

Journal of the American Viola Society

Volume 33 Summer 2017 Online Issue



Features:

Understanding Britten's *Lachrymae* through *Billy Budd*

Exploring the Transcription of the First Movement of
Brahms's Sonata op. 120, no. 1

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Primrose International Viola Competition

and the American Viola Society Festival

Hosted by the Colburn School
June 10-16, 2018



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Journal of the American Viola Society

A publication of the American Viola Society

Summer 2017: Volume 33, Online Issue

p. 3 **From the Editor**

p. 4 **From the President**

News & Notes

p. 5 **In Review: 43rd International Viola Congress:** Daphne Capparelli Gerling shares her impressions of the viola congress held in Cremona, Italy.

Feature Articles

p. 10 **From Clarinet to Viola: “Awkward and Unappealing”: Exploring the Transcription of the First Movement of Brahms’s Sonata op. 120, no. 1:** Mandy Isaacson provides a detailed look at Brahms’s transcription methods by investigating the differences between the clarinet and viola versions of the first movement of the F minor sonata.

p. 29 **Understanding Benjamin Britten’s *Lachrymae* through *Billy Budd*:** Josquin Larsen uses Britten’s opera *Billy Budd* to add multiple layers of context—both historical and compositional—to Britten’s viola masterwork, *Lachrymae*.

Departments

p. 43 **With Viola in Hand: The *Pièces de Concours*:** Melissa Claisse interviews Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot about her recent recording and edition of these “rediscovered treasures from turn-of-the-century France.”

p. 48 **Outreach:** Les Jacobson details the extensive and career-long outreach efforts of violist Richard Young.

p. 56 **Orchestral Matters:** Julie Edwards introduces us to the viola section of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

p. 63 **Book Review:** David Rose reviews *The Accompaniment in “Unaccompanied” Bach: Interpreting the Sonatas and Partitas for Violin*, by Stanley Ritchie.

On the Cover:
Janet Selby
Viola Woodland
Ceramic Etching

Janet Selby created this work to celebrate a concert by Australian violist Deborah Lander and Canadian violist Steve Dann in 2007.

Deeply inspired by Asian art and bonsai, Selby combined the elements of viola, Australian gum, and Canadian maple leaves for this distinctive piece. For more works by the artist, please visit janetselby.com.au.



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If there is an overarching theme to the articles in this issue, it would be the idea of multiples. Performers know what it's like to play with both a meaty core and effortless elegance at once, and scholars, teachers, and students know the necessity of juggling multiple roles. As you will read, the music

for our instrument reflects this in myriad and unexpected ways.

Anyone who has read *Lachrymae's* subtitle will know that the piece is partly Britten's response to another composer's music. But, Josquin Larsen shows us that these allusions to Dowland are only half of the multi-contextual dialogue woven into the work. The other half is Britten's own dialogue with himself, as Larsen enumerates through his close reading of the similarities between *Lachrymae* and Britten's opera, *Billy Budd*.

Other instrumentalists whose repertoire is comparatively more plentiful love to remind violists that two of our most important works, the Brahms sonatas, were originally written for another instrument. Instead of lamenting this fact and Brahms's own designation of the viola versions as "awkward and unappealing," Mandy Isaacson dives into the F-minor sonata from multiple directions. She looks deeply at the genesis of these works and reveals the sometimes fraught and uncertain transcription process of this master composer. After reading the article, you will be both affirmed of the sonatas' rightful central place in our repertoire, and feel freer—as Brahms did—to experiment and change these pieces.

Melissa Claisse's conversation with Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot guides us through multiple pieces—the *pièces de concours* from the Paris Conservatory—while drawing a portrait of the multi-faceted and multi-named

Puchhammer-Sédillot. One of my favorite parts of this article is how it shares a sense of discovery and openness to unexpected pathways, both of which led to this multi-year and multi-media musical project.

In a similar vein, Les Jacobson's thorough accounting of Richard Young's outreach efforts shows us the many multiple lives touched by Young's simple but effective concept of "the deal." This guiding philosophy allowed Young to affect musicians on multiple continents, social situations, and generations.

Julie Edwards's first article in the Orchestral Matters department introduces us to the violists of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. The multiples here are. . .multiple! Seven violists share their experiences—both the ups and downs of orchestral life—along with an overwhelming dose of viola pride. And in David Rose's book review, the idea of multiples is strikingly obvious, as he examines Stanley Ritchie's book about finding multiple voices in Bach's unaccompanied works for violin.

Congresses and festivals are the quintessential embodiment of multiple views, ideas, performances, and personalities, as Daphne Capparelli Gerling illustrates in her effusive and invigorating account of the International Viola Congress in Cremona. While reading it, you will feel the warmth of both the northern Italian sun and the coming together of violists.

As this is my first issue serving as the editor of *JAVS*, I have multiple people to thank. I am deeply grateful to both Chris Hallum and David Bynog for their editorial assistance and countless pieces of wisdom. They greatly contribute to the sustenance of this journal, and it wouldn't be the same without their monumental efforts. I am both excited and honored to serve as the editor of this journal, and I look forward to continuing its outstanding tradition.

Sincerely,

Andrew Braddock
Editor



Hello my friends,

As I take over as president of the American Viola Society I am beginning to understand the amount of work and commitment this position entails. My predecessor Kathy Steely did an amazing job of managing

and helping revitalize the AVS these past three years, and I owe her a large debt of gratitude for leaving the organization in great shape.

No one person is able to “run” an organization of the size and scope of the AVS. It takes many people to assure the organization runs smoothly. The AVS Executive Board is a group of highly motivated violists who mostly work behind the scenes to help guide the direction of the AVS, and the AVS National Office in Dallas, with its expert staff, helps with many things, from collecting dues to sending out the print journals. We all work as a team to help keep the society functioning well.

You may know that the Colburn School in Los Angeles is going to be the venue for the 2018 AVS Festival, and concurrently, the Primrose International Viola Competition (PIVC). Colburn has also taken over the management of the 2018 PIVC, and is funneling a lot of resources to assure a successful competition. We are very excited that the PIVC has just recently been accepted into the World Federation of International Music Competitions, a very prestigious international organization of 119 of the world’s leading music competitions.

So, what about the 2018 Festival? A little background is in order. In 2014 the PIVC was held at the Colburn School, and the AVS also hosted some concurrent non-competition sessions as well. These concurrent sessions were so successful that the AVS board determined to put in place a biennial festival. The 2016 AVS Festival at Oberlin was a great success, and 2018 promises to continue the trend with great master classes and concerts, presented by an international circle of artists, as well as informative lectures and presentations of all types. Of course, there will be a display of contemporary master violas, and the traditional massed viola presentation, with all attendees invited to participate. We are looking forward to having you join with us as we move the AVS on its new path.

At the risk of repeating myself, I stated in the July AVS newsletter that an organization is only as strong as the individual members working together. The AVS needs your commitment as members. You can help by volunteering to serve on committees, running for and serving on the AVS board if called upon, and by becoming involved in your state, local, and school viola organizations. As members of the AVS all of us are engaged in advancing the cause of the viola, our chosen instrument.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me personally if you have concerns, ideas for improving the AVS, or just want to say hello. My email is mpalumbo45@gmail.com.

Warm regards,

In Review: 43rd International Viola Congress

Daphne Capparelli Gerling



Left to right: Carlos María Solare, Erika Eckert, Myrna Layton, Margaret McDonald, Michael Palumbo. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

gathered for registration and the opening ceremony, which featured several officials from the city and provincial governance. A warm welcome was given by Carlos María Solare, President of the International Viola Society (IVS), and by Dorotea Vismara, coordinator of the 43rd International Congress and head of the incredible team that made each event happen over the course of the week. I can't overstate how hard Dorotea and her team worked to make sure each violist had an incredible experience at the congress. They certainly made the IVS very proud. I was not able to attend every event of the congress,

As I write to you, it's been a week since I arrived back from Cremona, and the amazing 43rd International Viola Congress. Recounting the events of a beautiful, viola-filled week might be the only way to accept that I now have to let each of those experiences become a memory—because it was such a spirited, international, energized series of events, and I'm sure I'm not the only attendee who wishes it were not really over.

The City of Cremona and the Associazione Italiana della Viola received over four hundred of us in Italy, with wide open arms of welcome. On the evening of October 3, many of us were arriving, and at Ristorante Pizzeria Duomo, a little “United Nations” of violists was soon dining together, meeting one another, and anticipating with glee the days to follow. Events officially began the next day, October 4, with the semi-final round of the International Viola Competition “Città di Cremona” taking place that morning. By noon, violists from eighteen countries were

but will attempt to give a day-by-day idea of what was on offer and what I most enjoyed.

On October 4, to close the opening ceremony, Giuseppe Russo Rossi (viola) and Giuliano Guidone (piano) offered a recital of transcriptions for viola. The five virtuosic works included themes from *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti, from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and from Rossini's *Cenerentola* and *The Barber of Seville*. The timing of the recital, which was scheduled over the lunch hour, and the beautiful operatic melodies, helped everyone present to work up an appetite for some serious Italian lunch, and for all the fantastic viola events that followed.

With very little pause later that afternoon, it was soon time for Tabea Zimmerman's master class. Prof. Zimmerman's presence at the congress was a great inspiration to everyone present, and both her teaching and performances were awaited with the greatest



Dorotea Vismara addresses the congress. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

anticipation. An unexpected bonus for those of us who were in the Camera di Commercio building on Wednesday morning was to surreptitiously observe some of her rehearsal during the sound-check for the evening's opening concert, and to see her beautiful and calm sense of focus (and gorgeous tone and command of her instrument!).

Ms. Zimmerman's master class that afternoon featured a beautiful performance by Giulia Panchieri of the first movement of Brahms's E-flat Sonata. We were all tremendously taken by Ms. Zimmerman's demonstrations of musical gestures played so intentionally that their meaning was instantly clear and present for the audience. She highlighted the importance of noticing that a motive begins in the piano part and is taken over by the viola, but is *one* musical gesture. While coaching another student playing a Hermann fantasy étude, she demonstrated fourth-finger sliding exercises to increase

facility, gave the audience a clear picture of the harmonic development of the *Étude*, and showed the importance of distributing the bow so the phrases could really sing out. She encouraged the student to work on the same passage in different octaves, and on other strings and parts of the bow for versatility.

Following that class, the esteemed Italian professor Alfonso Ghedin explained important concepts of viola set-up with luthier Bernard Neumann. They discussed the curvature of the bridge in modern versus baroque set-ups, and the importance of measuring the distance between the bridge and the tail piece for optimal instrument resonance. Dwight Pounds followed the session with a memorable lecture on the legacy that resulted from the collaboration between violists David Dalton and William Primrose.

The highlight of the opening day's performances came with the Congress Opening Concert in the Auditorium of the Chamber of Commerce that night. Dana Zemtsov performed the Bruch *Romanze* with beautiful sophistication, supple phrasing, and singing warmth of tone. Ettore Causa, the distinguished Italian violist now on faculty at Yale University, offered a veritable tour-de-force with his transcription of the Schumann Cello Concerto in A minor, op. 129. He played with such elegant confidence and unflagging energy. Michael Kugel followed with his own arrangement of Paganini's *Carnival of Venice*, op. 10, no. 5. He set the highest possible stakes for virtuosity and excelled, leaving a cheering and enthusiastic audience. After a brief interval to re-set the stage, Tabea Zimmerman appeared with percussionist Stefano Tononi to perform the much anticipated *Naturale* by Luciano Berio. Scored for recorded tape, percussion, and solo viola, the work is a journey of sound exploration and deep emotional catharsis, which the audience received enraptured. Together these soloists set the bar for excellence which remained throughout the congress.

Wednesday morning began with a class by Jerzy Kosmala on the Walton and Bartók concerti. By 10:00 a.m., Duo Collailm, from Ireland, featuring Karina and Aiveen Gallagher, were performing a program of Rolla works in the Auditorium. Concurrently, in the Sala Maffei recital hall, it was time for my performance with Wendy Richman and Jorge Variego—the European premiere of Jorge's work *The Invisible Hand*, for two violas and

electronics. We shared this program, themed around Argentina, with violist Silvina Alvarez and pianist Alicia Belleville, who premiered the *Fantasia Tanguera No. 8* by Ezequiel Diz. Jorge, Wendy, and I were very excited to take our work to Rome as well, for a performance at the Università di Roma Tor Vergata two days later. It was a thrill to be premiering works by younger composers at the congress, and this certainly was in keeping with the congress's theme: connecting cultures and generations.

As soon as we finished our performance, we quickly made our way to the stunning auditorium of the Museo del Violino. This museum, possibly Cremona's most important contemporary landmark, is one of the most unique concert halls in the world. Soon we would all hear within it one of the most beautiful concerts I have ever attended—Tabea Zimmerman performing with three of her students, each of whom is an outstanding young professional artist: Sindy Mohamed, German Tcakulov, and Sarina Zickgraf. They performed York Bowen's *Fantasia in E minor*, op. 41, no.1, Garth Knox's *Marin Marais Variations on Folies D'Espagne*, and Max von Weinzierl's *Nocturne*, op. 34. Additionally, Tcakulov and Zimmerman performed George Benjamin's *Viola, Viola*, and Mohamed and Zickgraf gave a heart-rending performance of Frank Bridge's *Lament* for two violas. These performances, especially of the Bowen and Knox, will stay in my memory for a lifetime.



Left to right: German Tcakulov, Sarina Zickgraf, Sindy Mohamed, Tabea Zimmerman. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

The session immediately following was one that I had greatly wanted to attend, but overlap of the sessions and a change of venue made it very difficult, so I was grateful to Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot for sharing with me the CD recording of her project, featuring the *Pièces de Concours* written for the Paris Conservatoire viola examinations between 1896 and 1938. A selection of these works, newly-edited by Jutta, is now available through Schott and should not be missed!

The afternoon continued with lecture-recitals by Anna Serova on the topic of nostalgia in the sonatas of Shostakovich and Rachmaninov (she transcribed the cello sonata for viola), Alicia Marie Valoti speaking about the genesis of the Campagnoli Caprices, several of which she performed, and Luca Sanzò, who offered a very contemporary panorama of twentieth-century Italian and German works for viola and viola d'amore. He also gave a memorable performance of Hindemith's *Sonata* op. 25, no. 1. Susanne Schaal-Gotthardt lectured on Hindemith, the congress's Viola Orchestra began rehearsals, and there were master classes by Michael Kugel and Alfonso Ghedin.

By evening all were excited to hear Bruno Giuranna perform the Brahms Viola Quintets with a select group of student performers connected to the Fondazione Stauffer: Cecilia Ziano, Edoardo Zosi, Maria Kropotkina, and Paolo Bonomini. I was en-route to Rome by then and had to miss this performance by Italy's most revered living violist, but it was by all accounts a wonderful rendition of these works that showcase the inner viola parts so beautifully.

