeks to fire players whose names were on the "cut list." I sat on the second stand of the viola section along with Theodore Israel, a violist who was able to extract the most naturally rich sound from any viola he picked up, so we weren't in danger of being fired.

Three weeks into the run of the show I was feeling a real sleep deficit because of my dual life, and one night I simply dozed off while holding on to a final note. I awoke to feel my stand partner grabbing my

bow arm and whispering urgently into my ear, "Stop playing, Bernie." Yes, while everyone else had stopped at the conductor's cutoff, I was still playing that stupid whole note *in my sleep*. It was clear that I could no longer moonlight for three and a half hours in the pit every night, so I offered to place my name on the cut list in place of Al Brown, the violist sitting behind me. Al later became a contractor and often hired me for gigs.

To say that playing eight shows a week in a Broadway pit was stultifying would demean the venue and all of the wonderful folk who made it part of our musical heritage, but from my vantage point as a pit-dweller, it seemed like Jerry Grossman's yawp was on the mark. By now I realized that I sorely needed to brush up my technique. Lillian Fuchs was the first American woman to make a name for herself as a viola soloist and the first to record the six Bach Cello Suites on viola, still considered among the best viola recordings ever made. Though barely five feet in height, Ms. Fuchs stands tall in the viola firmament because of the intensity and power of her sound, the security of her technique, and the honesty of her phrasing. Learning that Ms. Fuchs was teaching viola and chamber music at Yale University's Norfolk Music School in Connecticut for the summer of 1957, I asked to study with her.

Most of the other applicants were quite young, so at age thirty-one, I feared I was a bit long in the tooth to be accepted, especially with my wife, Nomi, and two children in tow for the summer. It's my guess that Ms. Fuchs took me on as a special challenge. I wasn't in terrible shape, but I was a bit rusty and needed to get back to the basics. Lillian was sometimes heard to say that she had "rescued" this so-called "ex-plumber," though, in my defense, I had never handled a pipe wrench professionally. My viola lessons and chamber music coaching were free, but I was required, like the other students (some of them half my age) to do kitchen duty at mealtimes. My wife and the kids had a ball watching me dish out food from behind the steam tables. They had never seen me in the kitchen at home, since their father was always working on Broadway or (like his father) "at the store."

Lessons began with the Bach Cello Suites. Using the old Schirmer (Svečenski) edition, Ms. Fuchs inserted her own fingerings and bowings. We began with the First Suite, her starting point for any new student,

The Zaslav Duo, from left to right: pianist Naomi (Nomi) Zaslav and violist Bernard Zaslav at Viola Congress XVII in 1989 (photo courtesy of Dwight Pounds)

and then we jumped far ahead to the Sixth Suite. Originally written for a five-string instrument, it's the most technically difficult of the bunch. In our lessons I was able to observe just how Lillian pulled such a rich tone from her fifteen-and-a-half-inch *Gasparo da Salò* viola. Considered small in viola terms, it fit quite naturally on her five-foot frame. She used a bow that was nearly half an inch shorter than normal, a specimen made by the important early English maker John Dodd, which suited her arm length. A large part of Lillian's secret for producing such a rich sound was her special attention to bow pressure. She positioned her bow a bit closer to the bridge than normal, though not close enough as to cause the tone to break.

Even to a novice, relating bow pressure to speed hardly qualifies as rocket science. Many teachers work on arm weight, wrist angles, pronation versus supination, and proper grip, but Lillian's method of teaching bow

pressure was unique. She would ask her pupils to draw the bow across the string while pressing hard enough to produce scratching (it can sound like a feline's death throes) and then gradually attenuate the bow pressure while increasing the speed. After much patience and practice, this produces the loudest possible sound from the instrument, without breaking the tone. The next (and far more difficult) step is to incorporate this technique into everyday use. It seems so obvious that any fiddler would ask, "What's so new about that?" There is nothing new about it, but it can be easily overlooked, since while we draw our hank of horsehair over what were once the guts of sheep, we usually direct most of our attention to the black squiggles on the page.

Lillian was a kind of "Unsinkable Molly Brown" (a famous survivor of the *RMS Titanic*). She would not be diverted; in the words of Oliver Herford, "She had a whim of iron." She seemed to be in competition with her often-overbearing brother, Joseph, who was one heck of a fiddler. He had a sterling technique, total control, pure intonation, a rich sound, and what critics used to call a strong musical "profile."

Together, they recorded Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola with the Musica Aeterna Orchestra under conductor Frederick Waldman. Playing on those recording sessions, I noted that the soloists vied constantly with one another for control of subtle changes of tempo, a classic example of two strong wills in conflict. Lillian would have her way no matter what, stamping her foot if things were not as she wished. There is a treacherous moment at the end of the cadenza in the second movement. The orchestra must enter right after the soloists finish playing the *Nachschlagen* (a kind of yodel, a veritable "yoo-hoo"), signaling the end of their trills.

This common device in classical music of the period had our conductor, Mr. Waldman, completely flummoxed. As the final trills of the cadenza approached, he stood frozen in place, unsure of where or when to make the gesture for our re-entry. We knew enough to rely on the totally unshakeable Gerald Tarack, our rock-solid concertmaster, in such a situation. Joseph and Lillian were required to play the entire cadenza section repeatedly and getting highly irritated in the process. For what turned out to be the final take, Mr. Waldman was reduced to standing immobile while we entered as one at Gerry's cue. I must add in all pride that New York's vaunted freelancers were absolutely conductor-proof, specializing in saving the *tuchases* of many a conductor.

After my study with Ms. Fuchs, there were still holes to be filled in my bank account, so in early 1959 I played in *Juno*, a Broadway show based on Seán O'Casey's 1924 play *Juno and the Paycock*, with music and lyrics by Marc Blitzstein. When it closed (too dark, too many Irish corpses strewn about onstage at the first number), I was called for *Once Upon a Mattress*, an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Princess and the Pea*. It opened at the off-off-Broadway Phoenix Theatre (on 11th Street and 2nd Avenue) on May 11, 1959, and featured a fresh-faced and hugely-talented newcomer named Carol Burnett. Due to the Phoenix's tiny theater pit, composer Mary Rodgers dismissed the violins at the dress rehearsal and rewrote the score overnight, leaving me to play concertmaster *on viola*. The play was riotous fun, but the egg creams, concocted at the candy store next door, were even better. *Take Me Along*, a show based on Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*, opened on October 22, 1959. It starred Jackie Gleason and ran for 448 performances; I didn't play all of them, but some nights (and matinees) it felt like I had. Beginning in March 1961 I played principal viola for a run of *The Happiest Girl in the World,* a show that starred Janice Rule and used music by Jacques Offenbach.

Tovarich was a comedy based on a play by Jacques Deval and Robert E. Sherwood. It starred Vivian Leigh and Jean Pierre Aumont and opened on March 18, 1963. It was fraught with problems from the beginning. Though Ms. Leigh won a Tony Award as Best Leading Actress for her role, her mental situation gradually made it necessary to hold the curtain for the second act, and her career gradually came to an end. In 1964 I subbed in *Fiddler on the Roof* with Zero Mostel and again in 1966 for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Watching Zero

Program from 1959 production of Once Upon a Mattress*, with Bernard Zaslav as viola concertmaster*

from the pit was both painful (to my neck) and rewarding. While I was playing *Golden Boy* in 1966 (for almost a year) at the Broadhurst Theatre with Sammy Davis, Jr. (a fine poker player, as I learned to my chagrin), I asked for the evening off to play a concert with the Symphony of the Air. Our contractor, Morris Stonzak, threatened to fire me, saying, "Y'know, a guy like you doesn't even *belong* on Broadway." I thought seriously about using that on my solo brochure, "So classy, he doesn't belong on Broadway." Catchy?

From 1957 through 1968, while filling various pits as needed, I was the violist (in succession or at the same time) of the Kohon, the Carnegie, and the Composers Quartets. The Kohons were quartet-in-residence first at Columbia and then at New York University; the Carnegie was quartet-in-residence at Brooklyn College. While these auspicious titles offered a certain cachet on a concert program, the jacket of an LP recording, or the occasional newspaper review, there was little or nothing in the way of monetary compensation. In addition to daily quartet rehearsals with one or the other of these groups, I was also principal viola with many of New York's top chamber orchestras, like the Clarion, the Esterhazy, and the New York Chamber Soloists (we sometimes called ourselves the *NY Chamber Pots* for reasons I won't go into here). I often sat on the first stand of violas with the Symphony of the Air, the cooperative vestige of Arturo Toscanini's incomparable NBC Symphony, of which my violin teacher, Mischa Mischakoff, had been concertmaster.

Hollywood's number crunchers soon learned that recording fees were a lot lower in London or Rome, but many movie dates were still happening in New York, although we were wont to claim that the industry was slowly dying. I worked on film scores composed by Aaron Copland, David Amram, Laurence Rosenthal, and Leonard Rosenman for films like *East of Eden, Requiem for a Heavyweight, Splendor in the Grass, The Manchurian Candidate, A Raisin in the Sun*, and a few hour-long TV shows on PBS. It was a truly exciting life with lots of variety. You never knew what gig Radio Registry might call you for; would it be for Stokowski, Skitch Henderson, or Frank Sinatra? I lived by my trusty date-book and the odd call from a contractor who was sufficiently impressed by my reputation in the business, but there was still that ever-present grocer to be reckoned with.

Joining the Kohon Quartet was my entrée into chamber music. Our very first LP recording of Alban Berg's Op. 3 Quartet was awarded the *Académie Charles Cros Grand Prix du Disque* in 1964 (it's still on YouTube). Excellent reviews brought us to prominence in New York's quartet scene, and Vox Records then asked us to embark on an exciting project, recording the nine quartets of Dvořák and the three quartets each of Schumann and Brahms (all six in one Vox Box), both quartets by Charles Ives (the first on LP), and clarinet quintets by Hummel. The Carnegie Quartet taught chamber music at Brooklyn College while it was the busiest group to play in the classrooms of New York's public schools, sponsored by a wonderful organization called Young Audiences. At the same time, my town was rapidly becoming home for a Second Viennese School of composition with such inspiring composers

of new music as Edgard Varèse in evidence. With Milton Babbitt, Roger Sessions, and Elliott Carter writing exciting new string quartets, it was Gunther Schuller, our guardian angel, who suggested the formation of the Composers Quartet to perform and record these thorny works.

Because of the extraordinary complexity of the new music we were learning, the Composers Quartet had to strive for rhythmic exactitude and meticulous ensemble with a vengeance. We refined every little musical event to a fare-thee-well, putting each detail under our ensemble's untiring microscope. "We're not together," first violinist Matthew Raimondi would frequently complain, while, "You're LATE, Zaslav," was what I heard so often from cellist Seymour Barab. Contrary to her ready smile, our second violinist, Anahid Ajemian, would frown as she tried to keep the peace, saying, "Oh, let's just try it again—but without talking this time."

At the beginning of a rehearsal at her apartment on Central Park West and 79th Street, Anahid's cat would first curl up contentedly between the legs of our folding music stands, making sure to avoid the hazardous endpin of Seymour's cello as well as our assorted feet. For the first few minutes the cat might endure the high-pitched textures in a score, but eventually, when some particular passagework drove her over the edge, she would dash madly out of the apartment's pet door. There she would sit patiently, facing the glass-faced mailbox chute in the hall, watching for the occasional letter to drop down so she could spring at it ferociously. If a poor put-upon feline couldn't abide the sounds we were producing, I wonder how so many of our audience members managed to remain in their seats.

Milton Babbitt (a dear departed friend) might rightly be considered a "maximalist," in every sense of the word, in contrast to composer Morton Feldman, who is considered a "minimalist" because of his exceedingly spare use of notes and the importance he gives to silence in his music. Babbitt controls (and carefully notates) every pitch, duration, rhythm, dynamic level (often one for every single note where deemed necessary), articulation, register, and timbre in his works. All this attention to detail gives a special clarity and beauty to Milton's music. Describing the amount of rehearsal time required to learn his music might sound like boasting (or a kind of sadistic addiction). Appreciating his music often requires more than one hearing, but it's well worth the effort.

We premiered Henry Weinberg's Second Quartet at a concert at Princeton University, where Milton taught composition. Before studying with Babbitt, Henry studied with George Rochberg, Roger Sessions, and Luigi Dallapiccola. His piece seemed to me like an attempt to go Babbitt one better in matters of complexity. Weinberg's musical output has been said to deal with rhythmic structuring, high sonorities, and fluctuating textures. What I remember most are the work's hellish difficulties. We devoted almost a year of rehearsal time to make a performance of this monstrously difficult work possible, while making the life of Anahid's cat a living hell. Henry thought nothing (don't think much of it myself) of asking us to play triple or even quadruple stops that went so high up on the fingerboard that our fingers nearly scraped our noses. We had mixed feelings about his demands, but we suffered through them and eventually recorded the quartet for Columbia Records, and it won the 1967 Naumberg Foundation Award for Chamber Music.

The hot-blooded Sicilian genes embodied within Matthew Raimondi's DNA uncoiled themselves the night of the premiere of Weinberg's quartet. After the concert was over, the four of us entered the large green room (which had two entrances) through the left side nearest the stage, where we awaited the hoped-for plaudits from those (mostly composers) who were to be our mainstay during our avant garde career. We felt satisfied (as much as one can ever be) with our performances, especially our performance of the Weinberg, so we were eager to hear the composer's reaction. When he rushed up from the other end of the green room to grab Matt's hand, the very first words he spoke were, "Have you seen my hat?" We were aghast at such supreme tactlessness after all the work we put into learning his piece. Edgar Kennedy, a classic film comedian of the past, was known as the "master of the slow burn," but Matt ran him a close second that night.

PHILHARMONIC HALL | LINCOLN CENTER

Wednesday Evening, December 27, 1967, at 8:30
Friday Evening, December 29, 1967, at 8:30
Sunday Evening, December 31, 1967, at 8:30

GEORGE F. SCHUTZ in association with STEPHEN SCHMIDT

presents

An Evening with P.D.Q. Bach

(1807-1742)

narrative intervention by

Prof. Peter Schickele

THE NEW YORK PICK-UP ENSEMBLE

JORGE MESTER, *Conductor*

P.D.Q. BACH — **Schleptet in E♭ (S.O.)**
for flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, and cello
Larghissimo—Allegro Boffo
Menuetto Con Brio Ma Senza Trio
Adagio Saccarino
Yehudi Menuetto
Presto Hey Nonny Nonnio

PROF. SCHICKELE — **Eine Kleine Nichtmusik**

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P.D.Q. BACH — **Sonata for Violin Four Hands and Harpsichord (S. 440)**
Andanteeny
Allegro Liberace
1 lb. Ground
Allah Breve
JORGE MESTER AND BERNARD ZASLOV, *violin*
JOHN NELSON, *harpsichord*

P.D.Q. BACH — **Serenude for Devious Instruments (S. 36-24-36)**
Slide whistles, kazoos, shower hose, windbreaker, tromboon and strings
Shake Allegro
Andante Alighieri
Four-Voice Frugue

Program from the premiere of P. D. Q. Bach's Sonata for Viola Four Hands, full of blooper typos

The Fine Arts Quartet in 1972, from left to right: Bernard Zaslav, Abram Loft, Leonard Sorkin, and George Sopkin

I played the premiere of P. D. Q. Bach's Sonata for Viola, Four Hands (edited by Professor Peter Schickele) with violist (later a conductor) Jorge Mester, on December 2, 1967. This was at a concert at Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall with the New York Pick-up Ensemble, "An Evening with P. D. Q. Bach" (1807–1742: please note unusual dates). Making his customary entrance by swinging down to the stage on a rope, our conductor, "Professor" Peter Schickele, faculty member of the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople, informed the audience that the young P. D. Q. Bach had been taken as a young child by his noted father to a concert. It happened to include a concerto for two violins by Vivaldi, but arriving late, they could hear the concert only from behind closed doors. The young P. D. Q., not having actually viewed the performance, was inspired to write his own concerto for the same number of human hands.

Accordingly, he wrote it for a single instrument, played simultaneously by two players, one holding the viola under his chin and his partner standing at the fingerboard end of the instrument (hence, "Four Hands"). Both players finger two different strings of the fingerboard (yes, it can be done), and each bows across the strings in opposite directions. A not-surprising amount of rehearsal is required to manage this rather complex feat. Due to the degree of intimacy involved, it is strongly suggested that both players shower before (and after) each rehearsal.

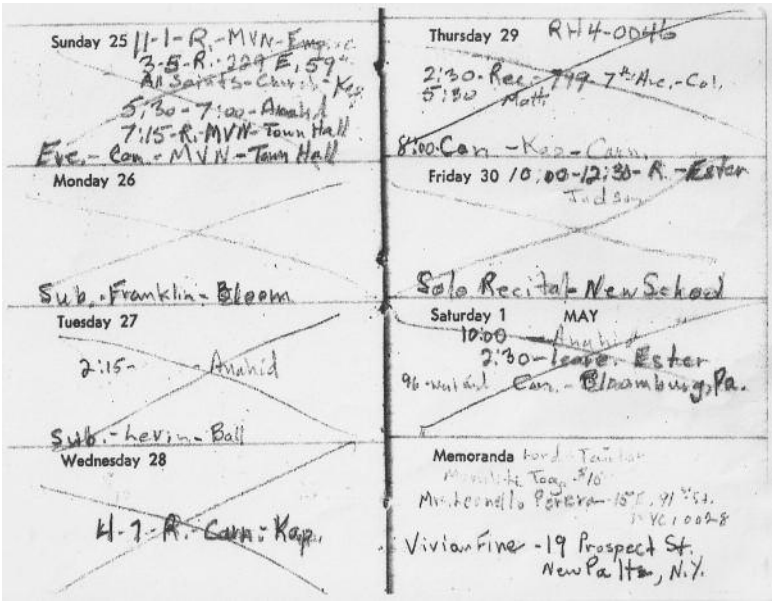
While there were some later changes for the published edition, the first two movements were marked *Andanteeny* and *Allegro Liberace*, and the slow (but hilariously boring) third movement, which used only the viola's open C string, was marked *1 lb. Ground*. It required one player to hold the instrument at the proper angle so that a thirty-foot length of well-rosined nylon fish-line could be drawn across the open string by two stagehands.

After the performance, Jorge and I returned for our on-stage bows to wild applause while engaging in a mock duel, using our cheapest bows for comedic effect. During the course of this shtick, the energetic Jorge knocked my glasses right off my face, and they flew into the audience (who thought it was part of the show). The concert was televised, and Nomi told me that my mother watched it on our TV set at home in Brooklyn. 1960s color TV sets sported knobs to adjust the red and green tints, and it seems that when I came on stage, my mother turned up the red tint, so her Buddy would have "a little color in his cheeks."

In 1968, I answered a call to join the prestigious Fine Arts Quartet in residence at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, thereby leaving New York (and Bye, Bye Broadway) at age forty-two to cross the Hudson River. With this iconic group, I performed and toured worldwide, taught chamber music, and recorded many of the staples of the quartet literature as well as commissioning new works by important composers. After twelve productive and rewarding years with the Fine Arts, two of my colleagues retired, and I went on to join the equally prestigious Vermeer Quartet in Chicago. Five more years of touring and recording with the Vermeer became physically wearing, so I then joined the newly formed Stanford Quartet. After eight years of teaching, performing

locally (for the most part), and recording with them, I retired in 1993. Learning at Stanford to do recording and editing on my own, I made another three albums of viola/piano music with the Zaslav Duo, together with my pianist wife (of sixty-four years). With a discography of 134 works of chamber music, and having performed with so many marvelous colleagues, I can't imagine a happier outcome for any violist.

My patient wife calls me a "pack-rat" for having saved so many of my tiny (two by three inches) pocket date-books. These small reminders of the gigs in store for me each day seemed to rule my life. In addition, I'd often tuck the odd program into my viola case after a concert, so I respond that without these memory joggers, I could not possibly have recalled all the exciting incidents of which I write and the many talented colleagues with whom I made music. One of Frank Loesser's Broadway musicals was named *The Most Happy Fella*, so I feel like I could be that fella.



