

Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 32 Number 2



Features:

In Review:
2016 American Viola Society Festival

Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Concerto for Viola
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Journal of the American Viola Society

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A Lady Playing a Viola da Braccio
Oil on Canvas

Provided courtesy of Doyle New York, whose representative gave the following information about the painting: "It comes to us from a private collector in New York City, who bought it from an antique dealer in the city some years ago. The painting is not titled in the sense that modern paintings are; our 'title' is simply a description of what is depicted."



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Greetings,

Back when I first became aware of the AVS as a composition student through the Gardner Composition Competition, I didn't fully realize the importance of organizations like the AVS. I became aware of the Gardner Competition through

Society of Composers, Inc., another great organization, and though I had helped host a regional SCI conference at my undergraduate institution, I cannot say that I was heavily involved as a member during that season of life. And it's not that SCI was not encouraging students to take an active role; there were (and are) many student chapters at universities across the country, and those chapters are a vitally important to the success of SCI and its mission to promote the creation and dissemination of new music.

As for the AVS, I can say that—as a relatively new member, JAVS Editor, and non-string player/composer—I have an interesting vantage point through which I see a strong, vibrant, and opportunities-rich organization. Especially now, having lived a few more years, it's much easier for me to see the incredible impact that the AVS and other similar organizations have on the musical community; and most importantly, I must point out that our members are the key to the success of the AVS, and everyone—even non-members—benefit greatly from the hard work and research of AVS members from across the nation and the world.

The AVS is even taking tangible steps toward involving a younger generation of violists in leadership roles. The launch of the new AVS Youth Advisory Council will provide us with much-needed input from those who represent the future of the American Viola Society. As a recruiter at a major university, I can say with confidence that current students are often the best at garnering the interest of prospective students, and the Youth Advisory Council represents a tangible way for the AVS to get younger violists involved in actually shaping the organization, and hopefully getting their peers more interested in AVS-related activities. It will be exciting to see how this group will help to mold us.

Finally, let me say that we are delighted to bring you this present Fall 2016 Issue of JAVS. There are quite a few wonderful offerings here; featuring an excellent review, written by Katrin Meidell, covering the recent AVS Festival in Oberlin, OH, as well as a fascinating article by Laura Manko Sahin on Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra. Our departmental offerings include five new recording reviews by Carlos María Solare, and a great article by Katherine Lewis with practical tips on restocking your studio. In Student Life, Molly Gebrian makes the case for interleaved practice, and our New Music editor, Myrna Layton, introduces three young composers who have recently written works for viola.

We hope you enjoy it.

Cordially,

Chris Hallum
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.

Eligibility:

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

General Guidelines:

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

Bellman, Jonathan D. *A Short Guide to Writing about Music*. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson, 2007.

Herbert, Trevor. *Music in Words: A Guide to Writing about Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Wingell, Richard J. *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009.

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

Judging:

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

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

Submission:

Entries must be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word by May 15, 2017. For the electronic submission form, please visit <http://www.americanviolasociety.org/Competitions/Dalton.php>.

Prize Categories:

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

1st Prize: \$400, sponsored by Thomas and Polly Tatton

2nd Prize: \$200

3rd Prize: Henle edition sheet music package including works by Schumann, Reger, Stamitz, Mendelssohn, and Bruch, donated by Hal Leonard Corporation



Greetings from the American Viola Society!

Fall is in the air and with that comes the start of the new academic year and new performance seasons. We have an active group of board members and volunteers working on various projects to benefit the viola community, and I

am excited to see continued development in many of our areas of mission focus.

I am excited to announce that the AVS Board has named a new Youth Advisory Council. We received a number of very strong nominations and it is truly gratifying to see the level of commitment and creativity in our viola leadership of the future! Newly named to the AVS Youth Advisory Council are Susan Bengtson, Katie Brown, Alexa Sangbin Thomson, Will Whitehead, and Corey Worley. This group will have a direct link to the AVS board and we look forward to hearing their ideas and perspectives as we continue to meet the mission of the society. Our young people are so important to our future, and having their voice more directly represented on the AVS board is an important step forward.

As you know, it is of vital importance for any organization to cultivate new leadership and to find ways to address the changing needs of new generations of members. The American Viola Society has had a long history of focusing

on addressing the needs of our future generations, including recognition of performance at very high levels through the Primrose International Viola Competition, an emphasis on teaching and master class presentation at our gatherings, and support of student research through the David Dalton Viola Research Competition. Recently, we reached our goal of fully funding the endowment for the DDVRC, ensuring that the AVS can continue to provide opportunities for publication for student researchers. Several of our winners of the Maurice Gardner Composition Competition have been composers at the start of their careers and this AVS opportunity is yet another way for them to gain wider recognition while creating new works for our instrument. We have also provided increased opportunities for early career presentation and performance at the 2014 and 2016 American Viola Society Festivals.

Being intentional about supporting the next generation is of course an investment in our future as an organization and never has the future been brighter! You can participate and support these projects through maintaining your membership and inviting others to join in support of the mission of the American Viola Society, by volunteering to organize or be a part of viola events in your community, and by simply bringing your ideas forward. We look forward to hearing from you!

Dr. Kathryn Steely
American Viola Society, president



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AVS Executive Board Nominations

The Nominations Committee of the AVS Executive Board is seeking nominations for President-elect and four Member-at-Large positions commencing July 1, 2017. AVS members are encouraged to send recommendations for nominees (self-nominations are allowed), and all nominees must be AVS members. Non-AVS members are encouraged to join or renew their memberships to be eligible to participate in the process.

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

All nominations must be received by January 31, 2017. Visit <https://www.americanviolasociety.org/AVS/Nominations.php> for detailed nomination guidelines, eligibility requirements, board responsibilities, and an explanation of the nominations and election process.

Questions about the nominations process or the responsibilities of AVS officers and Executive Board members may be addressed to Julie Edwards, chair of the Nominations Committee, at nominations@americanviolasociety.org.

Viola Ensemble Database

The American Viola Society has launched its Viola Ensemble Database, now available as a resource for everyone. Designed to help teachers and performers find suitable works written or arranged for multiple violas, the database can be searched by composer, title, arranger, duration, editor, publisher, original work, and number of movements. It is also possible to search by difficulty level, as many works in the database include ASTA level grading for each individual part. The database originated as a project by Dominic DeStefano,

Daphne Gerling, Hillary Herndon, and Katherine Lewis, and is now continually expanded thanks to the effort of a team of AVS volunteers. Use it today to find the next piece for your ensemble, or let us know of a work you would like to see listed. Our goal is to create the most comprehensive database available, and make it available to you!

Introducing the YAC

New this year, the American Viola Society established the Youth Advisory Council, a group of students and young professionals who serve as a liaison to the AVS Executive board, providing student perspective on the impact of AVS issues and projects for aspiring professional violists. The application pool was quite strong, and we are pleased to announce the five members of this inaugural council:

- **Susan Bengtson**, who currently serves as Helen Callus' Graduate Assistant at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music.
- **Katie Brown**, a first year graduate student studying Viola Performance and Music Education at the Eastman School of Music.
- **Alexa Sangbin Thomson**, a dual-citizen of the USA and New Zealand, currently pursuing her Master's degree at Rice University with Professor James Dunham.
- **William "Will" Whitehead** currently attends the Florida State University, where he studies viola, string pedagogy, and orchestral conducting.
- **Corey Worley**, a double degree student at Oberlin College & Conservatory studying psychology and viola performance under Peter Slowik.

Kenji Bunch's *Rise (and Shine)* score and parts now available

Kenji Bunch's *Rise (and Shine)*, commissioned by the American Viola Society for the 2016 AVS Festival in Oberlin, OH is now available for purchase on the Bill Holab Music website at this link: goo.gl/p2A3Aj.

A video of the performance can be found on YouTube at this link: goo.gl/Rp2da1.

A very special thanks to Tom Tatton and the entire ensemble for their careful preparation and performance of the premiere of this piece on June 11, 2016 at Oberlin Conservatory's Finney Chapel during the 2016 AVS Festival.

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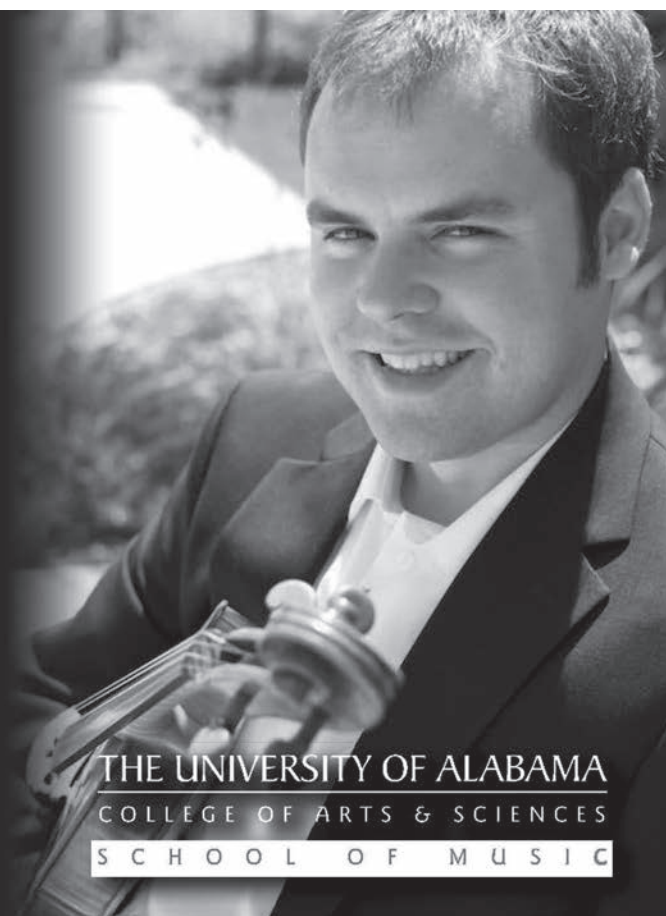
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In Review: 2016 American Viola Society Festival

Katrin Meidell



Photo credit: David M. Bynog

In early June 2016, swaths of violist—students, professionals, and amateurs alike—descended on Oberlin, Ohio. And they weren't alone. With them came composers, collaborators, vendors, and viola enthusiasts (the cicadas were already there, singing their own song), to indulge in what ended up being a stimulating, inspiring, and in a word, *perfect* four-day American Viola Society Festival. It was my first time at Oberlin, and even though the Conservatory was under construction and a third of its space was closed off, I was impressed by the beautiful campus and facilities: Every practice room has windows that look out on a garden. There are multiple performing spaces, all with excellent acoustics. Even the catered snacks are yummy. With such a backdrop, it is

not hard to imagine that the Festival turned out a success.

Before the Festival Welcome on Wednesday morning, I had the pleasure of serving as a judge in the Senior Division (ages fourteen to eighteen) of the Youth Solo Competition. I listened to six spectacular young violists, each of whom brought their own perspective to staples of the viola repertoire. With continued work and guidance, I do not doubt that all of them will enjoy successful music careers. The winner, Samuel Zacharia, played with a musical and technical maturity well beyond his seventeen years. His rendition of the first movement of Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher* was simply stunning. It's a piece that too often sounds pressed and shrill when performed by younger players, but Zacharia understood Hindemith's tonal language and, seemingly easily, was able to bring out the musical gestures in a nuanced and graceful performance. Amidst the expected lecture recitals and performances of little-known works, several sessions highlighted practical knowledge. One such session was Dr. Alexander McLeod's presentation titled, "The Physics and Mechanics of Bow-String Instruments." His in-depth explanation of the science of sound production lent proof to the tenets we already know—the varied combinations of bow Speed, arm Weight, hair Angle, and bow Placement (SWAP, which I lovingly got from my double bass friend, Jack Unzicker) determine the sound we produce. McLeod stipulates that we can use this understanding of physics and mechanics as a basis for working on and understanding technique; we can now practice and teach physical exercises with a sonic reference point. What really stood out to me was a video he showed, which featured a bowed string in slow motion. It turns out that the string does not spin in a steady arc, as I always believed,



The Bertram and Judith Kohl Building, Oberlin Conservatory (photo credit: Claire Stefani).

but rather moves in a stick-slip cycle, sticking to the hair until the tension increases enough to pull it away, then slipping along the hair until it reattaches and the cycle starts again. You can watch the video here: <https://goo.gl/Qta7Oj>. It's fascinating!



Festival Welcome (photo credit: David M. Bynog).

Another such practical session was Dr. Molly Gebrian's "Random Versus Blocked Practice." Possibly the best-attended lecture-presentation, Gebrian recounted several studies that had the entire audience believing that random practice is definitely the way to go. As she explained, if you know what's coming at you, you do it more easily. That's why the more we repeat a passage, the easier it gets. But that's not how a performance happens. We don't have the luxury of telling our audience, "*this* time I'm ready; listen now!" Blocked practice, which we were all taught to do—repeat, repeat, repeat—is necessary in the early stages of learning. But once all of the hard licks have been digested to a fairly high degree, randomly interspersing them between other passages trains you to perform them accurately when you only have one chance, as in a real performance. Gebrian presented results of functional MRI studies that showed which parts of the brain were activated in various learning scenarios. Areas of the brain that deal with higher-level cognition and planning were more active during random practice. Thus, during performance, there is less activity in these areas because the brain is working more efficiently. Given this research, the facts seem irrefutable: random practice elicits the most efficient and effective performance (once the skills have been solidified). You can read Gebrian's in-depth and fascinating article about random versus blocked practice on page 37.

While at the Festival, I was also introduced to loads of music I'd never heard before, as well as new ideas about pieces already in the established repertoire. For example, Dr. Christine Rutledge's session on articulation in Bach was enthralling. She compared Anna Magdalena Bach's copies of Bach's Violin Sonatas and Partitas to the original in his own hand, and extrapolated J.S. Bach's bowings for the Cello Suites, for which his original manuscript does not exist. Scholars largely agree that Magdalena Bach was an extraordinary copyist—when slurs weren't involved, posits Rutledge! While there were also other scribal errors, those of articulation were most common and egregious. J.S. Bach had a tendency to write "curled" slurs, as Rutledge called them, where the starting point curled in on itself.

Magdalena Bach was consistent in mis-copying these slurs. Instead of the note at which J.S. began them, she would messily scribble them in the general vicinity of the correct notes, often misplacing them by at least one note or more. She would also shorten longer slurs, or sometimes leave them out entirely. Rutledge explained that Magdalena Bach was a gifted and respected singer, but probably didn't understand the importance of articulation markings for string players. Throughout the session, Rutledge would demonstrate with her baroque viola the bowings she deduced as a result of her research. Though not in order, she performed the entirety Bach's G Major Suite, and it was stunning. While her bowings weren't shockingly different than those to which I am accustomed, there were a couple of spots that were novel and worked extremely well, such that Rutledge shaped gorgeous and refined phrases. I'm looking forward to her forthcoming edition of the Suites!