Thursday's offerings were truly international and highlighted some of the conservatory groups visiting. The Birmingham Conservatoire presented seventeen of Campagnoli's Caprices, the Portuguese Viola Society gave a recital and a lecture of Portuguese works with guitar, and Bogusława Hubisz-Sielska and Mariusz Sielski offered a recital of Polish and Eastern European works inspired by Italian opera. Valerie Dart, an Australian-based English violist, presented a lecture on British repertoire from 1885–1953, focusing on uncovering the works of lesser-known composers including Emil Kreuz, William Alwyn, Edmund Rubbra, and Cecil Forsyth.

Ettore Causa offered a recital featuring Schnittke's *Suite in the Old Style*, Op. 80, César Franck's *Mélancolie*, and Brahms's cello Sonata in E Minor, with Roberto Arosio.

Are you tired yet? Because everything I just described took place in 48 hours! And this was only the half way point...

On October 6 in the evening the Città di Cremona Competition finalists were announced: Matthew Cohen, Raphaël Pagnon, and Muriel Razawi; and once back from Rome on Friday October 7, I felt a great need to catch up! I had missed so much... Bruno Giuranna's lecture on the Brahms sonatas, and especially a highly-lauded performance by American violist Erika Eckert and pianist Margaret McDonald showcasing Libby Larsen's Viola Sonata and Margaret Brouwer's *Rhapsodic Sonata*. That afternoon, student ensembles from several conservatories including Rotterdam, The Hague, Cosenza, Florence, Porto, Birmingham, Milan, Bari, and Siena took to the city squares for viola ensemble street concerts, enjoyed by numerous passersby. Marco Misciagna's recital featured virtuosic works from Spain, Emerson de Biaggi and Carlos Aleixo dos Reis represented the Brazilian Viola society with their lecture-recital, and Dana Zemtsov and Clara Dutto stole our hearts with their rendition of the Vieuxtemps Sonata. Ms. Dutto played beautifully throughout the congress in several settings.

On Thursday at lunchtime several IVS and AVS board members met to reiterate their goals of working together for the common good of violists and viola activities around the world. It was gratifying to encounter the dedication of all our colleagues, which creates a unique warmth and dynamism in our world-wide viola community. That evening the Italian Viola Society also hosted an elegant banquet for congress participants.

On Saturday October 8, Margaret Carey performed Jacques Hétu's Variations, op. 11, for solo viola and



Ettore Causa coaching Yu Yue on Reger. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.



Distinguished holders of the Silver Alto Clef. Standing (left to right): Ronald Schmidt (Germany), Bruno Giuranna (Italy), Michael Vidulich (Australia/New Zealand), Dwight Pounds (USA), Carlos María Solare (Germany/Argentina). Seated (left to right): Baird Knechtel (Canada), Ann Bockes Frederking (Canada). Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

Danny Keasler performed works for viola and percussion in collaboration with Kyle Acuncius. With this recital both the Canadian and Thai Viola Societies were represented! I was very sad to miss "Beyond Brahms"—a recital featuring lesser-known and unpublished works for mezzo-soprano (alto), viola and piano by Richard Strauss, Joseph Marx, Adolf Busch, Frank Bridge, José Moreno Gans, and Charles Martin Loeffler, as well as Viacheslav Dinerchtein's recital with Clara Dutto "In the Footsteps of Rudolph Barshai," which featured sonatas by Bunin and Kryukov.

Ettore Causa gave a wonderful master class to conclude this final morning. Matteo Mizera performed Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Causa brought about a beautiful change in his playing, helping him to differentiate the dynamics, color, and structure of the phrases. Causa showed the audience the importance of varying vibrato rather than always using the same speed and intensity, as a way to create a clearer expressive hierarchy within phrases. He sang to demonstrate the weight and shape of the gestures, and showed Mizera how he was unintentionally accenting down-bows. By removing these needless accents, he was able to create more connected phrases.

Working with Yu Yue, who played a Reger Suite, Causa emphasized the importance of faithfully following the dynamics on the page. "He doesn't really give you space, because he writes everything down," he said, highlighting the fact that Reger's instructions in the score are already very detailed for the performer. He suggested minimizing the movement of the hand at the bow change in the lower half, while still keeping the hand round and soft, to avoid unwanted accentuation of bar three. This was very convincing, resulting in a simpler, more direct and cohesive interpretation.

At the close of the congress, Michael Kugel was awarded the Silver Alto Clef for extraordinary services to the viola. And with the closing chords of the Viola Orchestra, the audience joined in enthusiastically to clap for the Radetzky March and sing the refrain of Verdi's beloved *Va Pensiero!* Closing the congress on this very high note, we all lingered taking pictures and saying goodbyes to our friends and colleagues from around the world. Michael Vidulich and Anna Brooker of the Australia/New Zealand Viola Society officially announced IVS 44 in Wellington, NZ, September 1–5, 2017, and we were busy making plans to attend even before leaving the concert hall in Cremona.

Such is the nature of violists, excited to band together to perform and share the beauty of our instrument and its repertoire at every opportunity. Perhaps that makes it even more fitting that most of this text was written aboard a flight to the II ENVIO, Encontro Nacional de Violistas, which took place in Florianópolis, Brazil less than two weeks after the congress in Cremona! I'll close by thanking Dorotea Vismara, Claudia Wolvington, their amazing team, and all the congress participants and incredible guest artists who transformed Italy's pre-eminent Città del Violino into the City of the Viola for IVS 43!



The viola orchestra in action at the final concert. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.



Michael Palumbo, Daphne Gerling, and Bruno Giuranna share a fond farewell. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.



Claudia Wolvington and her amazing team. Pictured left to right: Anne Lokken, Claudia Wolvington, Giulia Panchieri, and Chiara Morandi. Image provided courtesy of Dwight Pounds.

Daphne Capparelli Gerling is Senior Artist Teacher of viola and chamber music at the University of North Texas College of Music, where she also co-directs the UNT Summer String Institute. She has served as an AVS board member since 2014, and maintains an online presence at www.daphnegerling.com.

From Clarinet to Viola: “Awkward and Unappealing” Exploring the Transcription of the First Movement of Brahms’s Sonata op. 120, no. 1

Mandy Isaacson

Johannes Brahms wrote his op. 120 sonatas in 1894 for clarinet and piano. While the viola arrangements have become part of standard viola repertoire, Brahms, in a letter to Joseph Joachim in October 1894, stated, “I fear as viola sonatas the two works are very awkward and unappealing.”¹ This description is confusing and problematic for the many violists who consider Brahms’s viola sonatas an important part of viola repertoire and examples of his development and expanded use of the viola in his chamber music compositions. This article will outline the context surrounding the creation of these works and examine the differences between the clarinet and viola parts in the first movement of the F minor sonata.

Genesis of the Sonatas

In 1891, Richard Mühlfeld’s clarinet playing inspired Brahms to write a new set of chamber works featuring the clarinet. He promised Mühlfeld a clarinet trio and clarinet quintet, which became op. 114 and op. 115, respectively.² Both of these works had their premiere in 1891. Versions substituting viola for clarinet were published in 1892.³ It was a common tradition dating back to the invention of the clarinet to write alternate clarinet parts that could be played on viola.⁴ With Joachim playing viola, the viola versions of trio and quintet were first performed in December 1891, shortly after the premieres of the original clarinet versions.⁵

In the summer of 1894, Brahms wrote in a letter to Mühlfeld that the beauty of his trip to Bad Ischl inspired him to write new clarinet works, which he identified in another letter written on the same day as “two modest sonatas” (*zwei bescheidene Sonaten*) for clarinet and piano.⁶ Brahms and Mühlfeld first performed the sonatas privately in November 1894 for a small audience that included

Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim. Several house concerts followed in November, including one at the family Sommerhof’s home that also featured Mozart’s clarinet trio (K. 498, “Kegelstatt”) with Joachim playing viola.⁷ The first public performances of the clarinet sonatas took place in Vienna on January 8, 1895 (E-flat major) and January 11, 1895 (F minor).⁸

Brahms first mentioned viola versions of these sonatas in a letter to Joachim on October 14, 1894, when he wrote that he would like to play the sonatas for Clara Schumann. He stated that he would either perform with Mühlfeld or bring viola parts for Joachim to play. Three days later, he responded to Joachim’s reply, stating: “I hope Mühlfeld will be able to come—because I fear as viola sonatas the two works are very awkward and unappealing. That reminds me of the secret irritation that I had when you told me once, quite simply and casually, that you had played my clarinet quintet as a violin sonata. So why should one go to the trouble to write fairly sensibly?”⁹

The viola parts were not discussed again until February 26, 1895, when Brahms contacted Fritz Simrock to begin discussing the publication process. In this letter, Brahms stated that he thought the title should appear as “für Klarinette oder Bratsche” even though, he admitted, he had yet to create a viola part. He also mentioned creating an arrangement for violin (likely at Simrock’s request for increased sales¹⁰) after the clarinet and viola editions were finished.¹¹ On March 22, Brahms wrote to Simrock that he did not want the publication of the clarinet and viola editions to wait until the violin arrangement was complete out of fear that the violin arrangement would become more popular than the clarinet and viola versions.¹²

Manuscripts and Sources

Brahms was meticulously involved in the publication process. While there are some surviving sketches showing Brahms's compositional process, he burned many of his sketches. After creating his first draft, he typically sent the work to his copyist to create the parts for performance, known as copyist's manuscripts. Brahms used these parts for performances and also made corrections on them if needed. He would then send these parts to be engraved, from which a proof would then be created. Once the proofs were ready, they were sent back to Brahms and any colleagues he wanted to examine the proofs before publication. Finally, the first edition would be printed.¹³

Given the performance and publication dates, it appears that Brahms and Mühlfeld performed using the original autograph manuscripts of the op. 120 sonatas instead of a copyist's manuscript. Although Brahms first mentioned the sonatas to his publisher Simrock in September 1894, he did not send the parts to be engraved until February 26, 1895, and he sent the viola parts several days later.¹⁴ On March 26, Brahms asked Simrock to send copies of the sonata—along with the viola part—to him, Clara Schumann, Joachim, d'Albert, Herzogenberg, Theodor Kirchner, Theodor Grimm, and Mühlfeld.¹⁵ The first edition was published by Simrock in June 1895.

The autograph manuscripts of the clarinet part and score were sold at auction in 1997 by Sotheby's auction house in London and have since been unavailable for scholars to view.¹⁶ The Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek holds the engraver's copies of the sonatas, including the viola part which has been digitized by the American Viola Society and made available online.¹⁷ The copy of the clarinet manuscript on which Brahms marked his changes is housed in the library of the University of California at Riverside.¹⁸ The clarinet, viola, and piano parts were copied by William Kupfer and were neither signed nor dated by Brahms.¹⁹ Simrock published the violin arrangement in 1895 without listing the arranger, but by 1903, Brahms's name was specified.²⁰

The engraver's copy is the only surviving copy of the viola part. Along with the first published edition, it forms the basis for urtext editions. Indications on the engraver's copy make clear that it was not a working copy. The numerous corrections on it are atypical of the care Brahms took in creating the clarinet part, and later, the violin arrangement.²¹

Brahms's Transcriptions

In his viola transcriptions of clarinet works, Brahms displays a wide variety of adherence to the original clarinet versions. Brahms transcribed the clarinet parts of the trio and quintet with virtually no changes other than transposing it to C and putting it into alto clef. In the sonatas, however, the transcription process was not as simple. Creitz identifies Brahms's transcription methods as either 1) creating no alterations whatsoever, such as in the trio and quintet; or 2) fully altering all voices, as in the violin arrangement of the sonatas.²²

Writing in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Donald Francis Tovey shares his belief that the sonatas allowed Brahms to better showcase his transcription abilities: "In the trio and quintet the relation of the clarinet to the string parts makes it impossible to alter the position of anything, and transcription accordingly reveals all the points where the viola fails to represent a clarinet. But with these sonatas Brahms could use a free hand." He goes on to state that the viola transcription is better than the violin version because the piano part is unaltered.²³ In the violin transcription, the piano takes over the violin melody line when it moves below the violin's lowest note, rather than the violin playing it up an octave.

In the first movement of the F minor sonata, the viola part differs from the original clarinet part in thirteen places.²⁴ These changes fall into three different categories: the first contains idiomatic changes, meaning added notes or techniques that would be unavailable to use on the clarinet, i.e. arpeggiated chords, double stops, or viola notes below the clarinet's lowest pitch. The second category consists of octave transpositions, and the third includes completely altered notes or rhythms. In making these changes, Brahms sought to use a different color in the viola or make the part more comfortable for a violist to play, possibly to accommodate amateur violists.²⁵ As I show below, however, many of these changes create problems by disrupting the melodic contour and obscuring textural clarity.

Although the viola and the clarinet occupy similar ranges, the tonal characteristics of each register varies greatly between the instruments. Tovey states that "the viola is querulous and strained just where the cantabile of the clarinet is warmest. The lowest octave of the clarinet is of a dramatic blue-grotto hollowness and coldness, where the fourth string of the viola is of a rich and pungent warmth."²⁶

Example 1. Johannes Brahms, Sonata op. 120 no. 1, mvt. 1: *Allegro appassionato*, mm 79–87.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a Clarinet (Cl.) and Viola (Vla.) duet. The first system shows measures 79-87. The Clarinet part is in the upper register, while the Viola part is transposed one octave lower. Both parts feature a melodic line with arpeggiated chords and a forte (f) dynamic. The second system continues the musical phrase, with the Viola part again transposed one octave lower than the Clarinet part. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

There are several instances in this movement where Brahms's choice of octave demonstrates his awareness of this difference. The melodic line in the opening phrase appears one octave lower in the viola version than in the clarinet. In the original clarinet manuscripts, Brahms experimented with placing the clarinet in the lower octave, but in the end, he settled on the upper octave.²⁷ If the music were written in the lower octave, the clarinet would play primarily in its lowest chalumeau register which, according to Tovey, is characterized by hollow sound. Instead, the clarinet plays in the upper octave, in its warm clarion register. The viola, on the other hand, has a warm and full sound in its lower octave. Playing the melody in the upper octave would give it a strained intensity.²⁸

Another example from the idiomatic category occurs in mm. 79–87 (ex. 1). While this passage is perfectly playable on viola in the original octave, Brahms nevertheless transposed it down an octave in the viola version.