One of Bernard Zaslav's Pocket Date-books: A Typical Week from April 1965.

Sunday, April 25

11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – I had a rehearsal with the Master Virtuosi of New York, a rather *chutzpahdik* (read, nervy) appellation cooked up by Gene Forrell, a veteran conductor of theater, dance, TV, and writer of commercial jingles. Gene wanted to make his mark on the New York classical music scene by hiring (at recording scale) the best and busiest freelancers in town. If he thought he had the talent to make it big as a conductor of classical music in Noo Yawk, *fugheddabouddit.*

3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Rehearsal for an upcoming concert with the Musica Aeterna Orchestra at the Metropolitan Museum on 5th Avenue and W. 85th Street.

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Tucked in a rehearsal with the Composers Quartet at Anahid Ajemian's apartment on Central Park West and 79th Street (working on Milton Babbitt's Second String Quartet at the moment). Grabbed a cab for:

7:15 p.m. – Pre-concert rehearsal with Master Virtuosi at Town Hall, after which came,

8:00 p.m. – Performance of the actual concert (no magic moments occurred).

Monday, April 26

Subbed in the musical *Ben Franklin in Paris* and shared a stand with Olga Bayrack Bloom, creator in 1976 of Bargemusic, New York's most intimate and beloved chamber music series, where fine performances occur several times a week on a floating barge on Manhattan's East River. Olga was a violinist, violist, and an altogether remarkable spirit; sadly, she passed away on Thanksgiving Day 2011, at age ninety-two.

Tuesday, April 27

2:15 p.m. – Rehearsal at Anahid's with Composers Quartet.

8:00 p.m. – Subbed for the Broadway show *I Had a Ball* (which I had quit earlier).

Wednesday, April 28

Home rehearsal for upcoming Duo concert.

4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Rehearsal with Musica Aeterna Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Thursday, April 29

2:30 p.m. – Commercial recording at Columbia Records, 79th Street.
5:30 p.m. – Rehearsal with Composers Quartet.
8:00 p.m. – Concert with Musica Aeterna at Carnegie Hall.

Friday, April 30

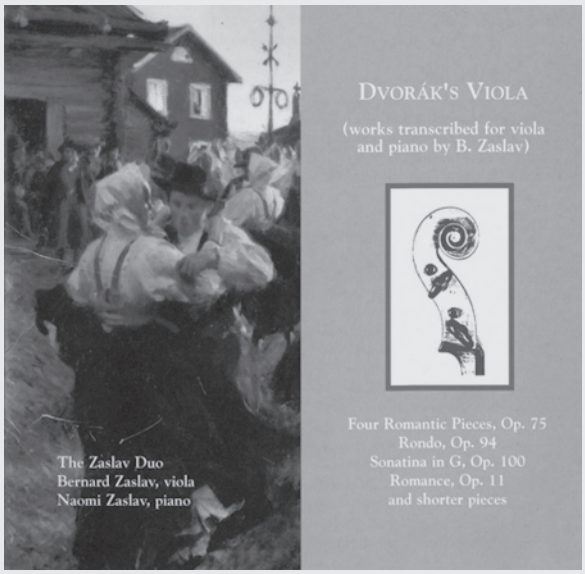
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Rehearsal with David Blum's Esterhazy Orchestra, a top-drawer band, at Judson Hall, on West 57th Street.
8:00 p.m. – Zaslav Duo recital at the New School for Social Research, West 12th Street. Second concert of our Artist Choice Series. Program consisted of Beethoven's *Notturno* in D Major, op. 42 (a transcription of his Serenade for String Trio, op. 8), premiere of a Duo for Viola and Piano, written for us by bassist/composer Alvin Brehm, Mozart's Duo for Violin and Viola, K. 423 (with Matthew Raimondi, first violinist of the Composers Quartet), and Brahms's Sonata, op. 120, no. 1 for Viola and Piano. A few measures into the opening Beethoven work, I noticed my pianist grimacing in frustration, because the highly important middle D key of the piano had jammed. We attempted to push on bravely, but the situation was rapidly getting ludicrous, so we were obliged to come to a full stop. Attending the concert was our friend Boris, owner of the Ostrovsky Piano Company on West 56th Street, across from Carnegie Hall's stage door. Seeing our dilemma, Boris rose from his seat, walked calmly up the few steps to the stage, leaned into the piano, fiddled around expertly with one of the hammers, and soon made everything right. After which he walked off in acknowledgement of the hand he richly deserved, and we had no further problems. Incidentally, we got a fine review for our efforts.

Saturday, May 1

10:00 a.m. – Rehearsal with Composers Quartet at Anahid's.
2:30 p.m. – Leave by bus for Bloomberg, PA (ninety-six miles—and back).
8:00 p.m. – Concert with Esterhazy Orchestra, conducted by David Blum.

So ended another week of my freelance life; a good run withal.

To accompany this article, we are pleased to publish Fritz Kreisler's arrangement of Dvořák's Slavonic Dance, Op. 46, No. 2, with the violin part arranged for viola by Bernard Zaslav. For the full piano accompaniment, please visit: http://americanviolasociety.org/resources/scores/javs-scores/. Zaslav recorded this arrangement for the 1996 album Dvořák's Viola: Works Transcribed for Viola and Piano *(Music&Arts CD-953). Additional arrangements by Bernard Zaslav will be forthcoming from Ovation Press (http://ovationpress.com/)*



Cover of the 1996 album Dvořák's Viola: Works Transcribed for Viola and Piano *by the Zaslav Duo*

Bernard Zaslav, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1926, spent the first two years of his career in the viola section of the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell and the rest of the twentieth century as the violist of the Kohon String Quartet, the Composers String Quartet, the Fine Arts String Quartet, the Vermeer String Quartet, the Stanford String Quartet, and the Zaslav Duo. He shared responsibility in these ensembles for commissioning, premiering, and recording new works by Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, Gunther Schuller, and too many others to mention. His discography of 134 works of chamber music, released on such labels as Vox, Turnabout, Laurel, Music & Arts, Nonesuch, Everest, Gasparo, CRI, Gallante, and Orfeo, have won international awards and enthusiastic acclaim from critics worldwide. He served on the faculties of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Distinguished Professor), Northern Illinois University, and Stanford University, where he was able to influence hundreds of his students to continue the practice of commissioning, premiering, and recording music by living composers and treating music by dead composers with equal reverence.

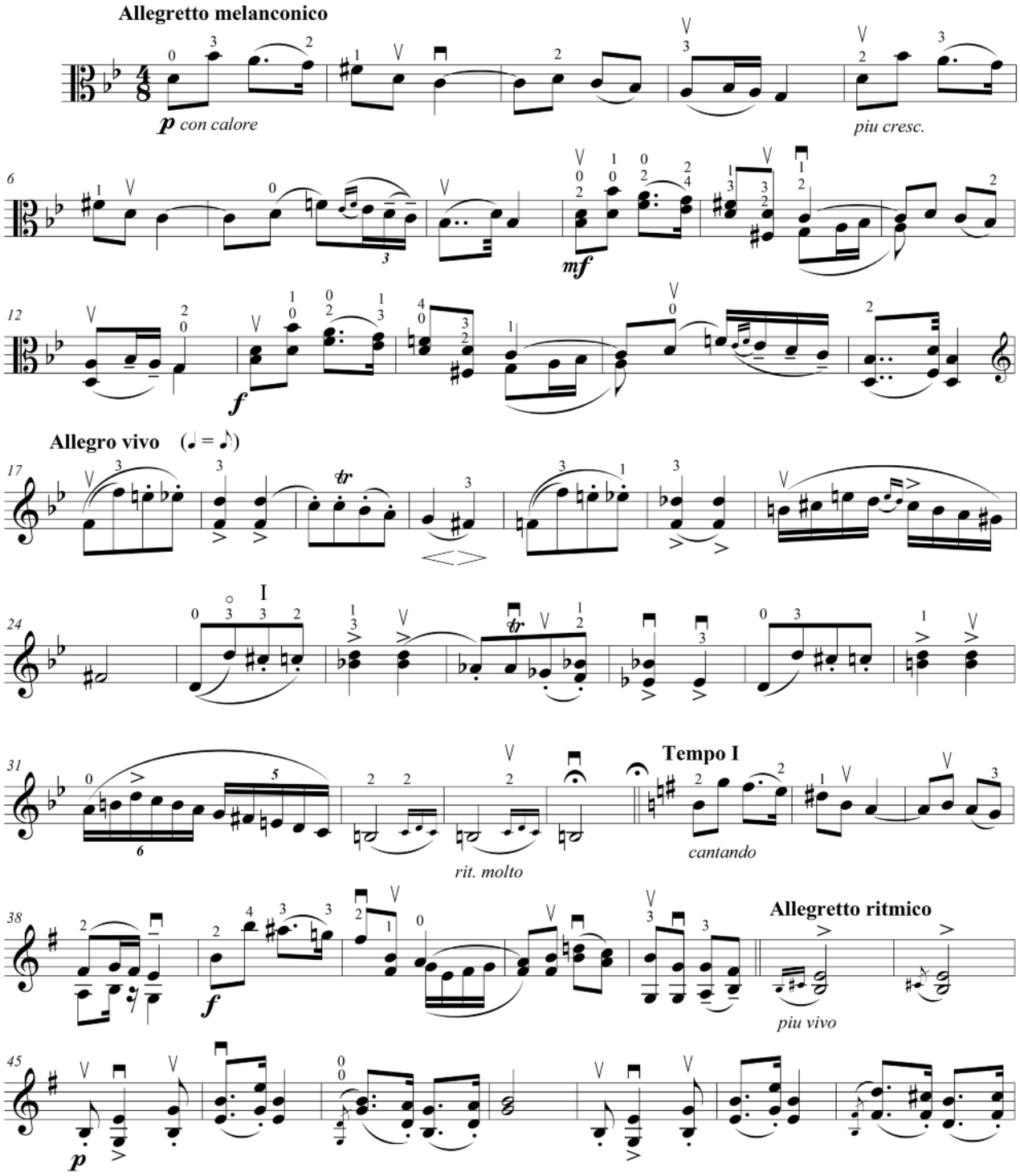
Slavonic Dance No. 1 in G Minor

Op. 46, No. 2

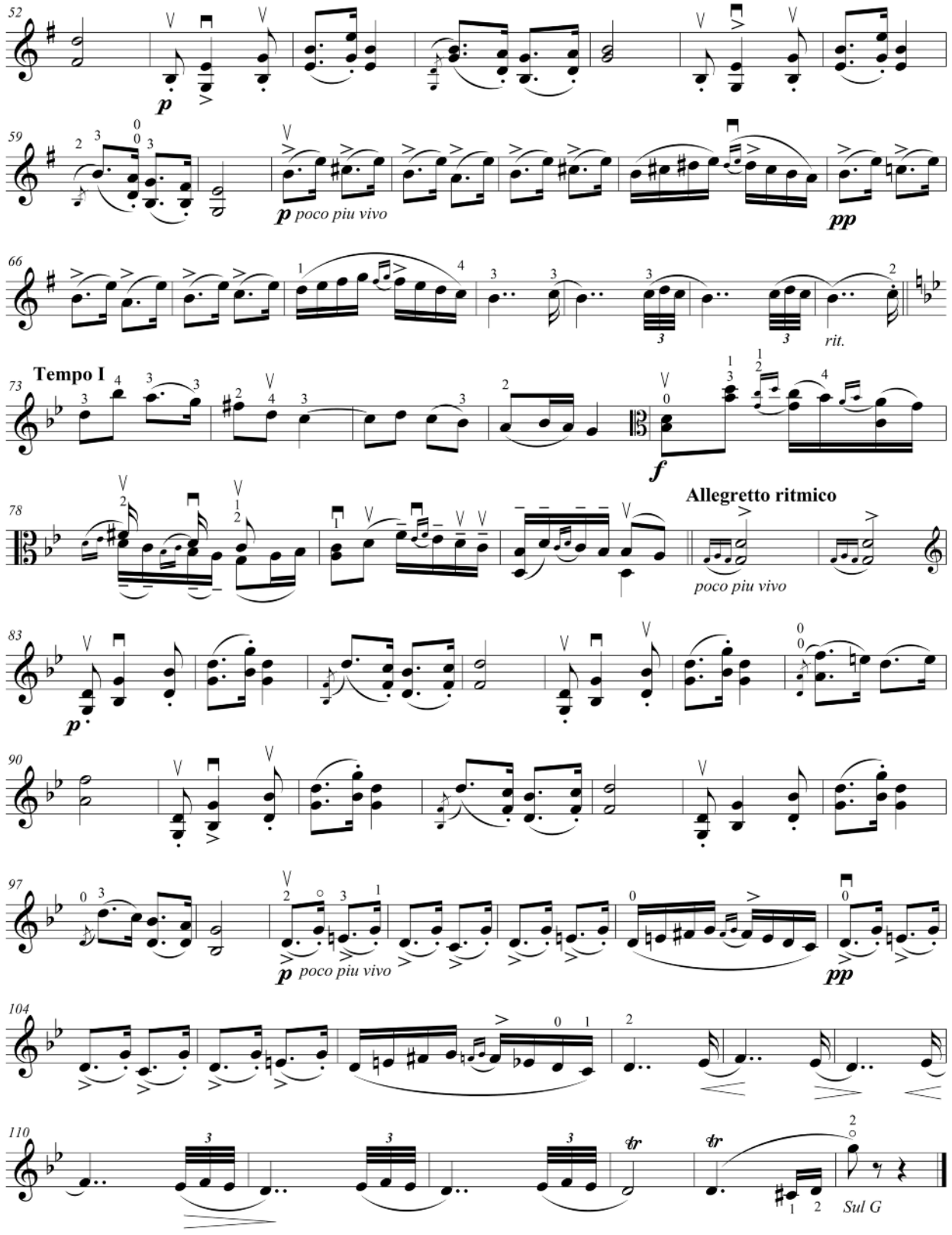
Viola

Dvořák-Kreisler

Arranged for viola by Bernard Zaslav

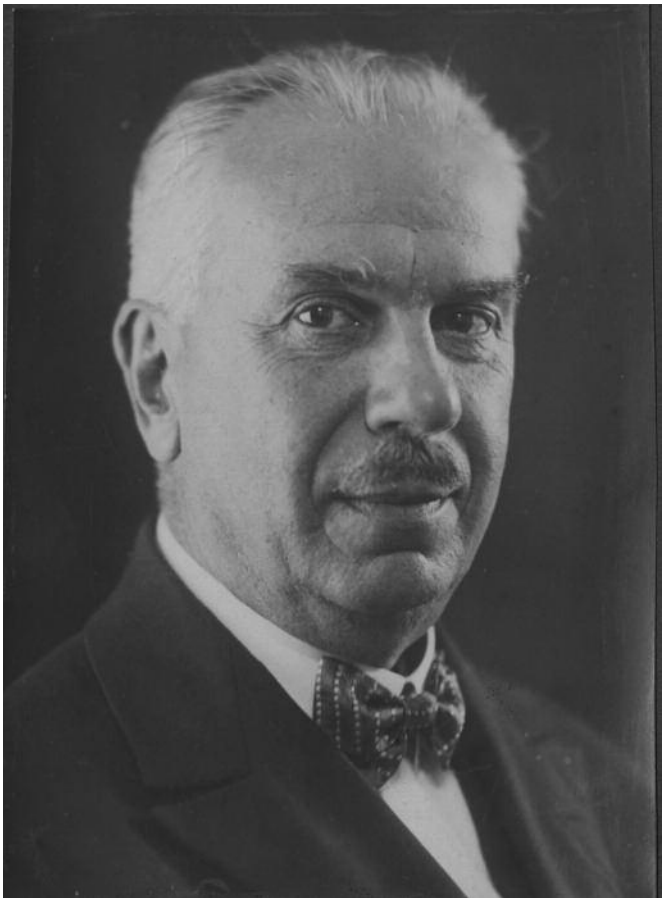


Slavonic Dance No. 1 in G Minor



Unknown Sergey Vasilenko and His Viola Compositions:

Recent Discoveries in Russian Archives



Sergey Vasilenko, circa 1937 (photo courtesy of RGALI, fund 1937, op.5, ed. hr. 107)

by Elena Artamonova

Russia has always shown great scope for artistic talent. The beginning of the twentieth century is regarded as the *Silver Age* of Russian culture owing to the emergence of a highly gifted generation of musicians, writers, and painters. Dissatisfaction with the realistic portrayal of life embraced by poets and writers in the nineteenth century stimulated a wave of creativity unprecedented in the cultural history of Russia. This period was dominated by a number of artistic movements including Symbolism, Acmeism, and Futurism, which cross-fertilized literature, music, the visual arts, theater, and philosophy with a strong emphasis on the distinctiveness of Russian spirituality. The Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the following Civil War broadened the degree of artistic freedom on the Russian musical scene with its radical innovations and new trends of the *Avant-garde*. It took its first inspiration in the 1890s from the individualism of Russian Symbolist composers of the *Silver Age*, Scriabin in particular. However, the *Avant-garde* moved further, with extreme experimentation in harmonic and rhythmic idioms, rejection of tonality, and alteration of forms up until 1932, when the movement clashed with the state decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations." This marked the start of the epoch of Socialist Realism; from then on art was thoroughly controlled by the state.

One of the composers who emerged during the *Silver Age* was Sergey Vasilenko. Working at the archives and libraries in Moscow and London, I was fortunate to find a number of his unknown and unpublished compositions for viola and piano. In view of the paucity of music for stringed instruments in Russia in the first decades of the last century, Vasilenko's seven compositions for viola, which are all different in style, mode, and technique, assume special importance. His compositional approach was dissimilar to many renowned contemporaries, including his former student Nikolay Roslavets, who persistently employed his *New System of Organized Sounds* in his viola sonatas. Vasilenko combined the elements of many diverse and often contradictory musical concepts of the time, including the *Silver Age*, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and the *Avant-garde*. His approach to the rhythmic and harmonic resources of Russian music launched new stan-

dards in viola performance and expanded the repertoire.

What made Vasilenko write for an instrument that occupied a subservient position to the violin and other members of the string family, and what retained his interest in the viola throughout his lifetime? Why have these compositions of a respected and loyal Soviet composer remained unknown to the public almost a century after their creation and over half a century after the death of Vasilenko? The analysis and discussion of these subjects rely heavily on the unpublished and little-explored materials from the archives of Sergey Vasilenko in Moscow.

Sergey Nikoforovich Vasilenko

Sergey Nikoforovich Vasilenko (1872–1956) had a long and distinguished career as a composer, conductor, and pedagogue based in Moscow in the first half of the twentieth century.[1] For almost fifty years (1906–41 and 1943–56), he held the position of Professor of Instrumentation and Composition at the Moscow Conservatoire and taught Nikolay Roslavets, Leonid Polovinkin, Nikolay Golovanov, Alexander Alexandrov, Anatoly Alexandrov, and many other students who became internationally known performers and composers. Vasilenko was brought up in an aristocratic family, and an inner circle of friends consisting of the leading writers, painters, and artists of the time influenced the formation of his aesthetic principles and interests. Among his close friends were Vladimir Stasov, Alexander Glazunov, Anatoly Lyadov, Vasily Safonov, Sergey Taneyev, Mily Balakirev, Fyodor Shalyapin, and Konstantin Stanislavsky, the creator of the internationally famous "Stanislavsky System" of acting. All these individuals were not only major personalities in their professional fields and very active public figures, but above all, they are remembered as the true proponents of Russian national heritage. The words of the famous Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky, addressed to the young composer in the early 1900s, reveal the tight bond between Sergey Vasilenko and the Russian legacy:

> You understand Russian music in depth. Do not turn toward the West or East. Develop Russian music as it is an inexhaustible treasure-trove; besides, this field would never disappoint your expectations. Our great Russian composers have taken only a little part from this treasure-house.[2]

Perhaps today these demanding words could be interpreted as radically nationalistic and narrow minded. At the same time, they also imply faithfulness toward one's own origin and customs that preserves the distinctiveness of a national idiom and one's own individual traits. Vasilenko did indeed follow this path and gained recognition as a composer with a special emphasis on Russian national traditions and history, including Old Believers[3] chant and folk music and symbolic and mystical themes influenced by the *Silver Age* aesthetic. However, he also managed to combine these idioms with the best achievements of the West, including counterpoint, motivic development, and structural purity of forms. His musical language was rooted in the traditions of the nineteenth-century Russian composers, particularly Taneyev and Rimsky-Korsakov, but it was also moderately influenced by Debussy and Scriabin. Vasilenko died in 1956, leaving an extensive list of compositions including operas; ballets; symphonies; concertos for balalaika, trumpet, cello, harp, clarinet, piano, violin, and horn; chamber and instrumental music; songs; choruses; folksong arrangements; and more.