Dr. Melissa Gerber Knecht presented intriguing insights into musical learning, while Professor Nancy Buck introduced nineteenth century solo viola repertoire by Georg Abraham Schneider and Justus Weinreich, filling in the gaps between Bach and Reger. Cleveland Orchestra violist Lembi Veskimets introduced her audience to an arresting viola sonata by Estonian composer Eduard Tubin, while Metropolitan Opera violist Milan Milisavljević explored Aram Khachaturian's *Sonata-Song for Viola Solo*. Both orchestral players demonstrated key elements of their respective works before performing utterly engaging performances of the sonatas. In addition, Karen Tuttle Coordination Technique all-stars Jeffrey Irvine, Dr. Susan Dubois, Sheila Browne, and Kim Kashkashian joined forces for an engaging discussion of "Tut's" teaching Saturday morning. The panel explained that music happens between the notes, to which Kashkashian recounted a revelation she had as a child: "I can play each note by itself. It's connecting them that's hard."

JAVS Associate Editor David Bynog presented on the tireless efforts of David Dalton and Dwight Pounds in cataloging the life of William Primrose, and the incredible holdings at the Primrose International



Tuttle panel: (left to right) Jeffrey Irvine, Sheila Browne, Kim Kashkashian, and Susan Dubois (photo credit: Julie Edwards).



Left to right: Carol Rodland, Katrin Meidell, and Kim Kashkashian (photo credit: Katrin Meidell).

Viola Archive, housed at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I learned that his teacher, Eugène Ysaÿe, encouraged Primrose to switch to viola from violin, and in a video Bynog showed, Primrose said, "I'm rather glad I stuck with the viola." Dalton and his wife, Donna, were present at the session, and recounted warm memories. One interesting story they shared was about the bronze casts of Primrose's hands that exist in the Archive. Donna Dalton told the audience that those present at the time of Primrose's death had decided they were not going to make a death mask, and so just before he died,

she recounted with shaking voice that she asked Primrose to put his hand into a mold as if holding a bow. What a fascinating story to account for the existence of these stunning artifacts.

Former David Holland students Daniel Sweaney and Renee Skerik joined Mr. Holland himself for a review of Holland's pedagogical methods. It was an engaging session, with Holland likening the viola to a "bastardized coffee table with a cable for a C string." To this startling comparison he concluded, "So there are some challenges there," as the audience laughed. He talked about the demands of each string being different in order for the sound to be even. "As we go down from the A to the cable, the strokes need to be deeper and shorter," he said. The panel introduced unique exercises for strengthening the bow hand, as well as mind-bending one-finger scales. Choose a scale, and play it with one finger; on tonic, sing the second scale degree, name the position and the note, and then shift to it. Follow this method up and down the fingerboard in order to instill true cognizance of the fingerboard, while developing excellent intonation and aural skills.

Other highlights of the Festival included the remarkable performances of the Jasper String Quartet with guest violist Liz Freivogel on Wednesday evening, Robert Vernon and Friends on Thursday evening, and of course, Kim Kashkashian's full recital with Michael Bukhman, piano, on Friday evening. Though sound sometimes was lost within the recesses of the large Warren Concert Hall, a



Jasper String Quartet: J Freivogel (First Violin), Sae Chonabayashi (Second Violin), Rachel Henderson Freivogel (Cello), and Sam Quintal (Viola) (photo credit: Claire Stefani).



Guest violist Liz Freivogel (center) joins the Jasper String Quartet (photo credit: Claire Stefani).

seat close to the stage awarded fantastic acoustics and views of the performers' faces and technique. Watching the Jasper Quartet was especially rewarding, as each player truly felt and expressed not only their own part, but that of all of the players.

Additionally, Finney Chapel was home to the extraordinary sound of the Rodland Duo (I never would have thought that viola and organ would work so well together!), as well as the Festival closing recital on Saturday afternoon. Primrose Competition winner (2014) Zhanbo Zheng performed Shostakovich's Viola Sonata with pianist Allie Su. While I didn't always agree with their interpretation, Zheng's technical ease with the viola, as well as the breadth of sounds he created, was stunning. Primrose Competition winner (2011) Ayane Kozasa performed Telemann's *Fantasie No. 1*, Vieuxtemps' *Élégie*, and an untitled new work by Paul Wiancko (b. 1983), which Kozasa told the audience is a movement from a Sonata that has yet to be completed. Notable moments in the Wiancko highlighted Kozasa's stellar pizzicato technique. Behind-the-bridge pizzicato had the audience leaning forward in their seats, while pizzicato in unison with pianist Yu Sakamoto's staccato produced a unique, hollow, yet resonant sound that filled the chapel. I look forward to hearing the entire work in the future.

In addition to myriad solo and chamber performances, this year's Festival was unique in its inclusion of viola ensemble works. Throughout the



Members of viola ensemble *Les Jeunes Altistes* (left to right): Maeson Leonard, Nyla Bowen, and Alyssa Tuapen (photo credit: Claire Stefani).

event, performances of ensembles ranging from middle-school-aged to professional (including a quartet of Cleveland Orchestra violists!) could be heard.

The final piece on the Festival Closing Recital was a massive ensemble piece, *Rise (and Shine)*, composed by Kenji Bunch. It was commissioned by the AVS, and Thomas Tatton conducted this world premiere performance.

Master classes were also prolific. Robert Vernon told the audience to prepare *Don Juan* at $\text{♩} = 160$, and that since one can't play as loud as an orchestra, one shouldn't even even try. "Never over-exaggerate dynamics or articulation," he said, and espoused the five golden rules of winning an orchestral audition: correct articulation, correct intonation, correct rhythm, beautiful sound, and mature musical direction. He additionally suggested that consistency in execution will help. He also expressed, with great humility, that his job is to try and serve the conductor. Additionally, Professor Peter Slowik, of Oberlin College & Conservatory, gave a unique master class on chamber music excerpts, in which

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Kenji Bunch congratulates festival participants after the premiere of his Rise (and Shine) (photo credit: Carol Rodland).

he explained that viola is the bridge between the violin and cello. We need to be able to expand our color pallet to be that unifying element between the high and low string sounds. His jovial demeanor had the audience laughing and nodding their head in agreement, with the two hours in the very warm First United Methodist Church going by much faster than I would have expected. The notes I took are too copious to include here, so I would suggest that if ever you have the option to see Professor Slowik teach, take it.

The only part I regret about those four days in June, is that I could not clone myself and go to every session. Choosing another session over Wendy Richman's lecture-presentation, "Music for Singing Violist" or Michael Hall's "Collaborating with Composers," to name a few, was a viola nerd's worst nightmare. Having heard Richman play-sing once before, I highly recommend you seek out the opportunity to experience her haunting and uniquely unforgettable musical performances. A few days before his session, Hall learned that his pianist would be unable to attend the Festival due to a family emergency. As perhaps only Hall could, he completely changed the repertoire of his lecture-presentation, pulling from his seemingly endless collection of contemporary music.

In summation, the 2016 AVS Festival was truly spectacular. It would not have been possible without the work of local host Professor Peter Slowik, Oberlin Conservatory Summer Programs Manager Anna Hoffmann, administrative support from Madeline Crouch & Co. and of course, the tireless efforts of the AVS Board. In particular, I wish to thank President Kathy Steeley and JAVS Associate Editor David Bynog, without whom this Festival would not have run so smoothly or been nearly as engaging. In seeking to fulfill the AVS's mission of "encouraging excellence in performing, pedagogy, research, composition, and lutherie," this could not have been a more impeccable event. I greatly look forward to the 2018 Festival, which will take place at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, in partnership with the Primrose International Viola Competition. Start saving now, for if it'll be anything like this year's Festival, it is not to be missed!

Dr. Katrin Meidell is Assistant Professor of Viola at Ball State University, where, in addition to her regular teaching and performing, she coaches the award-winning BSU Viola Choir. She is an avid teacher and performer, and a strong advocate for new music, regularly premiering works she commissioned. She is a proud Board Member of the American Viola Society.

Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 59: A Western Perspective

Laura Manko Sahin

Background

My interest in Turkish, Western classical music began when I moved to Ankara, Turkey three years ago, and Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 59 was one of the first pieces I listened to by a Turkish composer. This work was written in the latter part of the composer's life and it perfectly captures the aesthetics of modern Turkish classical music. The process of both researching and playing the Concerto helped me transition into my new musical environment. With the ultimate goal of making Saygun's Viola Concerto more accessible to violists all around the world, this article serves as an introduction to Western classical music of Turkey from the perspective of a Westerner in Eastern lands. To reach my goal, I will highlight the differences in musical material (folk elements, *makams*), and provide explanations and suggestions for listening and interpreting Eastern musical elements.

Transition of Music: Ottoman Empire to the Modern Turkish Republic

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman Empire was experiencing a vast transformation at all levels—social, political, and cultural. An empire that straddled two continents was beginning to align itself more closely with Europe and the West. The preferences and outlook of Ottoman court music shifted from the long tradition of heterophony to more complex polyphony influenced by visiting European performers and composers. Ottoman court musicians were recruited to play in European-style bands with the help of Italian, Giuseppe Donizetti, brother of famous opera composer, Gaetano Donizetti.¹ For a long time, Italian opera and military band music dominated the scene. It wasn't until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 that music really began to be created by the country's own composers.



Pictured above: Ahmed Adnan Saygun. Photo used with permission from A. Adnan Saygun Research Center at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. Photographer: Ozan Sağdıç.

The figure that helped Turkey move into a new phase in history was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern day Turkish Republic. Atatürk's goal was to identify more with the West rather than the Islamic Middle East, and he aimed to free the country of Arabic and Persian influences, looking instead to an indigenous Turkish culture thought to be present in rural

areas of Anatolia. In order to put his plan into action, he reformed policies regarding language, education, clothing, and music. Turkish folk music, according to the modern Turkish Republic, represented the true musical origin of the Turkish nation. As a part of this new philosophy, a music education system was designed in 1935. A year later, the first Conservatory was established with the assistance of German violist and composer, Paul Hindemith. Hindemith's goal was to maintain the folk traditions of Turkey, while applying a modern Western musical outlook.

The musical education structure was implemented by a collection of composers known as the "Turkish Five."² These five composers—Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907-1991), Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906-1972), Cemal Resit Rey (1904-1985), Hasan Ferit Alnar (1906-1978), and Necil Kemal Akses (1908-1999)—became the founders of modern Turkish music. The new compositional style used Western form infused with Turkish folk music and Ottoman court music. Each of the "Turkish Five" composers interpreted the innovative technique differently producing a wide variety of compositions that are valuable to performers and audience members alike.

The most popular member of the "Turkish Five" was Ahmed Adnan Saygun. *The Times*, a London newspaper, printed an obituary for Saygun calling him the "grand old man of Turkish music, who was to his country what Jean Sibelius is to Finland, what Manuel de Falla is to Spain, and what Béla Bartók is to Hungary."³ Saygun was one of the first composers in his homeland to successfully incorporate traditional Turkish folk songs and culture into the Western classical art form. His compositions are a perfect fusion of his Anatolian roots with Western compositional features, taking the flavors and colors of both areas and combining them into a diverse catalogue of works.

Saygun in Context of the Newly Formed Republic

A. Adnan Saygun was born on September 7, 1907 in Izmir, Turkey (formerly the Ottoman Empire). He started singing in his elementary school choir, and then progressed to private lessons in Turkish art music on the mandolin and then the *ud*, the Middle Eastern lute. Shortly thereafter, Saygun began studying piano and harmony with the master teacher, Macar Tefvik Bey, a Hungarian immigrant who was in part responsible for

bringing Western traditions to Izmir. At fourteen, he discovered his passion for writing music, and he won a scholarship from the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1928 to study in Paris. His first mentor at the École Normale de Musique was Nadia Boulanger, followed by Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum. Three years later, Saygun returned to his homeland, which by then had been reformed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Under Atatürk, the music education system was created based on the standards of the Western World, marking the beginning of a new era for the Republic of Turkey. Saygun highly respected his country's founder, and their prosperous relationship led to multiple commissioned works, and key administrative and advisory positions.

Saygun was not only known as a composer, but also as a scholar, educator, and ethnomusicologist. He wrote and published many books and teaching materials that were influential in starting new music conservatories in several cities across Turkey.⁴ He held professor positions in theory at Istanbul Municipal Conservatory and Ankara State Conservatory, and both theory and ethnomusicology appointments at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul. In 1936, Saygun collaborated with Béla Bartók during Bartók's visit to Turkey for ethnological study. The composers travelled through the Osmaniye neighborhood of Adana, north of Old Antioch, collecting and notating nomadic folk melodies (see Fig. 1). This trip sparked a life-long friendship between the two composers, leaving a profound influence on Saygun's compositions and ethnography research. Similarly, Bartók was also positively affected by his journey to Turkey. In the late 1930's, Bartók knew that he must leave his homeland of Hungary because

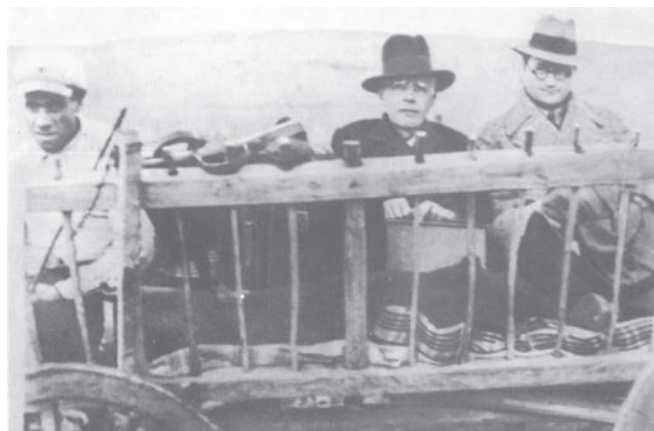


Figure 1. Saygun and Bartók in Osmaniye region of Turkey in 1935. Used with permission from Akadémiai Kiadó.

of the impending war, and he contacted Saygun about the possibility of living in Turkey. His plans to move to the East did not come to fruition, and Bartók instead immigrated to the United States in 1940.

In the years to follow, Saygun increasingly gained international recognition. With his oratorio, *Yunus Emre*, he was welcomed into Western musical centers including Paris and New York. He was presented with medals and prizes from Germany, Hungary, France, Italy, and England, and received commissions from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and Serge Koussevitzky Foundation in the United States. Saygun's music is published internationally through Peer Music Classical for Peer Musikverlag, GmbH in Hamburg, Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. in New York, and SACEM in France. His works include a total of five operas, five symphonies, five concertos, four string quartets, and a wide range of chamber and choral music. In 1971, Saygun became the first composer to be considered as a "State Artist" by the Turkish government, a title that is given to people for their contributions to the Art. His legacy has influenced composers and performers alike throughout Turkey and the world.