The lower octave on the viola sounds more open and less strained than the upper octave, especially with the use of the low D-flat and C, notes outside of the clarinet's range. To further enhance the open sound, Brahms added arpeggiated chords in m. 79 and m.86 that make use of the open C string. As Klorman states, these alterations maintain the music's intensity but still make it accessible to amateurs.²⁹

In the end of the movement, Brahms transposed the first seven measures of the coda (mm. 214–220) one octave lower in the viola version. It appears that the copyist first made this change, which caused Brahms to deliberate over his final decision. At first, he wrote the pitches in the original octave, but later negated this by writing "8va basso" under the passage.³⁰ Hong points out that

The viola descent in m. 213 and the first part of the Coda (mm. 214–220) . . . provides a wonderfully mysterious low point before the music bursts into the upper register for another registral descent in m. 224. The octave shift from C4 to C5 in m. 220 . . . in the viola version is of especially effective contrast in this whole passage. This also avoids twin peaks, as compared to the clarinet's higher version.³¹

Throughout his career, Brahms showed concern over the playability of his music. While composing one of his string quartets, he wrote to Joachim: "In the difficult passages . . . would you alter a few notes for me? To me, fingerings are always just evidence that something is rotten in the violin scoring."³² This can be seen in the changes Brahms made in mm. 139–141 (ex. 2). The copyist changed the triplet arpeggio in m. 139 so that mm.140–142 would be an octave lower than the clarinet original. But Brahms corrected mm.140–142 back into the original clarinet octave, while changing the last few notes of each of the arpeggios, presumably to make them easier to play.

Example 2. Johannes Brahms, Sonata op. 120 no. 1, mvt. 1: *Allegro appassionato*. Comparison of different versions of mm. 138–142, and opening theme, mm. 5–9.

Original Theme (mm. 5-9)

poco f

Clarinet Line (mm. 138-142)

espress.

Copyist's Version (mm. 138-142)

espress.

Brahms' Correction (mm. 138-142)

espress.

The image displays four staves of musical notation. The first staff, 'Original Theme (mm. 5-9)', is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It begins with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B-flat3, and C4, then a half note D4, and ends with a half note E4. The second staff, 'Clarinet Line (mm. 138-142)', is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It starts with a half note G3, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A3, B-flat3, C4), then a half note D4, and ends with a half note E4. The third staff, 'Copyist's Version (mm. 138-142)', is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It starts with a half note G2, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A2, B-flat2, C3), then a half note D3, and ends with a half note E3. The fourth staff, 'Brahms' Correction (mm. 138-142)', is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It starts with a half note G2, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A2, B-flat2, C3), then a half note D3, and ends with a half note E3. The notation for the triplet in the fourth staff is corrected to match the original theme's pitch contour.

Example 3. Johannes Brahms, Sonata op. 120 no. 1, mvt. 1: *Allegro appassionato*, mm. 28–30.

Original clarinet part (in C)

Clarinet down an octave

Viola part as altered by Brahms

Pno.

The image displays four staves of musical notation. The first staff, 'Original clarinet part (in C)', is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It begins with a half note G3, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A3, B-flat3, C4), then a half note D4, and ends with a half note E4. The second staff, 'Clarinet down an octave', is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It starts with a half note G2, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A2, B-flat2, C3), then a half note D3, and ends with a half note E3. The third staff, 'Viola part as altered by Brahms', is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It starts with a half note G2, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A2, B-flat2, C3), then a half note D3, and ends with a half note E3. The fourth staff, 'Pno.', is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs), 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It features a piano accompaniment with a half note G3 in the right hand and a half note G2 in the left hand, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A3, B-flat3, C4) in the right hand and a half note D3 in the left hand, and ends with a half note E4 in the right hand and a half note E3 in the left hand.

Example 4. Johannes Brahms, *Sonata op. 120 no. 1, mvt. 1: Allegro appassionato, mm. 187–191.*

This passage is a variation of the opening theme (shown in first staff in ex. 2), so the final notes of the clarinet's arpeggios (A-flat in m. 139 and D-flat in m. 141) are thematic. In the viola transcription, however, Brahms chose to alter these notes. Did he, in haste, forget that they were thematic, as Creitz proposes,³³ or did he simply choose to "alter a few notes" to make it more comfortable for a violist to play, assuming that the listener could still infer the theme? Wide leaps, such the octave at the end of m. 139 in the clarinet part, are idiomatic for the clarinet, but they are not as easily facilitated on a stringed instrument, perhaps lending credence to the idea that Brahms made these changes to make the work more easily playable on the viola.

Another instance of note alteration occurs in mm. 29–30. The viola part was transposed down an octave from the clarinet original. This change, though, would make the first note of m. 30 fall outside of the viola's range. To accommodate for this, Brahms starts the viola's arpeggios in m. 29 and m. 30 on the second pitch of the clarinet's (while keeping it in the same metrical position). This has the effect of transposing the arpeggio up a third, causing the viola to end its arpeggio a third higher—displaced by an octave—than the clarinet.

Although many of Brahms's changes solve problems, they can also create others. In several instances, sudden octave

Example 5. Johannes Brahms, *Sonata op. 120 no. 1, mvt. 1: Allegro appassionato, mm. 200–201.*

displacement disrupts the melodic contour, as seen in examples 4 and 5. In the clarinet version, the line descends from m. 187 to m. 191 without interruption. The viola version starts in the lower octave, but loses the sense of continuous descent with the leap back into the original octave in m. 189.

The changes to mm. 200–201 are fraught with more complicated implications. In the original version, Brahms suddenly displaces the melodic line up a minor 15th (an octave plus a minor seventh) between the first and second beats of m. 200. The viola version retains this same leap—albeit an octave lower—and contains another octave leap on the first beat of m. 201, realigning it with the original version's octave. Brahms used this octave leap in m. 201 to reinforce the fortissimo upward leap in the piano part. In addition to an idiomatic grace note in m. 201, Brahms added a *sforzando* to the viola part which was not present in the clarinet original. These changes make the passage more idiomatic on viola but also alter the character of the original clarinet line. In comparison to the clarinet original, the leap and *sforzando* in the viola part more closely align with the piano's gestures, creating a more unified and powerful musical statement.

Transposing the clarinet line down an octave sometimes causes the texture to become muddy (ex. 6). In these instances, the solo line falls in the middle of the piano register instead of serving as the highest voice. This not only alters the interactions between voices, but also creates a denser texture. In mm. 92–93, the clarinet part is the highest voice in the texture, residing at least an octave above the piano's highest notes. In mm. 94–95, although the piano is shifted up an octave, the clarinet still floats above the piano's treble voice. In the viola version, the melodic line for this entire passage (mm. 92–95) appears an octave lower than in the clarinet. The viola's melody in the first part (mm. 92–93) sits just above the piano's highest notes, similar to the placement of the clarinet line in relation to the piano in mm. 94–95. Yet in mm. 94–95, the entire viola line remains below the piano's upper notes, interweaving between the pitches of the right-hand chords. This is another instance of Brahms transposing down a passage that is playable on viola in the original octave. This change possibly facilitates the *piano* and *pianissimo* dynamics in the solo line and allows for a warmer color from the viola. Overall, the lower octave creates "the thick, often muddy, almost viscous inner-voice texture"³⁴ that Brahms so often employs when writing for the viola.

This passage also contains an example of a complete alteration from the original. In the viola version, the copyist added a rest on the first beat of m. 94, replacing the clarinet's quarter note. Brahms did not change this back. The same rest occurs in the other two appearances of this theme in mm. 40–42 and mm. 155–157.

Given the wide variety of editions and versions of these sonatas (including the original clarinet, Brahms's transcription, or any combination thereof), violists have multiple options to choose from when playing these works. In surveying recordings of the F-minor sonata, no two violists play the exact same octaves and alterations. In addition to differences of opinion evident in musical performance, written opinions also vary widely. For example, Bruno Giuranna and Thomas Hall offer two opposing views. Giuranna states:

Although the viola sounds well in low registers . . . simply to cut out all the high notes by taking them down an octave leads to monotony of timbre. You lose all sense of contrast, the music sounds compressed, whereas it should have great breadth and lyricism. And in performance the sudden octave displacements destroy the musical continuity.³⁵

Hall disagrees:

The fact is, however, that the character of the viola does change in the high registers. The typical Brahmsian predilection for the thick, often muddy, almost viscous inner-voice texture is promoted often by the octave placement of the Brahms viola part. The notion of chamber-music-like quality between the piano and the viola is maintained by not always using the same octave as the clarinet. In the clarinet version, the gaudy upper register of that instrument is ignored; why transpose the viola up to its obvious exposure?³⁶

Statements in Brahms's letters clearly show that he intended to create a viola part despite it being "awkward." In his previous correspondence, Brahms placed a high value on his pieces being idiomatic and comfortable to play, so his displeasure over the op.120 transcriptions may stem from the difficulty of crafting a viola version that was as idiomatically accessible as the original clarinet version.³⁷ Because the original employs large leaps and high registers, there are times when the viola simply fails

to recreate the clarinet's ease. But, by looking closely at Brahms's alterations, it becomes apparent how they allow the viola to shine. Some of the changes were likely meant to accommodate amateurs, but this group makes up a small percentage of those who perform these works today. Therefore, it is now up to the individual violist to choose which version they think best fits Brahms's musical intentions, and to decide for themselves if each change was created in the spirit of accommodating amateurs or to highlight the viola's special qualities. In doing this, one should bear in mind the advice Brahms gave to a performer of one of his works: "Machen Sie es wie Sie wollen, machen Sie es nur schön,": "do it however you want, just do it beautifully."³⁸

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Sonata op. 120 Bratsche

Allegro appassionato.

Maestri Prohman op. 120 No. 1

ina. que. 1. 2. 3. 4. 1. 2.

poco f.

dim.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

p. ma ben marc.

10411

1891 by J. J. Simon, Berlin

1891

Handwritten musical score for Viola, featuring ten staves of music. The score includes various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked "Allegro". The score is numbered 1 through 10. The first staff is marked "1." and the last staff is marked "10.". The score includes dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *pp*, *espress.*, *mol*, and *marc.*. The notation includes slurs, ties, and various note values. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

1.

dim.

pp

espress.

mol

marc.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

espressivo

via

vi

for
for

ma ben marc.

cresc.

1.

-x

-x

5



Handwritten musical score for Viola, featuring multiple staves with notes, rests, and performance markings. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *f*, *cresc*, and *dim*, as well as tempo and expression markings like *Sostenuto ed espressivo*. The notation includes various musical symbols, including clefs, key signatures, and time signatures. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

Handwritten markings on the left margin include:

- 4.
- 1.1
- vz
- in 1/3
- gr. hinf.
- 1. hinf.
- 8. hinf.
- in 1/3




Handwritten markings on the right margin include:

- Obsc. von 20

Appendix B: Complete Viola Part

The complete viola part with clarinet alternatives for the first movement was created by the author. Both parts were taken from the original publications by Simrock in 1895 and the Henle Critical Edition.

Alterations include three types:

	Idiomatic
	Octave
	Alterations

Sonata in F Minor, op. 120

movement 1

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)



The musical score for the first movement of the Sonata in F Minor, op. 120, by Johannes Brahms, is presented in two staves: Clarinet (in C) and Viola. The score is divided into measures 1-4, 10-13, 17-20, 23-26, and 29-32. The Viola part is highlighted with a solid line box, indicating idiomatic alterations. The Clarinet part is shown with a dashed line box, indicating octave alterations. The score includes dynamic markings such as *poco f*, *f*, and *dim.*

This musical score page contains measures 34 through 68 of the Sonata in F Minor, op. 120. The score is written for Clarinet (Cl.) and Viola (Vla.).

Measures 34-42: The Clarinet and Viola play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 42 features a boxed-in triplet of eighth notes in the Viola part. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

Measures 43-48: The Viola part continues with a melodic line. Measure 45 is marked *dolce* (sweetly). Measure 48 is marked *ma ben marc.* (but with more emphasis).

Measures 49-53: The Viola part features a melodic line with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking in measure 50 and a *pp* (pianissimo) marking in measure 51. Measure 53 is marked *p*.

Measures 54-59: The Viola part continues with a melodic line. Measure 57 is marked *p*. Measure 59 is marked *f* (forte).

Measures 60-67: The Clarinet and Viola play a complex rhythmic pattern. Measure 60 is marked *f*. Measure 62 is marked *f*. Measure 64 is marked *f*. Measure 66 is marked *f*. Measure 67 is marked *f*.

Measure 68: The Viola part continues with a melodic line. Measure 68 is marked *f*.

This musical score page contains six systems of music for a Sonata in F Minor, op. 120. The instruments are Clarinet (Cl.) and Viola (Vla.).

- System 1 (Measures 75-79):** Cl. has a whole rest. Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A *dim.* marking is under the first half note. A fermata is over the second half note. A *f* marking is under the third half note. A box highlights the first half note.
- System 2 (Measures 80-84):** Cl. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A box highlights the first half note.
- System 3 (Measures 85-89):** Cl. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A box highlights the first half note. A *p* marking is under the second half note.
- System 4 (Measures 90-94):** Cl. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A box highlights the first half note. A *p* marking is under the first half note, and a *pp* marking is under the second half note. A *espress.* marking is under the third half note.
- System 5 (Measures 95-99):** Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A *dolce* marking is under the first half note.
- System 6 (Measures 100-104):** Vla. has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. A *pp* marking is under the first half note.

111
Vla. *f*

117
Vla. *f marc.*

125
Cl. 3
Vla. 3

132
Vla. 2 *f* *espress.*

139
Cl. 3
Vla. 3

145
Cl. *f*
Vla. *f*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for Sonata in F Minor, op. 120, contains measures 111 through 145. It features staves for Viola (Vla.) and Clarinet (Cl.).
- Measures 111-116: Viola part, starting at measure 111. Measure 117 includes the marking *f marc.*
- Measures 125-131: Clarinet and Viola parts. Measures 125 and 131 contain triplets, indicated by a '3' above the notes.
- Measures 132-138: Viola part. Measure 132 has a '2' above the notes. Measures 134-138 include dynamic markings *f* and *espress.*
- Measures 139-144: Clarinet and Viola parts. Measures 139 and 144 contain triplets, indicated by a '3' above the notes.
- Measures 145-149: Clarinet and Viola parts. Measures 145 and 149 include dynamic markings *f*.
- Boxed areas: There are two rectangular boxes. The first box is around measures 125-126 of the Viola part. The second box is around measures 145-149 of the Viola part.

This page of the musical score for the Sonata in F Minor, op. 120, contains measures 150 through 189. The score is written for Clarinet (Cl.) and Viola (Vla.).

- Measures 150-156:** The Cl. part begins with a melodic line marked *dim.* and *p*. The Vla. part has a corresponding melodic line, with measures 150-153 highlighted by a black box. The Vla. part is marked *p* and *p dolce*. Both parts have a fermata over measure 156.
- Measures 157-163:** The Vla. part continues with a melodic line marked *dolce*. The Cl. part is not present in this system.
- Measures 164-172:** The Vla. part continues with a melodic line marked *dim.* and *pp*. The Cl. part is not present in this system.
- Measures 173-178:** The Vla. part continues with a melodic line marked *cresc.* and *f*. The Cl. part is not present in this system.
- Measures 179-182:** The Cl. part begins with a melodic line marked *f*. The Vla. part has a corresponding melodic line marked *f*. Both parts have a fermata over measure 182.
- Measures 183-189:** The Cl. part continues with a melodic line marked *f*. The Vla. part has a corresponding melodic line marked *f*. Both parts have a fermata over measure 189.