Background on His Viola Compositions

Vasilenko's viola compositions can be split into three categories and periods: adaptations of early music, middle-period works, and late works. The dates of two compositions, *Zodiakus* and *Lullaby*, are unknown. However, their subject-matter and language closely correspond to other works from particular phases.

<u>Adaptations of early music:</u>

* *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries*, for viola (or cello)

and piano, op. 35, 1918: *Pavane, Madonna Tenerina, Serenade for the Lady of My Heart, Knights*

* *Suite Zodiakus I.A.S. after Unknown Authors of the Eighteenth Century*, for viola and piano: *Ouverture, Passacaille, Minuet, Plainte, Musette*[4]

Middle-period:

* *Oriental Dance*, for clarinet in B-flat or viola and piano, op. 47, 1922

* Sonata, for viola and piano, op. 46, 1923

Late works:

* *Sleeping River*, for viola and piano, August 5, 1951

* *Lullaby*, for viola and piano

* *Four Pieces*, for viola and piano, August 25, 1953: *Prelude, Etude, Legend, Scherzo (Toccata)*

Vasilenko left no written explanation of the stimulus that brought his viola works into being. Certainly his Sonata, op. 46, was composed in December 1923 under the influence of the thriving concert activities of a young violist, Vadim Borisovsky (1900–72), who drew attention to the viola in the early 1920s.[5] Borisovsky premiered this work with the composer at the piano on January 8, 1924, at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire. Nevertheless, Vasilenko's first composition for viola and piano, the *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries*, op. 35, was written in 1918, at a time when Borisovsky was only one of many violin students in Moscow. It seems reasonable to assume—in view of Vasilenko's later reputation as a master of instrumentation—that his interest in the viola arose from his desire to experiment with different instrumental techniques, timbres, and sound effects, which he broadly explored in these pieces. However, the Sonata was only acknowledged and performed from time to time in the viola class of Borisovsky, who was the driving force of the majority of solo viola activities in Moscow for forty years (1923–63) until a heart attack brought his busy schedule to a stop. Borisovsky certainly knew of the existence of the lute pieces; he included them, along with the Sonata, in a catalogue of viola repertoire[6] compiled with Dr. Wilhelm Altmann, a German researcher from Berlin, but there is no evidence that he ever performed them in public, and they have remained unperformed until recently.

The main reason for such neglect was, as so often at the time, political. In the early 1930s the Soviet authorities—through the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), which effectively controlled Soviet musical life—decided that the viola was an instrument that overloaded the educational programs. As a result of this directive, Borisovsky was forced to resign from his viola professorship at the Moscow Conservatoire, and all his students were compelled to enroll in the violin course. Unofficially, they continued their viola tuition at Borisovsky's home despite the fear of very likely troubles if this arrangement was revealed. Only a year later, Borisovsky was invited back to the Conservatoire due to the fact that RAPM was dissolved by that time.

Vasilenko had his own political problems, not least because his roots in the Russian aristocracy would hardly have endeared him to the new dispensation in Soviet Russia, though he gained a reputation as a compassionate supporter of poor communities well before the Revolution. Certainly, his loyal public reputation appealed to the Soviet authorities, but his professional status and musical fulfillment of the Party ideology were of critical importance. But, his fascination for ancient music with its natural absorption of spirituality and the troubadours' idealized model of love was considered suspect; likewise were the themes of his pieces of the 1950s and their pastoral dreams and mystic fantasies influenced by Symbolism and *Silver Age* aesthetics. Vasilenko turned instead to topics that were politically approved by the Soviet state: stories of the Russian heroic past and socialist present, folk traditions, and folk instruments, including the balalaika. With the earlier viola works therefore under wraps and Borisovsky unable to perform them, it would be almost thirty years before Vasilenko returned to writing for the viola in the 1950s.

Vasilenko's cautious approach allowed his career to proceed relatively unchecked, but his enforced compliance to the ideals of the Communist party led in post-Soviet times to the view that he had simply been a marionette of the state ideology. Much of his fine music has been neglected in consequence.

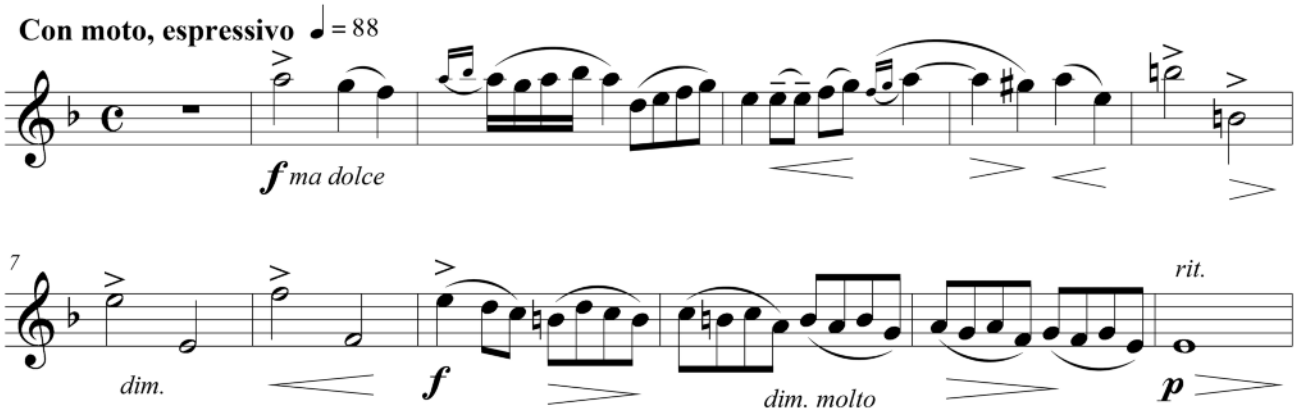
The Early Adapted Works

By 1918, when his first viola composition appeared, Vasilenko was already forty-six years old and well established as a public figure and a composer who extensively employed Russian subjects in his music. His activities as a conductor and organizer of the series of *Historic Concerts* in 1907–17 spurred an interest in the Baroque and Renaissance. The collection of early music at the Moscow Conservatoire Library, which Vasilenko used for these *Historic Concerts*, was very limited and soon ran out. None of the individual compositions or programmes was performed twice in these series, and, therefore, he was constantly in search of interesting music. His family wealth allowed him to travel abroad extensively and continually supported his concert projects. From 1909, Vasilenko undertook a few trips to Vienna, Bologna, Paris, and Berlin, where he lived for two to three months in search of unusual or representative repertoire. The Berlin Musical Instrument Museum (the *Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung*) and its rich collection of lutes generated Vasilenko's initial interest in these instruments. He was allowed to copy the scores of a number of little-known and anonymous Renaissance and Baroque composers, and, on his return to Russia, he wrote several pieces of his own based on the material he had discovered, among them, in 1912 and 1914, two suites: *15th–16th Century Lute Music of the Minnesingers*, op. 24 and *16th Century Lute Music*, op. 24a, for chamber orchestra.[7]

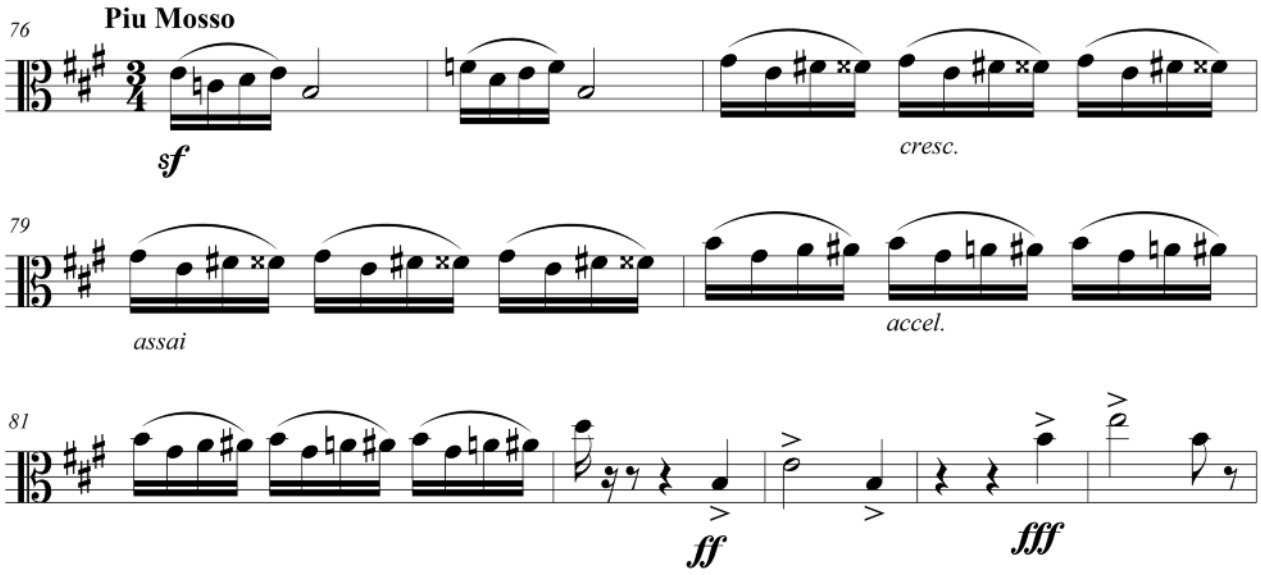
In 1918, Vasilenko considered using viola (or cello) and piano for his *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries*, op. 35. Vasilenko adapted the second, third, and fourth movements—*Madonna Tenerina, Serenade for the Lady of My Heart* (ex. 1), and *Knights* (ex. 2)—from his orchestral suites op. 24 and op. 24a and the opening *Pavane* came from the collection of Photostats that arrived from the Schola Cantorum in Paris in 1913. The authors of the musical material were anonymous apart from the third movement that Vasilenko called *Serenade for the Lady of My Heart*, autographed by Valentin Bakfark, a famous lute player of the mid-sixteenth century.

Vasilenko experimented here with different instrumental genres and forms of dances and songs, fusing them into a single suite that offered a broad range of techniques, timbres, and sound effects atypical for viola compositions from the Baroque period. Continuous waves of scalar and chromatic passages covering all the registers combined with rigorous

Example 1. Sergey Vasilenko, Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries, Serenade for the Lady of My Heart*, mm. 1–12 (viola part).*



Example 2. Sergey Vasilenko, Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries, Knights*, mm. 76–85 (viola part).*



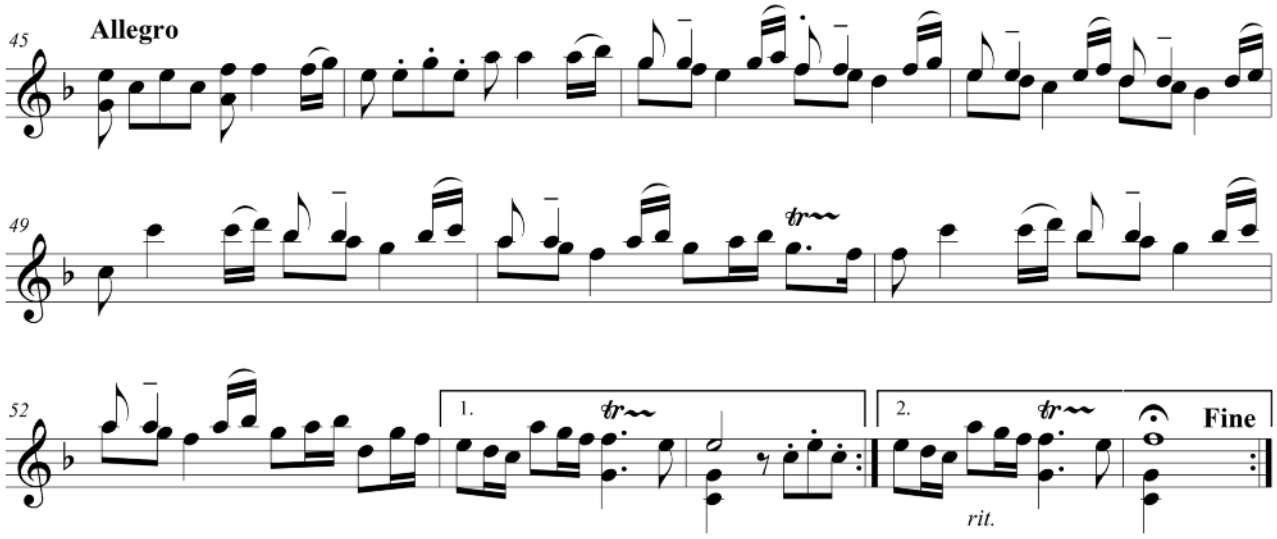
chord technique, emotionally expressive themes in the upper register, broken and arpeggiated pizzicato chords, and *con sordino* and harmonic passages all bring a special distinction for a particular phrase within the viola part.

Similarly, the suite *Zodiakus* was initially arranged by Vasilenko for small orchestra and premiered under his baton in Moscow on December 18, 1914. The manuscript that he obtained from the Schola Cantorum in Paris contained a series of short but exquisitely elegant pieces by a number of anonymous eighteenth-century French composers, hidden behind a peculiar pseudonym, *Zodiakus I.A.S.*[8] Vasilenko chose seven of these pieces for his orchestral suite, op. 27, and this composition received high praise from Paris.

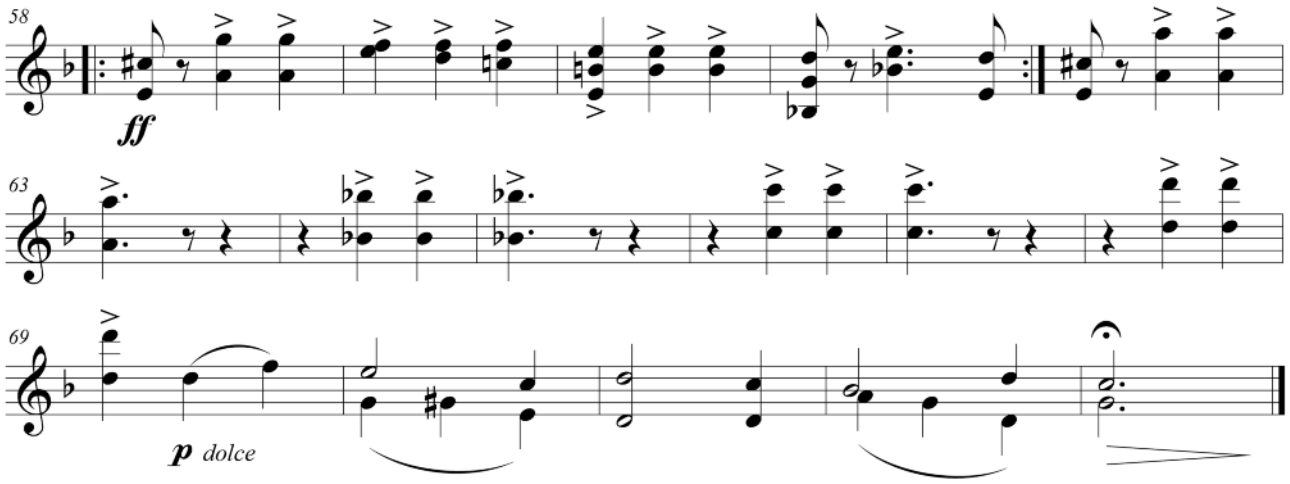
The undated arrangement—previously unknown—for viola and piano without an opus number includes four pieces from the orchestral suite and also a new one, *Musette*, from the same original Parisian source.[9] This viola work is not mentioned in any published or archival sources. The manuscript was found in the collection of music from the library of Vadim Borisovsky, and it is reasonable to conclude that this arrangement was intended for this fine soloist. One may suppose that it was composed after 1931 as Borisovsky did not include this suite in his viola catalogue published in Germany. At the same time, it is unlikely that Vasilenko worked on this arrangement later than the early 1930s, when his compositional activities were preoccupied with the subject-matter of the Soviet past and present, Turkmenian themes, and Chinese and Indian exoticism.

Technically this suite is much more demanding and instrumentally inconvenient than the lute pieces; occasionally it borders on being unplayable on the viola. This suite consists of five contrasting movements of dance and song-type pieces in which Vasilenko generally followed the style and idioms of the eighteenth-century French suite, but at the same time operated freely with some elements of twentieth-century language, including excessive usage of double stops, long leaps, experiments with polyrhythm, and occasional unusual modulations offering an unconventional tonal display of movements unrelated by key (the movements are in F major, F major, A major, A minor, and G major). The opening *Ouverture* especially retains its external traditional structure and setting but offers the soloist an unreserved scope for technical enhancement and instrumental perfection (ex. 3).