Saygun's Tonal Language

The first generation of Turkish composers, including Saygun, used a unique music modal system characteristic of the region. To better understand Saygun's writing, one must examine his use of the system of compositional guidelines, called makam. According to Oxford Music Online, "Today *makams* consist of scales comprising defined tetrachords (*dörtlü*) and pentachords (*beşli*) governed by explicit rules concerning predominant melodic direction (*seyir* [meaning 'course' or 'direction']). The *seyir* indicates prescribed modulations and the general shape of phrases, understood as either predominantly upwards (*inici*), predominantly downwards (*çıkıcı*) or a combination of both (*inici-çıkıcı*)."⁵ There are supposedly over five hundred makams in existence, but only thirty to forty are commonly used.⁶ When compared to Western music, makams are closely related to church modes, with some variations, and to a person hailing from the Western tradition, the most obvious differences would sound like the usage of microtonality and pitch variation (depending on whether the makam *seyir* is ascending or descending).

Turkish makams have a different temperament than that of the Western equal temperament. Saygun recognized

that makams lie outside of the traditional Western tuning system. In order to incorporate them into his compositions, he had to adapt the tuning of makam practice to fit his needs.⁷ Saygun adjusted the complex tuning system of makams into the Western equally tempered scale by having them function as more as "colors" in his compositions, rather than adhering to a strict system. Even though Saygun does not use makams in their true microtonal form in his compositions, he often encountered other compositional challenges, particularly when he was gathering folk melodies with Bartók. Saygun confesses, "We will have the principal scales of pentatonic origin, serving as bases to most of Turkish folk melodies. For a denomination of these scales, Bartók resorts to modal terms, which can easily lead to misunderstanding and are not easily adaptable to folk melodies [...] If these scales of the melodies conceived on them were played on piano one would immediately notice their strangeness due to their non-conformity to the reality of Turkish folk music."⁸

Saygun's compositional writing in the Viola Concerto represents his mature style, and there was a significant shift during this period in his life. In earlier compositions, he incorporated makams in a typical, more academic way, similar to that of his Turkish composer contemporaries. He would use makams more or less in their complete and original state to form more identifiable exotic melodies. By the time he started composing the Viola Concerto, Saygun had fully internalized the musical language of makams. He no longer found the need to use fully developed makam-based melodies, but rather fragments of tetrachords and pentachords. This gave Saygun more flexibility to manipulate the makams by modulating, combining, and separating them throughout the movements (See Ex. 1).⁹ Performers of the work should be aware of the makams and how they function within the context of a melodic line or phrase.¹⁰ Because Saygun used very accessible Western notation in the Viola Concerto, violists will find the composer's musical language approachable.

Saygun's Viola Writing

Saygun's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, op. 59 was his only solo piece written for the instrument. The work is categorized in the later period of his compositional history, and by that time he preferred to work in isolation. In a letter, Saygun confessed to his friend, Henriette Guilloux, "I do not stop! I do not stop

Hüzzam makam¹¹



Hicaz makam¹²



Rast makam¹³



Example 1. Makam tetrachord and pentachord combinations that Saygun uses throughout the *Viola Concerto*.¹⁴

working, (because) it is my only consolation”, and “I realize very much that the solitary life suits me [...] after the fourth symphony, I wrote a trio for oboe, clarinet, and piano [op. 55], the *Lamentations-Book II* for tenor solo and male chorus [op. 54], and a *Ritual Dance* for orchestra [op. 57]. I continue my studies on traditional Turkish music.”¹⁵ Soon after completing these pieces, he began writing the *Viola Concerto*. By that time, he was familiar with composing in the Concerto form, having already written *Piano Concerto No. 1*, op. 34 (1957-1958) and *Violin Concerto*, op. 44 (1967).

Saygun was well versed in writing for the viola in his three completed string quartets. His string writing showed a striking resemblance to that of his mentor’s, Béla Bartók. Bartók finished composing the last of his six string quartets in 1939, and Saygun did not start writing his first quartet until 1947, following their folk-music collecting journey. Both composers implement similar string performance techniques, including “Bartók” pizzicati and glissandi, harsh dissonance, and arch form.

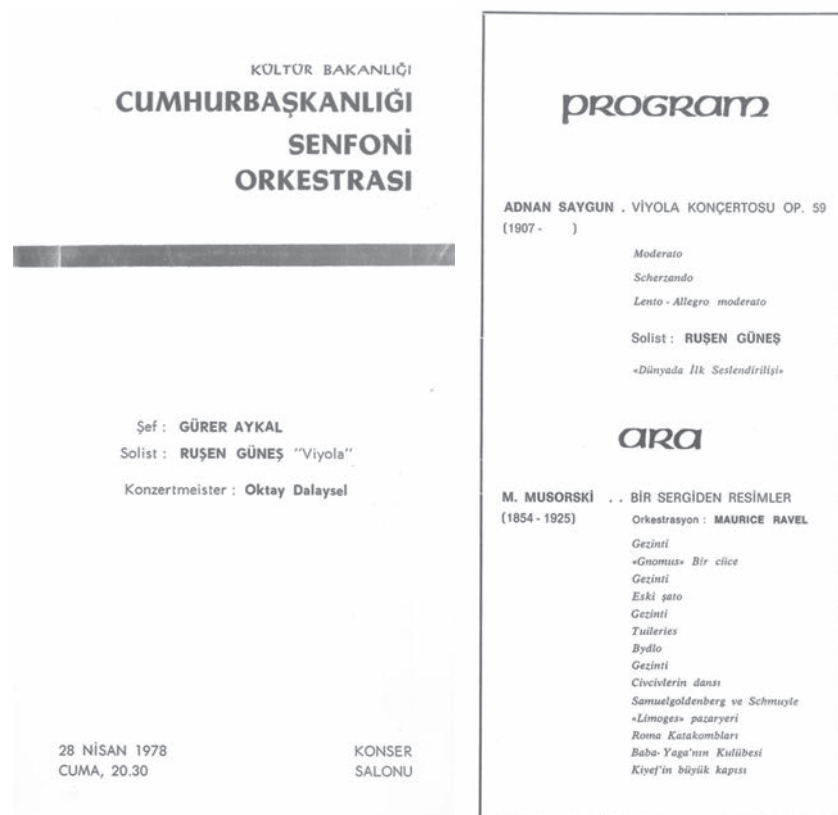
In addition to Bartók’s string quartets, Saygun’s *Viola Concerto* shows resemblance to multiple viola works. Bartók and Saygun’s viola concerti both incorporate elements of folk music rather than a complete extraction of whole folk tunes. The introductions to these concerti also have a sad, mourning character.¹⁶ Early performers of the Saygun *Viola Concerto* have commented as to similarities it shares with other notable works; for instance, the overall role of the viola in relation to the orchestral accompaniment in Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*—in both pieces, the solo viola and orchestra are like chamber music partners. Another common observation is how the thick orchestral accompaniment in Saygun’s *Viola Concerto*, which requires the viola to project through, shows a likeness to the dense orchestration in Strauss’ *Don Quixote*.¹⁷ In Saygun’s work however, the viola is more virtuosic and has an even more prominent role.

Viola Concerto Genesis

There are a lot of varying and contradicting theories as to why Saygun initially began writing the *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*. Many sources regarding the topic claim that the *Concerto* was written as a commission for the famous Turkish-British violist, Rusen Günes.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the true story has not been accurately documented before. In the early 1970s, the Principal Violist of the Presidential Symphony Orchestra in Ankara, Turkey, Semra Griffiths, asked Saygun to write a *Viola Concerto* for her.¹⁹ He accepted the request and began writing in 1976, completing the *Concerto* on February 10, 1977 in Istanbul, Turkey. The next piece of history is regrettably unclear. Semra Griffiths was not asked to premiere the work, but instead Rusen Günes was requested, and the reasons for doing so remain a mystery.

When rehearsals began with the soloist, Günes, the Presidential Symphony Orchestra was well prepared by the Turkish conductor, Gürer Aykal. According to Günes, “Saygun attended every rehearsal from beginning to end. He was a very shy man, and rarely

made comments. From what I remember, he told me merely one note correction.”²⁰ The rehearsal process for the Concerto lasted only a few days. Saygun’s meticulous work on the piece prior to the rehearsals made for only a few changes in the orchestral parts. Aykal, being a student of Saygun, was able to accurately and convincingly interpret the orchestral accompaniment. To great acclaim, the piece was premiered on April 28, 1978.



Example 2. Concert program of premiere, April 28, 1978 (used with permission from A. Adnan Saygun Center for Research and Music Education at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey)

Over the next few years, Rusen Güneş and Gürer Aykal continued to perform the piece in Bursa, Istanbul, and Izmir exposing Turkish audiences to Saygun’s new composition. The first recording of the Concerto was made in 1985, with Güneş as soloist, and Aykal conducting the London Philharmonic (where Güneş was at the time Principal Violist). Following the recording, the orchestral parts and Aykal’s full score oddly disappeared and were never located. As a result, the piece remained dormant for many years.

The Concerto’s story picks up years later in Germany. Christina Biwank, Principal Violist of the Dresden

Philharmonic, was requested by Frank Langosch, a local artist manager in Germany, to perform the work for the international premiere in Germany. Having never played music written by a Turkish composer, she was a bit hesitant, but accepted the challenge. Biwank shares, “the Concerto has traditional Turkish elements, but the structure seems to be in western form [...] I listened to a lot of Turkish folk music when learning the piece, and it was also helpful for me to play the Bártók 44 duets (for two violins).”²¹ On January 23, 2002, Biwank gave the international premiere of the Concerto with Stefan Fraas conducting the Vogtland Philharmonie Greiz-Reichenbach.

Following the international premiere, Biwank performed the Concerto two other times in Germany. In 2004, violist, Cavid Cafer, revived the piece in Turkey with conductor, Rengim Gökmen, and the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra as a part of the Ankara Music Festival. A second recording was made in 2006 by the Swiss-born violin/violist, Mirjam Tschopp with Howard Griffiths conducting the Bilkent Symphony. Tschopp also performed the work in 2007 with Isın Metin conducting the Bilkent Symphony at the Saygun one-hundredth Birthday Festival in Ankara, Turkey. The Concerto was most recently performed in Germany with Lutz de Veer conducting the Philharmonisches Orchester des Theaters Plauen-Zwickau with Mirjam Tschopp soloing.

Overview of Concerto

Saygun’s Concerto for Viola and Orchestra is set in three movements: I. Moderato (♩ = ca. 76), II. Scherzando (♩ = ca. 96), III. Lento (♩ = ca. 50) and Allegro moderato (♩ = ca. 104). The work is scored for two Flutes, two Oboes, English Horn, two B-flat Clarinets, two Bassoons, four F Horns, three C Trumpets, three Trombones, Timpani, Percussion, Celeste, Harp, and Strings. A unique instrument used in the work is the *darbuka*, a percussive instrument native to the Middle East. The drum is a single membranophone with a goblet-shaped appearance. Hector Berlioz was one of the first Western classical composers to incorporate the darbuka into one of his compositions, his opera *Les Troyens* (1858). The total

duration of the Concerto is approximately twenty-five minutes. The whole work is very virtuosic in nature, and is technically very demanding for the soloist. The music has a broad range of colors, evoking images of Anatolian landscapes. Saygun's viola writing is generally in a very high register on the instrument, which helps the solo line to penetrate the dense orchestration. The balance between the orchestra and soloist can be a challenge and it requires the conductor to be extra sensitive. The orchestral

accompaniment acts more of a chamber music partner to the solo viola line, rather than true accompaniment.

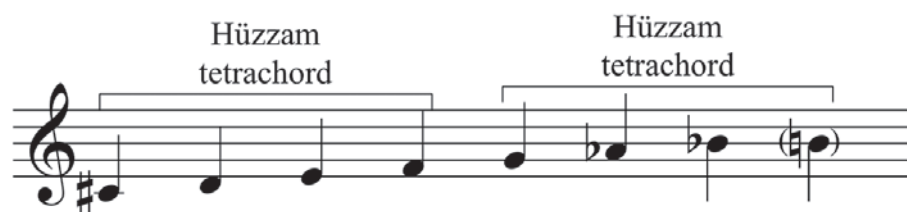
Generally speaking, audiences in Turkey and in Germany have received the Concerto very well. Having played Saygun's Viola Concerto, and Violin works in many countries, soloist Mirjam Tschopp shared that "In my experience, whoever listens to Saygun's music is deeply fascinated and impressed by its inner force and emotion



Example 3. Saygun, Viola Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 1-3. This example and all others following are used with permission from Peer Musikverlag.



Example 4. Saygun, Viola Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 27-31



Example 5. Octatonic scale



Example 6. Saygun, *Viola Concerto*, mvt. 1, mm. 6-10

as well as by its rhythmical structures. I've met very few people that thought that the music was too much overwhelming and dramatic."²²

Folk Elements

Even though Saygun's work is clearly in Western musical form, there are Eastern elements that can be foreign to musicians outside of the immediate area. These extractions are either references to authentic folk instruments and dances of the Balkan and Anatolian

regions, and/or are fragments of folk songs.

In the first movement, the very opening motive (see Ex. 3) is used not only in the first movement, but also throughout the whole work. The first note serves as a *sospiro* (meaning "sigh") figure that resolves to E, and the following notes—G, A-flat, and again F—also return to E (Hüzzam makam tetrachord). This four-note cell is in fact Saygun's signature motive, and he uses it in many of his compositions.²³ Saygun develops this motive

throughout the Concerto by reversing the direction and augmenting its duration.²⁴ This *sospiro* figure is akin to a motive that a *bağlama*, a common Turkish folk lute, would play as an improvisation. The bağlama is of the plucked string family, and it generally has seven strings, some sympathetic and others melodic that are grouped in two, two, and three—from bottom to top. The instrument is fretted and is tuned according to the specific music that is played. The tradition of the bağlama is similar to that of English lute songs, where the singer accompanies himself/herself with a plucked instrument. Another motive that shares similarities to a bağlama is in mm. 27–31 (see Ex. 4). Again, the ornamentation hovers around a central note of C-sharp. This time the figure is in triplets and then morphs into repetitive sixteenth notes, both of which are regularly used in improvisations of bağlama players. The F, E, D, and C-sharp is a hüzzam makam tetrachord stacked with another hüzzam tetrachord a major second apart, forming a full octatonic scale in m. 31 (see Ex. 5).

Also in the first movement, a type of Turkish folk-singing style, *uzun hava*, is used in mm. 6–10 (see Ex. 6). An *uzun hava* (long air) is a type of unmetered (*parlando*), declamatory improvisation in recitative style. Accompanying instruments drone, as a primary voice projects an improvisation over top with a crying quality. In this case the accompanying instruments are at first the clarinets, and viola sings in *forte*, mm. 6–7, and then the roles are reversed in mm. 8–10, where the clarinets take over as the primary projecting voice.