6 Sonata in F Minor, op. 120

Vla. 194 *f*

Cl. 199

Vla. *f*

Vla. 203 *p cresc.* *f*

Cl. 211 *Sostenuto ed espressivo* *fp*

Vla. *fp*

Cl. 216 *p* *cresc.*

Vla. *p* *cresc.*

Vla. 221 *f* 6

Vla. 231 *p s.v.*

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Notes

- ¹ “...ich fürchte, als Bratschen-Sonaten sind die beiden Stücke sehr ungeschickt und unerfreulich.” Andreas Moser, ed. *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim Band VI*. (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1908), 277. All translations by the author unless otherwise stated.
- ² Colin Lawson, *Brahms: Clarinet Quintet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 32.
- ³ James Spencer Fay, *The Clarinet and Its Use As a Solo Instrument in the Chamber Music of Johannes Brahms*. (D.M.A. diss., Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 70-76.
- ⁴ Edward Klorman, e-mail message to author, September 18, 2016.
- ⁵ Fay, 71.
- ⁶ Imogen Fellinger, “Johannes Brahms und Richard Mühlfeld,” *Brahms Studien* IV (1981), 84-86.
- ⁷ Fay, 78. Lawson, 40-41.
- ⁸ Heinz Becker, “Brahms, Johannes,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Grove, 2001), 4: 202.

- ⁹ “Ich hoffe, Mühlfeld wird kommen können -- denn ich fürchte, als Bratschen-Sonaten sind die beiden Stücke sehr ungeschickt und unerfreulich. Das erinnert mich an den heimlichen Ärger, den ich hatte, als Du mir einmal ganz einfach und beiläufig sagtest, Du habest mein Klarinetten-Quintett als Violin-sonate gespielt. Weshalb gibt man sich denn Mühe, einigermaßen vernünftig zu schreiben?” Moser, *Briefwechsel*, 277.
- ¹⁰ Max Kalbeck, ed. *Johannes Brahms Briefe an P.J. Simrock und Fritz Simrock Band XII*, (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1919), 166.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 164-165.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 167.
- ¹³ Robert Pascall, “The Editor’s Brahms,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* 1999, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 250-253.
- ¹⁴ Fay, 79.
- ¹⁵ Kalbeck, 168.
- ¹⁶ Pei-Chi Hong, *Experimental Brahms: A Comparative Study of the Differences of Design and Performance in Brahms’s Sonata Opus 120 No. 1 for Clarinet/Viola/ Violin and Piano, First Movement*, (D.M.A. diss., New England Conservatory of Music, 2003), 9-10.
- ¹⁷ <http://studio.americanviolasociety.org/studio/files/2013/04/Brahms-op-120-viola-part-Brahms-Archiv.pdf> See Appendix A.
- ¹⁸ Hong, 11.
- ¹⁹ Fay, 79.
- ²⁰ Hong, 11.
- ²¹ James Creitz, “The Brahms Sonatas, Op. 120 for Viola and their Textual Challenges,” last modified March 2004, accessed October 2, 2013, http://www.solisti.de/brahms/sonatas120_eng.html.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Donald Francis Tovey, “Brahms’s Chamber Music” in *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, ed. Walter Willson Cobbett and Colin Mason (London: Oxford University Press, 1963): 182.
- ²⁴ For a version showing all the changes, see appendix B.
- ²⁵ Klorman, *op. cit.*
- ²⁶ Tovey, 182.
- ²⁷ Mitchell Estrin, “The Brahms Sonatas: An Examination of the Manuscripts,” *The Clarinet* vol. 3, no. 4 (2006): 70-71.
- ²⁸ For examples of this passage played both ways, compare recordings by Kim Kashkashian and Yuri Bashmet.
- ²⁹ Klorman, *op. cit.*
- ³⁰ For the manuscript, see appendix A.
- ³¹ Hong, 71.
- ³² Johannes Brahms, translated by Styra Avins in “Performing Brahms’s Music: Clues from his Letters,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style* 2003, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.
- ³³ Creitz.
- ³⁴ Thomas G. Hall, “New Works: Sonata No. 1 in F Minor for Viola and Piano.” *Journal of the American Viola Society*, ed. Milton Katims, Vol. 6/2 (1990): 53.
- ³⁵ Bruno Giuranna, “Brahms’ ‘Viola’ Sonata in E-flat.” *The Strad* 104 (June 1993): 552.
- ³⁶ Hall, 53.
- ³⁷ Avins, “Performing Brahms...”, 26.
- ³⁸ Johannes Brahms, quoted in Hong, 183-184.

Understanding Benjamin Britten's *Lachrymae* through *Billy Budd*

Josquin Larsen

Benjamin Britten was one of England's foremost composers in the twentieth century and especially well-known for his operatic works. Thanks to an encounter between Britten and Scottish violist William Primrose, violists and audiences around the world are graced with an important piece for viola and piano: *Lachrymae: Reflections on a Song of Dowland*. In studying a work, it can easily become a self-contained microcosm for musicians, divorced from the circumstances that surrounded its creation and its context within a composer's life and musical language. *Lachrymae* is very much a vocal work for viola and piano. In addition to describing the work's historical context and source material, this article will explore its vocal qualities through its relationship with Britten's contemporaneous opera, *Billy Budd*.

Lachrymae's Creation

William Primrose first met Benjamin Britten in 1949 during Britten and tenor Peter Pears's first American tour. In a letter from October 24, 1949, Primrose wrote, "[Thank you] for your heartwarming compliment the other evening at the Hawkes' when you said I was 'needed' at Aldeburgh. Believe me I would regard it as a privilege, without a viola piece from you, but with it my cup would indeed overflow."¹ Primrose later referred to this evening in his memoirs as the spark that led to the creation of Britten's *Lachrymae* the following year.²

Primrose performed at Britten's summer festival in Aldeburgh three times. The first, on June 20, 1950, was in a "chamber music concert featuring viola" that included the premiere of *Lachrymae*, Mozart's "Kegelstatt" Trio, K. 498, and Arthur Benjamin's Viola Sonata.³ The second concert, in 1951, featured Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante, K. 364, with violinist Manoug Parikian, and the third concert, in 1952,

included *Lachrymae*, Priaulx Rainier's Sonata, Bach's Sixth Brandenburg Concerto (with Britten conducting) and Holst's *Lyric Movement*.⁴ In his memoir, however, Primrose misstates the premier date of *Lachrymae*. He wrote that its premier took place on the same concert as his performance of the Brandenburg Concerto with Cecil Aronowitz (indicating the 1952 festival—not the 1950 festival, the actual premiere date).⁵ Britten would later dedicate his reworking of *Lachrymae* for viola and strings (*senza* first violins) to Aronowitz, who premiered this version of the work twenty-six years later in 1976. For the purpose of this analysis, the version for viola and piano will be used.

In early 1950, Britten was hard at work on his opera *Billy Budd*, based on the novel of the same name by Herman Melville. In a letter to one of his librettists, Eric Crozier, dated May 4, 1950, Britten apologizes: "Please forgive the muddle & carelessness on my part—it only comes from too much to do. I'm trying hard to write a piece for Primrose to reward him for coming to the festival—but keeping it quiet from Morgan⁶ who doesn't like me taking a moment off of Billy Budd!"⁷ The last page of the published edition of *Lachrymae* indicates that Britten composed it in Aldeburgh during April 1950, and the manuscript bears a completion date of May 16. This relatively short period of composition, especially with the mid-June Festival fast approaching, perhaps accounts for Britten limiting the work's length to a more modest scale, rather than a multi-movement sonata. Composing a more substantial work would most likely have caused him to lose focus on *Billy Budd*.

Lachrymae's Form

Primrose remarked that *Lachrymae* is "a series of quite remarkable, highly original, and devilishly ingenious variations on one of a set of songs of the same name

by John Dowland.⁷⁸ In comparison to other standard forms, theme and variations form provides expanded opportunities for both composers and performers. The composer is able to show off his or her craft (Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* come to mind) and the performer can show off his or her technical prowess (e.g. Paganini's electrifying variations on Rossini's aria "Di tanti palpiti" from *Tancredi*). However, unlike a traditional theme and variations form, where the theme is clearly stated and the variations follow, Britten applies a more diffuse and ingenious approach. In the vein of Charles Ives's cumulative form, Britten develops motivic fragments until he reveals the fully realized theme as the culmination of the work. Britten appears to have taken this idea from the large-scale form of *Billy Budd*, in which the significance of the opera's focal point—the Interview Chords preceding Billy Budd's hanging in Act II—is not made fully clear until the very end of the opera. The music of *Billy Budd* starts off with a fractured,

hazy decent into the memory of Captain Vere. Gradually, over the course of the work, motives crystalize and their meaning becomes clear within the context of the overall narrative as well as the relationships between different characters (namely, Billy Budd and Captain Vere). The emotional and psychological impact is quite profound.

Britten uses similar formal devices in *Lachrymae* to much the same emotional effect. The motives Britten chooses to develop from his source material (see examples 1 and 2) hold a lot of possibility for variation and allow him to avoid any redundancy that could ensue if he had presented the theme at the beginning of the work. By doing so, Britten effectively sustains the drama and emotion of the form through to the very end.

In his article "On Ambiguity in Britten," Paul Kildea explains that "Britten's technique here was a twist on an idea he had been experimenting with since the early

Example 1. John Dowland "If My Complaints" / "Capitaine Digorie Piper His Galiard"

Motive A

Motive B

If my com - plaints could pas - si - ons move, Or make Love see where - in I suf - fer wrong:

Example 2. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*, mm. 1–6.

Lento
con sord.

Motive A

pp

pp cresc.

Motive B

ppp

ppp cresc.

con Ped.
una corda

trem.

1930s. At the end of *A Boy Was Born* (1933) a simple chorale emerges from the thick, swirling textures; here, finally, is the real theme on which the preceding . . . music is based.”⁹ Britten would return to this reverse variation form again in 1963 in his *Nocturnal after Dowland* for solo guitar, revealing in the ending, as in *Lachrymae*, the song “Come Heavy Sleep” as the basis of the work.

Britten also circumvents the expectations of variation form with the subtitle “Reflections on a song of John Dowland.” By substituting the idea of variation with “reflection,” Britten bypasses any preconceived notion the listener may have and becomes free to explore, in this case, motivic ideas in all their permutations.¹⁰ Britten was intimately familiar with the works of many English composers of the Renaissance and early Baroque (Dowland, Morley, Purcell) and he would regularly perform them in recital with his partner, Peter Pears.¹¹ With his knowledge of early English music, it is no surprise that he would choose a work by Dowland to use as his theme. These Reflections, as will be seen, form the basis of some associations Britten has with the music of Dowland, and they also create connections with *Billy Budd*. Britten quotes another song of Dowland’s, “Flow My Teares,” in Reflection 6 of *Lachrymae* (see example 8). This intertextual reference, however, does not hinge on the listener understanding that Britten is quoting another Dowland song. Rather, it enriches the Reflection in which it is found. As a quotation, it may also impel the performer to take some liberties with the delivery of the quote—to evoke the tonal properties of a viol or to explicitly indicate to the listener that Britten is literally quoting Dowland. Philosophically, this quotation illustrates how Britten perceives these pieces to be connected: while reflecting on one song, he is compelled to include another without compromising the integrity of Dowland’s original song referenced in the title.

Britten’s title and subtitle—*Lachrymae: Reflections on a Song of Dowland*—are also rife with ambiguity. The non-specific reference to “a Song of Dowland” leaves listeners with a sense of mystery as to where *Lachrymae*’s source material comes from, especially if they are unfamiliar with Dowland’s work. Besides a quotation from “Flow My Teares,” Britten uses the song “If My Complaints Could Passions Move” as the motivic basis of the work.

Dowland’s Historical Context

The melodies of the songs “If My Complaints” and “Flow My Teares” have complicated and multi-layered origins. First published around 1595, “Flow My Tears” originally appeared as a pavan entitled *Lachrimae* for solo lute, and it achieved, according to Diane Poulton, “extraordinary popularity.”¹² Dowland later set the text “Flow My Tears” to the pavan and published it in his collection of twenty-two songs for voice and lute, *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1600). Peter Holman posits, “The song is almost certainly an adaptation of the pavan rather than the other way around, for Dowland headed it ‘Lacrimae’ as if it was a version of a well-known piece, and the poem has no metrical regularity; it shows signs of having been written to fit the tune.”¹³ The final iteration of this melody appeared in a collection published in 1604 entitled *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares*, consisting of twenty-one dances (pavans and galliards) written specifically for five viols (or violins) and lute. The music of “Flow My Teares” appears here under the title *Lachrimae Antiquae* (“old tears” in Latin).

Similar to “Flow My Teares,” the melody for “If My Complaints” appears in multiple versions: song for voice and lute, lute solo, four-part ayre, and consort for viols and lute. While it is certain that the arrangement in *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares* was the last to appear, it is difficult to determine whether the solo lute or vocal version was written first. Citing specific musical features of the works, Poulton asserts that this music was originally written for solo lute.¹⁴ Regardless of which came first, this music appeared under at least two different titles: “Captaine Digorie Piper His Galiard” in the *Lachrimae* collection, and as “If My Complaints Could Passions Move” in *The First Booke of Songes* (1597).

Given that the *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares* collection was written for a consort of viols or violins and that Britten’s *Lachrymae* was written for viola, Britten’s title seems to highlight this connection. Yet, with his reference to “song” in the subtitle “Reflections on a Song of Dowland,” Britten cheekily plays upon the tension between the origins of *Lachrymae*’s instrumental and vocal source material.

There is an amusing coincidence in Britten’s choice of Dowland’s song as well: Piper’s galliard is the portrait of the notorious Captain Digorie Piper (1559–1590) of the *Sweepstake* who narrowly escaped punishment in 1586 for

piracy.¹⁵ Britten's main compositional focus at the time was an opera whose text's premise concerns a mutiny on a ship at sea. Whether or not Britten was aware of this connection is hard to say, yet it would definitely make a good excuse if Forster asked Britten what he was working on.

Viola as a "Quasi-Vocal Presence"

In the introduction of his book, *Britten's Musical Language*, Philip Rupprecht explores vocal discourse

by means of the instrumental viola and piano medium found in *Lachrymae*. Rupprecht states:

This discourse, though, is without the crucial linguistic possibilities of self-designation, . . . and yet, in the end, listeners are compelled to accept the viola as a quasi-vocal presence. . . . Britten's *Lachrymae* conflates speaking presences in a scenario with connotation of utterance occluded or held back, if not of outright struggle among speakers.¹⁶

Example 3: Benjamin Britten, *Billy Budd: Prologue*.

Slowly moving ♩ = 56
Andante

Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Violoncellos
Doublebasses

Example 4. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*, mm. 9–16. Britten masks Dowland's "If My Complaints" by cleverly voicing it in the bass, while the upper voices of the piano and viola distract from what would be an obvious statement of the theme.

ppp trem.
pp
pp legato ma distinto
espress.