Example 3. Sergey Vasilenko, Suite Zodiakus I.A.S. after Unknown Authors of the Eighteenth Century, Ouverture*, mm. 45–56 (viola part).*



Example 4. Sergey Vasilenko, Suite Zodiakus I.A.S. after Unknown Authors of the Eighteenth Century, Passacaille*, mm. 58–73 (viola part).*

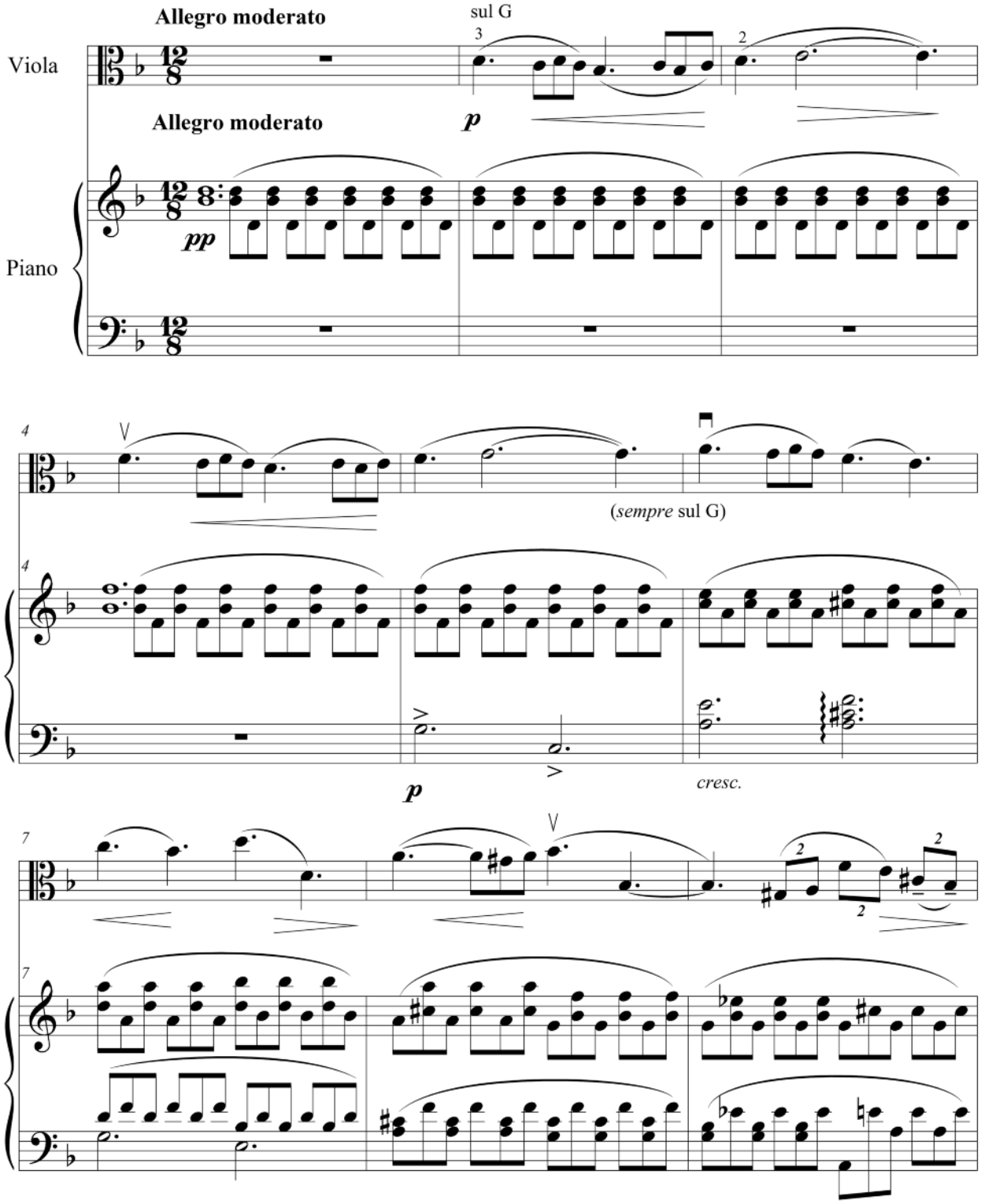


Middle-period Works

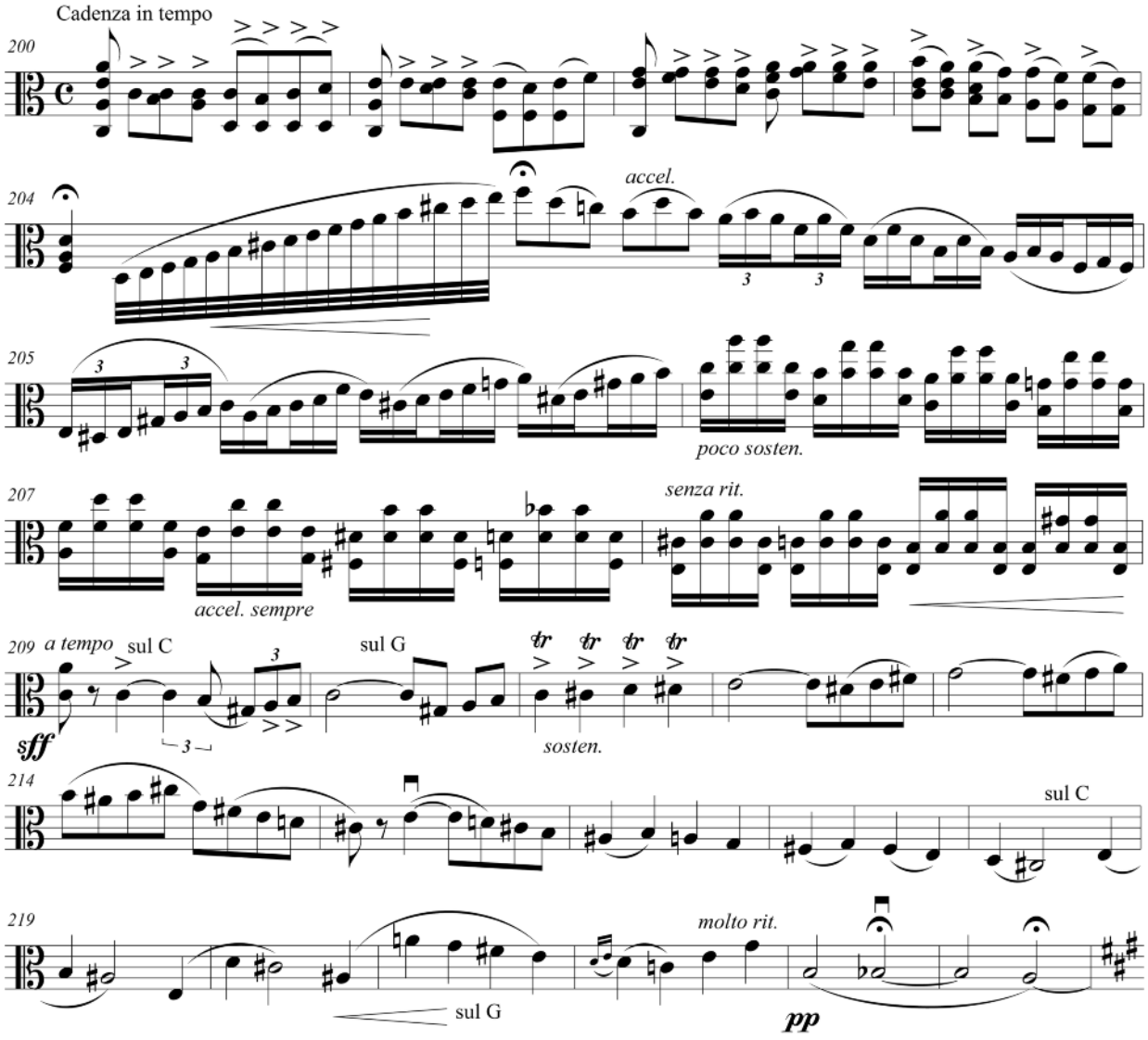
The works of the early 1920s show the influence of Oriental subjects that were extensively employed in the works of Russian National composers of the nineteenth century, in particular by Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, and Borodin. In 1922, Vasilenko wrote a graceful and, at the same time, virtuoso *Oriental Dance* for clarinet in B-flat or viola with piano, op. 47. The manuscript of the clarinet version survived, though the first two pages have gone astray. Fortunately, it was published three times in 1931, 1949, and 1959, and, therefore, the missing text could be reconstructed. However, the viola manuscript has been irretrievably lost and was never published. The fact that the work was also intended for viola was confirmed in Georgy Polyanovsky's catalogue of Vasilenko's works published in 1964 and Georgy Ivanov's catalogue of 1973. I arranged this piece for the viola and piano; my viola edition adjusts the articulation and phrasing to the clarinet version to render this charismatic work more suitable for a stringed instrument.

The single-movement Viola Sonata makes considerable technical demands on both players, encompassing the unrestrained emotional expression and power of Romanticism, the intimate lyricism of vocal and song-type themes, contrapuntal imitation with the emphasis on rhythm of Neoclassical aesthetics, and the exotic chromatic and modal harmonies of Oriental music combined with the augmented, diminished, and dissonant intervals of Modernism. Such a fusion of contradicting styles is perhaps the

Example 5. Sergey Vasilenko, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 23, Allegro moderato, mm. 1–9.



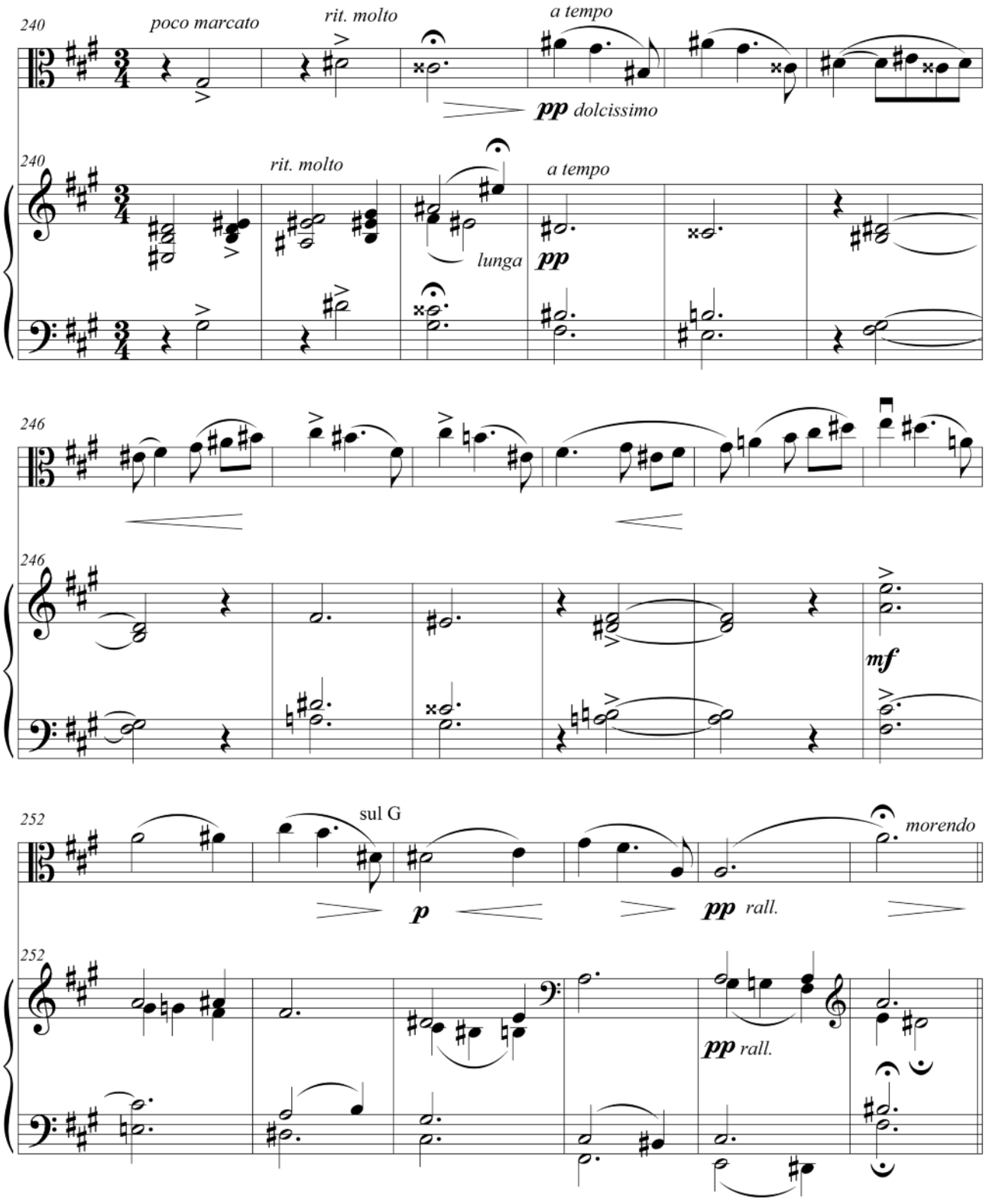
Example 6. Sergey Vasilenko, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 23, Allegro moderato (cadenza), mm. 200–224 (viola part).



only example found in a viola composition of this period in Russia. Nevertheless, the unusual synthesis of counterpoint and song elements was first introduced by Taneyev in his attempt to create a distinctive Russian instrumental form; a combination of Western counterpoint and Russian folksong. Paul Hindemith had a similar approach in his works, including viola sonatas, occasionally combining counterpoint with German folksongs.

The structure of Vasilenko's sonata combines a traditional sonata form and the four movements of a traditional symphony, also offering the violist a single large cadenza and three short solo episodes, which add a *concertante* element to the work. The fact that this sonata was arranged for violin and piano[10] speaks for its exceptionally advanced technical and instrumental qualities. The opening allegro, *Allegro moderato*, contains only the exposition and development (ex. 5), concluding with a dramatic cadenza (ex. 6). Instead of an immediate recapitulation, a second section, *Andante amorevole* (ex. 7), presents two independent, very intimate, and exceptionally melodious themes that are followed by a short, vigorous episode, marked *Molto agitato*. This episode connects this section with a *Fughetta*. This third section has an exposition and counter-exposition but no development. A contrastingly contemplative passage, *Sostenuto*, leads to a

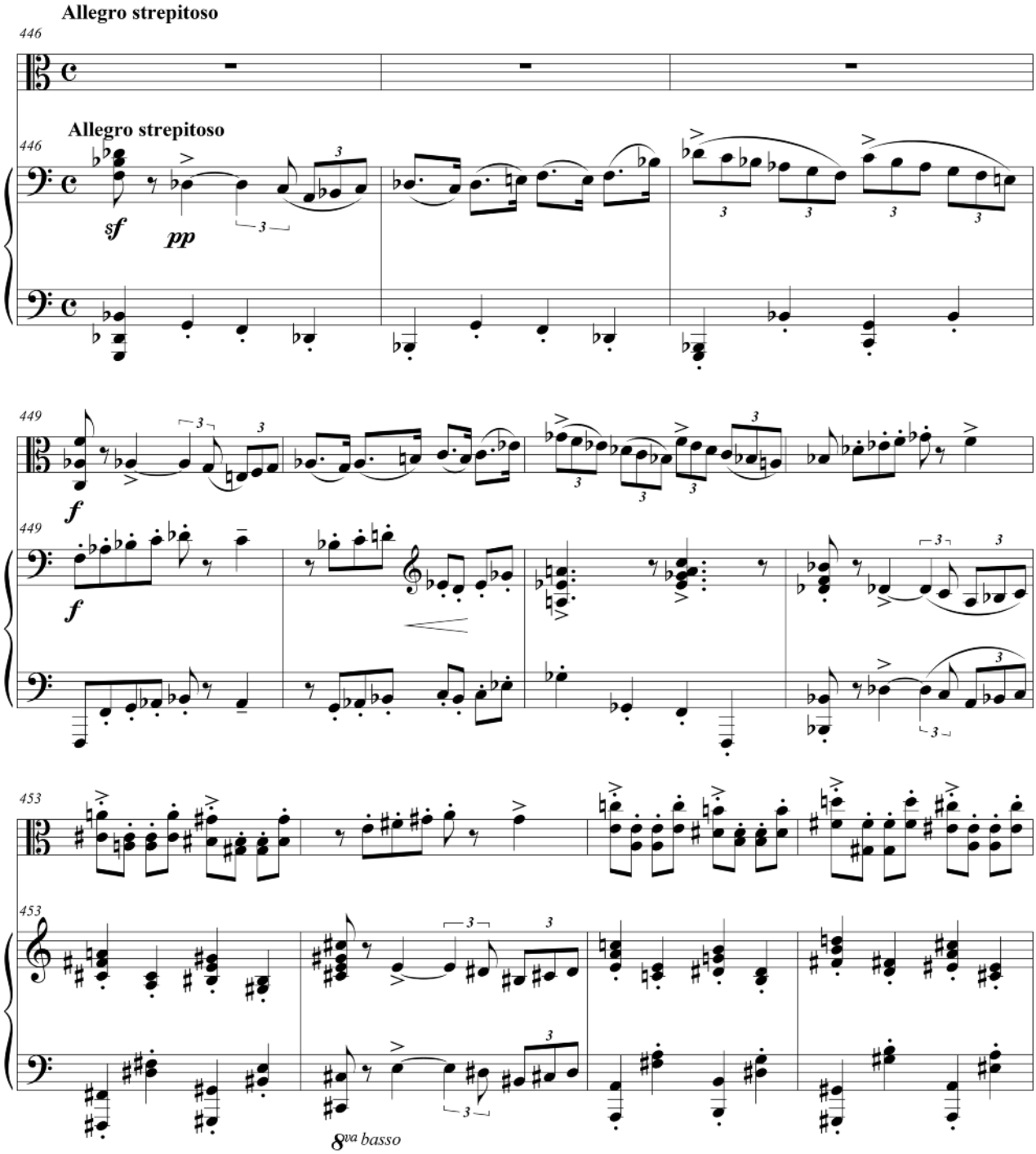
Example 7. Sergey Vasilenko, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 23, Andante amorevole [movt. II], mm. 240–57.



fourth section, *Tempo del commincio*, which now acts as the recapitulation of the first, thus providing balance. It even presents a modified and shortened version of the third section *Fughetta* (ex. 8), which then leads toward the vibrant and spectacular coda.

The process of the alteration of traditional instrumental forms in Russia at the turn of the twentieth centu-

Example 8. Sergey Vasilenko, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 23, [movt. IV], mm. 446–56.



ry was introduced and developed in the late piano sonatas of Alexander Scriabin. This practice was very influential, especially among the young generation of composers, including Nikolay Roslavets, who exercised with a single-movement form in his radical endeavor to break all possible ties with tradition. Vasilenko, on the contrary, never belonged to the extreme and revolutionary groups of the Russian musical scene. He implemented his innovations while maintaining his ties to tradition and compromised between the conservatives and left-wing modernist movements of the time. Vasilenko followed this unconventional, ultra-modern approach of having a single-movement sonata that consequently shortens

and condenses the time compared to the layout of a standard four-movement sonata. Despite this radicalism, Vasilenko was a melodist, and this work, though varied in compositional techniques and styles, was largely based on an exquisite melodic development of themes. Thus he employed simple forms within internal parts and sections of this four-movement structure, including a simple ternary form in the second subject of the exposition and a strophic two-verse-chorus form of the second theme in the second movement, which consequently stretched the time and revealed the originality of his creative approach toward the modification of the traditional sonata form.

Late Works

Vasilenko approached the viola again a few years before his death and almost thirty years after his first works for this instrument. The style of these later works bears a closer resemblance to Impressionism and Russian Symbolism with the challenging application of string technique and complex modern rhythms with metric modulations, extensive chromatic exercises, and harmonic modulations.

Sleeping River, which bears the date August 5, 1951, is Vasilenko's arrangement of a movement from his *Ancient Suite* for piano. The arrangement not only changes the key to D major from the original E major but considerably alters the entire text, giving the viola a quasi-cadenza section in the middle (ex. 9). Both instruments are equal partners but carry out different roles: the viola leads the theme throughout, and the piano gives a colorful harmonic display.

The manuscript of the *Lullaby* is undated, but the style suggests that this composition belongs to the early 1950s. This beautiful and charming piece in E minor follows the style of a lullaby but unexpectedly develops into a very expressive and agitated middle section with a viola cadenza before eventually returning to the tranquillity of the initial theme.