In the second movement, Saygun incorporates a greater

amount of influence from folk music into his writing. The percussion play an introduction of *aksak* (limping) rhythms in constantly changing meters, $\frac{8}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{6}{8}$ (see Ex. 7). Aksak rhythms are uneven, stressed/accented groupings of simple and compound beats. These types of rhythms are typical of the Balkan and Turkish regions and Saygun employs them throughout the movement. Bartók became acquainted with these rhythms during his research of Bulgarian dances. Later on, the solo viola imitates a *kemençe*, a bowed stringed instrument of the Black Sea region of Turkey, beginning in m. 84 (see Ex. 8). The name *kemençe* is derivative of the word *keman*, which translates to violin in Turkish. The Black Sea instrument has three strings, tuned in fourths. It is placed against the chest and played with fingernails using an underhand bow, and is not to be confused with the classical Persian *kamancheh*. The *kemençe* has a unique hollow and nasal sound, that pierces over a group of dancers or other musicians. As Turkish violinist and scholar, Selim Giray states, “*kemençe* and its dependent dance the *horon* manifest themselves immediately when quoted in a composition. The $\frac{7}{8}$ or $\frac{7}{16}$ meters and repetitions of rhythmic patterns in continuous [eighth-note] or sixteenth-note pulses are the immediate signs of the dance and the instrument.”²⁵ The *horon* is a mixed-gender line dance hailing from the Black Sea region of Turkey, always accompanied by *kemençe*. In this case, the solo viola replicates the folk dance and instrument by playing true glissandi (rather than portamento), as slurred fourths in $\frac{7}{8}$ meter.



Ex. 7. Saygun, *Viola Concerto*, mvt. 2, mm. 1–11



Example 8. Saygun, *Viola Concerto*, mvt. 2, mm. 84–87

III

Lento (♩ = ca. 50)
come una cadenza



7



12



15



17



20



Example 9. Saygun, *Viola Concerto*, mvt. 3, mm. 1-24



Example 10. Saygun, *Viola Concerto*, mvmt. 3, mm. 100-103

The solo viola cadenza begins the third movement, which is a combination of Turkish and Balkan folk tunes (see Ex. 9). Lyrical in nature, the tied-over triplets and sixteenths emphasize a flexible pulsation. Later on in the movement, another folk dance called the *ağır zeybek* (slow dance) is introduced by the solo viola in m. 100 with heavy down bow strokes and glissandi (see Ex. 10). The *ağır zeybek*, a dance that is synonymous with courage and dignity, is indigenous to the Aegean region of Turkey and is most commonly danced by men. The meter is typically in an $\frac{18}{4}$ or $\frac{9}{4}$, rarely in a $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, which Saygun employs. The viola imitates the *zurna*, one of the two instruments which normally provides the music for an *ağır zeybek*. The *zurna* is a double reed instrument that resembles a medieval shawm, predecessor of oboe with a larger bell. The second instrument is the *davul*, which is a large drum played with a padded mallet at the musician's waist. Saygun recalls Bartók's first experience hearing the *davul* and *zurna* on their folk music expedition, "the musicians began to play and something strange resulted; the blows that the old fellow gave to his [davul] made the whole building shake[...] The piercing cry of the *zurna* made the air of the room most vibrant, producing a deafening and bizarre roar."²⁶

Conclusion

Ahmed Adnan Saygun was an influential composer, educator, scholar, and ethnomusicologist in the early, formative years of the Turkish Republic. He was one of the first composers to successfully incorporate traditional Turkish folk songs and cultural elements into the Western classical art form, thereby profoundly changing the compositional style in his motherland. Saygun fulfilled a lifelong dream of transcending boundaries and creating a synthesis between Eastern and Western cultures. His *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*, Op. 59²⁷ perfectly exemplifies how Saygun masterfully incorporated elements of Turkish traditions and folk music into the concerto form established by his predecessors in Europe. His creative emulation of native instruments, as well as incorporation of makam system, evoke images of the country's unique culture. Furthermore, Saygun's challenging yet rewarding writing

style for solo viola and elaborate orchestration make the *Concerto* a valuable work to study.²⁸ After years of laying dormant and rarely being performed or researched, Saygun's *Viola Concerto* is being rediscovered—and with that comes the opportunity to peek through a window into the entire Turkish classical music world.

Laura Manko Sahin completed a Doctor of Philosophy in Music at Bilkent University (Ankara, Turkey) with dissertation advisors, Dr. Tahsin Tolga Yayalar and Gürer Aykal, and violist, Ece Akyol; an Artist Diploma and a Master of Music at Boston University with Michelle LaCourse; and a Bachelor of Music at University of North Carolina School of the Arts with Sheila Browne. She was previously violist with the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, Bilkent Piano Quartet, Nodus Contemporary Ensemble, Boston Harp Trio, and Principal violist of the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra. A former faculty member at Bilkent University and Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Dr. Sahin is currently on faculty at the New Mexico School of Music and the Luzerne Music Center.

Notes

1. Emre Araci, "Reforming Zeal," *Times* (London) 138, no. 1855 (September 1, 1997): 12–15.
2. After their return from government-endorsed international study, the term, "Turkish Five" was given to this first generation of Turkish composers by a music critic, and it remained with them throughout their careers. However, all five composers deny a homogenous style or schooling label. The "Turkish Five" was named after a group of Russian composers, "The Five" who lived in the latter half of the nineteenth century.
3. "Ahmed Adnan Saygun," *Times* (London), 15 January 1991, 12.
4. To the author's knowledge, the following is a complete list of scholarly materials written by Saygun: *Pentatonicism in Turkish Folk Music*, Istanbul, 1936; *Youth Songs: For Community Centers and Schools*, 1937;

- Rize, Artvin, and Kars Regions: Turkish Folk Song, Saz, and Dance Music*, Istanbul, 1937; *Folk Songs: Seven Black Sea Region Folk Songs and One Horon*, 1938; *Music In Community Centers*, Ankara, 1940; *Lie (Art Conversations)*, Ankara, 1945; *Karacaoğlan*, Ankara 1952; *High School Music Book (1-3)*, Co-Author Halil Bedîi Yönetken, Ankara, 1955; *Fundamentals of Music (Four Volumes)*, Ankara State Conservatory Publication, I. (1958), II. (1962), III. (1964), IV. (1966); *The Genesis of the Melody (For the 100th anniversary of Zoltán Kodály)*, Budapest, 1962; *Traditional Music Reading Book, Op. 40*, Istanbul, 1967; *Collective Solfege (Two Volumes)*, Ankara, 1968; *Folk Music Research in Turkey (With Béla Bartók)*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976; *Atatürk and Music*, Sevdâ-Cenap And Music Foundation, Ankara, 1981.
5. Kurt Reinhard, "Turkey" (Oxford Music Press, n.d.), accessed November 12, 2015.
 6. Ibid.
 7. According to most theorists there are 24 tones in the makam octave, but in practice there may be more.
 8. Laszlo Vikar and A. A. Saygun, *Béla Bartók's Folk Music Research in Turkey* (Hyperion Books, 1976), 225.
 9. The whole note indicates the base of the makam and the half note represents the reciting tone.
 10. For further reading on how Saygun incorporates makams in his earlier writing, as well as in the Viola Concerto, please refer to the following works: Araci, "Life and Works of Ahmed Adnan Saygun"; Sahin: "Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 59: Performance History, Manuscript Analysis and New Editions"; Yücel: "The Viola Concerto of Ahmed Adnan Saygun: Compositional Elements and Performance Perspectives."
 11. The Hüzam makam normally has a slightly raised E-flat and a lowered F-sharp.
 12. The Hicaz makam normally has a slightly raised B-flat and a lowered C-sharp.
 13. The Rast makam normally has a slightly lowered B-natural and a lowered F-sharp.
 14. For clarity, the examples of makams are displayed in Western, equally tempered notation. This is how Saygun incorporated them into his Viola Concerto. In their original form, the makams have slight microtonal alterations. Ismail Hakkı Özkan, *Türk Musikisi Nazariyatı ve Usulleri, Kudüm Velvelleri*, 8th edition (İstanbul: Otuken Nesriyat, 1984).
 15. Emre Araci, "Life and Works of Ahmed Adnan Saygun" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Edinburgh, 1999), 94.
 16. There is speculation amongst Saygun scholars as to whether Saygun used Bartók's Viola Concerto as a specific model for his own Concerto. Saygun was aware of Bartók's work while he was writing his own Concerto, but there is no concrete evidence of a direct influence.
 17. Biwank, Günes, and Gökmen, interviews with the author, March 20-May 29, 2015
 18. There is a common misconception, both in scholarly writing [Araci: "Life and Works of Ahmed Adnan Saygun"; Bilgenoglu: "Viola Pieces by Turkish Composers"; Gizem Yücel: "The Viola Concerto of Ahmed Adnan Saygun: Compositional Elements and Performance Perspectives" (University of North Carolina, 2013); and Eren Tunçer: "Ahmet Adnan Saygun's Viola Concerto Op. 59 and Motivic Analysis of the 1st Movement," *Idil Journal of Art and Language* 3, no. 14 (October 20, 2014).] and in the general public that Rusen Günes commissioned Saygun's Viola Concerto, or that the piece was written for him. But from the source himself, Günes, states that this is not true.
 19. Howard Griffiths, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.
 20. Rusen Günes, interview with the author, March 20, 2015.
 21. Christina Biwank, interview with the author, April 5, 2015.
 22. Mirjam Tschopp, interview with the author, April 10, 2015.

23. Emre Araci, "Life and Works of Ahmed Adnan Saygun."
24. Eren Tunçer, "Ahmet Adnan Saygun's Viola Concerto Op. 59 and Motivic Analysis of the 1st Movement," *Idil Journal of Art and Language* 3, no. 14 (October 20, 2014): 143-157.
25. Selim Giray, *A Biography of the Turkish Composer Ahmed Adnan Saygun and a Discussion of His Violin Works*, illustrated edition (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 36.
26. Ibid., 42.
27. The current edition of the viola solo part, published by Peer MusikVerlag in 2006, is available on their website for purchase. The edition has only a few suggestions with regard to bowings and also contains several mistakes. The author thought it was worthwhile to produce two new editions: the Urtext Revised Edition, which corrects all mistakes, and the Critical Revised Edition, which includes fingering and bowing options, as well as explanations for how to execute the foreign musical elements. The new editions are contained within the author's dissertation on the Concerto, which was completed in June of 2016.
28. Peer MusikVerlag will soon be releasing both editions on their website, as well as a revised piano reduction, written by the author and composer, Aida Shirazi.
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Young Composers and the Viola

Myrna Layton



Leon Haxby (photo courtesy of Poppy Grant)

How does it happen that non-violist composers decide to write works for the viola? For three young composers, Leon Haxby, Michael Biancardi, and John C. Leavitt, it is all because of violists! You are exponents of your instrument and its beautiful sound, and because of you, wonderful compositions have been written and added to the viola repertoire. Works by each of these young men can be found in the collection of scores made available through the American Viola Society's website, for easy access by the people who asked for their composition.

Leon Haxby, a London-based composer, was chosen to write a piece for five violas for the Birmingham Conservatoire Viola Ensemble to premiere at the

International Viola Congress held in Porto, Portugal, in 2014. Louise Lansdown, Head of Strings at Birmingham Conservatoire, asked that the composer use an English theme. The result was *Variations on a Theme by Edward Elgar*. Michael Biancardi, a native of West Linn, Oregon, had a good friend, violist Hunter Montgomery, who asked for a viola piece. "I think in his head, he was imagining something for viola and piano," Michael says, "but I wrote a piece for nine violas." That piece, *Strata*, was performed at the 2016 AVS Festival by the Crane Viola Ensemble. John C. Leavitt, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, developed good relationships with several excellent violists who suggested he write a piece for their instrument. When John was approached by a concert organizer to write a composition for a "Night of Concertos" event in 2015, he decided to write a viola concerto, which he titled *Icarus*, and invited his violist friend Devan Freebairn to be the soloist.

These young composers, respectively twenty-three (Leon), twenty-four (Michael), and twenty-five years old (John), are just at the start of their composition careers but are fully aware of the viola and its range and beauty of expression. John says, "I think what inspired me in writing for the viola is its own richness. I love that C string that gives such deep sound, but I feel like the viola still has a lot of access to the sweetness that is typically owned by the violin." Leon likes composing for the viola truly because of violists. He believes they (and other string players) "spend a decent amount of time preparing a piece before it comes to rehearsal and have a good work ethic." Because of this, violists make the compositions sound beautiful, the way the composers hope they will. Satisfaction all around!

None of these young men plays the viola himself. Leon plays bassoon and piano; Michael plays saxophone and dabbles in various other woodwind instruments; John plays violin and piano. Leon does incorporate

the bassoon into many of his compositions. Composer Howard Skempton, one of Leon's composition tutors, noticed that Leon writes very fluently for the bassoon and therefore advised Leon to make sure he keeps up his bassoon playing "because he can hear it in my music." John composes for the piano frequently and believes that he writes fluently for it because he is a pianist. Additionally, he says, "Having the piano as my main instrument has strengthened my ears to hear multiple voices (and) has given me the opportunity to collaborate with other instruments—everyone needs a pianist!" Michael, however, never writes for the saxophone. It has become where he goes to play, but "compositionally, I am much more drawn to orchestras, and I just don't focus on saxophone." In fact, Michael's compositional style tends to focus on luscious string parts.



John C. Leavitt (photo courtesy of Brock Bolen)

Of the three composers, John is the one who began composing the earliest. His elementary school sponsored an arts competition annually called "Reflections," and John began at age six to enter pieces in the composition category. However, his career focus was on performance until his junior year at university, when he realized that his technical skills on the piano were not going to carry him "far enough to have a successful career as a performer." At the same time, many composition opportunities were coming his way, bringing with them success and more opportunities. "The shoe fit!" says John, and his course

became composition in a serious and focused way. Leon's start in composition came at about age fourteen, when he began using a sampling and looping program to play with the sound of rock music, dance tracks, and classical compositions, rearranging and editing them. From this, he moved on to notation software, and he soon realized that composition was what he most wanted to do. "It seemed to come naturally to me, and I found it much easier compared to my instrumental studies," he says. Michael was a junior in high school when a humanities teacher asked the class to do a project in which they would use a form of art to answer a philosophical question. Michael's answer came in the form of a piece for symphony orchestra, which he was able to conduct with the school orchestra, and he really loved the whole experience. "That's when I kind of got hooked on composing," he says. Like Leon, Michael could not imagine himself focusing on instrumental studies. "I saw myself being able to compose for six hours a day and be happy, but if I had to practice six hours a day, I would get really miserable."