In lieu of developing text to create meaning and incite emotional reaction, compositional devices must be used to imitate the development of words and ideas. Much like the famous passacaglia from *Peter Grimes* where the solo viola assumes the voice of the young apprentice, Britten gives the viola a vocal role in *Lachrymae*.¹⁷ Even though instrumental music lacks linguistic connotation and delivery, the viola and piano use color, timbre, and articulation, as well as Britten's twentieth-century tonal palette to become Rupprecht's "quasi-vocal presence." *Lachrymae* can be seen as the search for a lost song, the viola on a quest to discover its Elizabethan roots. Britten does not separate the vocal nature of the viola from its instrumental embodiment.

Lachrymae and Billy Budd

Rupprecht calls the opening of *Lachrymae* a "Prologue" in his analysis, and to think of it as such creates a clear formal link to *Billy Budd*.¹⁸ The opera opens with a Prologue featuring oscillating thirds—B-flat and D against B and D—whose tonal ambiguity produces immediate conflict, consequently setting the tone for the entire opera (ex. 3).

In the prologue of *Lachrymae*, Britten creates a similar musically ambiguous mist with tremolando in the piano, tight clusters of seconds, and muted timbres in the viola and piano. Under tremolando double stops in the viola and rolled triads in the piano, Dowland's theme appears in the piano's bass register, masquerading as a bass line (ex. 4). And just as the orchestra trails away to let Captain Vere introduce the action of *Billy Budd*, Dowland's theme dissolves into a misty haze before the main action of the Reflections begin.

In Reflection 1, Britten effectively uses rhythm to create tension. The four-note head motive in eighth-notes in the viola part creates metrical ambiguity—3/4 or 6/8—while the intervening rests evoke stuttering speech (reminiscent of Billy Budd's own "debilitating" stutter). The piano part maintains 3/4 time while stubbornly playing on beat two, offsetting the listener's expectation and adding to the quirky off-kilter nature of this Reflection (ex. 5).

Bitonal juxtaposition of C minor and B minor creates harmonic tension throughout *Lachrymae*. Beginning

Example 5. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. Reflection 1, mm. 6–7. The stuttering figure as well as 3/4 and 6/8 groupings of eighth-notes (groups of two and three).

1 Allegretto, andante molto

pp rubato

pp sempre

5 Largamente (♩ = ♩. of preceding)

f

f

mf

in the Prologue, B minor's F-sharp and C-sharp creep into the piece in m. 6 (ex. 2). Britten also shrouds the harmony with seconds, sevenths, and chains of fourths (and their inversion, fifths) while joining disparate triads to create his modern harmonic style. Reflection 5 provides an excellent example of Britten's technique of linking harmonically distant triads. He isolates the head-

Example 6. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. Mediant related triads in Reflection 5. The head motive (circled) is cast in the upper note of the chords alternating between piano and viola (A-C-F-E).

motive (here A–C–F–E) and distributes it among the upper voice of both the viola's and piano's chords while harmonizing each note with a new harmony (ex. 6).

Britten uses this exact technique at the end of the orchestral Interview Scene (Act II, Scene 2) of *Billy Budd*. The upper voice of each chord outlines an F major triad (as a common tone), and each successive note is harmonized by a new chord (ex. 7).

Example 7. Benjamin Britten, *Billy Budd*, Act II Scene 2, the Interview Chords (first seven measures) where the upper note in each triad outlines an F Major triad.

102 **Very slow — Largo**

Brass *f* Tutti *ff* W.W. *mf* Str. *p* W.W. & Hns. *mf* Tutti *fff* Str. *mf*

Example 8. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. The quotation in Reflection 6 with literal quotation marks.

6 **Appassionato** (♩ = ♩)

con Ped. *ff*

Britten forms a linkage between Reflection 5 and 6 by passing the viola's slurred eighth-note triplets to the piano. This flowing figuration, based on the four-note head motive of "If My Complaints," creates word-painting for the text that accompanies the melody from *Lachrymae Antiquae* quoted here, "Flow My Teares" (ex. 8). The text reads: "Never may my woes be relieved / Since pity is fled."

The quotation, however, is not the famous opening incipit from the *Lachrymae Antiquae*. Similar to the main action in Act I Scene 1 of *Billy Budd*, the quote begins *in media res*, with the second phrase of "Flow My Teares," as if the song had just then occurred to the violist (ex. 9). Further obfuscating the melody's appearance, Britten places its entrance on a weak beat (the second beat of the measure) and changes the original dotted half note into two tied quarter notes. The unstable meter unpredictably shifts between 2/4 and 3/4.¹⁹

Further illustrating bitonal tension, Reflection 6 begins firmly in E-flat major, yet as the viola obsessively repeats the end of the phrase, it becomes stuck on B natural. Try as the piano might, it is unable to sway the harmony back to E-flat major or C minor, resigning itself to B minor's tonal space (ex. 10).

The B natural lingers into Reflection 7 (see m. 1 of example 11), as the piano indecisively alternates between B natural and B-flat, a motion that is reflected in the viola's melody. As shown below, similar semitone tensions permeate *Billy Budd*'s harmony.

The viola almost finds its voice in Reflection 6, which marks the middle of the work. The key here—E-flat major—correctly corresponds to the key of the second phrase of "If My Complaints," but the melody is drawn from a different source ("Flow My Teares"). In the final part of this Reflection, the viola's obsessive repetition of a melodic

Example 9. Second phrase of Dowland's "Flow My Teares." Britten's quotation (ex. 8) begins on the second quarter note of this phrase.

Example 10. Benjamin Britten, Lachrymae. The viola's persistent B natural at the end of Reflection 6.

fragment expresses the frustration caused by this incongruity. In the following Reflections, the viola turns its attention back to the original motive of “If My Complaints” but with the addition of a new, more overtly human element: dance and

movement. Whereas the first five Reflections feature purely instrumental writing, the sixth introduces a song, the work’s first and most clear human touch. Even after abandoning this song, Britten retains the human elements of dance and

Example 11. Benjamin Britten, Lachrymae. Enharmonic spellings in Reflection 7: The circled notes in the piano part alternate between D-flat and C-sharp in measures 3 and 5. The circled notes in the viola part mark the alternation between B-flat and B which is the catalyst for the enharmonic respelling of notes and delineates a change in voice-leading in the piano part.

7 Alla Valse moderato

Example 12. Benjamin Britten, Billy Budd, Act I, Scene 1. The A-sharp in the second oboe implies conflict early on between B and A-sharp/B-flat in Billy Budd’s musical language.

Scene 1
Quick and energetic ♩ = 132
4 Allegro energico

movement with a waltz and a march in Reflections 7 and 8. Enharmonic spelling and semitone juxtaposition are also important to Britten's depiction of the harmony. These enharmonic implications are subtle because the listener would only notice if the score was in hand. Reflection 7, Alla Valse, presents a great example of this ambiguity as the piano part alternates between the sharp and flat spelling of notes to modify the harmony (D-flat becoming C-sharp while the viola goes between B-flat and B natural in ex. 11). *Billy Budd* is filled with these enharmonic relations.

In *Billy Budd*, there is a constant clash between B and B-flat or A-sharp, which opens the opera and persists until the end. Claire Seymour in *The Operas of Benjamin Britten* argues that B-flat is the pitch associated with conformity and repression while B is associated with the morally or dramatically disruptive elements of the work. B-flat also has sinister implications in other of Britten's operas as well, where it is identified with the forces of oppression in *Peter Grimes* and *Albert Herring*.²⁰ Act I Scene I of *Billy Budd* opens in B minor with conflict implied by an

Example 13. Benjamin Britten, *Billy Budd*, Act I Scene 1, after figure 7. Here Britten explores bimodality where the First Party is in F-sharp phrygian and the Second Party is in A-sharp phrygian. A-sharp–E-sharp is the main tonal axis of the Second Party.

The musical score for Example 13 shows the Chorus (Tenors and Basses) singing the phrase "O heave! O heave a-way, heave! O heave! O heave a-way, heave, O heave! O heave!". The score is written for Tenors and Basses in F-sharp phrygian and A-sharp phrygian modes. The Tenors' part is in F-sharp phrygian, and the Basses' part is in A-sharp phrygian. The score includes triplets and dynamic markings (p).

Example 14. Benjamin Britten, *Billy Budd*, Act I Scene 1, after figure 11. The Bosun's B-flat returns the chorus' A-sharp from the previous example to B-flat in m. 4 of the example.

The musical score for Example 14 shows the Bosun and Chorus (3rd Party Tenors and Basses 1) singing the phrase "Take your pur-chase: and sway! and sway!". The Bosun's part is in B-flat mode, and the Chorus' part is in A-sharp phrygian mode. The score includes triplets and dynamic markings (f).

A-sharp in the oboe (ex. 12).²¹ Later, the sailors' cry of "O, heave! O, heave away" unites them in their oppression (ex. 13). However, Bosun's command of "Sway" deflects the harmony from A-sharp to B-flat which turns the crew's dissension into submission (ex. 14).²²

While lacking an explicit narrative as in *Billy Budd*, these same forces are at play in *Lachrymae*. This conflict is manifested by the repeated intrusions of B minor harmonies into the prevailing C minor tonality of the work. It is almost as if the C minor harmony cannot keep B minor from returning. The use of enharmonic relations from Reflection 7 also carry into Reflection 8:

Example 15. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. E-flat acts as enharmonic equivalent to D-sharp and acts as a Picardy third in the last measure of Reflection 7.

Example 16. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. Bitonality in Reflection 8 expressed between piano and viola, the piano sustaining the C minor head-motive while the viola is in B minor.

8 **Allegro marcia** *a punta* *pizz.*

Example 17. The viola's full-statement of the first phrase of "If My Complaints" in Britten's musical language (upper line) compared to Dowland's original tune (lower line).

the viola ends Reflection 7 on a sustained E-flat which acts as the Picardy third of the B minor phrase and anticipates the viola's key in the subsequent Reflection, Allegro Marcia (ex. 15).

The march Reflection puts the C minor/B minor conflict on prominent display. The viola part resides mostly in B minor, though not without moments of harmonic ambiguity (see the E-flat—enharmonically D-sharp—at the end of the phrase in example 16). Opposing the viola's B minor is the piano's chord cluster of the opening C minor head motive: C–E-flat–A-flat–G. This reflection is also the most colorful Reflection of the set in terms of twentieth-century timbral effects, with quasi-ponticello in the viola while the piano keeps the pedal depressed. Britten also subtly links Reflections 7 and 8 by repeated pitches: the last three notes of Reflection 7 (F-sharp–D–E-flat) form the dotted rhythm motive of Reflection 8 (F-sharp–D–E-flat).

The piano opens Reflection 10 with the head-motive sinisterly scored in the bass. C minor is reestablished as the prevailing key in both instruments. The viola then enters with shimmering thirty-second notes, agitating against the solemnly moving half-notes of the piano. Finally, at arguably the high point of the piece, the viola gives a harmonically unstable yet complete statement of the first phrase of “If My Complaints” (ex. 17).

Following this statement, the motivic material is derived from the second half of the first phrase of Dowland’s “If My Complaints.” The music remains unsettled since it has not yet found the right key. Dowland’s song begins to coalesce as the piano joins the viola melody to reveal Britten’s source material, reproducing almost all of Dowland’s original counterpoint. This quotation aptly begins with the second half of Dowland’s first phrase—rightly so, since the preceding music is based almost exclusively on the opening half of the phrase. Both parts

Example 18. Benjamin Britten, *Lachrymae*. Dowland’s “If My Complaints Could Passions Move” fully revealed

finally come together in E-flat major, the relative major of C minor and the key area of the second phrase of Dowland's song (ex. 18).

At the work's conclusion, an agreement is reached between the two players on C minor as the proper tonality. Much like *Billy Budd*, the arc of *Lachrymae*'s narrative is sealed by a return of the prologue's *Lento* mood, which has been irrevocably altered by the music that separates them. When the viola finally joins the piano in Dowland's "If My Complaints," it has truly found its voice.

Conclusion

To understand a composer's musical language, it is important to study many of his or her works. For Britten, a consummate composer for voice whose output comprises so many vocal genres, his operas offer a wealth of expressive material for the violist in terms of musical rhetoric. There is no doubt that *Lachrymae* is intimately linked with *Billy Budd*, not only through their year of composition but also by the devices that Britten employs in both. *Billy Budd* is to some degree limited because it was composed entirely for male voices, yet Britten does wonders to eliminate this supposed barrier with his masterful orchestration. *Lachrymae* also has its limitation in terms of its viola and piano instrumentation, yet Britten surmounts this restriction with many brilliant compositional devices. And again, Britten will limit himself when transcribing the piano part for string orchestra sans first violins in 1976. In *Lachrymae*, Britten was able to create a vocal work for viola and piano that, in many ways, is a miniature of *Billy Budd*. The use of key, harmony, timbre, and register to create character and drama are all qualities that make *Billy Budd* one of Britten's best operas. After looking closely at *Billy Budd*, it becomes clear that *Lachrymae* is cut from the same cloth.

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Notes

- ¹ Donald Mitchell, ed., *Letters from a Life: Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976*, vol. 3, 1946-1951 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 550-551.
- ² William Primrose, *Walk on the North Side* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 185.
- ³ Mitchell, 550.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Primrose, *Walk on the North Side*, 185.
- ⁶ E.M. Forster, the preeminent British author and first librettist of *Billy Budd*.
- ⁷ Mitchell, *Letters from a Life*, 590.

- ⁸ Primrose, *Walk on the North Side*, 185.
- ⁹ Paul Kildea, "On Ambiguity in Britten" in *Rethinking Britten*, ed. Philip Rupprecht (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13.
- ¹⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the motivic transformations Britten employs, see David Sills, "Benjamin Britten's *Lachrymae*: An Analysis for Performers," *Journal of the American Viola Society* 13, no. 3 (1997): 17–34.
- ¹¹ Britten worked on a realization of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* around the same. Other works that incorporate early English music include *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* and *Noye's Fludde*.
- ¹² Diana Poulton, *John Dowland* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982), 124.
- ¹³ Peter Holman, *Dowland: Lacrimae (1604)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 37.
- ¹⁴ Poulton, *John Dowland*, 135.
- ¹⁵ Holman, *Dowland: Lacrimae (1604)*, 68.
- ¹⁶ Philip Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21.
- ¹⁷ In Act I Scene 3 of *Billy Budd*, Britten features a solo viola when John Claggart manipulates the young Novice to betray Billy Budd.
- ¹⁸ Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language*, 17.
- ¹⁹ Reflection 6 and Billy Budd's final aria (Act II Scene 3: "And farewell to ye, old *Rights o' Man*") share several similarities. Each are in flat major keys: the aria in B-flat major, and Reflection 6 in E-flat major. Both have a time signature marked 2/4–3/4 which seems to arbitrarily move between the two and not alternate back and forth. The vocal writing is similar especially regarding longer phrases. The two also share a marked duple against triple subdivision. In terms of overall structure, the aria follows the Interview Scene, which, as noted above, employs the same upper-voice compositional device used in Reflection 5 (which is followed by Reflection 6).
- ²⁰ Claire Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 137.
- ²¹ These two pairs of notes (B and D in the flutes and A-sharp and D in the oboes) are the same opening notes of the Prologue (see example 3, above) with the B-flat spelled as A-sharp.
- ²² Seymour, 138. This scene foreshadows the near rebellion that happens following Billy Budd's death in Act II.