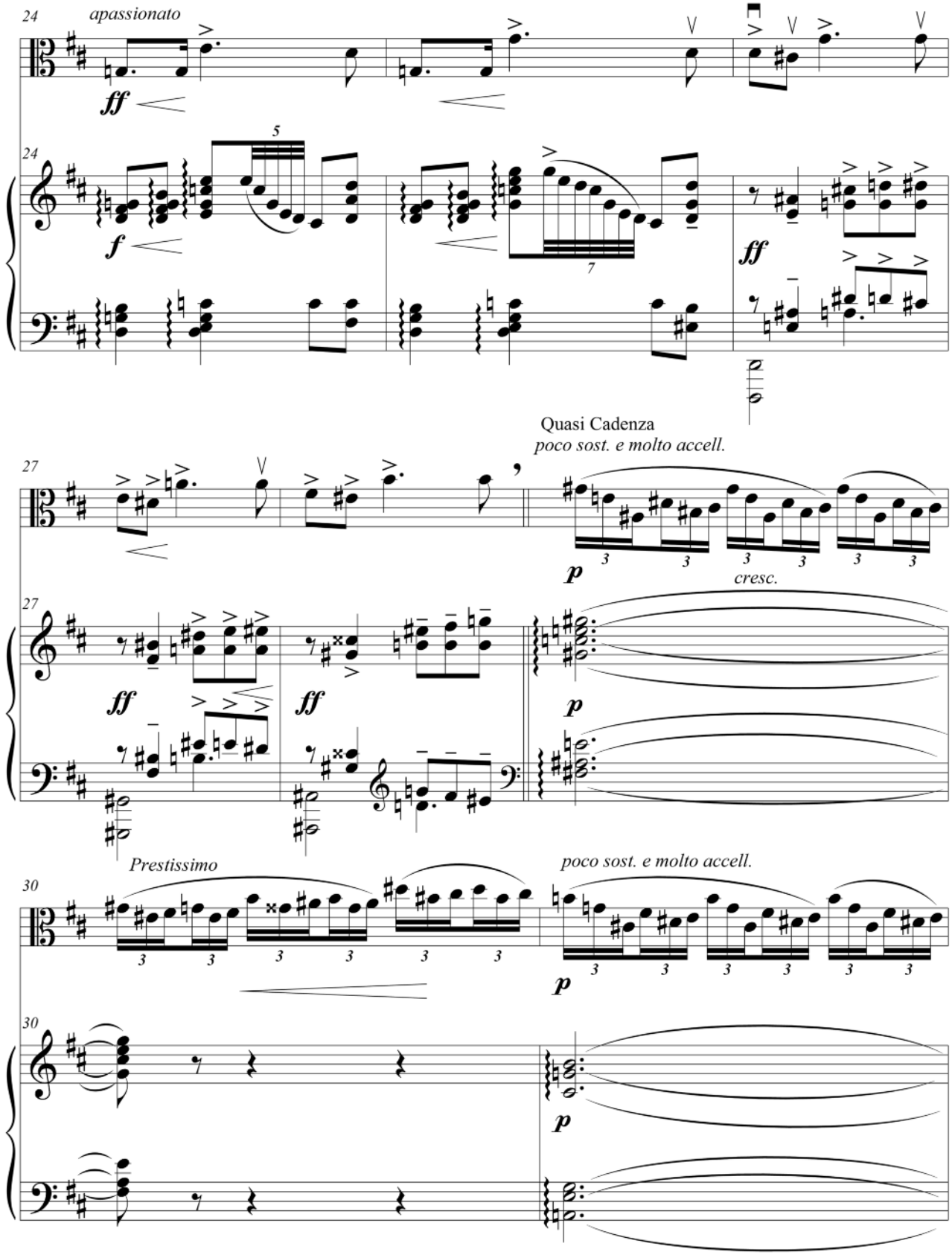
Vasilenko's *Four Pieces*, without an opus number, survive in manuscript as contrasting picturesque movements unrelated by key and thematic material; a date, August 25, 1953, appears only on the second piece, *Etude*. Nevertheless, the pieces undoubtedly belong to the same cycle, which consists of a *Prelude, Etude, Legend*, and *Scherzo*. They survive only as piano-viola scores, with many modifications, which are at times almost impossible to read. (An earlier, even rougher, version of the *Scherzo*, inscribed "Toccata" and then marked as the third in the cycle, does have a separate viola part, with several passages of continuous double-stopping, which Vasilenko did not transfer to the *Scherzo.*)

The *Prelude* in this cycle is a short piece of improvisatory character in D major. The opening theme led by the viola is vocal and chromatic in nature and, at first, does not expand to the high register. It sequentially develops with alterations in harmony and rhythm, which transforms this initially delicate tune into an expressive, passionate melody. It is enriched with double stops with special emphasis on dissonant intervals of minor and major sevenths and leaps articulated by double-dotted eighth notes and quarter notes that bring extra intensity to the character of the music. In the last bars of the piece the piano takes the lead and breaks the melody into short motifs that gradually restrain and soften the emotions to *pianissimo.*

Vasilenko gave the viola a full leadership role in the *Etude.* It is not a didactic study but a concert piece, though it conforms to a single facet of technique marked by harmonic experimentation and modulation from C minor to C major. The chromatic character and uninterrupted waves of sixteenth note passages written in presto might remind one of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee*. Vasilenko placed special emphasis on the viola timbre and dynamic contrasts and finished this piece with a natural harmonic in *pianissimo*, which adds a decorative finishing touch to this virtuosic instrumental display.

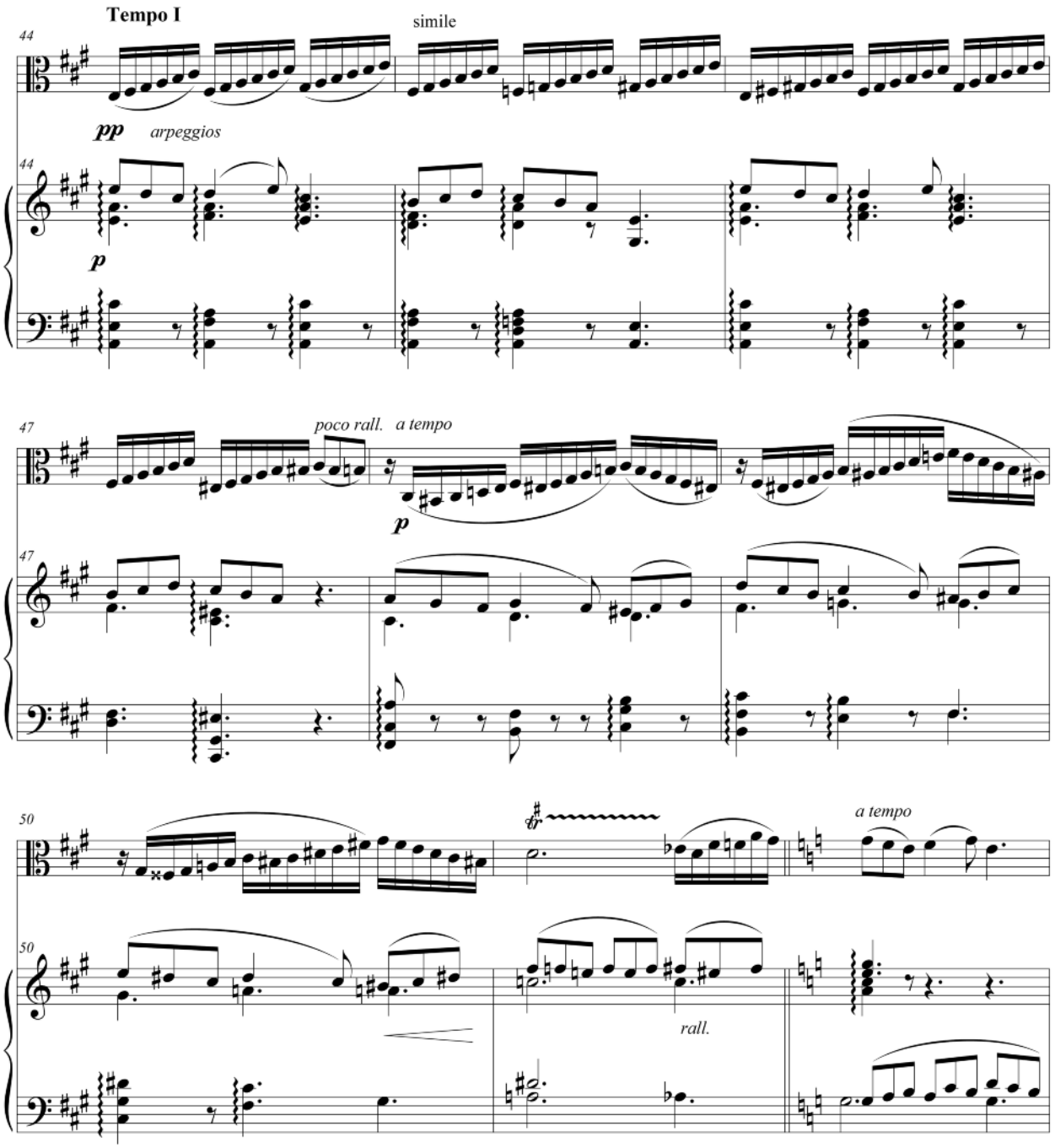
Legend is written in a ternary form in which the first part is in C major, the second in D major, and the recapitulation of the first modulates to A major and returns to the home key of C. However, this is just a tonal frame in which Vasilenko constantly experimented with chromatic unresolved modulations that play the role of unpredictable tonal contrasts. The piece exhibits narrative qualities not only in the title, which translates from Latin as "to be read," but also in

Example 9. Sergey Vasilenko, Sleeping River, *mm. 24–31.*



the instrumental texture and application in which both instruments, in turn, become either passive or active participants. The viola is the storyteller in the introduction with the opening theme of a vocal nature accompanied by arpeggiated chords of the piano that remind one of a gusli player.[11] This instrumental subordination changes, and both instruments start a dialogue that leads to a quazi viola cadenza, an episode that precedes the middle section of a contrasting scherzando character. The return of the first theme is rhythmically and instrumentally unanticipated, though it retains its compound meter of 9/8. The piano leads the melody, while the viola accompanies with ascending scalar chromatic passages in sextuplets (ex. 10). Similar to the *Prelude*, the theme then breaks into short motifs that dissolve in *pianissimo*.

Example 10. Sergey Vasilenko, Four Pieces, Legend*, mm. 44–52.*



The *Scherzo* in F major exhibits the traditional playful, humorous character with a fast tempo marked here *Allegro molto vivace, quasi presto*. At the same time, the piece follows an unconventional route and is written in a duple time, 2/4, instead of a triple meter. Vasilenko also offered an innovative approach to the form and harmonic display with modulations to distantly related and unrelated keys. It is a through-composed structure with self-contained sections ($ABCA^1B^1$ and conclusion) instead of a traditional ternary form. Nearly uninterrupted chromatic and scalar runs of sixteenth notes in the viola part present a spectacular technical display and timbral contrast with an accelerando toward the end of the piece.

Conclusion

Vasilenko's compositional style was exquisitely crafted, sophisticated, and very distinctive. While Russian culture was the inspirational source of Vasilenko's musical resourcefulness and being, his intellect and erudition won him recognition among his contemporaries. Some critics called him "a profound analyst"[12] for his comprehension of Russian music along with the works of Wagner, French Impressionists, and other composers. His depth of knowledge of instrumental colors and their combinations, technical and sonorous possibilities, as well as his professionalism in their application allowed Vasilenko to employ, operate, and mix contradictory idioms with dynamism and expression. Often his inquisitiveness and zest of mind led him to pursue and adapt different styles from the Baroque and Neoclassical to a Romantic idiom. He unpretentiously grasped the *Silver Age* aesthetic with its mysticism, symbolic approach, and visual images and modified his language according to the requirements of the new musical epoch. The best examples of this approach are demonstrated in the Viola Sonata with its extraordinary synthesis of strict contrapuntal elements of Neoclassicism with the colorful Oriental idioms and unreserved emotions of Romanticism, as well as in his stylization of the Baroque in *Zodiakus* and the *Lute pieces* enriched by the instrumental advantages and inventions of the twentieth century. Yet he did so without any favoritism or fanaticism and distanced himself from any rigorous duplication of either fashionable aesthetics or radicalism.

The range and complexity of styles and string techniques in his works for viola and piano allow one to describe them as unique examples of Russian viola heritage with a diversity of harmonic and rhythmic language, an exquisite palette of sound color, and a considered approach to the form, articulations, and dynamics. The composer often explored beyond the traditional limits of the technical and sonorous application of the instrument elevating it on a par with the violin. Vasilenko's most important achievement was the enhancement of the viola with a quasi-orchestral range of colors and an equal intensity of musical and technical material that was rare in chamber music. Vasilenko was a devoted musician deeply rooted in Russian culture with a broad spectrum of knowledge, interests, and talents, some of which Soviet life taught him to keep to himself. Unfortunately, in the second half of the twentieth century, his music has fallen from view. In one of his unpublished archival writings, Vasilenko admitted that despite all the tribulations and achievements of life, he was always alone, one to one with his music, perfecting his skills and exploring the unknown. The discovery of these viola works sheds new light on the unknown Vasilenko.[13]

Sergey Vasilenko's Viola Sonata was originally published in 1925 (G.M.6306I.M) and republished in 1931 and 1955 (plate 24387) by Gos. izd-vo, Muzykal'nyi Sektor. It was also issued in editions in 1955 by Muzgiz and in 1985 by Muzyka. The Primrose International Archive and several other libraries contain copies of the music. The Lute pieces *were published in 1930 (and 1932) jointly by Gos. izd-vo, Muzykal'nyi Sektor and Universal Edition (M. 10119; U.E. 9271).* Oriental Dance *for clarinet and piano was published in 1931 jointly by Staatsmusikverlag and Universal Edition (M. 11656; U.E. 10123) and in 1949 and 1959 by Muzgiz. The viola manuscript is lost and has been arranged by Elena Artamonova based on the version for clarinet. The manuscripts of the* Four Pieces, Sleeping River, *and* Lullaby *are housed in the Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture (fund 52 N 500, 817, 900), and the manuscript for* Zodiakus *is part of the private collection of Vadim Borisovsky. Publication options for several of Vasilenko's viola works are currently being explored.*

Violist and musicologist Elena Artamonova is currently pursuing a PhD in Music Performance at Goldsmiths

College, Centre for Russian Music, University of London, under the guidance of Professor Alexander Ivashkin, researching unknown viola music of the Russian Avant-garde movement. She graduated with First Class Honors from the Gnesin Music College and the Moscow Conservatoire under Yuri Bashmet and attended the master classes among others of Tabea Zimmermann, Nobuko Imai, Martin Outram, and Simon Rowland-Jones. Elena holds a number of prizes and awards, including the Associateship of the Royal College of Music with Honors and has performed in Europe, the USA, and the Far East.

Notes

[1] Vasilenko's brief biography can be found in various music dictionaries. However, many interesting details about his formation and professional experiences are still confined to his personal reminiscences housed in RGALI (the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art) in Moscow, which were only partly published in his *Memoirs* in the USSR in 1948 and in 1979.

[2] Sergey Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominaniy* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948), 162. (Translated by Elena Artamonova.)

[3] Reforms to the practices of the Orthodox Church in the mid-seventeenth century led to a schism, with the "Old Believers" adhering to the earlier rites.

[4] All titles of the movements in the manuscript are given in French.

[5] Vadim Borisovsky began his career as a chamber violist, similar to his colleagues, but despite all the odds moved on to promote the viola as a solo instrument giving recitals and researching and arranging works for this instrument. He was the founder of the first viola-solo faculty at the Moscow Conservatoire and is regarded as the "Father of the Russian School of viola playing" for his tremendous contributions to the development of the viola and the enlargement of its solo repertoire. Borisovsky's dedication and professionalism were appreciated not only in the Soviet Union, but also abroad. Among his distinguished admirers were Lionel Tertis in the United Kingdom and Paul Hindemith in Germany, to name a few. Borisovsky was one of the founder-members of the Beethoven Quartet, which closely collaborated with Dmitry Shostakovich, and he remained in the group until 1964, when he was replaced by one of his prominent former students, Fyodor Druzhinin.

[6] Wilhelm Altmann and Vadim Borisovsky, *Literaturverzeichnis für Bratsche und Viola d'amore* (Wolfenbüttel, Germany: Verlag für musikalische Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1937).

[7] Vasilenko's titles vary between versions, though the Suite, op. 24a was a revised edition of the Suite, op. 24, in which Vasilenko gave the titles to unnamed pieces and slightly changed the order of movements and orchestration. He also paid little regard to historical accuracy: the Minnesingers flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and at least two movements from these suites have their origins in the fifteenth century.

[8] The meaning of the initials remains unknown.

[9] The viola version drops the word "French," which appears in the title of the orchestral version and which Vasilenko also used to describe the material in his *Memoirs*.

[10] Sergey Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, arranged for violin and piano by Mikhail Reitikh (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955).

[11] Gusli was an old multi-string plucked instrument derived from the ancient lyre. Gusli is associated with the legendary Boyan, a singer of tales from the ancient Slavic epic poem *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, which was adapted by Alexander Borodin as an opera.

[12] Evgeniy Braudo, "Sorokapyatiletie tvorcheskoy deyatel'nosti zasluzhennogo deyatelya iskusstv S.N. Vasilenko," 18. Housed in RGALI, fund 2024, op.1, ed. hr. 37. (Translated by Elena Artamonova.)

[13] The first complete recording of Vasilenko's viola music is available on the Toccata Classics label. Further details may be found at www.toccataclassics.com/cddetail.php?CN=TOCC0127

THE VIOLA IN THAILAND: AN INTERVIEW WITH AJARN CHOOCHART PITAKSAKORN, NATIONAL ARTIST

Ajarn Choochart Pitaksakorn playing the viola (photo courtesy of Aj. Choochart Pitaksakorn)

by Yavet Boyadjiev

Introduction

Thailand is known more for its picturesque islands, colorful foods, and golden pagodas than for its concert halls, music schools, and classical performing artists. But since the opening decades of the twentieth century, when the popularity of Western culture surged following the return of the revered King Chulalongkorn from his international travels, the practice of classical music in Thailand has grown exponentially.

At seventy-eight years old, few musicians have had a longer or more significant impact on the development of classical music in Thailand than Col. Aj. Choochart Pitaksakorn. Holder of an honorary Doctoral Degree in Music Education from Chulalongkorn University and awarded the Golden Record in 1972 from H. M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the present King of Thailand, he capped an eventful and pioneering career in music by being named a National Artist in 2010, the highest distinction given to Thai artists.

Though he trained as a violinist, the viola has played a central part in Ajarn Choochart's (*Ajarn* means

teacher in Thai) professional life. His enthusiasm and devotion to the instrument are palpable—and effective. Through concert series and devoted teaching he has popularized the instrument for several generations of young musicians and is acknowledged as one of the elder statesmen of the classical music tradition in his country, a position he treats with uncommon modesty.

Col. Choochart's credentials are impeccable. He holds the position of Artist-in-Residence and Professor of Viola at Chulalongkorn University, where he oversees and conducts many of the school's ensembles. He has taught in the most prestigious music programs in the country including at Mahidol, Rangsit, and Kasetsart Universities, and he sits on the advisory board of the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra. He is a former honorary advisor for the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra and conductor of the Ibycus Chamber Orchestra.

I first met Ajarn Choochart in my capacity as Head of Strings at the Mahidol University College of Music. We sat down for an interview shortly after a concert celebrating his status as National Artist, an event at which he performed Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi*. Our conversation touched on everything from his strict vegetarianism to the practice of yoga and his love for animals but most importantly his eventful life and his vision for the future of the viola in a society increasingly devoted to classical music.

The National Artist Prize, Early Studies, and Lessons Abroad

YB: What is the National Prize of Thailand?

CP: It is an award given to performers or teachers who have made a lasting contribution to Thai society. It is given once a year in literature, the visual arts, Thai classical dance, and Thai music to selected artists. In my case the award was given to recognize over fifty years of contribution to society through my teaching and performing.

YB: What does it mean to you to be given such a distinction? Were you surprised? Can you tell me about the process and how you felt about it?

CP: I was traveling to give a concert at Thammasat University, and there was a phone call from the Minister of Culture, who congratulated me. "For what?" I asked. "Well, you have been awarded the National Artist Prize." I kept quiet about it during the concert, but I couldn't keep it a secret. The audience already knew and after the concert offered me congratulations.

Later there was an Awards Ceremony at the Thai Cultural Center in Bangkok, where I conducted, gave an interview, and played. My arrangements of Thai music for piano were played there as well … and of course I was very happy, but there were also feelings that I had not lived up to deserve the prize. This is a highly prestigious award, and I thought I would have to work more … contribute more to earn the honor of being noted in such a way.

Ajarn Choochart Pitaksakorn receiving the National Artist Prize from the hands of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (2010) (photo courtesy of Aj. Choochart Pitaksakorn)

YB: What drew you initially to music? Can you describe your earliest experiences with an instrument?

CP: My father was an officer in the navy. He was what they call a naval architect, and his office was next to the music department. Occasionally he would take me along to his office and ask his assistants to take me to hear the navy orchestra. They played a lot of light music like Johann Strauss, which I love very much. I began to love Western music, though not especially any particular instrument. I just loved the

sound and harmony of the orchestra as a whole. One day my father asked me whether I would like to learn an instrument, and I said: "OK, what do you want me to learn?" And he decided on the violin. So you see it was not my intention but my father's suggestion. I was about nine years old.