Each of these young composers follows a slightly different compositional process. Leon usually starts with "a title or concept" of what he wants a piece to be about, or musical elements he wants to explore. "The instrumentation is almost always decided beforehand too, normally because I'm writing for a specific ensemble, but also because setting up certain limitations can actually help ideas flow more easily (even though that seems paradoxical)." Leon uses Sibelius with a MIDI keyboard and a sound library and has a piano nearby so that he can work out melodies and chords at the piano. "Elements like texture, rhythm, and color I can hear in my head," Leon says. Michael uses a similar set of Sibelius tools, but he usually starts with a melody that he can hear in his head. He works at the MIDI keyboard to devise chord progressions and countermelodies, and just keeps "adding things until it either gets too busy and I delete things or until I feel like it is at a good place." His compositional process is very melody-centric, which means that you might catch him at odd times and places singing into his phone so that he can capture a melody to work on later. John also hears musical ideas in his head and then writes them down, filling in the gaps "using Western compositional techniques that I've learned from my studies." John "always writes at the piano," except for orchestral works, which he writes using a MIDI sequencer so that he can "hear accurate representations" of his compositions as he goes.

John most enjoys composing for musical theater, scoring for films, and also creating concert music like his viola concerto, *Icarus*. He plans to continue in all three genres and see where he finds the greatest success as he goes along. Like John, Michael is interested in film scoring—his favorite genre is cinematic orchestral music. Michael says, “I have a story in my head as I write music, but I think it is even more fun if the audience gets to watch the story as they hear the music.” Michael feels it is important to connect with the audience, and music is an important tool to help films, advertisements, and media make the connection. John is also very concerned about connecting with people through genres that are “relevant to human beings today.” He prefers to engage with “music written for living people, not for the sake of exploring or reenacting the past.” Conversely, looking at past music is exactly what Leon prefers to do: his compositional interests lie in re-contextualizing existing material to create new works. Leon says, “The music from an earlier period provides certain comfortable connotations,” and he enjoys changing the listener’s expectations and forcing them “to occupy two musical worlds at once.” Leon intends to make “appropriation music” the focus of his compositional exploration going forward. He looks to composers like Charles Ives and Clarence Barlow for inspiration but does not believe that “any composer has dedicated the majority of their works to this style of music, which I intend to.”

All three of these young composers enjoy interacting with the musicians who are performing their music. While that opportunity does not always come, as Michael describes it, “There is something about the creation process that being involved in the performance gives you something a lot more satisfying than just writing a piece sitting at a desk.” However, he also makes the point that when he is involved with performers, “I don’t want them to feel like I’m in charge; I like to collaborate with the performers.” John believes that the performers help to make his music better. He prefers to work closely with the artists, especially for the first performance of a piece, because the first draft of a score might not be perfect. “There are always mistakes that I’ve made in the notation and questions that need to be answered,” he says. John also finds it fascinating to see what different performers bring to his music: “I love to see what their life makes of my music.” Leon agrees with this. He has recently begun experimenting with allowing the performer more



Michael Biancardi (photo courtesy of Madison Thorpe)

input into the music by giving improvisatory directions to express ideas that are difficult to notate. He says, “It also allows performers to judge the atmosphere of each concert and react accordingly with their improvisations; this give and take between musicians and audience has become a recent interest of mine.”

The Music

At this point, John has only composed one work for viola, *Icarus*, but it is, in his words, “Quite extensive.” This viola concerto is programmatic, telling the story of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun. Devan Freebairn, the soloist for the work’s premiere, mentions that “the end of the story doesn’t make it into the piece, where Icarus falls to his death because he flew too close to the sun. But I think the tension in the glissandi foreshadows that moment, though the piece ends in the glory of soaring flight.” Audience members have noted the cinematic feel to the piece and compared it to some of Hans Zimmer’s compositions. John explains that “it sounds very modern and has some cool extended techniques—like string glissandi and slapping harp strings—that people really find fascinating.” John’s next viola venture will be to make a transcription for viola of a cello nocturne that he had

previously written, and while he hopes to write more viola works, he is waiting to see “what sparks it.”

Leon’s first work emphasizing the viola was *Variations on a Theme by Edward Elgar*, which was premiered at the viola congress in Portugal in 2014. Also in 2014, he composed the soundtrack for a short film using a work titled *Raga in D for Viola and Drone Box*. Working directly with the performer to explain exactly the sound that was wanted, Leon wrote only a very loose score, which he does not intend to publish. His latest viola composition is called *A Walk on the Wild Side* and was commissioned by violist Alistair Rutherford. Leon enjoyed writing a piece for a player with “wide capabilities.” Looking to the past as is his wont, Leon took inspiration from the first of Bach’s Three Sonatas for Viola da Gamba. He explains, “The piano part stays as a constant throughout, but the viola part gradually changes each bar until none of the original Bach is left. The effect should be like slowly peeling a sticker away from its adhesive backing.”

Michael’s *Strata: for 9 violas + optional percussion*, which was written and released on video in 2014, has since been performed by youth ensembles in Mexico and Chile and in various venues in New York State and at Oberlin by the Crane Viola Ensemble in June 2016. Recently, Michael has been working on several pieces for viola quartet, two of which are arrangements of folk songs. For works like these, Michael starts by doing extensive research into the time period and the stories behind the music so that he can express matching feelings in his viola arrangements. *Shenandoah*, for example, is about a fur trader who does not get the girl of his dreams in the end. Michael tried to reflect the pathos the trader felt in his viola quartet arrangement. In *Simple Gifts*, Michael’s research led him to discover that, though this piece is often associated with a hymn-like character, it actually had its origins as a dance song. Using the dance scene in the movie *Tangled* as an inspiration, Michael tried to recreate a dance-like joy in his viola-quartet-arrangement of the piece. His most recent viola project is Stephen Foster’s *Beautiful Dreamer*, and so he has been researching the composer and his background, the time period, and the meaning of the lyrics so he can “get to the heart” of the song in his arrangement for viola quartet.



The American Viola Society Viola Ensemble Database

Designed to help teachers and performers find suitable works written or arranged for multiple violas, the database can be searched by composer, title, arranger, duration, editor, publisher, original work, and number of movements. It is also possible to search by difficulty level, as many works in the database include ASTA level grading for each individual part.

To use this database, please navigate to
www.americanviolasociety.org >> Resources >> Viola Ensemble Database

The Reception

What are violists saying about performing works by these young composers? Eileen Smith, the executive coordinator of the Cecil Aronowitz International Competition at Birmingham Conservatoire, was one of the quintet who performed Leon Haxby's *Elgar Variations* in Portugal. She says, "Theme and variation is a well-known musical structure, and Leon's purpose was to take this and flip it upside down. This piece of music contains elements of satire, and its performance directions (such as the third viola part asking the performer to "fall asleep") give it a humorous edge which pokes fun at the structure without being disrespectful to this important musical form." Eileen's opinion is that the piece is well-written and asks for good chamber musicianship from its performers, since it requires "excellent rhythm and listening skills." She enjoyed the process of working with Leon, who was specific in his musical direction but also open to the ideas of the players. "With this piece, Leon gives us the right amount of freedom (and equally the right amount of instruction) to really delve into the different characters of the variations," Eileen says. Another performer, Alistair Rutherford, who studies viola with Louise Lansdown, says of Haxby's work, "The piece, inspired by Alkan's *Le festin d'Ésope* variations, where he takes a small, simple melody and slowly rips it to shreds, clearly takes the theme from Elgar's Symphony No. 1, movement 1, and completely dismantles and fragments it throughout the five movements of Haxby's Quintet. Performing the piece was an incredibly fun opportunity. It is a challenging piece of chamber music requiring the utmost of attention to detail. The changes of color and mood between the movements are stark, and a strong foundation of rhythm is necessary in order to capture the quirky nature of the meter changes."

Michael Biancardi's *Strata* drew positive comments from many players in the Crane Viola Ensemble, directed by Shelly Tramposh at SUNY Potsdam. Dr. Tramposh sums it up by saying, "Everyone likes the piece!" Comments from some of her students follow: Shannon Santmyer says, "When we first sight-read the piece, I especially found it to be unlike any we had played before. *Strata* was such a fun piece to perform and could make anyone want to get up and dance." Alexa Teves Mani says, "Michael Biancardi's *Strata* was one of my favorite pieces we performed this year; it was so upbeat and fun. It has nine parts (not including the two percussion parts), which

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at first seemed intimidating. However, the first time rehearsing, I was amazed because it was like each part fit like a piece of a puzzle. At times it almost felt like we were in a drum circle, the music felt so alive.” April Beard says, “When the intertwining melodies and rhythmic motifs all came together, we really felt the groove of the piece, and I think the audience did too! The parts build on top of each other, and as they do, the music blooms. Since I just graduated this semester, this was the last piece that I got to play with the wonderful members of the Crane viola studio, so it became a very sentimental piece of music to me—you can’t help but to smile the whole way through.” As for other Biancardi compositions, Kristi Rawlinson Leavitt, who studies viola with Claudine Bigelow at Brigham Young University, has played viola on several of Michael Biancardi’s video projects. She says, “Michael was so great to work with. First of all, his arrangements make it so each of the instruments play something interesting, even if they don’t have the melody. I am a violist, so I’m used to having pretty boring secondary parts. Michael composed interesting and complex parts for everyone, even the inner voices, and that made it fun and exciting to play and listen to. Michael was also very open to suggestion. Since he is not a string player, sometimes there would be some awkward string crossings or bowings, but he was very willing to work with me to make things easier for me, but still sound how he had envisioned.”

The opportunity to play the *Icarus* solo for John C. Leavitt in 2015 was important to Devan Freebairn, then studying with Claudine Bigelow and now a student of Dimitri Murrath. John involved Devan in his compositional process early on. She advised him, for example, on the range of the instrument and on the use of clef signs to make reading easier. Devan says, “The music wasn’t too complex, but there were long slow glissandi, and it took me a lot of practice to learn how to slide my finger smoothly and slowly enough without the friction between my finger and the string making it sound jagged.” Ty Turley-Trejo, the music director of the Utah Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted *Icarus* on two separate occasions. He says, “I thought the viola solo was very well-written, with some unique, modern treatments of the instrument. The pizz.–arco interplay was perfectly suited for the main theme, and the up-slide embellishments were a distinguishing feature—both the allegro up-slides and the largo up-note sliding. The

balance of soloist with orchestra was well-conceived, and the interplay of the instrumentation was nicely done. In a concerto-type work there’s always concern that the soloist will be drowned out by the orchestra, and often times we have to rely on good composers to write lines that are *complementary* to the soloist rather than conflicting. John handled this like a pro.” Composer, conductor, and soloist were all very satisfied with the premiere performance and delighted that the audience responded to the work so favorably. Devan sums it up this way: “I enjoyed the process of learning a piece from scratch. It was very informative and enjoyable to be able to work with the composer and help him to write for viola. And I feel like the viola world gained a lovely piece in the end.”

The viola world has gained many lovely pieces through the efforts of all three of these young composers: Leon Haxby, Michael Biancardi, and John C. Leavitt. Be sure to look for their works in the “Resources” section on the American Viola Society website. Try them out!

For viola works mentioned in this article, visit: <http://www.americanviolasociety.org/Resources/Scores.php>. To learn more about the composers, visit their individual websites: <http://www.leonhaxby.com>, <http://www.biancardimusic.com>, and <http://johncleavittmusic.com/>.

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Restocking Ideas for Your Viola Studio

Katherine Lewis

Whether you are a new college professor with start-up money to spend, a studio teacher looking to put your materials-fee to good use, or a seasoned veteran interested in a little studio rejuvenation for the year, fall is a great time to restock your teaching space for the academic year.

There are many “tools of the trade” unique to viola teachers, and the items outlined below address the diverse pedagogical, technical, and musical challenges that viola students and their teachers face.

1. General Posture Tools

A beautiful, full viola sound begins with balanced posture. “Grounding” is a term that many teachers use to describe the feeling of being relaxed, yet strong in stance, to their students. When a student’s knees are locked, their hips or pelvis rotated or tilted, or their feet come off the ground, it is easy to lose the connection with the sound of the instrument and the music. A balance board with a 360-degree motion is a great tool to use with violists of any age and level. Designed to help with stability and balance for athletes, the best type of balance board rests on a cushion and has a platform wide enough so that the feet can be placed shoulder width apart. Although it is possible to play while balancing on a balance board, the goal should be finding a strong, centered stance without the instrument for several minutes at a time, which can then be replicated with the instrument in playing position once off the board.

For students who continually forget to stay balanced and rise up on their toes while playing, a simple and inexpensive solution is the placement of a plastic squeaker (commonly found in dog toys) under the foot. As a student begins to lose his or her connection with the ground, the telltale “squeak” is all they need to remember to stay grounded! Squeakers fit easily in a student’s or teacher’s case, so they can always be “at the ready” for lessons and practice sessions.

2. Set-Up Accessories

As students grow and mature, their set-up needs change. Violists and their instruments are all unique in size and shape, and most teachers agree that there is no “one size fits all” solution to holding and balancing the instrument on the shoulder. Although a bit price prohibitive, it can be quite useful to keep a large supply of chin rests and shoulder rests on hand in the studio. In recent years, several new products have become available that are worth trying out. These include the Krédde chin rest and the Frisch and Denig Chin Rest Fitting System (fitting kits are available for purchase by teachers). In addition, older standbys, such as the SAS chin rest, which comes in four different heights; the Berber chin rest; and various center-mounted models work well for many students.

Teachers may also help their students find an optimal set up with a variety of shoulder rests and the use of red cosmetic sponges that can fit on either end of the shoulder rest and add extra height or cushioning and prevent the instrument from slipping. Lastly, several shoulder rest models have a variety of feet lengths, and it is useful to experiment with shoulder-rest height, especially for students with long necks.

3. Right Arm and Sound Production Aids

“More sound, less effort” is my studio mantra. It’s a phrase that may seem confusing until a student learns to properly control his or her right arm and maximize arm weight in the string. To help discover this feeling, a teacher can use large rubber bands and/or therapy bands to help a student feel the sensation of a totally relaxed arm. For students struggling to play at the frog (frog-a-phobics!), using a fractional sized bow, or “baby bow,” can be both fun and eye-opening. After a week of playing on a small bow, students are usually much more comfortable at the frog, assuming their bow hold and right arm movement is correct!

An additional tool to develop the right arm is the Practice Bow. Designed by viola pedagogue Kathryn Plummer in 1993, this ingenious teaching tool clips to the string and helps students understand how to keep a steady contact point by isolating the motion of the down and up bow in a smooth, controlled manner. It is also useful for students learning how to separate tension between the hands, as they can “play” the instrument without any sound. Dr. Daphne Gerling uses the Practice Bow in her studio teaching at the University of North Texas, because it “allows students to focus 100% of their attention on creating a comfortable, ergonomic, and flowing motion, separate from the concept of tone. I use it to help people develop awareness of their right-hand joint flexibility, of where the fingers contact the bow, of how much effort they need in their bow hold vs. how much they think they need, and to explore concepts of bow distribution and weight.” The Practice Bow is available in five different sizes (from 1/8th-size to full-size), the smaller sizes being useful not only for younger players, but for older students who may need to work on isolating the finger, wrist, or arm movements at the frog. The Practice Bow is also useful for teaching vibrato, as often the left hand tenses up when the bow is placed on the string. By eliminating the possibility of sound, students can learn how to coordinate their hands, keeping the left one relaxed as the right one moves in a completely different manner.