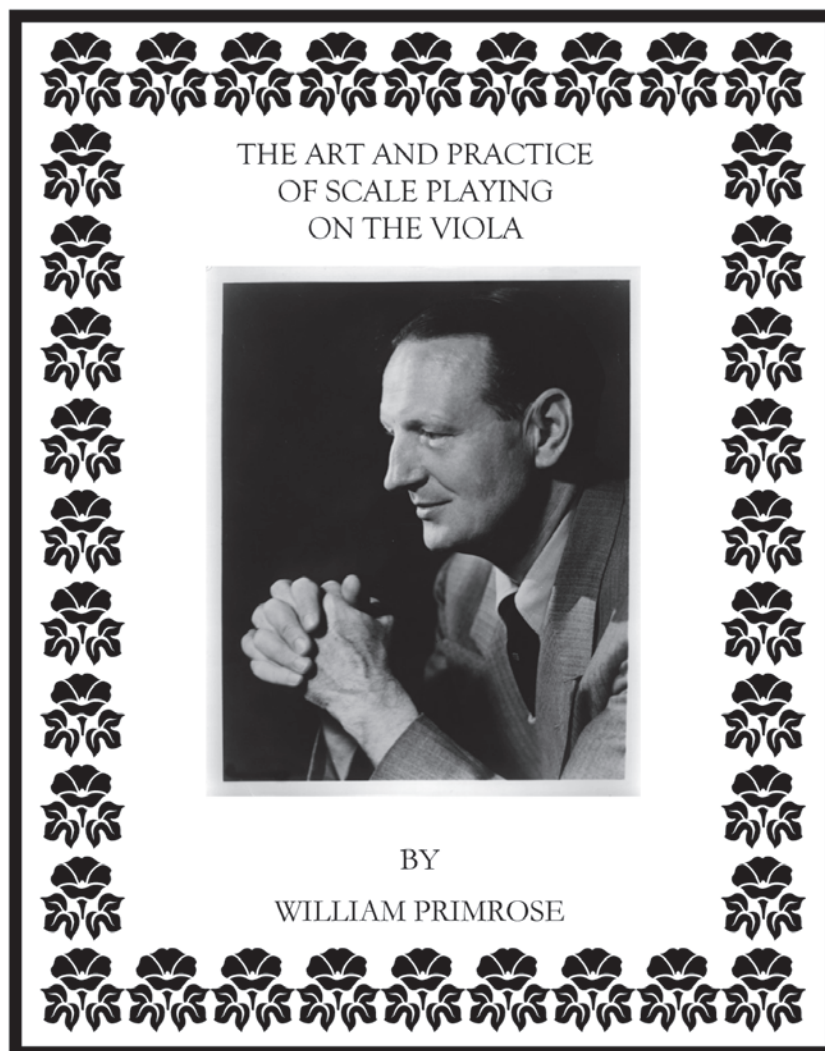


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The *Pièces de Concours*: Rediscovered Treasures from Turn-of-the-Century France

A Conversation with Violist Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot

Melissa Claisse

As any violist knows, our repertoire choices are somewhat limited in comparison to those of our violinist and cellist colleagues. The situation has improved, of course, as the 20th and 21st centuries were—and continue to be—very generous to violists. But it seems like our Romantic-era repertoire choices are limited to a few oft-repeated recital hits. Is there any hope of expanding upon that list, other than through transcriptions? The surprising answer to that question is a most definite yes, as I learned while speaking with Austrian-Canadian violist Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot. In collaboration with Schott Music Publishers, she edited a new three-volume edition of turn-of-the-century French showpieces originally written for the viola, in addition to her recently released 2-CD album of 18 of these pieces. But where did these pieces come from, and why don't we know about them? Those are the questions that Puchhammer-Sédillot wanted to answer over six years ago when she first encountered these pieces.

First, a brief history lesson. As the viola was starting to come into its own as a solo instrument in the mid-19th century, it became clear that violists would need to be instructed not just as if they played oversized violins, but separately, in their own dedicated programs with attention to the instrument's unique technical demands. So, the very first viola studio class was established in 1877 at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels by violist Léon Firket. Seventeen years later, in 1894, the Conservatoire de Paris followed with their own program dedicated specifically to teaching viola students under the direction of violist Théophile Laforge.¹

The Conservatoire de Paris was founded a century earlier in 1795, and since that time, exit examinations were required for all students in order to obtain a diploma.

Included in each of these exams was a *pièce de concours* (competition piece). This was a mandatory, technically demanding piece, what we might term a “showpiece,” sometimes commissioned specifically for the occasion. Because there had been no tradition of the viola as a virtuosic instrument before the mid-19th century, the *pièces de concours* for viola were the very first of their kind: technically demanding virtuosic showpieces originally for the viola. In fact, you are probably familiar with the only *pièce de concours* that has entered standard viola literature: George Enesco's *Concertpièce*, the *pièce de concours* in 1908, 1913, 1920, and 1927 (particularly popular pieces were often repeated as *pièces de concours* in later years).

However, there were 26 other *pièces de concours* for viola between 1896 and 1941. After 1941, the examination requirements were altered, allowing violists to choose from several pieces, including standard repertoire.² What happened to the rest of these late-romantic viola pieces? Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot, a native of Vienna and now Professor of Viola at the Université de Montréal in Quebec, had the same question, and she set out on a multi-year journey to find out. I sat down with her for an interview to learn about this journey.

[The interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.]

Melissa Claisse: How did you first discover these pieces?

Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot: I inherited some music from a former adult student who had herself inherited it from an elderly violist, and she brought this music to me, saying it was too hard for her. And so in that way, I got the Hüe [George Hüe, 1858–1948], some Büsser [Henri Büsser, 1872–1973], and a few other parts. Then, I noticed that several of these parts were dedicated to

Théophile Laforge, who was the first professor of viola at the Conservatoire de Paris. The turn of the century had always been the period I was particularly interested in, and I had already released CDs of German works and done some research on English works from this period, so I thought it might be interesting to do some work on French works. When I was in Paris, I took a trip to the Conservatoire and met a very nice librarian who gave me a list of the *pièces de concours* and allowed me to look at some music and copy portions of a few pieces. Then I discovered that, in fact, everything on this list from before 1930 had been given away and was now housed at the National Library of Paris.

MC: *The Conservatory library didn't even own the pieces?*

JP: They didn't even have all the pieces, which was a big surprise. And the list of other instruments' *pièces de concours* was available on the internet, but not the viola list. I think many people, even in France, don't know that this list exists.

MC: *If the conservatory didn't even have the music, would the students have been able to access it?*

JP: They couldn't have had access to the music easily, so no, they didn't play it. And so, on a few more visits, when I was passing through Paris, I tried to get more parts that were free of copyright. For those that weren't, I couldn't make copies but I could look at them. And often I went to La Flûte de Pan [a music store in Paris] and hoped to find music that had been returned or acquired.

MC: *I know that eventually you did find all of these pieces. Did you say to yourself, now I want to learn these, or record them—what was your plan?*

JP: The first thing was that I wanted to learn them—they're fun to play! And so, I learned about a few per year, as they're quite difficult. I'm always looking for something new to share with the viola community, so it became a project that I presented at viola congresses. I learned the first ones for the Würzburg Viola Congress (in 2011), where I played three or four pieces. And there, a representative from Schott came to talk to me, to suggest that it would be interesting to collaborate with me on a new edition of these pieces.

MC: *What did you say?*

JP: At that time, I had no idea that I would edit or record them—I wasn't ready yet. But at a certain point, years later, I had researched more, and I wrote back and said I was interested now. It had come up that the university [Université de Montréal] would be able to give me their hall for a few half days of recording, so in some way, it seemed like it was now or never for the project, so I thought ok, I'll do it.

MC: *At that point, you were both recording 18 pièces de concours and editing an edition for Schott.*

JP: Yes, we compiled the pieces I had already learned and we discovered that they would fill 2 CDs. I was most interested in this time period [1896–1941], because, due to the changes in the examination requirements in 1940, the *pièces de concours* were not as singular anymore, as you could play Walton or Stamitz, or other choices.

MC: *What was the recording process like? Was it different from the other recordings you've made?*

JP: It's a challenge to learn so many pieces while also working. Normally you do something like that at an ideal time, when you have a lot of time to prepare. But this time, it was when the hall was free for half a day, so the process was different. I had three half-days before Christmas, two days a few weeks later, and another two and a half days in June [2015–2016]. It was actually lucky that it was like this because the pieces are so difficult, so I had more time to prepare. Additionally, the pieces are very physically demanding, so there is a limit to how many takes you can try of certain things. So, there was a time limit and a physical force limit. Plus, normally there are slow movements; whereas here, every piece has a little slow material, but with much more difficulty.

MC: *Were there any recordings of these pieces already?*

JP: No, none at all. So when it's all new, you have to discover the tempi, the transitions, and whether things work or not—there's absolutely no tradition that you know of. You have to make your own decisions to make things work so that it's musically acceptable. The process of checking in with the pianist is also very important. As you don't have a reference recording—and I'm not very

good at looking at the piano music and instantly hearing what I see—it was very important for me to work with Élise Desjardins, my pianist, at different points along the way, rather than just at the end.

MC: Let's talk about the process of editing the music for Schott. Had you ever edited music before?

JP: No, never before. It's a very special process. I used the first editions which I had copied from the conservatory and the National Library in Paris. Depending on which period, editor, composer, and sometimes the first performer (usually Laforge), I discovered that there were a lot of notational discrepancies between different pieces. Some parts had a lot of accents added, or legato lines, or bowings that were totally changed. So, when you read it with the tastes of today, sometimes it doesn't make sense, because we read it literally—we are trained like that. At the time, though, it might have meant something different depending on their tastes.

Additionally, we know that at that time, they used a lot of very high positions because their technique—though it was beginning to evolve—was still based on violin technique. Meanwhile, we play differently today: we like the clarity of lower positions. Also, we think sliding up and down is usually tasteless, whereas at the time it was considered very nice. I also gave bowings that work for a big sound, which we like here in America. So, I tried to modernize the old tastes, while keeping the right colors. My idea was to edit in a way that gives the student easy access to the pieces. When somebody who is advanced but perhaps not totally ready, like a student, gets the part for the first time, the teacher doesn't have to put the first fingerings to make it playable. The student can buy the part and get through the piece by reading the fingerings in the part, as well as tempi suggestions. I would say it's like *prêt-à-porter*, it's "ready to go," so the teachers don't have to do the work. From that point, the teacher can change the fingerings, or give other suggestions, but there's a very good skeleton already there. There might be more markings than in some other editions, but I think the student prefers it this way.

MC: And I know you've been teaching these pieces to your students. At the beginning of the year, you gave each of us our very own pièce de concours to learn. Can you tell me about how that's going?

JP: Yes, I've been teaching almost all of the pieces that I have edited and it's a very rewarding experience, as much for me as for the students. It seems that they really love them. One of the big advantages of these pieces is that they are not too long. They give students the feeling that they are virtuosic players, that they can do hard things, without having to learn an entire concerto. The other nice thing about them is that, since they are from the turn of the century, they are harmonically very interesting. They allow for a lot of choices in tone colors, which gives the teacher a good opportunity to teach tone color, transitions, and timing. Each piece always contains a little cadenza, so it really calls for a lot of imagination. I think the more the students play them, the more fun they have.

MC: Are there any other pieces in the viola repertoire like these, or do you feel like these fill a unique need?

JP: I'm totally convinced that these pieces fill a hole in our repertoire. We have La Campanella (Paganini), but it is very difficult, and with it, you always have the challenge of sounding like a different instrument, like a violin. Conversely, the *pièces de concours* are really written for viola. You don't have to pretend to be somebody else, you just play, and be what you are: the violist, with the viola. These pieces work well when you need a little recital filler of seven minutes or so, or as a recital finisher, as they are quite virtuosic.

MC: Can you give me an idea of what kind of technical demands are in these pieces that you might not see in other viola works?

JP: Especially for the earlier *pièces de concours*, the style is from the heritage of old violin concertos, including for example, those chromatic scales that go over the whole range of the instrument. You also get up-bow staccatos and complicated arpeggios. There are tenths passages—you never get that in viola repertoire, but here they're not too long. You have melodies in thirds, sixths, and octaves. Octave melodies are rare, although we sometimes find them in Primrose transcriptions. It definitely works the whole technical checklist. And there's spiccato of all kinds, longer and shorter détaché, and varied bowings, along with fast and awkward scales.

MC: Would you say these pieces are good to prepare violists for longer, more difficult pieces, like the big concertos?

JP: Probably. Playing these pieces is a very good way to give the feeling to a violist that they *can* be virtuosic. Once you get the feeling, and you play a few of them, you have some fun, and you don't think it's so difficult. Then you learn to not shy away when something hard comes up. And I would say there are pieces here for all kinds of levels. I'm convinced that even a very talented young teenager will get a kick out of it because it's a little virtuosic, and it makes you feel good!

MC: *Do you have a favorite pièce de concours?*

JP: I don't! I am amazed because I find myself driving, and I look and I am listening to my CD! Normally other CDs you make can get tiring to listen to, as you've heard them so much, but I don't get bored with the *pièces de concours* because these pieces are really varied. As for a favorite, I do like the Honnoré [Léon Honnoré, 1868–1930], and I like the Cools [Eugène Cools, 1877–1936]. Of course, there are always some parts that you like a bit less in a piece. Perhaps these pieces didn't really survive because they're not 100% genius, but I would say it's 80% really, really nice and then there's this little 10% or 20% where it's like, oh this is a bowing exercise. But they all have really beautiful parts in them.

MC: *What was the most difficult part of this whole project? And the most rewarding?*

JP: The most difficult part was having to edit and listen to them at night, after listening to music all day long teaching. And you can't even see anymore because you're so tired and everything swims in front of the eyes! It was not an easy process. I think the most rewarding part was being able to listen to all 18 pieces on the recording, one after the other. That really gives me a feeling of achievement. When you do one at a time, you are not conscious of the size of the project, but being able to see it all together is rewarding. I also like being able to teach them because I know what they're about and I can help the students to have fun with them. I have performed them all multiple times—they're really tested, so I know they work.

End of interview.