My father's idea was that I should learn the violin for one hour and Thai music for one hour. In order for my ear not to clash with the two different intonation systems—because the intonation systems in Western music and in Thai music are so different—he encouraged me to also learn a keyboard instrument, the organ.

YB: A Thai or a Western organ?

CP: An ancient organ [*laughs*]! From before you were born. It was small, and you had to pump the air into it with your feet to produce the sound. They also use this type of organ in Indian music.[1] Later on, of course, when I had the opportunity I used the piano to improve my aural skills.

YB: Who was your first violin teacher?

CP: My first violin teacher was Ajarn Yunyong Danggoon, a naval officer. Later, I studied with Ajarn Sutin Thesarak. He was extremely popular. Anyone from my generation would know his name in Thailand, though he is hardly mentioned today.

One day I went to one of his concerts and heard something so very beautiful. I had never heard anything more beautiful before. I learned later that it was the Tchaikovsky Concerto, and the performer happened to be Ajarn Sutin. I made up my mind that I would study with him and went to his house. When I arrived, he was studying *Zigeunerweisen,* playing it so beautifully! I became his pupil.

Sadly he died just last year at age eighty-five. But he was musically active right till the end. About five or six years ago he played three concertos in one night: Mendelssohn, Bruch, and Tchaikovsky! Stunning. Before he passed away, he asked: "Choochart, can you conduct for me?" You can imagine I was so honored and agreed immediately. He said he wanted to play those three concerti and *Zigeunerweisen* and other show pieces as encore pieces. For me he will always remain the greatest Thai violinist.

YB: And then I understand you became a pupil of Maxim Jacobsen?

CP: Yes, starting from around 1955. By then I had won some small competitions in London and was studying at the Blackheath Conservatoire of Music but looking for a teacher with an established reputation. I was preparing to go to the Royal College of Music. Jacobsen, who was Latvian, had come to England to give some master classes, and I attended but I didn't dare to be an active participant. I heard that he was very strict, so I went as an auditor and came away impressed with his teaching, especially his ideas on technique.

At the end of the master class he said he had two vacancies for private pupils, but they should pass an audition and be able to travel with him because he gave master classes all over Europe. I applied for the audition, and I passed.

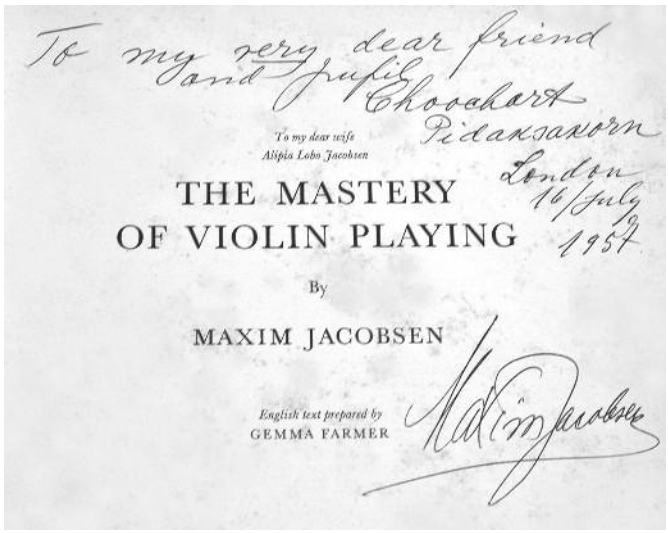
The following week his secretary called me and said Professor Jacobsen wanted to see me. When I met him he said the one sentence that changed my life: "OK, you passed the audition, but you don't know how to play the violin" [*laughs*]. I was hit with rage and feelings of egotism … didn't he realize I was already a competition winner? I almost said goodbye to him, but then I had a second thought: "What if he is right?" Maybe I really needed to learn from him. So, what I said was: "Professor I will go with you, wherever you go," and Jacobsen said: "OK, buy the ticket, next stop is Frankfurt." And for the next six months, I traveled with him.

Professor Jacobsen had a colorful and intense lifestyle. I'd like to add that when I returned to Europe in 1975, he had already passed away, so I took lessons from Ms. Kató Havas from Hungary. She was fabulous, fantastic … I studied for only two months, but I took lessons two or three times per week, and every lesson lasted about two hours.

YB: Can you describe Jacobsen's teaching methodology?

CP: His ideas came from relaxation. He spoke about the use of the joints, the tendons, the muscles, and he gave me exercises by Ševčík alongside his own. He had a lot of gymnastics for violinists. He said that because I was so small I could not use the kind of technique intended for bigger people. He told me he had a special method for each pupil to adjust to their bodies. But he said that even though I should not use the technique for big people, I could play like them if I adapted my body to the violin. That was Professor Jacobsen. He wrote a lot of wonderful books on technique, and the most fantastic one is *Paraphrases on Études by Kreutzer*, published in English and German by Zimmermann.

He taught technique and how to acquire it step by step. He analyzed what needed to be done with the body and the brain too. Later I adapted much of his teaching to my study of the viola, particularly his ideas about the flexibility of the wrist.


To my very dear friend and pupil Choochart Pitaksakorn
London 16/July/1957
To my dear wife Alipia Lobo Jacobsen
THE MASTERY OF VIOLIN PLAYING
By
MAXIM JACOBSEN
English text prepared by GEMMA FARMER

Prof. Maxim Jacobsen's autographed dedication to Aj. Choochart Pitaksakorn (1957) (photo courtesy of the author)

YB: How was Kató Havas's style of teaching? Was it different from Jacobsen's?

CP: Jacobsen and Havas were quite different. Havas emphasized the elimination of all types of blockages: mental and physical. She was very beneficial for me at the time, since through very intense training, she helped me recover the technique I had learned from Jacobsen. She was especially good at helping me eliminate anxieties and body tension.

The Viola, Yoga, and Army Service

YB: With so many years of violin studies, don't you consider yourself a violinist?

CP: No, I am a violist [*laughs*]!

YB: And were you the first viola soloist in Thailand?

CP: There are some who played as soloists before me … I would like to say that I am among the first violists in Thailand.

YB: How did it happen that you came to love the viola so much? What made you switch instruments?

CP: About forty years ago, in the 1970s, some Thai and English colleagues of mine wanted to start a quartet, and they asked me to join as a violist. Initially I said no, but one of my friends convinced me to learn to play in the new clef. I had played the viola at school when I was a student but never gave it serious thought. However, when I played in the quartet, I fell in love with the viola. I started to practice the viola and started searching for the right tone, and I was fascinated by the big sound. I had never heard anything like it before. So you could say that I was infatuated by the sound, and I slowly discovered the essence and the heart of the viola; how it should sound.

In the beginning, I applied violin technique, and it worked up to a certain level, but later I realized that the viola is not a bigger violin but a completely different instrument. You can't use the same tone production, vibrato, or right-hand technique. The soul of the viola is different from the spirit of the violin. So I ordered all the books available at the time and LP recordings, mostly by Lionel Tertis and William Primrose, who were the champions, and studied them. I bought several editions to study the fingerings because you know, the fingerings of the violin and the viola are completely different, and I

spent about five years to get to know the heart of the viola.

YB: Your advocacy for the practice of yoga is legendary among your pupils. Can you elaborate on your experiences with this discipline?

CP: One time I saw a gentleman in *Life* magazine[2] standing on his head: it was Menuhin! This awoke in me an enormous curiosity for yoga. I went to the bookstore, and when I saw columns of books about yoga I didn't know which one to choose, so I closed my eyes and picked one [*laughs*]! This book was wonderful, it was written in medical terms, and I practiced yoga from this book for seven years.

I met Menuhin on several occasions, always after concerts. I remember Menuhin's words: "Study yoga, and you will play better." This advice helped me quite a lot and taught me a few things about technique. In 1975, when I returned to London to study with Kató Havas, I asked him [Menuhin] about his shoulder rest, which he had patented and used for many years, and why—on that particular day—he wasn't using it. He responded that he started to use yoga technique to balance the violin, and that is why he was not using the shoulder rest. That time he taught me right there in the green room how to hold the violin in that way and how to come down from the high positions without crippling the violin. His concepts were based on the practice of yoga. I found them fascinating and began to explore the practice in my own path to technique.

For some time I studied Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga in London with an Indian yogi at the London Yoga Center. I am currently working on a teaching method that incorporates yoga in daily instrumental practice.

YB: I noticed that your name, besides carrying the title of Ajarn, is always preceded with the military rank of Colonel. Did you go to the army? How did you achieve that rank?

CP: That's right, Colonel. When you work in the army you get a rank, and I achieved the rank of Colonel. When I came back from Europe, I needed to find a job, and there was one in the army, so I applied and got it! In the military I conducted all types of bands. The army, the navy, and the air force all have music departments with symphonic orchestra, symphonic band, military band, and jazz bands.

I was in the army for seventeen years. The higher my rank went, the less I practiced, since the administrative work increased as well. After my nine years of studying in Europe, I attained higher and higher military rank and conducted the various bands and orchestras, but I couldn't find time to practice. So, one day I thought: "Is this what I want?"

Then at some point I gave myself a full musical evaluation, and I failed. I gave myself an "F" and concluded that I represented a very low level of playing.

YB: It sounds as if after seventeen years in the army you had lost your ability to play.

CP: Exactly! And that's how I got the rank [*laughs*]. After this low point I began a process of recovering and perfecting my technique.

Ajarn Choochart Pitaksakorn receiving the Golden Record Award from the hands of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1972 (photo courtesy of Aj. Choochart Pitaksakorn)

Classical Music in Thailand, Teaching, and the Status of the Viola—Present and Future

YB: In my few years living in Thailand I have come to understand that the interest in Western classical music is

more of a recent phenomenon than a long-standing tradition. Did you live through this process of change and development in the presence of Western classical music in Thailand?

CP: In the 1930s, Thailand had a symphony orchestra conducted by Phra Chen-Duriyang.[3] He is considered the father of Western music in Thailand, and we owe him a lot. At the time he was the only one in the East who played symphonies, overtures, and opera excerpts; actually, his orchestra was considered one of the best in Asia. Phra Chen-Duriyang and his orchestra didn't play anything except Western classical music. He wrote very famous books in Thai on harmony and ear training, and he also wrote about Thai music theory and gave many lectures. He educated many great musicians: composers, arrangers, conductors; he was a very great man. There should be monuments to him, really … Phra Chen-Duriyang.

YB: How do you see the development of the viola in your country since you came back to Thailand?

CP: Well, I have seen the erosion of the inferiority complex that is associated with viola playing. I mean if you're good you play first violin, if not you play second violin, and if you can't do that then you play the viola. And whatever études the violinists have, we have—Massart, Rode, Kreutzer, Ševčík—we must play them and practice. I try to play duets with the rising viola players in the country. When I have a not-so-fine player I don't look down on them but just say: "Come on, let's play together." And we play scales together.

In the early days in Thailand, violists didn't play scales or études. They just played pieces, and they lacked technique. I try to convince my students that you must have technique in order to succeed. You may have a lot in your heart, but if you don't have the technique you cannot express it. And I try to transcribe many pieces that the violinists have to the viola so that the violists can have music to enjoy … that's part of my teaching strategy.

YB: Speaking of teaching, how would you describe your approach to education?

CP: I teach following the Russian School as I learned it from Professor Maxim Jacobsen. I integrate yoga in my teaching as advised by Lord Yehudi Menuhin. I also use Menuhin's and Kató Havas's concepts of violin playing, together with the methods of Auer, Dounis, Galamian, Capet, and Flesch. However, I adapt every facet of teaching to suit the individual physiologically, anatomically, psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually. I emphasize the concept of inner hearing and "mind over matter."

Additionally, in my experience, young people always practice too fast. I tell them that if you want to play fast, practice slowly. The secret of practicing is to never make mistakes. Usually I know if they have been practicing correctly. If they are playing something for a technical reason, I ask them to concentrate on only one thing at a time and to try to see where the problem is.

Thai violists must work harder to attain the necessary level of technique in order to express their musicality through the instrument. They must listen to the cello, rather than the violin as a model.

YB: Are there enough jobs for violists and violinists in Thailand? What are the employment prospects for some of your students?

CP: In two or three years there will be no more positions left for them. There are only so many positions that orchestras can offer. Both the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra and the Bangkok Symphony play quite regularly, but other smaller orchestras like the Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute Orchestra perform only two or three times a year. *The Viola Lovers* also has only a limited performance schedule. So violists and violinists can't live from that kind of work, and they need to go into teaching. Yet, many of them don't like teaching. In such cases they might have to look for jobs elsewhere or change their profession.

The music jobs now are far away from Bangkok. Universities in Bangkok have all the positions covered. They would have to go to the North East, to more rural areas. Even Chang Mai is already covered with teachers. My students have been lucky and good enough to teach at some of the top universities in Thailand, and they play in the orchestras I have

already mentioned, but this is still not enough to provide job security.

YB: You mentioned The Viola Lovers. *Can you tell me more about this project?*

CP: One day, I was listening to a CD called *The London Cello Sound*, which consisted of a group of forty celli, and I thought, "Why not *Viola Sound?*" And while I was thinking, there was already a CD coming out with a group of forty-eight violas called *The Viola Sound!* So, I decided this was it and began recruiting my friends, my pupils, my pupil's friends, and finally I was able to recruit twenty-four violas.

Since there was no music written for that kind of group, I had to do my own arrangements. We didn't confine ourselves to the classics, we did not only do arrangements of symphonies by Haydn, show pieces for the violin, but also transcribed parts of *West Side Story* and even arranged jazz tunes and Latin-American genres such as samba, cha-cha, and mambo.

Initially the group consisted of twenty-four violas and one bass, and later we added a harp, timpani, and Latin-American percussion instruments. In the beginning the violists were not very happy as they had to play in extremely high positions to simulate the part of a flute, but in the end they enjoyed it. That was the birth of *The Viola Lovers*. Given my other professional commitments, we perform only two or three concerts a year. My latest creation is a double bass string quartet [*laughs*]. You have to be open to everything if you want to promote music in Thailand!

YB: How do you see the future of the viola in Thailand?

CP: I see it in a positive light because some of the young students studying abroad now will come back. A student of mine just got a master's degree in viola in the United States. I have also encouraged him to continue his studies in Europe with a fine teacher. In all there are a least three or four Thai violists studying in the United States. These new people will help. They will make a big difference.

When the Mahidol University College of Music began hiring teachers from abroad, they taught the same way that I teach … scales … exercises. And that is another reason for the improvement of Western music in Thailand.

I think parents—especially mothers—are very important. They have to convince their children that the viola is a solo instrument. In Thailand the mother usually accompanies the child to the music lessons, and if she approves of the instrument, this is of enormous influence on the student … and usually the father says ok … [*laughs*]. Early education is a key element in promoting classical music here.

In Thailand you see people with money, people eagerly supporting a football club or even pop music for dancing, but generally they don't want to support classical music. We need more sponsors and more supporters of Western music.

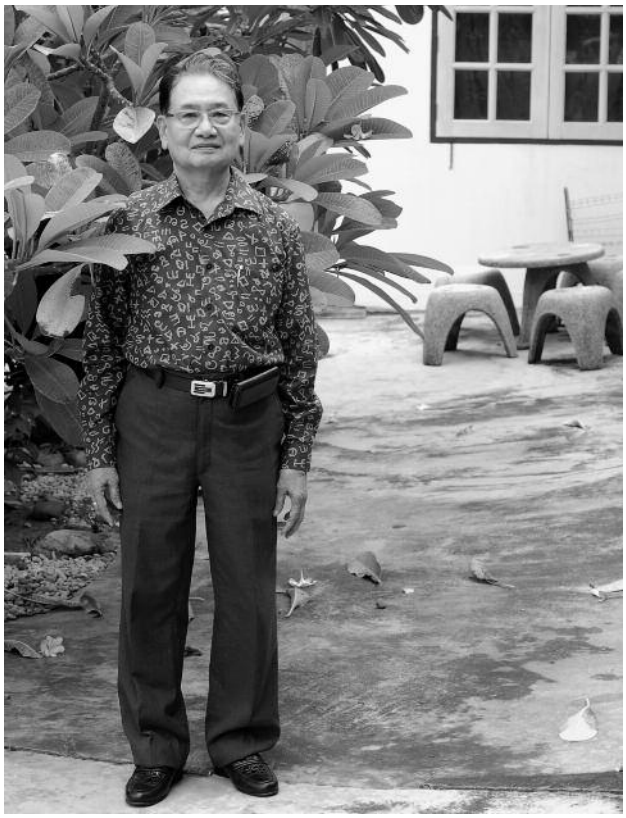
YB: Looking back on your fifty years of teaching, what gives you the greatest sense of fulfillment?

CP: Well, I'm happy that my work has received national recognition. The Golden Record given by His Majesty the King of Thailand for outstanding conducting and arranging and the Silver Cross of Merit by President Franz Jonas for distinguished service to the Republic of Austria—for promoting Austrian music in Thailand—are distinctions that make me proud. Equally humbling is the National Artist Prize and the honorary doctorate degree from Chulalongkorn University.

Looking back at over fifty years during which I have taught violin, viola, harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, conducting, and aural training, I'm most happy to have trained hundreds of good musicians—violinists, violists, conductors, music teachers—all of whom have contributed much in the world of classical music in Thailand. I'm particularly happy to promote the viola to the public by founding *The Viola Lovers*. These are the fruits of my long and hardworking years.

YB: Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to speak about your life and career.

CP: My pleasure.



Ajarn Choochart Pitaksakorn in his garden (photo courtesy of the author)

Violinist Yavet Boyadjiev is Chair of the String Department at the Mahidol University College of Music in Thailand and is a founding member of the Bangkok Piano Trio.

Notes:

[1] Ajarn Choochart refers to a reed organ of European origin (also called Harmonium), which was imported into India in the nineteenth century and is in wide use in Indian classical music. In more modern Indian versions, it allows the players to sit on the floor as opposed to the antique one, which required the players to sit on a bench to be able to pump air with their feet.

[2] *Life Magazine*, Sept. 20, 1937.

[3] Phra Chen-Duriyang (1883–1968) is the Thai name of Peter Feit, the son of a German advisor to the Royal Court of Thailand. Through establishing the first symphony orchestra of the country, he introduced Western classical music to Thailand. He also wrote several books on music theory, transcribed Thai music into Western notation, studied the Thai tuning system, and composed the music of the country's national anthem.

Student Life

Take it "From the Top!"

Members of the Reiziger Trio with FTT *members after the New Albany Show, April 2008; front row: Jennifer Hurley-Wales (co-founder of* FTT*), Deborah Price, Stephanie Price; back row: Eric Gratz, Christopher O'Riley (*FTT *host), Nathaniel West (photo courtesy of Deborah Price)*

by Deborah Price with *From the Top* viola alumni

National Public Radio's (NPR's) *From the Top (FTT)* presents a weekly show featuring some of the best young classical musicians from around the country in performance and dialogue with host and renowned pianist Christopher O'Riley. I have had the privilege to experience the show's production process first hand through my work as founder and artistic director of the Chamber Music Connection, Inc. (CMC). CMC's first encounter with *FTT* landed us in one of the ultimate *FTT* experiences; it came during the inaugural year of their public television show, *From the Top, "Live from Carnegie Hall!"*

In May 2006, I arrived home to a very interesting voicemail after an amazing weekend at the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition where one of the CMC quartets, *opus.*, won the Junior Division silver medal. Three groups from our small not-for-profit organization located outside Columbus, Ohio, performed in the quarterfinals of Fischoff that year. It was a fabulous and rewarding experience, not only for *opus*. and the other two participating CMC groups, but for our organization as a whole.