4. Technique Books

Several well-known teachers and performers have published technique and étude books in recent years that address specific aspects of viola technique. One of the most comprehensive, Ivo-Jan van der Werff's *A Notebook for Viola Players*, can be useful for players at any level of development. In it he includes exercises that address posture, bow control, and various left-hand issues. The book includes clear photographs and explanations and comes with a DVD.

Many violists are unaware of the many étude books that are not transcriptions from the violin. Campagnoli's *41 Caprices* are a great alternative to Kreutzer, and Johannes Palaschko published multiple volumes of études at various levels. Michael Kimber's *Twentieth-Century Idioms for Violists* provides students with fifteen original études that focus on various melodic and technical challenges often found in contemporary music (examples include octatonic sets, mixed meter, and harmonics). Each

étude includes a page-long explanation of the idiom and practice guide.

In addition, there are several finger-pattern and scale books that are worth investing in, including Melissa Matson's *One-Position Finger Pattern Scales for the Viola*, Ellen Rose's *Extreme Viola*, William Primrose's *The Art and Practice of Scale Playing on the Viola*, Michael Kimber's scale book and various pedagogical études, and Christine Rutledge's *Violist's Handbook*.

5. Repertoire

All too often, violinists who teach viola are led to believe that the viola repertoire is small and limited. Many viola teachers themselves get stuck in a tracked sequence of repertoire and use a “one size fits all” approach to sequencing. If you fall into either of these categories, know that there are several excellent resources to help you discover new repertoire for performance at any level. The American String Teachers Association has two publications that should be on every viola teacher's shelf, the *ASTA String Syllabus* and *Playing and Teaching the Viola: A Comprehensive Guide to the Central Clef Instrument and Its Music*. The later, lovingly referred to as the “green viola bible” in some circles, has chapters by many of the leading pedagogues of our day and includes a comprehensive list of repertoire by level compiled by Patricia McCarty. Additionally, Franz Zeyringer's *Literatur für Viola*, published in 1976 (with a later New Edition in 1985), is still an excellent resource, especially for those interested in exploring chamber music in diverse combinations of instruments with viola.

6. Bach

Whether you are a prep teacher introducing movements of Bach's Cello Suites to your students for the first time or a seasoned conservatory teacher helping students prepare for auditions and degree recitals, Bach's suites are at the center of most curriculums. While many conservatory teachers have embraced the relatively new Peters Edition as the best clean working edition, there are as many opinions about editions, bowings, note choices, ornamentation, and style as there are teachers! That being said, there are also a number of excellent resources beyond the standard performance editions that can help you and your students make informed decisions about Baroque style, harmony, analysis, and character. The Bärenreiter Urtext is an excellent source for advanced

students looking to study and understand various options using the six primary sources that are known, as Bach's autograph is lost. It can also be fun for younger students to look at and understand where the music they are learning comes from and why they might hear different bowings, tempi, ornaments, and notes on the various recordings they listen to. Students who are having a hard time with analysis may find Allen Winold's two volume set, *Bach's Cello Suites: Analyses and Explorations*, to be informative and helpful in making phrasing decisions based on harmony. Also, cellist Anthony Arnone has published a duet companion to the suites for cello, and he has transcribed these for viola for Suites 1–3. Duets can be great for lessons to help a student hear bass lines and harmonic changes. Of course, many teachers are able to create bass lines on the fly, but if you have trouble with this, Arnone's volume can be quite helpful.

Many students struggle with the swing or flow of the various dance movements and have little or no idea of what Baroque dance looked like. Baroque dancer Paige Whitley-Bauguess has a two-volume DVD called *Introduction to Baroque Dance* that takes viewers through the basic steps of the Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Menuet, Bourrée, Gavotte, and Gigue. This, along with a collection of small percussion instruments, can help students feel the dance rhythms and develop a greater understanding of phrasing and timing in Bach's stylized Baroque dance movements.

7. Special Scores

Teachers who are helping students prepare for college and/or grad school auditions should make sure that they have a number of scores available in the studio or in the nearest library for their students to study. For example, students working on Walton's Viola Concerto benefit greatly from examining the differences in orchestration between the 1929 and 1962 versions found in Volume 12 of Oxford University Press's *William Walton Edition*. This source, edited by Christopher Wellington, includes a thorough background of the piece, textual notes, and full orchestral scores of both versions with the two versions of the solo part included in each score.

Other facsimiles that are of special interest include Bartók's Concerto and Schubert's "Arpeggione" Sonata (both are available on IMSLP). The facsimile edition of Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, published by Sikorski, is also an excellent resource.

8. Duos/Trios/etc.

Many teaching situations do not include easy and affordable access to strong accompanists. Violist Molly Sharp has addressed this problem with her recently published viola accompaniments to viola concertos by Stamitz, Hoffmeister, and Telemann. These duets can be used for performance but also are a wonderful tool for the early stages of learning to help students address common intonation, rhythm, and style problems during lessons.

As many teachers and students are aware, the American Viola Society is constantly adding scores to the resources section of the AVS website. Included are many wonderful duos, trios, quartets, and ensemble pieces. Additionally, there is now a searchable database of music for three or more violas on the AVS website, which allows teachers to select difficulty level and includes notes on the length of the piece and publisher. For teachers looking to build studio unity (see no. 10), creating a viola ensemble within the studio is a great motivator for strong and weak players alike! For those looking to build their own library, there are dozens of composers who have written original works for viola ensemble, including Michael Kimber, who has composed well over a dozen fun and accessible pieces for groups of two to five violas. There are several notable arrangers of viola music, including the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet, Julian Milone, Thomas Tatton, and Simon Rowland-Jones. Additionally, teachers should be aware of the major publishers of viola music: Corda, Viola World, Rarities for Strings, Medici, and Gems, in addition to the AVS. Finally, there are several collections of viola ensemble-music, such as the four *Quatrebratche* volumes and excellent pedagogical collections written by Elizabeth Stuen-Walker and Joanne Martin.

9. Teaching Musicality

Some teachers find that teaching musicality, phrasing, and gesture can be particularly challenging for certain students. Having a supply of teaching aids, such as nature photos, famous artwork reproductions, markers, highlighters, and crayons can be useful for helping students make an emotional connection with their repertoire. Parts can be copied and color coded for different sections for students with synesthesia or an ability to think in colors, and pictures or photographs can help visual thinkers find ideas for setting and context in their interpretations. Additionally, the ASTA publication *Playing and Teaching the Viola: A Comprehensive Guide*

to the Central Clef Instrument and Its Music (see no. 5) includes Karen Tuttle's list of emotions, which is a wonderful resource to help students label characters in their music. For some students, coming up with a story line for their repertoire is a simple request, but for others it can be difficult and daunting. Having other tools to help these students connect with their piece, whether it's through words, colors, nature, or painting/drawing can allow them to open themselves up to a new way of thinking about their music, ultimately allowing them to connect with their audience more deeply.

10. "Viola Power" Swag

Last, but not least, violists love to show their spirit! Whether it's a new alto-clef banner on the door, studio t-shirt, pictures of famous violists, or a viola-centric concert poster, having some special viola swag is particularly important in mixed violin/viola studios. Younger violists beginning to build their viola-identity and older students who are making the switch from violin will also appreciate the gesture of being welcomed and included in our viola community.

Katherine Lewis is associate professor of viola at Illinois State University and Master Teacher of the ISU String Project. She is currently serving as president-elect of Illinois ASTA and is a former board member of the AVS. Dr. Lewis performs regularly as principal viola of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra.

Where to Find Select Resources

Balance board: Amazon (Indo board with cushion); <https://amzn.com/B00OACQ4S6>

Dog squeaker: Amazon; <https://amzn.com/B00GB9R700>

Kréddle chin rest: <https://www.kreddle.com>

Frisch and Denig chin rest: <http://chinrests.com>

SAS chin rest: Johnson Strings (many stores don't carry all of the heights); <https://www.johnsonstring.com>

Berber chin rest: Shar; <http://www.sharmusic.com/>

Practice Bow: Kathryn Plummer; e-mail: kathryn.plummer@vanderbilt.edu

Ivo-Jan van der Werff's *A Notebook for Viola Players*: Amazon; <https://amzn.com/1590952766>

Michael Kimber's music: http://members.tripod.com/~m_kimber/mk.html

Melissa Matson's *One-Position Finger Pattern Scales for the Viola*: e-mail: mmmviola@rochester.rr.com

Ellen Rose's *Extreme Viola*: e-mail: erose@smu.edu

Christine Rutledge's *Violist's Handbook*: <http://www.christinerutledge.com>

ASTA's *Playing and Teaching the Viola*: Amazon; <https://amzn.com/2005014699>

Franz Zeyringer's *Literatur für Viola*: Out of print; used copies can often be found via AddALL: <http://used.addall.com/>

Anthony Arnone's Bach duet companions: e-mail: anthony-arnone@uiowa.edu

Paige Whitley-Bauguess's *Introduction to Baroque Dance DVD*: Amazon; <https://amzn.com/B000BXDMYW>

Molly Sharp's viola concerto accompaniments: <http://www.mollysharpcreates.com/duets-purchase/>

Interleaved Practice: The Best Practice Method for Reliable Performance

Molly Gebrian



Author Molly Gebrian

As performers, we are always looking for ways to enhance our consistency under pressure and to ensure that all of our hard work in the practice room doesn't disappear when we are on stage. We have all had the experience of performing below what we know we are capable of and wishing we could get a second chance. Although there are no magic bullets when it comes to becoming a better performer, there is one practice technique that science has shown to be far superior for enhanced performance: interleaved practicing.

The way most of us are taught to practice is called blocked (or massed) practice: we work on a particular piece for a large chunk of time before moving on to something new. Similarly, we were all taught to play a passage a certain number of times perfectly to solidify it in our hands. These practice methods are all well and good (and maybe necessary) for learning new pieces and solidifying skills, but they are not enough if we wish to perform well because they do not allow us to practice what our brains have to do when we perform. In a concert, we do not get to play a tricky passage several times before the one that actually counts. We get one chance to get it right and if we have never practiced playing something perfectly on the first try, our chances of executing it exactly how we want are not very good.

This is where interleaved practice (also known as random practice) comes in. A large number of studies have been done on the efficacy of interleaved practice in the realm of sports coaching. One of the clearest experiments looking at interleaved practicing is a study that was done on college baseball players.¹ In the study, the players were divided into two groups and each practiced hitting forty-five pitches. In the blocked practice group, they were pitched fifteen fastballs, fifteen curve balls, and fifteen change-up pitches and they had to hit as many as they could. The random practice group also got forty-five total pitches, but they never knew what was coming at them, so they might get a fastball, then three curveballs, then two change-up pitches, then five fastballs, etc. What the experimenters found was that during the practice session, the players in the blocked practice group hit more balls than those in the random practice group. However, when they tested their batting performance at a later date, those who had trained with blocked practice had gotten twenty-five percent better while those who had trained with random practice had gotten fifty-seven percent better, which is clearly a much bigger improvement.

These results are typical of nearly every single study that has been done on interleaved versus blocked practicing from basketball, to racquetball, badminton, golf, and snowboarding, to problem solving and studying in general, in the elderly, in children, and even in musicians.² All of these studies show fewer gains during the actual practice session for those doing interleaved practice, but enhanced ability in a performance situation as compared to those who used blocked practice. The fact that there are fewer apparent gains during practice make sense if you think about the baseball study: the players in the blocked practice group knew exactly what kind of pitch was coming, so they could prepare better to hit the ball accurately. On the other hand, those in the random practice group never knew what was coming next, meaning they had to adjust on the spot, resulting in a lower batting average.

This difficulty of adjusting on the spot is known in scientific circles as “contextual interference.” To illustrate what this means more clearly, think about the technical aspects of performing a piece of music. This is obviously an oversimplification, but thinking of the cognitive framework for playing a particular passage being like that of a computer program (fingerings, bowings, shifts, dynamics, tone, phrasing, etc.), playing the same passage over and over just keeps rerunning the same program, whereas constant changes between programs is more taxing. Since the programs all draw on the same skills (albeit in different combinations for each piece), they interfere with one another (hence “contextual interference”). Looked at this way, it’s no wonder gains aren’t as apparent during an interleaved practice session. But interleaving is exactly what happens during a performance, so performers who have practiced in this way have an advantage when they get on stage; they have practiced not only what their hands and arms have to do, but also the cognitive shifts their brains will have to do.

The evidence that this also works for musicians comes from a study on pianists from 2013.³ In the study, the pianists had to learn a group of short pieces that had been specifically composed for the experiment. The pieces were challenging enough that they weren’t sight readable, but easy enough that they could be learned in a relatively short amount of time. All of the pianists learned all of the pieces, but some of the pieces were learned using blocked practice, while others were learned using interleaved

practice in a practice schedule that was tightly controlled by the experimenters. Two days later, the pianists returned to the lab and performed a subset of the pieces for the researchers. Just like with the baseball players, the pianists performed the pieces they had learned using interleaved practice much better than the pieces they had learned using blocked practice (measured in terms of note and rhythm accuracy).