I also spoke with some of Puchhammer-Sédillot's students, to see what their experiences with these pieces were like. Master's student Olivier Marin told me that he was impressed by the "vocal quality and intensity" of Henri Büsser's (1872–1973) *Appassionato*, and that he "focused on sound and physical engagement" when practicing the piece. Cynthia Blanchon, also a master's student, said that in playing *Romance, Scherzo, et Finale* by Gabriel Grovlez (1879–1944), she found it refreshing to play a virtuosic piece that was "composed to highlight the qualities of our instrument." In speaking with these students and others, the commonality that stood out was that they didn't want to play virtuosic showpieces merely for virtuosity sake. Rather, they were eager to give the viola's unique qualities a chance to shine in the context of late Romantic era lyricism and showmanship, a language rarely explored in viola repertoire. As Puchhammer-Sédillot said, "You don't have to pretend to be somebody else: you just play, and be what you are: the violist, with the viola."

As a doctoral student in Puchhammer-Sédillot's studio, I had been aware of her work on the *pièces de concours*. In the course of my research for this article, I sat down and listened to her CD with a new ear attuned to the historical significance of these pieces.

When listening to Léon Firker's (1874–1934) *Concertino*, the very first *pièce de concours* in 1896, I was struck by the tender, spritely way the viola melody danced around the piano line. In comparison to other viola pieces, its form and clarity recalled the Stamitz or Hoffmeister concertos, and its mood was reminiscent of the pure, plaintive second movement of Schubert's "Arpeggione" sonata. But of course, *Concertino* was written many decades after these pieces, and its singularity reflects this fact—I can't think of another piece quite like it. I was thrilled to hear the *Allegro* portion of Stan Golestan's (1875–1956) *Arioso and Allegro* (1932), which I could confidently place as a product of the Jazz Age, at once sensual, whimsical, and vivacious. In *Poème* by Eugène Cools (1877–1934), after a sultry, dream-like piano introduction, the viola is left by itself to play an opening melody in which the instrument seems to claim its own space, without insisting or fighting, but with the certainty of a voice, ready for its long-overdue turn in the spotlight.

These pieces were a part of the story of the very first viola students in music schools. I imagine a young violist, perhaps in the very first class in Paris, who must have encountered some skepticism or teasing, however good-natured, from his violinist and cellist colleagues. And then I imagine him playing his *pièce de concours* in his final exam, with its undeniable virtuosity and flair, and feeling as if he's finally made it, finally claimed his place as a violist in that world. If you play the viola, then these pieces are your heritage too, your connection to those violists of a century past. Jutta Puchhammer-Sédillot has provided us with the delightful opportunity to reclaim this history, our history. Perhaps her work will inspire us to go searching for yet more treasures which have been misplaced in the fog of time.

American violist Melissa Claisse holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the Université de Montréal. Originally from South Carolina, she is currently pursuing doctoral studies, writing, and working in arts management in the lively and diverse artistic community of Montreal.

Notes

¹ Frédéric Lainé, *L'Alto: histoire, facture, interprètes, répertoire, pédagogie*. (France: Bressuire, Anne Fuzeau Productions, 2010).

² Eighteen of these works, composed between 1896 and 1938, appear in Puchhammer-Sédillot's CD recording. The three-volume publication includes thirteen of the *pièces de concours*.

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Richard Young: The Art of Giving Back

Les Jacobson

A longer version of this article originally appeared on Les Jacobson's website on March 12, 2014, and this present version has been updated to include some more recent information on Richard Young and his work. The original article is available on the web at <https://goo.gl/qZGtps>.



Richard Young

When Richard Young was invited to join the Vermeer Quartet in 1985, he felt he had reached the pinnacle of the chamber music world. Just 39, he had played professionally for 13 years, first with the New Hungarian Quartet and then the Rogeri Trio. But the Vermeer was in a different, more elevated class, one of the top performing ensembles in the world. Based in Chicago since its founding in 1969, the Vermeer had recorded extensively, and their playing routinely drew rave reviews. “[The Vermeer were] magnificent; majestic in style, technically without flaw, and utterly persuasive,” wrote Melbourne’s *The Age* (1992). “The Vermeer Quartet’s interpretations

seem so nearly ideal that one can more easily appreciate music as universal harmony,” said the Polish music magazine *Ruch Muzyczny* (1989).

Young considered himself neither religious nor deeply spiritual, but he sensed in the Vermeer invitation a special kind of gift, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, for which some kind of payback was appropriate. “I felt I had to justify my success,” he said.

The chance came shortly after he joined the quartet. The Vermeer players were invited to give a demonstration to students from one of the tougher neighborhoods in Chicago’s impoverished south side, and every Saturday for a year Young gave free lessons to four of the school’s students.

It was one of those Saturdays when Young—who is white, slim and youthful-looking—was working with one of the students, an African-American teenager, when she interrupted him with a question.

“Hey Richard,” the girl said. “My mama asked me why these lessons are free.”

“What’d you tell her?” he asked.

“I didn’t know what to tell her. My mama says nothing in life is free. You’re going to want something.”

Young was taken aback: there was no doubt what the “something” was. “I knew when a lot of your maturing takes place on the streets, you grow up fast,” he said. “Thirteen years old and she’s asking about that.”

An idea occurred to him, an unusual compact between teacher and student. “You know your mama was right,” he said. “You’re going to have to pay; you *should* pay, because you’re the one benefiting. But there are ways to pay other than with money, and that can sometimes be



Young (far right) with the other members of the Vermeer Quartet (left to right): Shmuel Ashkenasi, Marc Johnson, and Mathias Tacke.

more important than money.” The girl’s eyes widened. “It may take you years before you can pay off these lessons,” he continued. “It might be in music, it might be in some other field. But whenever you’re ready to share your knowledge or skills with someone else, do it. And do it for free.”

Thus was born “the deal,” which became the basis of Young’s extensive outreach work. Whenever he had the chance he acted to help poor but deserving youngsters, always reminding them that it was crucial to repay his help with help of their own down the road.

Despite the Vermeer’s punishing schedule—forty to sixty concerts a year, recording sessions, a residency at Northern Illinois University, a teaching fellowship at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England, plus summer residencies throughout America and Europe—he always found time to teach and advance scores of promising but impoverished music students, finding them teachers, scholarships and performing opportunities. He never took a penny, but his guidance came with one condition: his students had to commit themselves to “the deal.”

“He changed my life, and the lives of many other kids,” said Deborah Wanderley dos Santos, a violinist with the São Paulo State Symphony and consultant to the Baltimore Symphony’s youth orchestra project, whose career Young guided after meeting her in Brazil.

Young’s help, said Sarah Gomes Mateus, another Brazilian student he worked with, was part of her divine plan. “God’s purpose for us in life is to be fulfilled,” she said. “Richard Young was God’s instrument.”

How did he arrive at his pay-it-forward ethos? Young’s early years offer few clues. He grew up in Port Washington, New York, on Long Island’s affluent north shore. Both his parents were amateur musicians. His father was an airline pilot, his mother taught piano. He took up the violin at the age of 5 but despite being a good student, didn’t see himself advancing toward a music career. That changed in high school, when he began studying with Aaron Rosand, one of the great violinists of his day. “That’s when I got the bug,” Young said.

“He was 15 or 16 but seemed older, more mature,” recalled Rosand, who now teaches at the Curtis Institute. “He was extremely bright and a remarkable violinist. His musical ability, sense of phrasing and his instincts were all so good.”

Rosand encouraged him to apply to Indiana University’s music school, and he auditioned for Josef Gingold, a member of the violin faculty there. Gingold accepted him immediately. Former concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell, Gingold taught not only technique and musicianship but also, by example, how to nurture talent through positive reinforcement, an attitude that Young later adopted in his own teaching career. Like Rosand, Gingold had a huge regard for the young violinist’s talent. “I have nothing to teach the boy, he’s so well-prepared,” he wrote to Rosand.

When Young graduated in 1969 the war in Vietnam was raging. With the draft looming, he auditioned for the U.S. Army Band’s “Strolling Strings” and spent three years in the Washington, D.C. area playing at the White House and at other government functions.

Within a month of his discharge in 1972 he embarked on the first of his three professional residencies, playing second violin with the New Hungarian String Quartet, in residence at Oberlin College, from 1972 to 1979.

The quartet broke up in 1979 and Young moved back to New York, while continuing to teach at Oberlin. A year later he joined the Rogeri Trio. The pianist was Barbara

Weintraub, a former student of the legendary Leon Fleisher, and the cellist was Carter Brey, now the principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic.

Brey called their years together a “great musical and instrumental match. . . . I learned a lot playing with Richard. His playing was so wonderfully imaginative and full of flair.”

The trio played together for five years before breaking up due to Brey’s expanding schedule of solo concerts. A few weeks later Young was in Australia subbing for the first violinist of the Muir Quartet when he got a phone call from the late Marc Johnson, then cellist of the Vermeer Quartet, inviting him to audition for the viola spot after Bernard Zaslav had left the group.

“I always had it in my ear that Richard was a violinist with a dark tone and deep vibrato who would sound great as a violist,” Johnson said. “But when I reached him in Sydney, he replied he was interested but there was this one problem. He said, ‘I don’t play viola.’ I told him: ‘Well, you’ve got six weeks to learn.’ ”

Young borrowed a beautiful-sounding Brescian viola and set out to learn the alto clef. The audition required candidates to play unspecified excerpts from eight pieces. Young had to pencil fingerings over almost every note.

Despite his lack of experience with the viola, he got the job, and went on to play 22 years with the Vermeer. The quartet was known for a fine, polished sound and incredible sensitivity to nuance. Recordings of works by Haydn, Schnittke, Shostakovich and Bartók were nominated for Grammy awards.

His younger brother once gave him a coffee mug inscribed, “Success is doing what you love. Success is loving what you do.” Young thought that aptly summed up his life. “I felt very lucky to be doing what I was doing,” Young said. “It was like a dream job.”

Still, there was the missing piece—the need to give back, to balance the equation—that seemed to amount almost to an obsession. Serious payback began in 1986, when he heard about a new music school for poor kids on Chicago’s north side. Founded by Rita Simó, a concert pianist and former Dominican nun, the People’s Music School provided lessons for underprivileged youngsters

and, reflecting Simó’s religious and moral philosophy, accepted no payments. Instead, students and their parents were asked to pay back their lessons through light cleaning and secretarial help.

Young volunteered to help. “He was the most enthusiastic musician I ever saw,” said Simó, now retired. “He had a strong desire to help students who didn’t have money. He’d come by every week to teach string classes and chamber music, judge the student recitals, organize master classes and juries, recruit and train teachers, and bring in guest performers. And he never accepted a penny.”

Around the same time Young discovered another outlet for his volunteerism, the Chicago-based International Music Foundation. Founded in 1979, the IMF produced the annual Do-It-Yourself Messiah; the Dame Myra Hess concerts, a free weekly recital series; and “Live Music Now!” concerts for Chicago Public School students.

“Richard is like a camel,” said IMF executive director Ann Murray. “Once he’s under the tent, he’s in.” He started quietly enough, showing up at Messiah concerts to sit in with the first violins, sometimes bringing along one of his students as a stand partner. Eventually he was moved up to concertmaster, where he instituted string sectionals, a role he still performs every December. “Richard brings a very special professional attitude,” said DIY Messiah conductor Stanley Sperber, former music director of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra and currently conductor of the Jerusalem Academy Chamber Choir. “He communicates the nuances of string playing better than anyone I’ve ever worked with.”

From the Messiah, Young “jumped in with both feet,” Murray said. He arranged for violinist Pinchas Zukerman to join the Vermeer for a Foundation benefit. Working with radio station WFMT music director Norman Pellegrini he helped revamp “Live Music Now!” school outreach programs. And he formed and led the Bootinsky Piano Trio, named in honor of IMF’s founder Al Booth.

In addition, Young selected and coached advanced students for the Myra Hess recitals, and convinced young musicians to play in nursing homes in another Foundation-sponsored program. “He was always concerned about getting them to give back, to be aware of folks without a lot of advantages,” said Murray. “He felt strongly it shouldn’t just be about ‘me me me and my career.’ ”

During his Vermeer years he also started mentoring promising string students he'd find at competitions and elsewhere. One of them was Lindsay Deutsch, now a soloist on the concert circuit, then an aspiring fourteen-year-old violinist when she met Young in 1998 at a competition he was judging. As part of his mentorship, he urged her to come to Chicago to play a Myra Hess concert. He also arranged a two-week "chamber music boot camp," as she put it. Deutsch and her fellow players, whom Young recruited, practiced every morning, and he joined them for intense coaching sessions in the afternoon. "He made me a more well-rounded musician," she recalled. "I was much more confident about my music-making after that, both as a chamber musician and as a soloist."

The pianist Young invited to Deutsch's boot camp, Tomo Matsuo, viewed the experience a little differently. As usual, Young took no money for his coaching services but asked the players to commit to the pay-it-forward deal. Matsuo was cynical about Young's service ethos. "I was young, brash and a little rebellious. I didn't give a crap about the humanitarian stuff. To be honest, it sounded like hippie BS."

After the midday Hess recital downtown, Young gathered up his charges and headed up to the city's north side. Matsuo assumed they were going out for a celebratory meal. Instead, they spent the rest of the afternoon playing with kids at a school for the severely handicapped. "My upbringing was very tame; I really had no first-hand experience with the inequalities in the world," Matsuo said. "Richard was a teacher in the larger sense: he connected the music, the standing ovations, the adulation, to the bigger world. It made a deep impression on me."

Another student Young helped was dos Santos, the Brazilian violinist. She grew up in Brasilia and left home at 17 to study violin in the south of Brazil. She met Young while auditioning for the Youth Orchestra of the Americas. "I wasn't advanced technically, but he saw the potential and the passion," she recalled. Young arranged for dos Santos to study with a colleague in Vancouver, and eventually brought her and Mateus, a violinist friend of hers from Brazil, to Chicago for advanced studies with him at North Park University.

While at North Park, dos Santos started the YOURS Project, three youth orchestras at a school in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood in partnership with the

People's Music School. (YOURS was an acronym for Youth Orchestra Urban Rita Simó, in recognition of the school's founder.) Lessons were free, but the effort to launch the program was daunting. "At the beginning I had to sell my blood to be able to purchase the chocolates we sold for fundraising. I worked night shifts at the emergency desk in the university, where I would spend the evening answering phone calls, making plans for the YOURS Project."

Young's deal resonated with dos Santos because it dovetailed neatly with her own vision. "Giving back is the right and fair thing to do, it is what all of us should be doing."

"Richard said his father taught him: 'If you want people to be generous, you need to be generous,'" dos Santos said. Aside from giving her free lessons, Young showed her how to launch and sustain the program. He helped her connect with local music shops to procure instruments and arranged a benefit concert to raise funds.

Another protégé of Young's was Fusun Alpakin, who came to Chicago from Turkey in 1999 and met him a year later when she started teaching violin at the People's Music School. With Young's encouragement and support Alpakin and her husband, a ballet dancer, opened their own school, the Southport Performing Arts Conservatory and Entertainment, with two campuses on Chicago's north side. "Richard trusted and inspired me to accomplish my dream," she said. "When he sees that you have the passion and dedication, that's when he'll want to work with you."