CMC was founded in 1992 as a short summer festival presenting chamber music education. I hadn't imagined that CMC would someday develop into a nationally recognized chamber music program hosting more than thirty ensembles per term, including six or more conductorless chamber orchestras, with an associated faculty of over forty members and guest artists including such artists as Don Weilerstein, Alisa Weilerstein, Peter Salaff, David Finckel, Wu Han, Christopher O'Riley, the Claremont Trio, and the Cavani, Guarneri, St. Lawrence, Ying, Fry Street, and Cypress Quartets.

Nearly fifteen years into CMC's life as an organization, I returned home from Fischoff to the phone message from *FTT* music producer Tom Vignieri waiting for me. (I kept that voicemail saved on my phone for a very long time!) The message went something like this: "Hello, this is Tom Vignieri, music producer of *From the Top*. I heard one of your groups had quite a weekend!" He went on to explain *FTT*'s relationship with the Fischoff, in that the show presents the winning junior division ensemble on one of their shows and that *FTT* likes to consider the other

medal winners as well. When Tom and I "finally" spoke (it was probably the same day, though it felt like forever), he explained more about the radio show, and I shared more details about our *opus*. I mentioned to him how I wished *FTT* were a television show, as the boys of *opus*. were truly a group to be seen! (You can find performances by *opus*. from their precollege years performing in Fischoff and the Saint Paul competitions on YouTube.) Tom replied, "Funny that you mention that, as we have a television show in the works, but it's really for groups that have already appeared on the radio show." The short story is that, over the course of several phone calls and audio and video sharing, Tom booked *opus*. for the Carnegie show (Season 1: Episode 9) in October 2006. *opus.* performed the first movement of Ravel's String Quartet in addition to a feature with Christopher O'Riley of the *Scherzo* from Brahms's F-Minor Piano Quintet. *opus.* eventually appeared on the radio show as well (#159), paired up with a wonderful all-girl quartet, Seraphina, from Philadelphia.

Members of the opus. *and Seraphina quartets talk with host Christopher O'Riley onstage at a* From the Top *taping on May 9, 2007 (photo courtesy of* From the Top*)*

Since that first appearance, CMC has had the privilege to witness six of our ensembles, along with several of our affiliated alumni, appearing on the show. In addition, several of our featured CMC students and alumni have received $10,000 Jack Kent Cooke (JKC) scholarship awards. The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation is a private organization that supports young students who excel in a variety of academic disciplines, and *From the Top* chooses approximately twenty-five exceptional precollegiate musicians each year for the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award. In addition to performance opportunities, *FTT* involves participants in a Leadership Seminar, and Jack Kent Cooke scholarship recipients also develop an Arts Leadership Project. *FTT* has brought us to shows in New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, Iowa, Indiana, and even in our own state of Ohio. In this article, you will hear from the violists of these groups as well as one we met along the way.

Eva Kennedy first appeared on the show as a fourteen-year-old violinist with CMC's Octet Abbraccio (#216). Last April, she made a second appearance (#233) as the violist with CMC's Quartet Toujours (QT) after winning the grand prize at the 2010/11 Discover Chamber Music Competition, presented by Midwest Young Artists, and the gold medal at the 2011 Saint Paul String Quartet Competition (SPSQC), presented by the Artaria String Quartet. QT formed in fall 2010 from the members of Abbraccio who hadn't yet graduated high school.

Meredith and **Rachel Kufchak**, sisters who studied both viola and chamber music with me since they were four and five years old respectively, also performed on *FTT* as members of Abbraccio. Both were awarded $10,000 Jack Kent Cooke scholarships, a first for *FTT*. Meredith and Rachel served as violists in the Abbracio octet along with violinists Eva Kennedy, Heeyeon Chung, Kaho Sugawara, and Claire Watkins and cellists Ruthie Cordray and Kyle Price.

Reuben Payne was the violist of the all-boy-band *opus.* Reuben received his start at CMC at age ten during our spring weekend festival with the Cavani String Quartet. Reuben and *opus.* continued studying at CMC through their senior year of school. The additional members of *opus.* included violinists Jeff Myers and James Rubino with cellist Matthew Kufchak, the first CMC Jack Kent Cooke scholarship winner. **Stephanie**

Members of the Octet Abbraccio (photo courtesy of From the Top*)*

Price first appeared on *FTT* (#177) as a member of the Reiziger Trio (violin, viola, and double bass) performing with featured soloist and the bassist of Reiziger, Nate West. Reiziger (violinist Eric Gratz with Nate and Stephanie) performed one of our favorite works by Charles Washington, *Midnight Child*. Steph's second appearance (#180) was as a member of the CMC and CIM collaborative quartet, Viaggio String Quartet, gold medal winners at the 2008 SPSQC. I received this call from Tom while Stephanie and I were on a college visit to UC Boulder. He needed a quartet to perform a challenging new work by a young composer they were featuring in Berkeley, California. In addition, Viaggio member and violinist Anthony Bracewell became yet another CMC Jack Kent Cooke award winner, performing a feature solo on the Berkeley show. Viaggio members included Eric Gratz, from the Young Artist Program at CIM, with Anthony, Stephanie, and cellist Ken Kubota, from CMC.

Caroline Weeks is one of those remarkable performers we met along the way. Caroline was a featured soloist on #216 with Abbraccio. She was performing the beautiful and engaging first movement of Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata.

DP: What was it like to find out that you would be on FTT*? Was it what you expected? How did it influence you afterward?*

Eva: It was crazy! I vividly remember both times I heard we were going to be on the show. The first time, I was shadowing an ER nurse when I received the text from Debbie—I actually cheered out loud and got some funny looks. The second time, I got the call in school orchestra. I went into the back of the viola locker room where it was quieter. When Debbie told me the quartet was confirmed, we flipped out on the phone together. I jumped and danced around in the solitude of this old locker room. I remember feeling like I was headed for someplace so much bigger. *From the Top* gave me a glimpse of the world that could be open to me if I work hard enough. Musicians maintain a critical self-perspective, and to find out that *From the Top* thought we were good enough to be on their show was exhilarating, empowering, and incredible.

I wasn't really sure what to anticipate, but I did not expect the actual experience of recording to be as fun as it was. The show is organized and professional, and the recording process is relaxed and comfortable. The staff is incredible, and it was a great environment in which to perform. This was the first big, important thing we [the members of Octet Abbraccio] had done that wasn't a competition, so it was really cool to be able to perform without having to worry about comparing ourselves to other people. It was very much a celebration of music and all the participants' hard work. It was a wonderful experience.

Recording a radio show is so different from any other type of performance. Though it is definitely a performance, the setup is so involved—there were microphones and wires and lights everywhere, tape on the ground, and staff members with black T-shirts and walkie-talkies. I'd been to a couple of the shows before, but actually being on stage in the midst of it was unreal. It wasn't just a regular performance; it was a show. Because it was such a comprehensive experience, it required a lot more from us as performers; we

weren't just playing through our piece—there were introductions and interviews as well! The show isn't just about talented young artists; *FTT* fully showcases each performer.

We also had the opportunity to play with guest artist Michael Feinstein. Our show was recorded in his new arts center in Carmel, Indiana (it was absolutely gorgeous; I'll never forget walking into that hall for the first time), and we, along with harpist Katherine Kapelsohn and Christopher O'Riley, accompanied Michael on Gershwin's *Love Walked In*. It was so fun, he was amazing, the piece was beautiful, and it was a really magical performance. It was such a neat opportunity that we would never have experienced anywhere else.

Meredith: Recording for the radio show was a great experience. Working with Christopher O'Riley and the rest of the team was so much fun! It was incredible to share one of our favorite pieces of music, Mendelssohn's Octet, with the rest of the country.

Rachel: It was awesome to find out that I was going to be on *FTT*, because both Meredith and I applied, and I was advised not to get my hopes up because it was highly improbable that we would BOTH be on the show *and* get the JKC scholarship. I couldn't believe it was happening, especially because I had braced myself for the bad news, but it turned out to be an incredible experience that I shared with not only my sister, but some of my closest friends, the Abbraccio octet.

The entire experience was far beyond what I had expected. They treated [us] as professionals and interacted with all of us in a way that was really commendable. Being able to record and be broadcast was awesome and is an experience I am grateful to have had early in my career. The fact that several of us were [graduating] made the experience even more memorable and was certainly a good way to leave CMC before starting a new chapter in my life.

Reuben: We received the invitation from *From the Top* right after Fischoff. I was especially excited when I heard that we would be featured on the television show, that we would be aired throughout the country, and that anyone could tune in to see it. When I heard that we would be performing with Christopher O'Riley, it was that much more thrilling. The TV show was definitely the way to go for us—the violinists of *opus.* dance around and make lots of faces! They were very animated, which is great for television! There's no way you would get the full *opus.* experience without the visual.

All of the cameras were intimidating at first. They were so close that I was worried about hitting one. When I would look up for cues, there would be a camera right behind Jeff or James's head! Looking back, they got some really great shots of us, and the program was really well put together. Only having two rehearsals with Chris was a bit frightening. Tom told us that they would edit takes together as needed; this eased the pressure on us, though we still wanted to play our best every time. I remember that at the first read, I was really nervous. Everyone sounded so good and talented! I was concerned about how we were going to measure up. At the same time, we recognized some of the people there from previous Fischoff competitions, and meeting Gerry Slavet, cofounder of *FTT*, was an experience never to forget! During our rehearsal he was sitting back pumping his feet in beat through the whole Brahms. Playing in Carnegie Hall, in Zankel Hall, was an awesome experience. It filled you with awe to be in the hall where the greatest artists play when "they've made it."

How did it influence me? I'm not sure if it was *FTT*, the Fischoff, the other competitions, or all of it combined that made me realize that we might have a chance at this music thing. It influenced which schools I explored. I wanted to find a school that would promote both music and engineering, which led me to Northwestern.

Stephanie: "O.M.G! Yay!" I believe those are the words I used when my mom told me I was going to be on *FTT* with the Reiziger Trio. When she told me I would be on the show again, this time with Viaggio Quartet ... in San Francisco, I believe I used the words: "SAN FRANCISCO! Yes!! Sun!"

Was it what I expected? Even more! On the San Francisco show I celebrated my eighteenth birthday, and not only was I surrounded by old friends and new *FTT* friends, but by good music and food! The *FTT* staff brought me a delicious cake after the traditional *FTT* pizza party and sang "Happy Birthday."

Reflections on my experience on *FTT*: good memories; lots of laughing, performing, and eating! I've realized now, that's just what you do as a musician.

Caroline: Ever since I can remember, listening to *FTT* on the radio was a family ritual. The catchy piano prelude paired with Christopher O'Riley's velvety voice was always a thrill to hear when tuning into the show. At the end of my senior year of high school, after all my auditions for music schools were finished, auditions for the *FTT* show were being held right in my backyard. I thought to myself, "Hey, what's another audition, right?" and decided on a whim to try out. I didn't have very high hopes of making it on the show but was going to try my best and enjoy myself every step of the way. I played the first movement of the Walton Concerto, told them it was my dream to be a professional violist. The next thing I knew, I was on the show! The entire process was like an out of body experience; literally like a dream.

The actual *FTT* experience could not have been more inspiring and still remains the most pivotal point in my musical career. I was so impressed with the down-to-earth nature of the *FTT* family, as well as the other performers. Everyone was so supportive.

To this day, I am still meeting musicians who have appeared on *FTT*, and all of the fond memories of that one life-changing weekend come rushing back. I hope to remain in touch with all of the dynamic people in the *FTT* family as I move further ahead in my musical studies and will always remember the impact show #216 had on my life.

DP: Tell us about your Leadership Seminar experience? For the JKC scholarship winners, tell us about your outreach project and how you chose this particular focus?

Caroline Weeks playing Rebecca Clarke's Sonata (photo courtesy of From the Top *and John Servies)*

Eva: The leadership seminar was one of my favorite parts of *FTT*. It was so incredibly inspiring to see what people have done and can do with their music. It clarified how important music is to me and how it can affect others as well. One of the volunteers at the SPSQC said to us, "Your music is a gift you give to those who can't play." She's there every year, always thanks us so sincerely, is encouraging and wonderful, and, especially after the leadership seminar, I've really taken those words to heart. I'm less singularly focused on how I'll grow and succeed for myself and think more about what I can do for others through music. If it's playing for a big charity event or even just playing for my grandparents when they're in town, I do it more now and enjoy it. It's such a small thing that I can give of myself that has the potential to do so much.

Meredith: During the leadership seminar, we learned the importance of keeping the arts, and specifically classical music, alive. We learned how we as individuals could impact the future of classical music. Receiving the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artists Award was an incredible experience, and I'm so grateful. I bought the viola that I am currently playing with the scholarship money. For our outreach project, we visited Ames High School to perform the Mendelssohn and play with the orchestra. It was great to work with the students we had just met.

Rachel: [During] the leadership seminar we established how important music was to each of us and

how we can use it to make a difference in the world and impact others. It was sobering to realize that music is a powerful thing that CAN change lives, and it wasn't just something to do for a career or for fun. As a JKC recipient, I was required to do an outreach project. I was a little worried at first about it because the possibilities were so open-ended, but it actually ended up working out really well! After performing for the Ames High School orchestra, we did an exercise with them on communication between performers. (This was not something new to us; at CMC we did several outreach performances at the Ohio State School for the Blind, hospitals, and public schools.) It ended up being a really good teaching experience, and it made me realize how much I love sharing my enthusiasm for music with others. Not only did we make an impact on the students, I gained a greater understanding of my appreciation for music. Additionally, I wrote a letter to the governor of Ohio speaking of the incredible importance of music education in the public school system.

Reuben: I remember the Leadership Seminar being a great conversation about where we saw ourselves in the future. We were all considering going to music school for performance, and, as seniors in high school, we wanted more than anything to be in a professional quartet. While in NYC for *From the Top, Live from Carnegie Hall!*, we performed an outreach concert at a middle school in Greenwich, Connecticut, organized by a coach we met through CMC, Dr. Connie Barrett. The students were genuinely interested and had so many questions that we couldn't answer them all. The fact that the students and staff engaged with us, that it was an uplifting experience, and that we might have made a difference left a huge impact on each of us.

Stephanie: When I was on the show with the Reiziger Trio we performed for the New Albany High School music students. It was really early in the morning, and all I remember is performing with Nate and Eric and answering lots of questions from the students. With Viaggio, we performed for a *FTT* soirée at a mansion filled with amazing contemporary art overlooking the San Francisco Bay and Golden Gate Bridge. I remember walking around the hills of the estate and coming back to find Anthony and Eric schmoozing with the caterers. Once again great food, great music, great fun!

Caroline: Aside from the rehearsing and performing with Chris O'Riley, the most enjoyable element of being on the show was the student outreach. I had the opportunity to travel to small elementary schools in the surrounding area to perform live in front of an assembly of small kids. At first, I was a little nervous; unsure of what their reaction was going to be. I didn't think kindergarten through fifth graders would be excited to hear an unaccompanied Bach suite, but boy, was I wrong. Boys were screaming, "Whooaaa! AWESOME!" and girls had wide smiles on their faces after I finished the Prelude of the Third Cello Suite. The final chord was met with resounding applause. Hands shot up one after another in the Q&A segment, and, as the kids were filing out of the room, many came up and asked for my autograph! I felt like a total rock star that day, and it reinforced, once again, the importance of arts advocacy in my mind.

DP: What have you done since, and where are you now?

Eva: After *From the Top*, QT participated in Fischoff, where we advanced to the semifinals. It was another amazing experience—I can never get enough of that competition environment. It's always so cool to see other groups perform. It really expands your view to know there are such incredible groups throughout the country. Last summer, we attended the Mimir Chamber Music Festival together, which was another amazing experience. The faculty was *unbelievable*—there are some faculty concerts and coachings from that summer I will remember for the rest of my life. We really grew as musicians and as a quartet.

Meredith: I'm currently a sophomore majoring in viola performance at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, studying with Ivo-Jan van der Werff.

Rachel: I've moved to Texas to attend the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston. Chamber music will always be a big part of my life and something that I've enjoyed participating in since being at school. Additionally, *FTT* was a great way to

make connections in the music world. I'm finishing up the first semester of my sophomore year as a viola performance major. I'm not certain where my life will take me, but I know that music will always be a special gift that I will enjoy for the rest of my life! Reflections: You know how some memories in life are just full of sunshine and rainbows and happiness? Yeah, *FTT*'s one of them.

Reuben: I'm at Northwestern in my senior year finishing up my chemical Engineering degree—I realized that I don't need a music performance degree to continue to play the viola. I recently joined a band made up of Northwestern students. The band went public after spending this summer mastering a few songs that we recorded last spring. They're available for free download on our website: tinytriangle.bandcamp.com.

The opus. *Quartet (photo courtesy of* From the Top*)*

Stephanie: I'm in my last year of undergraduate studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music. I'm preparing for graduate auditions and my senior recital and will participate for a second time in CIM's Intensive Quartet Seminar. I'm also a section violist for the Firelands Symphony and coach at the CMC-Cleveland pilot program and at CMC-Worthington whenever I can travel back home.

DP: Any recommendations for those who might be considering auditioning or applying for FTT*?*

Eva: Go for it! Be yourself! They're looking for musical talent, but they're also looking for cool people and cool stories. Don't lose your professionalism, but let your personality shine through. Record yourself and listen to the recording before you send in your application! You can hear all sorts of easily fixable problems. *From the Top* was absolutely one of the greatest experiences of my life. It was so much fun, and it had such a lasting impact on me. I've discovered the effect music can have on people; those who play and those who don't. Music is something that connects all of us, regardless of our other interests, our class, our religion, or our location. And there is so much love to be found in the music world.

Rachel: At first I thought being on *FTT* was all about being the best, like it would give some kind of [permanent] star status. Once you move on to college it's not as big of a deal. But what it's all about is having the experience. For me it was achieving a dream and making memories that will stick with me for the rest of my life. When I was a freshman in high school I made a "bucket list" of sorts with my older sister, and performing on *FTT* was definitely on there. Yes, it was an accomplishment that I made, but it wasn't all about me. It was about my parents and family who supported me, my teachers who gave me much needed instruction, and my friends who were kind enough to perform with me and make *FTT* such a memorable time in my life. Yes, take this time to shine, but don't ever forget who got you there!

Reuben: Come up with a way to accentuate those characteristics that make you unique. The writers of *FTT* will work with it. The music is the main part of the show, but exploring our other interests brings another element of entertainment to it all.

Stephanie: Show them who you are, and don't be afraid of what silly story they will talk about, because in the end it's funny!

Caroline: Go in with a positive attitude and a smile. I auditioned purely for the fun of it. One piece of advice I have for musicians is that with playing, and especially with auditions, don't take yourself too seriously. [It can be] the death of a performance as well as the longevity of a player.

To listen to or view past performances by these and other featured FTT *performers, or to download an application to appear on a* From the Top *show, visit www.fromthetop.org. For more information about CMC, visit www.cmconnection.org or TheCMConnection on Facebook.*

Deborah Barrett Price is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Connection, Inc. (CMC). She serves on the faculty of Denison University teaching viola, violin, and chamber music and is a Yamaha Certified String Educator Clinician. In recognition of her work as the Founder and Artistic Director of the CMC, Debbie was named the 2004 Columbus Symphony Orchestra Community Educator of the Year and has received commendations from the Ohio State Senate and House of Representatives for excellence in teaching. She has served as Artistic Director of CMC-Italia performing, teaching, and conducting in Bonefro and Rome, Italy, including a performance at Italy's esteemed Santa Cecilia Conservatory.

With Viola in Hand

My Life with the Viola Alta

by George Andrix

In 1955 I was principal violist of the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra stationed at Vaihingen, Germany. Larry Fisher, my stand partner at the time, was trying out a viola that he had found at a fiddle shop in Stuttgart. After deciding that he didn't want it, he asked me if I would like to try it. I tried it and decided to buy it for the magnificent sum of sixty-nine dollars. Since that day I have not done any serious playing on any other viola.