Musicians are just now learning about this research and method of practicing, but researchers have been studying interleaved practice for over 35 years. The very first study on random practicing, done in 1979, provides a critical detail in support of the idea that interleaved practicing is something all musicians should adopt if they want to perform their best. In this study, subjects had to learn different movement patterns to knock down wooden barriers.⁴ Like in the baseball study, there was a blocked practice group and a random practice group. The critical detail comes in how performance was tested. Some of the subjects were tested in an interleaved fashion, while others were tested in a blocked fashion. This gave the experimenters four possible groups to look at: random practicing-random testing (RR), random practicing-blocked testing (RB), blocked practicing-blocked testing (BB), and blocked practicing-random testing (BR). What they found was that the subjects who performed the worst, by a very wide margin, were those who practiced using blocked practice, but who were tested in an interleaved manner. This is extremely important information for musicians because our performances are always a random retention test. If we are only doing blocked practice, this puts us at a severe disadvantage.⁵

Despite the overwhelming evidence that interleaved practice is superior to blocked practice, people persist in using blocked practice, even when they’ve seen that it is inferior. In fact, in the study on pianists mentioned earlier, they interviewed the pianists after the fact to see which practice method they thought was better. Even though the pianists could see for themselves that the pieces they had learned using interleaved practice were the ones they performed better, they still said they thought blocked practice was a better practice method. This is, in fact, so common that scientists have given it a name: the illusion of mastery. Blocked practice makes us feel like we have mastered the skill, but it is an illusion. It is a very powerful illusion, and is something we must

always guard against. Robert Bjork, one of the leading researchers on blocked practice, has the following to say: “Learners are prone to interpreting performance during acquisition as a valid index of learning, which can lead not only to misassessments of the degree to which learning has happened, but also to learners preferring poor conditions of learning over better conditions of learning.”⁶

Understanding what is happening in the brain during interleaved practice instead of massed/blocked practice can help protect against this illusion. In a study from 2011, subjects had to learn to do six different four-finger sequences as quickly as possible.⁷ Over the course of two days, the subjects in the study learned some of the sequences using blocked practice and some using random practice. On day five, they were tested on their performance in both a blocked and random retention test. During both the practice and the test, researchers were looking at what their brains were doing using functional MRI. The researchers found that during the practice session, the brains of the participants were much more highly activated in the random practice condition than in the blocked practice condition. This was especially true in areas of the brain involved in higher cognitive activities, such as movement planning, action selection, and working memory. In fact, there were no regions of the brain that were more activated during blocked practice over random practice. This explains why blocked practice may feel better to do: it’s easier for the brain, so it makes us think we’re doing a better job (that’s the illusion of mastery). However, something different happened during performance. For the sequences the subjects learned using blocked practice, there was more activation during performance, which means the brain had to work harder to remember the sequences. Conversely, for the sequences the subjects learned using random practice, their brains were less activated during the test. Again, this was especially true for areas involved in higher cognitive activities, which the experimenters interpreted to mean that there was more efficient retrieval of the motor memory during the test as a result of the interleaved practicing. This explains why skills practiced using random practice end up being performed better: the brain doesn’t have to work as hard during a performance if the materials have been learned using random practice. Our brains have enough to keep track of as it is when we are performing; we don’t need to make it even harder by practicing using an inferior method.

One other recent study with intriguing results looked at the connections that form between different areas of the brain when someone is learning a new skill.⁸ In this study, they found that one week after blocked practice, there was an increase in the connection between the prefrontal cortex and the anterior putamen. Previous studies have shown that the anterior putamen is involved in the early stages of motor learning when the skill is relatively poor. In contrast, one week of interleaved practice resulted in increased connection between the sensory motor cortex and the posterior putamen. This connection has been implicated in the long-term storage of skill, and previous studies have shown a shift from the anterior to the posterior putamen with increased training. The study here seems to imply that random practice essentially allows you to skip the early stages of learning, which is an intriguing finding. This is especially relevant when we are learning brand new skills (like extended techniques) or teaching beginning and intermediate level students.

Hopefully, all of the evidence presented thus far has convinced you that random practicing is worth trying. However, it would be a mistake to think that blocked practice has no place at all in the practice room. One final study illustrates the importance of doing both. This study was done with basketball players who were trying to increase their ability on three different types of passing.⁹ In this study, there were three groups: a blocked practice group, a random practice group, and a group whose practice schedule was increasingly random. For this final group, they started with blocked practice, then they moved onto serial practice (that is, they worked on skill A, then skill B, then skill C, then skill A, then skill B, then skill C, etc.) This gradually increases the contextual interference while still being predictable. Finally, they ended with random practice. This study found that the group that was given the increasingly random practice schedule made the most improvement, much more so than the blocked practice group, but also even more than the strictly random practice group. It seems that blocked practice helps solidify the skill, gradually increasing the contextual interference through serial practice increases the level of difficulty, and finally random practice arrives at a practice schedule that mimics what the brain will have to do in an actual performance situation. There are an infinite number of ways to use the principles of random practice. There are two important concepts to keep in mind: 1) Random practicing is effective

because it forces you to constantly change your frame of mind, which mimics what your brain has to do during performance. 2) When using random practice to work on making entire passages reliable, because of the difficulty of what we have to do as musicians, if the skill hasn't been solidified using blocked practice, you will never be able to do it using random practice. Said another way, in order to play something perfectly from scratch right off the bat, it is first necessary to be able to play it perfectly and reliably a number of times in a row. Here are a few suggestions for how to implement the concept of interleaving into your practice:

Serial practice

Pick four to seven trouble spots in a piece you are working on and put sticky notes in your part next to each spot. Make sure that all of these are spots that you can do well a certain number of times in a row before you try to do this method. Play the first spot once and if it's perfect, give yourself a tick mark on the sticky note. Then, play the second spot and again give yourself a tick mark if it's perfect. Continue through all your spots until you've reached the final one. Then, go back to spot number one and play it again. If it's perfect, give yourself another tick mark. If you make a mistake, erase the first tick mark. Continue going through your spots like this until all of the sticky notes have a minimum of five tick marks on them. Remember, if you make a mistake in any of your spots, you have to erase the tick marks you've already accumulated for that spot and start over again at zero.

Use an interval timer

An interval timer is an app that allows you to set an alarm to go off every X number of minutes (or seconds). The one I use is called "Interval Timer" and it's free for iPhone and Android. I start using this practice method when I'm two to three weeks away from a concert or audition. Pick a spot that you've already solidified, but want to make sure to nail perfectly every time (the opening of your concerto, a tricky passage in the middle, etc.) and set your interval timer to go off however often you want (I set mine to go every five minutes). Go about your normal practice routine (clicking things up using the metronome, practicing things in rhythms, whatever you normally do) and then every time the timer goes off, stop what you're doing and go play the spot you picked ahead of time. Only play it once, just like it's a concert. Then return to whatever you were practicing. Don't work on the spot

you just played, no matter how bad it is. You can make notes for yourself of places in the passage that need more practice so you can work on it later, but if you work on it now, you're defeating the purpose of interleaved practice.

You will find that the first few times you do this, the passage you picked won't be very good. This can be discouraging, but it's an accurate indicator of how well you can play the passage on the spot and how well it's likely to go in a performance. The more times you do this, you will learn the kind of focus you need to play the passage exactly how you want, and also what still needs work. Soon, you will find that every time the timer goes off, the passage will be consistent and reliable. When it's time for the concert, you won't worry about how it will go; you will know exactly how it will go because you have practiced playing it on the spot many times at home. (This is also an incredibly effective practice method for preparing an orchestra audition. Every time interval timer goes off, play a different excerpt.)

Another way to use an interval timer is to set it to go off every X number of minutes and whenever it goes off, switch what you are practicing. Right now, for instance, I'm learning a new piece of chamber music. I have my interval timer go off every five minutes and every time it goes off, I move to a different movement. This forces me to be extremely efficient in my practicing because I only get five minutes before I have to move on. When I cycle back to the movement I started with, it's a good test to see whether the practicing I did earlier really stuck. This won't be the only practicing I do on the piece (some things take longer than five minutes to work out, of course), but is one of many tools I use.

Mix up your technique routine

Instead of going around the circle of fifths with your scales and arpeggios, try using random practice instead. Make little cards, each one labeled with a different key, and put them in a small baggie. Then, make other cards labeled with different tempos and put those in a different baggie. Finally, make cards with different bow strokes or bowings on them and put those in the third baggie. Each day, pick out a key, a tempo, and a bow stroke and that's what you have to do that day for your scale.

Mock performances and auditions

People preparing for orchestra auditions often know the importance of doing mock auditions, but often we don't

hear about the importance of doing mock recitals. When I am getting ready for a performance or an audition, at least two weeks before the date, at the end of the day when I'm tired and my brain isn't working well anymore, I will do a mock audition or play my entire recital program. I will only warm up the way I plan to before the actual event to mimic as closely as possible what I will feel like at the concert or audition. I do this at the end of the day when I'm tired because I know that my brain won't be working quite normally during the performance, so I don't want to make my mock audition at a time of day when my brain is focused optimally. This simulates a performance situation (minus the nerves) and forces me to play everything perfectly the first time around. I also record each of these mock auditions/recitals and then take notes on what I heard so I know where to focus in my practicing the next day.

I have found that many performers are skeptical of random practice because it flies in the face of everything they were taught about good practicing. If you have never tried it before, it can be very frustrating to do at first because, like all the studies show, gains are slower

during this kind of practice than in blocked practice. But the benefits are clear the minute you get up to perform something you have perfected using interleaved practice. It is obviously possible to play extremely well only doing blocked practice, but the science is clear: random practice is unequivocally the best practice method for enhanced performance. Just because we have been doing something one way for generations doesn't mean we shouldn't be open to trying something new, especially when there is overwhelming evidence as to its efficacy.

Molly Gebrian currently teaches viola, music theory, and a course on music and the brain at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Her interest in neuroscience started at Oberlin College and Conservatory, where she was a double-degree student in viola and neuroscience. After getting her master's degree at the New England Conservatory, she completed her DMA at Rice University, where she also continued her education and research into music and the brain.

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Notes

1. Kellie Green Hall, Derek A. Domingues, and Richard Cavazos, "Contextual Interference Effects with Skilled Baseball Players," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 78 (1994): 835-841.
2. For an excellent review of this research, see: see: Nicholas C. Sonderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176-199. Papers specific to the examples cited here include: Dennis K. Landin, et al., "The Effects of Variable Practice on the Performance of a Basketball Skill," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 64 (1993): 232-237; D. Penelope Green, et al., "Practice Variability and Transfer of a Racket Skill," *Perceptual & Motor Skills* 81 (1995): 1275-1281; Sinah Goode and Richard A. Magill, "Contextual Interference Effects in Learning Three Badminton Serves," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 57, no. 4 (1986): 308-314; Jared M. Porter et al., "The Effects of Three Levels of Contextual Interference on Performance Outcomes and Movement Patterns in Golf Skills," *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* 22 (2007): 243-255; Peter J. K. Smith, "Applying Contextual Interference to Snowboarding Skills," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 95 (2002): 999-1005; Jeroen J. G. van Merriënboer, et al., (1997). "The Transfer Paradox: Effects of Contextual Interference on Retention and Transfer Performance of a Complex Cognitive Skill," *Perceptual & Motor Skills* 84 (1997): 784-786; Suzanne M. Mannes and Walter Kintsch, "Knowledge Organization and Text Organization," *Cognition and Instruction* 4 (1987): 91-115; Chien-Ho (Janice) Lin, et al., "Contextual Interference Effects in Sequence Learning for Younger and Older Adults," *Psychology and Aging* 25 (2010): 929-939; Diane M. Ste-Marie, et al., "High Levels of Contextual Interference Enhance Handwriting Acquisition," *Journal of Motor Behavior* 36 (2004): 115-126.
3. Branden Abushanab and Anthony J. Bishara, "Memory and Metacognition for Piano Melodies: Illusory Advantage of Fixed- over Random-Order Practice," *Memory and Cognition* 41, no. 6 (2013): 928-937.
4. John B. Shea and Robyn L. Morgan, "Contextual Interference Effects on the Acquisition, Retention, and Transfer of a Motor Skill," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Learning and Memory* 5, no. 2 (1979): 179-187.
5. For those who are curious, the groups that performed the best were those who were tested in a blocked fashion (regardless of how they practiced). They were only marginally better, however, than those who practiced in an interleaved manner and were tested in an interleaved manner. For a clearer graph of this data than is in the original study, see: Nicholas C. Sonderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176-199. The graph in question appears on page 181.
6. Ibid., 177.
7. Chien-Ho (Janice) Lin et al., "Brain-Behavior Correlates of Optimizing Learning Through Interleaved Practice," *NeuroImage* 56 (2011): 1758-1772.
8. Sunbin Song et al., "White Matter Microstructural Correlates of Superior Long-Term Skill Gained Implicitly under Randomized Practice," *Cerebral Cortex* 22 (2011): 1671-1677.
9. Jared M. Porter and Esmaeel Saemi, "Moderately Skilled Learners Benefit by Practicing with Systematic Increases in Contextual Interference," *International Journal of Coaching Science* 4, no. 2 (2010): 61-71.

Recording Reviews

Carlos María Solare



Dialogue – Béla Bartók: 23 Duos for viola and cello; Augusta Read Thomas: *Dream Catcher*; David Del Tredici: *Cello Acroscopic*; Walter Piston: *Duo*. Carol Rodland, viola; Scott Kluksdahl, cello. Crystal Records CD 880.

The present selection from Béla Bartók's violin duos was arranged for viola and cello by the composer's always enterprising younger son, Peter. These are not one-to-one transcriptions; Bartók Jr. has redistributed the music between the two instruments, sometimes changing the octaves at which they play and achieving generally effective solutions. The present players' partnership goes back to their student days, and they obviously enjoy making music with each other. Balance and phrasing are disarmingly natural with tempos that are mostly within a second or two of Bartók Sr.'s painstaking markings.

Two unaccompanied pieces are placed midway through the program. The suggestiveness of the title of Augusta Read Thomas's composition together with Rodland's detailed and vivid playing conspire to make a most compelling statement of this—at first sight—loosely

constructed piece, which the composer describes as a "captured improvisation." Del Tredici's composition is an arrangement of the concluding aria from his Lewis Carroll-inspired opera, *Final Alice* (the text of which is an acrostic, hence the title). Kluksdahl negotiates the self-accompanied, lullaby-like piece with warm sound in both the *arco* and *pizzicato* statements of the main subject.

The only original piece on this recital (Thomas's was originally written for violin) is Walter Piston's *Duo*, a beautifully crafted composition in the neo-classical style of the pre-war years (it was actually written in 1949). Two sparkingly vivacious movements frame a heartfelt *Andante sereno* that recalls the "populist" style of Aaron Copland. With expressive, stylish playing from Rodland and Kluksdahl, the *Duo* makes for an exciting conclusion to this lovely recital that has been faithfully caught by the life-like recording.



Max Reger: Three Suites, op. 131c; Adolf Busch: Suite, op. 16a; Justus Weinreich: Three Suites. Roland Glassl, viola. Audite 97.721.

This brim-full CD (eighty minutes, eight seconds!) explores with commendable completeness the neo-baroque repertoire for unaccompanied viola from the early twentieth century. The three Suites by Max Reger, written in 1915, belong of course to every violist's stock-in-trade. We know that Reger was planning a further suite for the viola player Karl Doktor at the time of his early death. According to a creditable anecdote, Adolf Busch—Doktor's quartet colleague and a passionate admirer of Reger's music—wrote his own viola suite during a train ride as consolation for his friend's disappointment over the unfulfilled promise.

Busch's composition does indeed sound like a fourth Reger suite. Its movements are similarly structured in a slow-fast-slow-fast sequence, but Busch sticks more than Reger to Baroque dance forms; all movements, apart from the opening, employ dance rhythms. The music is technically more complicated, with some rather uncomfortable chord progressions, including a passage in sixths self-accompanied by left hand pizzicatos.

Justus Weinreich (1858-1927) hails from Kassel, Germany, and was a member of the Court Orchestra in Karlsruhe. He wrote numerous études, a few of which have been reprinted in Ulrich Drüner's invaluable collection, *Das Studium der Viola*. The three unaccompanied suites were probably written in the last years of the nineteenth century, thus pre-dating Reger by almost twenty years. As with Reger and Busch, Weinreich's suites have four movements, which are based almost without exception on baroque dance models. Their harmonic horizon is less vast than that of Reger and Busch, but this player-friendly music constitutes—to quote the booklet notes—an interesting example of “the continuing tradition of productively internalizing Bach.”