The instrument was made by C. Rautmann in Braunschweig in 1878. The body length is 18 3/8 inches. At that time I had not heard the term "viola alta." To me, it was just a rather large viola, and, as one would expect, had a rather large sound; a sound that I have never been willing to give up for the convenience of playing a small viola.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Andrea Amati standardized the sizes and shapes of the instruments of the violin family, including the viola, which, at the time was considered more of a tenor instrument than an alto. The body length of his viola measured more than eighteen inches. Andrea's sons (the brothers Amati) are said to be the first to make a small viola that was known as an alto. Since that time, and most especially in the twentieth century, violists and viola makers have been trying (with no appreciable success) to redesign the instrument to defy the laws of nature and make a small viola sound like Mr. Amati's original design.

Over the years, composers have tried various ways of bringing the viola to the fore as a solo instrument. In his Sixth Brandenburg Concerto, Bach matched the two violas with two violas da gamba, instruments with a quieter tone than the instruments of the violin family. Mozart, in his Sinfonia Concertante, tuned the viola up a half step. Brahms, in the *Agitato* of his B-flat Major String Quartet, op. 67, muted the other three instruments. In general, however, composers found the viola to be unsatisfactory as a solo instrument.

George Andrix with his viola alta

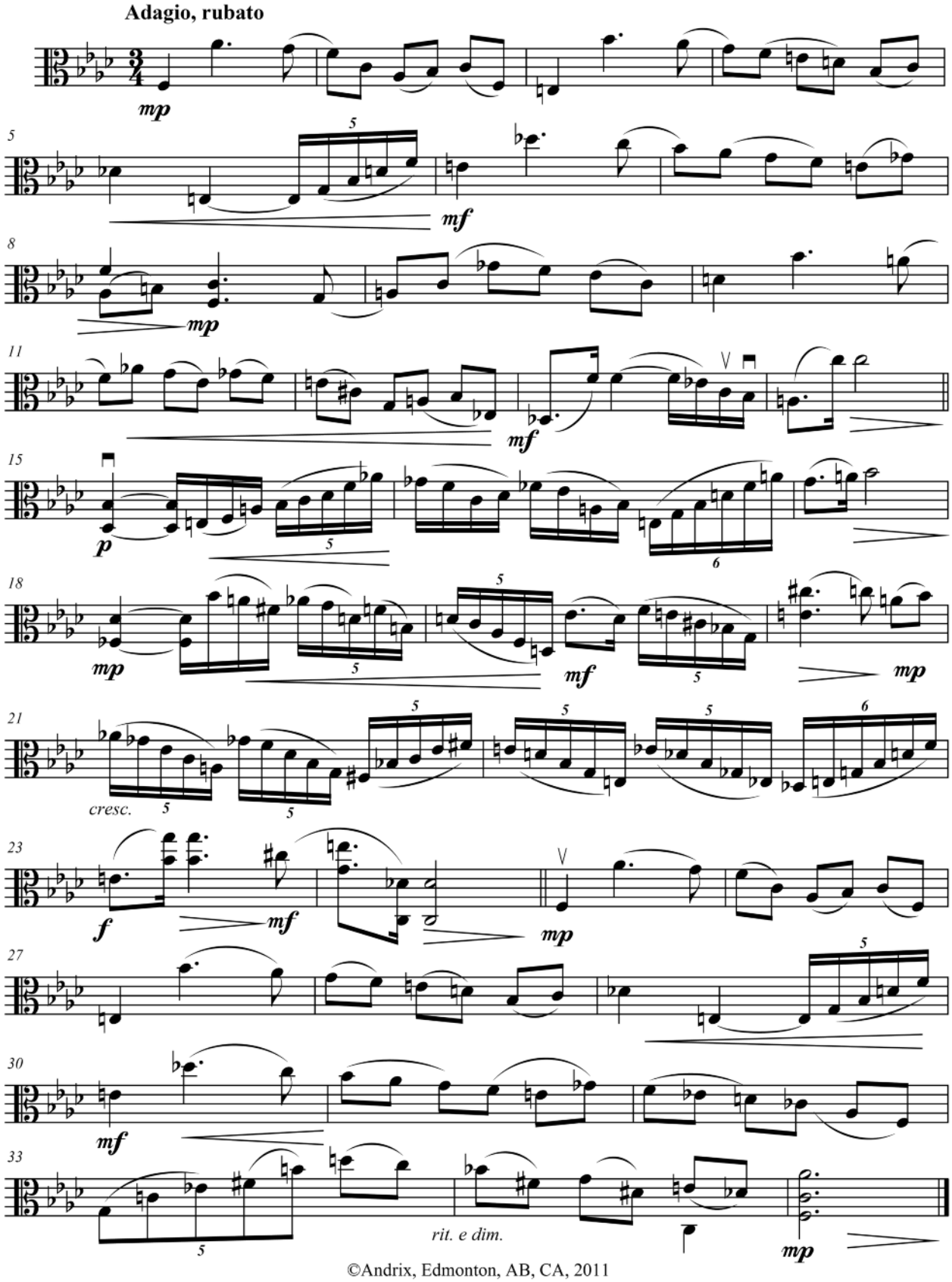
During the nineteenth century, the viola, and to some extent the people who played it, were burdened with a very poor reputation. It was common practice for those who could no longer play well enough on other instruments (even non-string instruments) to be put into the viola section. The viola became known as the instrument of retirement.

In his efforts to improve the reputation of both viola and violists, Hermann Ritter, a prominent German violist and viola teacher in the late nineteenth century, designed an instrument that he called the viola alta. It was an instrument of violin proportions but with a body length between eighteen and nineteen inches; as large as Amati's original design. Various violin makers in southern Germany built the instrument. Wagner was particularly fond of the viola alta and had several of them in his orchestra at Bayreuth.

Romantic Sketch #1

for Viola Alta

George Andrix



When I first acquired my viola alta, I was a young, six-foot tall, male, Homo sapiens of average proportions. During my career as a chamber music and orchestral violist, I found that I was able to negotiate everything that the repertoire demanded, from the highest orchestra parts of Strauss to the most intricate string quartets of Bartók. Sometimes it was quite a strain, but it could be done. I was not able to play the Paganini Caprices, but I couldn't do that on the violin either.

For the last year or so, I have been playing violin and not playing viola at all, so when I was asked to play a short viola recital on a noon-hour concert series we have here in Edmonton, I wasn't very enthusiastic, but I agreed to do it thinking that I could find a few easy tunes that wouldn't require too much work. When my pianist said, "Great, let's do a Brahms sonata," I was even less enthusiastic. The Brahms F-Minor Sonata is not a horrendously virtuosic piece, but in my rather advanced and arthritic years it is no longer easy to execute some of the things that were once quite routine; playing thirds for example. Even when I was a mere youth of forty or fifty years, it was a strain to play a minor third double stop in the lower positions. I would often play a minor third with the first and fourth fingers rather than the first and third and would occasionally use other fingerings that more closely resembled cello fingerings than violin fingerings.

I am happy to report that I was able to sufficiently reacquaint myself with the viola alta to give what I thought was a good performance of the Brahms F-Minor Sonata. Furthermore, I really enjoyed working on the piece and very much enjoyed playing the viola again, so I set about looking for something else to play in a similar Romantic idiom that would not be too much of a strain for me to play on the viola alta. When nothing immediately came to hand that fit my requirements, I decided to write something myself. The first of an undetermined number of *Romantic Sketches for Viola Alta* is included herewith. It is, of course, also playable on a normal viola.

I will end with the, obviously incorrect, final sentence of the *Grove Music Online* entry on Hermann Ritter: "His book, *Die Geschichte der Viola alta* (Leipzig, 1876/R), traces the history of the instrument, which subsequently lost favour, possibly because of its unwieldy size; it is no longer played."

Composer, violinist, violist, conductor, orchestral, and chamber musician George Andrix was a finalist in the Naumberg Competition (New York) in 1965 as a member of the Ithaca String Quartet. Born in Chicago, he trained at the University of Illinois and the Trinity College of Music in London. George has been a competitive archer and black powder cartridge shooter, a sheep farmer, a boat builder, a livery stable hand, and has played string quartets on white water raft trips down the Grand Canyon. At present, he resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where he is active as a composer and Baroque violinist.

Explore the Viola Alta Further

Readers interested in learning more about the viola alta can read these earlier articles in the *JAVS*:

Daniel Thomason, "Hermann Ritter and His Viola Alta," 6, no. 1 (Spring 1990) 3–5.
http://americanviolasociety.org/journal/files/2010/04/JAVS-6_1.pdf
Includes a listing of Ritter's compositions for the viola alta.

Linda Shaver-Gleason, "Ritter's Viola Alta: The Viola's Nineteenth Century Identity Crisis," 21, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 19–26.

Readers looking for additional music to play on the viola alta can start with these compositions:

Albert Behrens
Drei Stücke für Viola Alta, op. 4
http://imslp.org/wiki/3_St%C3%BCcke_f%C3%BCr_Viola_Alta,_Op.4_%28Behrens,_Albert%29

Felix Draeseke
Viola Sonata No. 1 (Edition Peters/Wollenweber WW45)
Viola Sonata No. 2 (Edition Peters/Wollenweber WW179)

Franz Liszt
Romance oubliée (International Music Company IM 3550 and Editio Musica Budapest/Hal Leonard HL 50510797)

Recording Reviews

by Carlos María Solare

American Weavings. Music by Daniel Pinkham, Augusta Read Thomas, John Weaver, Christopher Gable, and Craig Philips. Carol Rodland, viola, Catherine Rodland, organ. Crystal Records CD839.

A family affair in every sense, this enchanting CD features for the most part music either commissioned by—or, in one case, unsolicitedly given to—the sisters Carol and Catherine Rodland. Two pieces by John Weaver book-end the recital and give it its punning title. *Concert Piece* makes for an impressive opening with its passacaglia-like beginning, and it should be hard to find a more rousing ending than *Foundation*, last of the *Three Chorale Preludes* with which the CD finishes. Carol Rodland writes movingly of finding in her mailbox at the New England Conservatory a copy of the *Sonata da Chiesa* by Daniel Pinkham, a composer whose music she had admired since childhood. Pinkham's piece, loosely based on Baroque patterns, uses effectively the organ's registrations and varies the viola's sound with *con sordino* effects and the use of harmonics. Augusta Read Thomas's *Incantation* and *Pulsar* are originally for unaccompanied violin, but—as does most music for that instrument—they sound warmer, more attractive, and just plain better on the viola! Both are freely-shaped ruminations that come across as if improvised, although their rhythmic and structural complexity becomes apparent on closer scrutiny. I found Christopher Gable's *Teshuvah* less immediately accessible, but nevertheless worth the effort. As the composer observes in his liner notes, the piece's "'formless' form makes much more sense in hindsight." The performances by the Rodland sisters are beyond praise. Carol's round, powerful viola tone is infinitely variegated and more than holds its own against the organ, while Catherine, always considerate of her partner, nevertheless holds nothing back when the music requires it, and her use of registrations is consistently imaginative. The recording is ideally clear, with none of the churchy resonance that can afflict recordings of organ music.

Add Viola and Stir. Katrina Wreede, viola, *et al*. Vlazville Records VV-1001.

My acquaintance with Katrina Wreede goes back to a long-ago viola congress, when she came as near as anybody ever has to making me improvise on the viola and actually enjoy it. She was at that time a member of the Turtle Island String Quartet, which she has long left behind to pursue an amazing range of musical styles, of which this all-too-short CD gives a nice conspectus. Wreede defines her composing style(s) as "California Eclectic," and I can't do any better than that. The CD starts with a trio of bar-lounge compositions for viola, piano, and double bass—*Still Tuesday*, *Sierra Waltz*, and *Pleasant*—that had me reaching for that Martini (stirred, of course) within two bars. Later on come *Scenes*, an extended concert piece with harp of a more "abstract" hue, and the hypnotic *Invocation #3*, accompanied by assorted chimes. In between there are several pieces that originated in the collective composing project "60 x 60" and are accordingly around 60 seconds long. They include electronics (*56 Seconds of Creep*), multiple-tracking (*A Slough of Violas*), and other effects that I wouldn't like to spoil for the prospective listener. All this adds up to a most enjoyable recording for the curious at heart. Good news is that the sheet music is available through the artist's website. I have namely not gotten any better at improvising.

Sprezzatura: Music by Paul Chihara, Paul Siskind, Benjamin Britten, and Paul Hindemith. Shelly Tramposh, viola; Cullan Bryant, piano. Ravello Records RR 7818.

This CD's Italian title is taken from—of all things—Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano*, a Renaissance instruction manual for courtiers. "Sprezzatura" signifies the art that conceals art, in other words, making whatever you do appear easy and effortless. I don't know just how easy Shelly Tramposh and Cullan Bryant find this music, but the aural impression is certainly such, that this listener never (well, hardly ever) caught himself wondering about technical issues: everything sounds just right! Two of the pieces on offer are first recordings, and they were certainly new to me. Paul Chihara's Sonata should prove very popular with players looking for a chronologically recent piece that doesn't sound like "contemporary music"! The first two movements were written for the composer's viola-playing wife in 1994, but serious illness interrupted work. For several years a two-movement piece with a muted ending was in circulation, until in 2009 Chihara was able to celebrate a complete return to health with a finale. The first movement features a seductively undulating melody slightly reminiscent of Hindemith's Op. 11, No. 4, with Brahms's E-flat Major Sonata not far behind (not least in the indication *Allegro amabile*!). The composer describes the second movement—written partly in hospital under heavy medication—as a "Valse triste"; it is marked *Tempo di menuetto*, and it closely echoes the one in Mozart's E Minor Violin Sonata, K. 304. The finale, again marked *Allegro amabile*, recapitulates previous material in (in Chihara's words) "a happy celebration of life and love."

When Shelly Tramposh asked her colleague at SUNY Potsdam, Paul Siskind, to write "something for viola," she stipulated that it shouldn't be "yet another elegy." Siskind obliged with the present piece, the German title of which—*Etwas für Bratsche* (*etwas rasch!*)—translates precisely as "Something for viola (somewhat fast!)." The six-minute piece begins with a solemn introduction that is punctuated by glissandi in harmonics; in Tramposh's hands, these are ideally clear! A cadenza leads on to a short rhythmic section that ends the piece.

These two premiere recordings are most convincingly presented by Tramposh and Bryant, who have clearly lived with the music for a long time and are as closely-knit a musical partnership as could be wished. Long stretches of Chihara's Sonata dwell in the viola's higher register, and here Tramposh achieves a consistent beauty of tone, painting as it were with a very fine brush. The rest of the program—Britten's *Lachrymae* and Hindemith's "1939" Sonata—is, of course, central repertoire, but these interpreters don't need to fear comparison with any of their many predecessors. In her interesting liner notes, Tramposh indicates an awareness of being in an interpretative line with Primrose, the dedicatee of Britten's piece, and Hindemith (although the former might not have liked being described as "English"!). Britten's variations are nicely charac-

terized, the waltz at Fig. 7 being given a nice lilt; the *ponticello* right afterward could have been "uglier," though! The double harmonics at Fig. 9 are crystal clear and sound really eerie, and the coda is given an appropriately viol-like sound. Hindemith's last sonata for viola and piano is maybe the least immediately accessible of the three, but it sounds almost Mozartean in Tramposh's and Bryant's hands. This most enjoyable CD, beautifully recorded and produced, has obviously been a labor of love for all concerned and sounds it, every note of it.

Gernot Wolfgang: Short Stories—More Groove-oriented Chamber Music. Brian Dembow, viola; Judith Farmer, bassoon; Nico Abondolo, double bass; Joanne Pearce Martin, piano, *et al*. Albany Troy 1248.

Born in the spa town of Bad Gastein (near Salzburg, Austria), Gernot Wolfgang has been based in Los Angeles for almost twenty years. His music has been described as "a symbiosis between the rhythmic energies of jazz and European classical [or 'serious'] music." Wolfgang's musical roots are indeed firmly planted in jazz, as already the first bars of the present CD reveal, an infectiously rhythmic little piece called *Low Agenda* and accordingly scored for bassoon and double bass. Wolfgang's wife being bassoonist Judith Farmer, he has composed duos that pair the bassoon with the various string instruments in turn. The one with viola gives this CD its title. Its three movements—*Uncle Bebop*, *Rays of Light*, and *Latin Dance*—make for an effective triptych with two riotous rhythmic romps framing a rhapsodic, cadenza-like centerpiece. The performance by Ms. Farmer and violist Brian Dembow is jaw-dropping, with syncopations, cross-rhythms, and the frequent long general rests perfectly unanimous. So much so that, probably because of the composer's Hollywood connection, I can't quite avoid the unworthy thought that a "ticker" was at work! Dembow also performs the piano-accompanied *Quiet Time*, an Americana-tinged meditation that creates a beautiful atmosphere with relatively simple means. This performance sounds strangely straight-laced; I would have welcomed more freedom in rubato, especially in the double-stopped cadenza passages. But then, these are matters of taste, and the whole of this CD, very well-recorded and presented, is a most valuable introduction to this cosmopolitan composer's music (and I haven't even mentioned the viola-less pieces).

Ruth Freeman, Live Performances (Vol. 1). Music by Mozart, Brant, Russell, and Gnattali. Ruth Freeman, viola and viola d'amore; Henry Brant and Marvin Tartak, piano; Freelance String Orchestra; Robert Chiofalo, conductor. Available from www.afm6.org or ruth-freeman@comcast.net

This is one of two self-produced CDs featuring in-concert recordings by Bay Area violist Ruth Freeman and includes several premiere performances of pieces written or arranged for her. With recording dates between 1982 and 1997, the

technical quality is variable but never less than adequate, and of course the repertoire's rarity value relativizes any such considerations.

The Sonata in F Major by W. A. Mozart has been arranged from the Piano Sonata, K. 533/494 by composer/pianist Henry Brant. He and Freeman make a good case for the transcription, which is on the whole well managed. The viola alternates between see-sawing accompaniments and carrying the tune in a way that feels authentic and idiomatic; only very occasionally is there a "fifth wheel" impression. Last year, at the Primrose Competition in Albuquerque, Nokuthula Ngwenyama played another such arrangement—of the Piano Sonata, K. 332—penned by her student Alexander Smith, so there seems to be an understandable interest in creating a posthumous repertoire of Mozart viola music! As opposed to the brilliantly virtuosic Smith opus, the Brant arrangement keeps much of the time to the viola's middle and lower register,

creating some beautiful sonorities, which are gratefully realized by Freeman and Brant in this San Francisco performance from 1984.

Brant's original composition *Quombex*, for viola d'amore and three music boxes (a Walter Trampler commission), was recorded during the first Viola d'amore Congress, held at the University of Wyoming. Since the music boxes are supposed to be placed at the auditorium's corners, this should be a splendid piece for a state-of-the-art Surround Sound recording! As it is, the 1982 tape sounds slightly compressed but gives an idea of the strange sound-world Brant evoked in this piece, which is played exclusively in harmonics.

Armand Russell's *Sonata Fantasia* was written for Ruth Freeman, and this is a recording of the 1997 premiere performance. The piece is written in a traditional language, its highlight being—for me—a charming second movement held in a lilting, Milhaud-like 6/8 that is interrupted by a stormy middle section.

Reading the name of the operatically named Brazilian composer Radamés Gnattali rang a very distant bell: I remembered seeing the music of his Viola Concerto on my teacher's desk when arriving for a lesson in the late 1970s in Buenos Aires (as far as I know, he never got around to playing it). Finally hearing the piece after all these years, I find it sounds exactly as contemporary music was supposed to sound in 1970s South America: vaguely folkoristic rhythmic elements and agreeably sweet-sour harmony. The concerto is very well written for the viola, featuring idiomatic double-stops in a first movement cadenza and in the finale's coda. The viola section is also prominently featured (the piece is scored for strings alone). In this recording of the 1987 US premiere, Freeman shows her mettle in a virtuoso performance that brings the CD to an exhilarating close.

Ad Index

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