Roland Glassl, a prize-winner of both the Tertis and Primrose competitions and former member of the celebrated Mandelring Quartet, takes this music's manifold hurdles with the greatest aplomb, making the most of its expressive potential. The warm sound of his viola has been well caught in a generous acoustic. A couple of movements sound rather rushed (perhaps the CD's extreme length had a subconscious effect on the choice of tempo), but Glassl has a sure instinct for the shape and structure of each movement and characterizes them most excitingly.



Scott Slapin: *Violacentrism – The Opera*. Scott Slapin and Tanya Solomon, viola. Penn State Viola Ensemble; Tim Deighton, dir., www.violacentrism.com.

At around forty-three minutes in length, Scott Slapin's *Violacentrism – The Opera* runs head to head alongside *Harold in Italy* as the longest viola joke ever. But then, as opposed to the latter, this really *is* a joke, and one of a particularly elaborate and subtle kind. You probably won't laugh out loud very often, but you must be made of very stern stuff indeed if you are not smiling snugly after listening to this recording.

The booklet gives a short synopsis of the story involving Cremonus, God of the Viola, his anger at man's creation of other instruments and his quest to convince mankind of the greatness of his chosen instrument. The piece is scored for two violas, and nothing more is indeed necessary to convey all the moods depicted in the music. Slapin's score operates with various leitmotifs to guide the listener through the plot. These are introduced during the eight-minute Overture and provide the thematic tissue of the following eight numbers, which include, of all things, a lesson in Music History (*Five Centuries in Five Minutes*) and a musical-within-the-opera (*Violist under the Roof*). Perhaps the joke becomes too localized in *The Sounds of Hampshire County* (where—you guessed it—the composer is based), but the sounds we hear of musicians trying out instruments at the local luthier's shop are the same anywhere in the world.

Violacentrism is good fun, but in the end I was left with the impression of having listened to a soundtrack without having seen the movie, and wishing for more of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the Wagnerian sense. Not necessarily an opera, but perhaps an imaginative viola studio could create a pantomime or ballet to accompany Slapin's score. An additional track with an "Encore" of the piece's Finale arranged for massed violas—performed by the Penn State Viola Ensemble—would seem to point in this direction. There remains the small matter that the music of *Violacentrism* is of decidedly virtuoso character for both players. With this CD, Scott Slapin and Tanya Solomon have unsurprisingly set the bar extremely high for any violists wishing to try their hands at the score (available, incidentally, from www.violacentrism.com).



Norbert von Hanneheim: Stück No. 1, 3 and 4 for viola and piano; Duo for violin and viola; Suite for viola and piano; Sonata No. 1 for viola and piano; Sonata No. 2 for viola and piano. Aida-Carmen Soanea, viola; Igor Kamenz, piano; Adrian Pinzaru, violin. Challenge Classics CC72734.

The fate of Norbert von Hanneheim (1898-1945) was among the grimmest at a particularly cruel moment in history. Born into a German family in Transylvania, Romania, he was one of the most talented students in Arnold Schoenberg's class at the Berlin Academy

of the Arts. In 1932 he won the Felix-Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Staat-Stipendium, and seemed all set for a successful career. But it was not to be: a year later, the Nazis came to power and Hanneheim's music was declared "degenerate," and he could only find work as a copyist and arranger of folk songs. Nevertheless, he continued to compose "for the drawer." Around 1936 he showed a viola sonata to the eminent Berlin violist Emil Seiler, whose enthusiastic comments prompted him to write a suite and a second sonata. The greatest part of Hanneheim's compositions remained unpublished and existed only in unique autograph manuscripts; a suitcase containing most of them was lost in a bomb attack on Berlin during WWII. The mentally unstable composer was confined to a psychiatric clinic and later deported to one of the euthanasia institutions operated by the Nazis. Although he was still alive at the end of the war, Hanneheim died shortly afterwards of heart failure.

Copies of the three aforementioned viola works were found many years later among Seiler's papers, and others emerged in unsuspected places. About one fifth of the roughly two-hundred and forty compositions that Hanneheim is known to have written are now accounted for. This CD includes all the known viola works.

Hanneheim wrote listener-friendly atonal music. He took Schoenberg's method of "composing with twelve notes related only to each other" one step further: instead of working with rows of twelve notes, he used (to quote the booklet notes) "a melody treated like a row." The opening movement of the first viola sonata, e.g., is based upon a row of 54 notes that, upon being repeated, is "rhythmically modified and stabilizes the structure of the movement like a cantus firmus." Additionally, and undoubtedly influenced by his Romanian origins, Hanneheim uses highly personal, irregular rhythms including meters of five and seven beats. Although thoroughly construed, some passages sound like written-out jazz riffs. Hanneheim had a keen ear for the viola sound; he often uses the C string and gives the instrument nostalgically tinged, songful lines, but also—like at the end of the second sonata—a few virtuoso passages at breakneck speed.

This recording project is a labor of love by Romanian violist, Aida-Carmen Soanea. She and Igor Kamenz are

a tried and true team that have immersed themselves in Hannenheim's unique sound world and bring it to fascinating new life. They play as if they have been performing this repertoire for years, and they probably have. The music has been growing on me with each new listening, and I can only recommend all adventurous violists to get acquainted with the work of Norbert von Hannenheim. The publication of the scores is being planned.



Michael Kimber: Music for Viola 4. *Night Music* for viola and string orchestra; *Adventure Overture*; *Evocations* for viola and string orchestra; *Traveling Music*; *Odyssey* for string orchestra; *Variations on a Polish folk song "Ty pójdiesz górą"* for viola and orchestra; *Ti pidesh horom (Ty pójdiesz górą)* [tr. You will go by the mountain]; *Mój sprytny kotek* [tr. My cute kitten] for viola and string orchestra. Marcin Murawski, Martyna Kowzan, Ewa Tracz, Alicja Guściora, and Justyna Kowalczyk, viola; Ramona and Natalia Boczniewicz, vocals; Mariusz Siejko, double bass; Orkiestra Kameralna Concertino; Marek Siwka, cond. Acte Préalable AP0335.



Michael Kimber: Music for Viola 5. *Ten Short Pieces*; *Six Etude-Caprices*; *Sonata* for solo viola; *Dark Woods* for viola and marimba; *Lullaby for Maksymilian*. Marcin Murawski, Alicja Guściora, Martyna Kowzan, Eugeniusz Dąbrowski and Paweł Michałowski, viola; Pavel Rys, marimba. Acte Préalable AP0346.



Michael Kimber: Music for Viola 6. *Four Melodious Etudes* for solo viola; *Violapalooza!* for a quartet of violists; *Traveling Music* for 4-part viola ensemble; *Fugal Fantasia on "The First Noel"*; *Three Little Quirky Pieces* for viola quartet; *Rhapsody* for viola and string orchestra; *Traveling* for string orchestra;

Paweł Michałowski: *Murovisation-Celebration*.
Marcin Murawski, Alicja Guściora, Martyna Kowzan,
Eugeniusz Dąbrowski, Ewa Tracz and Paweł
Michałowski, viola; Orkiestra dla Dyplomantów;
Eugeniusz Dąbrowski, cond. Acte Préalable AP0349.

Two years ago I reviewed three CDs of music for viola (both solo and in ensemble) by Michael Kimber, performed by Polish violist, Marcin Murawski and students from his class at the Ignacy Jan Paderewski Academy of Music in Poznań, Poland (cf. *JAVS* Vol. 30, Nr. 2, p. 80ff.). Here is a second tranche of three further CDs, bringing the story up to date. The quality of performance, recording and presentation is at the same high level as with the previous installments.

The centerpiece of the whole series in more than one sense, Vol. 4 includes three large-scale compositions for viola and string orchestra. *Night Music*, written in 2013, is a rhapsodic piece in form of very free variations on a yearning motif that keeps tugging at your memory before revealing itself retrospectively as a not-too-distant cousin of the opening strains from the Walton Concerto. *Evocations* stem from 2005; the opening movement achieves a destabilizing ambiguity through the superimposition of three-quarter and six-eighth rhythms, the second one features a wistful tune floating over a accompaniment, and the third is a perpetual motion that is nicely rounded off by a recapitulation of the folk-like motif from the first movement.

Folk music takes center stage with *Variations on a Polish folk song "Ty pójdiesz górą"* (You will go by the mountain), a monumental set of variations written especially for this CD at the suggestion of the present soloist. Kimber avoids any potential monotony with changing textures from one section to the next and has an ace up his sleeve in that two members of the orchestra happen to be accomplished vocalists who are featured as soloists halfway through, singing the actual song with earthy voices. The set climaxes in a rousing Polonaise, and the CD has an in-built encore in the form of an additional setting of the song for the two singers and viola ensemble. Interspersed with these pieces are some short compositions for string orchestra

of a lighter hue. *Adventure Overture* finds Kimber convincingly doing a John Williams, and *Traveling Music* conveniently presents the orchestral version of a piece featured later in the series as a viola ensemble work.

Contrastingly, Vol. 5 consists mostly of unaccompanied compositions, and admittedly the sensation of getting dangerously close to the barrel's bottom can't always be avoided. Both the *Six Etude-Caprices* (1997) and the *Ten Short Pieces* (2010) are charming character pieces that survey the fingerboard much in the way of the classic etudes by Kayser, Kreutzer and the like, and for that very reason much more fun to play than to listen to, well played as they are by Murawski and two of his students. Much more interesting, and no less fun, is the unaccompanied *Sonata* (1997) with its witty updating of a Bach Prelude followed by a jazzy Fugue, a songful Nocturne and dizzy Presto, all eloquently dispatched by Eugeniusz Dąbrowski. *Dark Woods* (2014) for viola and marimba explores some beautiful sonorities in its four contrasting movements, the first of which keeps reminding me of Bloch's 1919 Suite. Paweł Michałowski and his near-namesake Pavel Rys are the imaginative players.

Finally, Vol. 6 recapitulates the various genres that were featured in the previous issues and includes Kimber's most recent viola composition, the *Rhapsody* for viola and strings written early last year for Martyna Kowzan, a student of Murawski's who played a prominent role throughout this project. She performs the melancholic piece, not unlike some of Piazzolla's urban elegies, with authority and a nice sense of line. She is well seconded by her classmate Dąbrowski, here wearing his conducting cap and keeping the orchestra

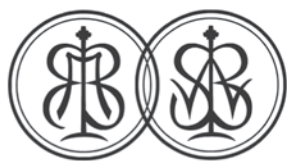
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on its collective toes. The *Four Melodious Etudes* (2009) are so many morsels that Murawski shapes beautifully with that kind of art that conceals art; even the Wieniawski-like flourishes that conclude the set retain a *cantabile* quality.

After becoming a founding member (with Christine Rutledge, Elizabeth Oakes, and Nathalie Cruden) of the Iowa City Viola Quartet in 2004, Kimber wrote many pieces for this group, three of which are included in this volume. *Violapalooza!* (2009) is a minute-long, nicely lilting trifle, the *Three Quirky Pieces* (2006) are just that, their amusingly alliterative titles adding to the general feeling of innocent merriment! The *Fugal Fantasia on "The First Noel"* (2012) is beautifully built and develops to a rousing culmination. The odd one out—in the sense that it was not written for Kimber's own group—is *Traveling Music* (2005), a mellifluous suite of three movements that exists in several versions (that for string orchestra is featured in Vol. 4 of the series). This agreeable piece of Americana should not be confused with the similarly named *Traveling* (2006) for string orchestra and harp, a lovely medley of Latin-influenced rhythms that concludes the present CD. As in Vol. 3, a non-Kimber composition is included: *Murovisation-Celebration* by Paweł Michałowski, a rousing—and rousingly performed by Murawski's students—birthday tribute to the composer's teacher and initiator of the project that has now come to an end. Unless, that is, Michael Kimber still has a few further compositions up his sleeve...

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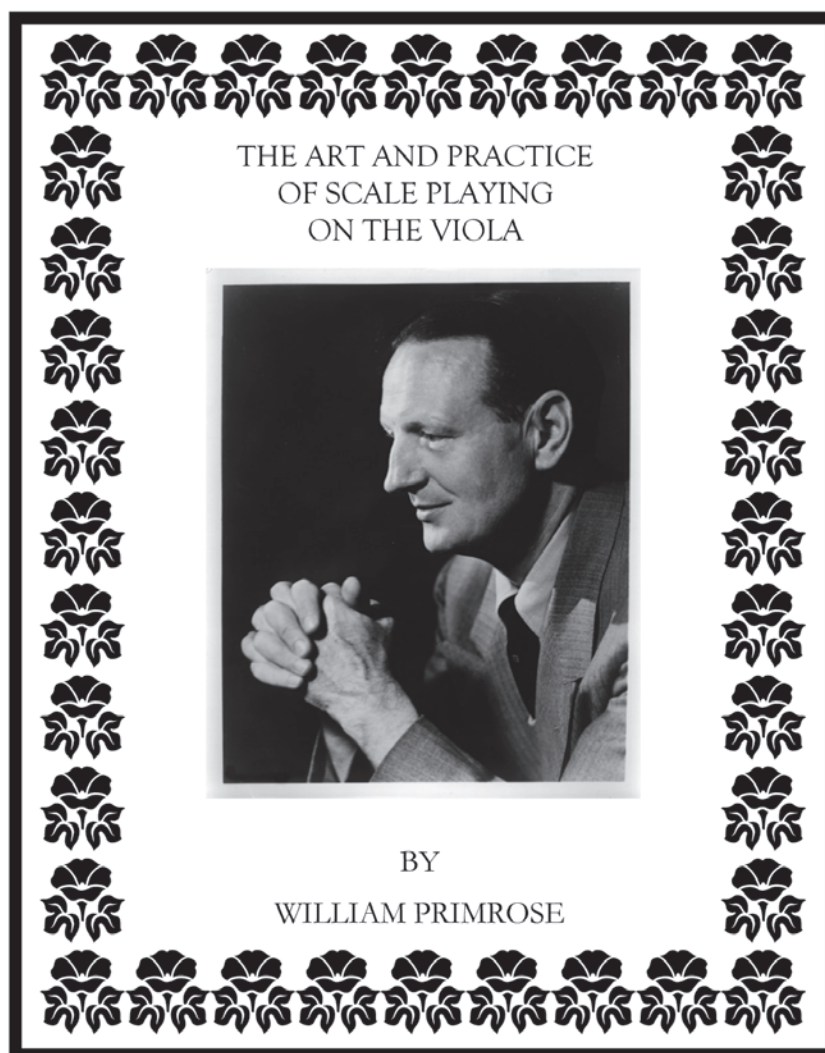
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