Violinist Mariana Fernandes's experience was similar. Forced to drop out of school when her mother lost her job, Fernandes scrounged enough money to attend a music festival in Curitiba, Brazil. When Young heard her play, he said, "You have such a big passion for the music. I want you to develop that along with your technique." He arranged a scholarship with free room and board for her to study with one of his former students at the University of Missouri at St. Louis. "Nothing would have happened without Richard," she said, "because he was fighting for me."

What with the Vermeer's performing and teaching schedule and his work with his young students, Young was happily busy year-round.

That changed in 2007, when the Vermeer called it quits. Faced with Marc Johnson's pending retirement, founder and first violinist Ashkenasi decided he did not want to go through the rigors of finding and breaking in a new cellist.

Despite the immense psychic rewards he derived from his students, whom he continued to teach in North and South America as well as Europe, Young found this to be a deeply trying time. His father had suffered a serious depression after he reached mandatory retirement age with American Airlines, and Young feared he might face the same kind of post-career letdown.



Young working with a student ensemble from Uruguay.

"He was very afraid of not doing something. He needs to be engaged, to be contributing," said his wife Jenni.

Fortunately, a new outlet for his energy and passion had emerged two years earlier, in 2005. Alex Klein, principal oboist with the Chicago Symphony and a guest in concerts and on recordings with the Vermeer, had moved back to his native Brazil to start a festival in Curitiba, not far from the Atlantic coast. "Alex and I are on the same wavelength," said Young, especially regarding their strong commitment to helping poor but deserving students. At Curitiba, Klein recruited Young to play in chamber music groups, teach master classes and give lessons. "The kids were hungry for any crumb we could give them," Young said.

The next year Klein started another festival, FEMUSC (for Festival of Music in Santa Catarina), in nearby Jaraguá do Sul. Young joined him there and again played and taught violin, viola, and chamber music.

Young's role, said Charles Stegeman, Professor of Violin at Duquesne University and a fellow FEMUSC teacher, was all-encompassing. "He spent every waking minute with the kids—sometimes he didn't even stop for dinner—teaching, coaching, even writing letters on their behalf. Richard was a tireless ombudsman and advocate for dozens of kids who are talented but don't have the resources."

Another musician teaching at FEMUSC was pianist Ricardo Castro, who, with Klein and Young recorded a CD, "Poetic Inspirations: Works for Oboe, Viola & Piano" on the Cedille label (CDR 90000 102). Castro invited Young to teach at his youth orchestra project in Salvador, a city of three million that is the capital of the east coast Brazilian state of Bahia. The program, called Neojiba (for Núcleos Estaduais de Orquestras Juvenis e Infantis da Bahia), is sponsored and funded by the state of Bahia.



Young with kids who participated in one of the Neojiba projects.

Young arrived in Salvador in June 2009 and immediately set to work developing a program that would enable the students to build on their raw talent and provide a framework to empower them to teach future Neojiba students.

He called his approach *Metodo Neojiba*, or the "Neojiba Method." The key, he said, was to harness the passion of group settings to build technical discipline versus the one-on-one teacher and student approach employed at most conservatories.

As always, he threw himself into the project, beginning a three-year stint of flying to Brazil for 14-day teaching sessions every four to six weeks. Classes of ninety minutes began by rigorously working students through scale, arpeggio, and etude exercises, instructing them on the proper way to stand, position the hands, align the fingers and hold and use the bow. The idea was to instill time-tested basics of the classical teaching tradition but in a group setting, with students of varied abilities and interests. “The goal was to keep it challenging, exciting and even cool,” said Young.

The atmosphere was demanding but non-threatening. When he called on students to demonstrate a phrase or technique, they were usually in groups of three or four. Humor was critical to keep the classes loose and fun. “This horse made a huge sacrifice for you,” Young would tell the students, to encourage them to use all the bow hair. And pointing to his own thinning scalp, he’d say, “It’s not so easy to grow hair!” To describe a thick, beautiful and round tone, one of the students suggested the term *popozuda* “a la Jennifer Lopez” (*popozuda* means “big butt” in Portuguese). “It always got a laugh. But the kids totally got it. And most important, they remembered the technique, and they did it.”

A video on the Neojiba YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/wKSOxWcTW1Y>) from November 2010 shows Young at work, leading a string chamber ensemble of forty or fifty students in a Handel sonata. Young, wearing a black T-shirt and blue jeans, stops the piece after a few measures and, waving his bow for emphasis, encourages the students to use a different type of bowing to obtain a different sound. “When you want to change the color, you have to change the technique,” he tells them in English, and waits while an assistant translates into Portuguese. Then he embellishes: “Here, because we want a silkier sound, we go a little bit to the side of the stick, further from the bridge and draw the bow faster.”

Later in the piece, Young stops them to point out they are rushing. “It sounds like a train going downhill,” he explains. “Remember what I’ve taught you: keep the fire in your heart, but keep the ice in your veins.”

When their energy appears to ebb, he reminds them: “You are Brazilians, you are the most passionate people in the world! But you still have to *prove* it every time you play.” And he challenges them. “Take control of what you

can control, but do your best, sem drama, sem lagrimas, sem desculpas, sem problemas (no drama, no tears, no excuses, no problems).”

Though he was paid only a modest stipend for his work, the payback from students was priceless. Fatherless students would tell him, “Richard, you are my father,” a sentiment that he said “both warmed my heart and broke my heart.” And there was the time a handful of younger pupils burst into tears when he told them he might not return if they didn’t try harder.

“Fofo” is a Brazilian-Portuguese word meaning soft and delicate, like a baby’s skin. Young would use it to indicate a softer, warmer pizzicato tone. A few students started calling him Professor Fofo.

But despite these deeply rewarding experiences, three years of commuting more than 8,000 miles a month took a toll. “It was time to move on,” he said. “And in any case, if I have done my job well, the kids have become empowered to progress for themselves and to teach others, which was always our goal.”

In mid-2012 Young began work in Colombia on a program called Batuta (Spanish for “baton”). Batuta is one of the largest arts programs in Latin America, and the largest in Colombia. The program’s reach is massive for a small country: some forty-seven thousand students in two hundred eighty-four orchestras in more than one hundred cities. Young’s role is to teach the teachers, thus leveraging his skills to reach the most students.



Young with a quartet of Colombian 10-year-olds.

When I asked him recently what he had been working on since then, he reeled off an exhaustive list of projects and initiatives. They included teaching at Bogotá’s Javeriana University and training the teachers of the youth project



Young with some of the teachers he has trained in Colombia.

at Orquesta Filarmonica de Bogotá, which reaches twenty thousand kids. He has also been giving master classes to the violists in the Quito Symphony, Ecuador's top orchestra, as well as teaching for *Esperanza Azteca*, a large



Young coaching students in Valledupar, Colombia.

network of youth orchestras based in Puebla, Mexico.

He'd also found time to perform works for viola and orchestra by Brazilian composers Radamés Gnattali, Ernst Mahle, and Edino Krieger. And he premiered the 2013 Concerto for Viola and Orchestra written for him by Liduino Pitombeira, and premiered his original viola transcription of Heitor Villa-Lobos's 1945 Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra.

In other words, business as usual.

But when the business is helping others, tirelessly and ceaselessly, it begs the question: what drives this kind of



Liduino Pitombeira (left) and Richard Young (right).

altruism? Can it be captured, like lightning in a bottle, and taught so that others can become more giving and selfless? Young's many admirers are divided on the question. Some see in his outreach work a compulsion, almost a genetic need, to employ his talents for the greater good. "Maybe it's his work ethic," says his wife Jenni. "He feeds off helping people who deserve help; it's what he loves to do. It's what made him a great musician—always wanting to be better. Now he's driven by wanting to make his students better, in ways that go beyond music."

Others see his giving ethos and efforts more as spiritual expression and fulfillment, along the lines of the Dalai Lama's aphorism, "To experience peace, provide peace for another."

"If ever there were a demonstration of the power of the God within us—the God which is the universe and with which all art seeks to commune—your Brazilian 'family' and efforts seem to be it," said Tim Jones, a violinist who studied with Young at Wichita State University in 2008 and 2009. To this tribute to his teacher, Jones added a heartfelt postscript: "To think I may someday reach out into the world with music in such a way encourages and inspires, for art is not only entertainment, but clearly also God in the form of hope, in the form of joy, in the form of sound."

"He is a profoundly principled person," said Stegeman, his fellow FEMUSC teacher. The theologian and author Martin Marty, Young's partner in the recording of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ*, would agree. "Richard was born with a spirit of generosity that is very rare." Ego, too, plays no small part. It is certainly gratifying to

be adored and admired—especially by young people—Young’s people. His youth crusade might seem self-serving. “Adulation is nice,” he admits, “but it’s not the real motivation. It’s to strive make things better for others.”

So is it all these things: a spiritual drive, a communal ethos, a genetic need or gratitude for continuous success?

Then, one day, an answer showed up in my email. It was a copy of *Comprehensive String Pedagogy & Curriculum*, an instructional manual Young had written for youth ensembles, inspired by Venezuela’s famous *Sistema* music programs for the poor as well as traditional youth orchestras, covering all aspects of string teaching. (The materials are now being used by string programs in the U.S., Latin America, and Hong Kong.) In the introduction he writes, “...in even the most dry and predictable exercises, every note should be expressive. For this reason, vibrato is encouraged—not so much that it masks the pitch, but enough to suggest that beauty is never an afterthought. Indeed, there is enough ugliness and chaos that surrounds us in our everyday lives. And all too often we have little control of these things. But at the moment we put the bow to the strings, we have the power to dictate the beauty in our immediate environment.”

There it is: altruism as an aesthetic choice—the talent and will to help others by creating beauty in the world. Who wouldn’t follow this course if they could?

But when asked directly, he shrugs it off. In the final analysis he says, it’s all about the deal. To illustrate the point, he relates a story. One of his violin students at the People’s Music School was a Colombian teen named Lina Olmos. Young recalled that though she was not unusually gifted, “she was very bright and had a lot of potential. But she was unfocused and unsure of herself.” As usual, he made the deal with her. “I said to her, ‘Beyond our work with the violin, I will teach you how to be excellent. And you will transfer that excellence to whatever you decide to do in your life.’”

The goal, he said, was not to push her toward a career in music, but to enable her to eventually contribute meaningfully to society, using her developing talent. In that sense, music was a means for growth and development, a model for constancy and discipline, and Young was a mentor as much as a violin instructor,



A recent photo of Lina Olmos, her husband, and one of their children.

teaching not just the notes but their meaning. That meaning, he seemed to say, was the meaning of life: the more we give, the more we grow. The more we grow, the more we live fully, and help others to live fully. It is the best of all virtuous circles.

Lina studied with him for a year in Chicago, then returned to Colombia.

“She really got her act together,” Young said with satisfaction. “She wrote me that she had decided to become a doctor. And she married a doctor, and every Monday they devote the day to providing free medical care in a clinic in the poor part of town. So every Monday Lina pays me back.”

“Which makes me,” he said, “an incredibly rich guy.”

Les Jacobson is a writer in Evanston, Illinois. He is on staff and a columnist at the Evanston RoundTable newspaper and maintains a blog for his fiction and journalism at www.lesterjacobson.com. He plays viola in a number of string quartets, as well as in the annual Do-It-Yourself Messiah concerts (where he first met Richard Young) and the pit orchestra of the Savoyaires, Evanston’s Gilbert & Sullivan company. His desert island composer is Brahms, but his favorite viola pieces are Britten’s Lachrymae and Shostakovich’s Viola Sonata.

Meet the Section: Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra

Julie Edwards

The viola section of Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra is a tightly knit group of colleagues and friends. They have annual viola section parties, they perform viola ensemble music as the “Hot Damn Violas” to rave reviews, and they even go so far as to help each other move!

Violists, being of helpful nature, are often drawn to committee service, and the FWSO section is no exception. Several members of the section served during the recent long and arduous negotiations that resulted in a three-month strike that ended in December 2016.

On top of having wonderful camaraderie offstage, they also perform well together onstage. I had the privilege of hearing the FWSO perform during a visit in 2015. The section sounded superb in their role supporting the cello hymn at the beginning of the 1812 Overture, and exhibited exceptional ensemble skills and agility in Anitra’s Dance from Grieg’s *Peer Gynt Suite*.

Now that you’ve heard about the wonderful viola section of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, here’s your chance to get to know each member of the section a little better. Learn more about the FWSO, including the biographies of our featured violists, at fwsymphony.org.

Laura Brunton, Principal Viola

Biography

My hometown is Hickory, North Carolina. I started on the violin in public school strings class in about fifth grade. I switched to viola in the middle of my senior year of college at the then North Carolina School of the Arts. I studied violin with Elaine Richey until my senior year when I switched to viola and studied with Sally Peck. My graduate studies were at the St. Louis Conservatory of Music with Michael Tree.



The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra viola section in performance. From top left to bottom right: Aleksandra Holowka, Dmitry Kustanovich, Sorin Guttman, Dan Sigale, Joni Baczewski, Scott Jessup (Assistant Principal), David Hermann (Associate Principal), and Laura Brunton (Principal).

I joined the Fort Worth Symphony in the fall of 1985 and was a section violist for three years before winning the job of principal viola in 1988. [Prior to joining FWSO] I played in the Winston-Salem Symphony, Greensboro Symphony and the Piedmont Chamber Orchestra while in school in NC. While in St Louis, I played in The Orchestra and Chorus of St Louis.

I believe my best preparation for [an orchestra career] came from constant orchestral playing in school and at summer festivals and in community orchestras all along. I had very important orchestral excerpts classes in college too.

I play on “Jerome”—he is a very old viola attributed to the Amati family of stringed instrument makers. He is getting close to 400 years old!

What is your superhero power in the section?

Sometimes I feel like a “mom” to my section members. I have eyes and ears in the back of my head!!

What is your favorite memory from the FWSO, and what are your thoughts about the viola section?

Probably my favorite memory of my FWSO career was our performance at Carnegie Hall. It was a thrill to be in that space and the audience response to our performance was unforgettable! I believe that our section is probably the strongest of the string sections in the orchestra. We are also known as the section that gets along with each other and even socializes together. I enjoy the real camaraderie our section shares. Even though we are all very different people, we genuinely care about each other as well as playing together so beautifully! We recently played Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 11 which I had never played. Our section soli were a highlight of each performance.

What do you want young violists to know about orchestra life? Is there something you wish someone had told you about? Do you have one piece of advice for violists who aspire to an orchestra career?

It is not for everyone. It is a real job and real work every day for not much money or glory. I never knew how shamefully orchestra management could treat musicians. We have had to do their jobs as well as our own. Make sure that you work even harder on learning orchestral repertoire than on solos. Play for others as much as you can. Never waste money going to auditions if you are not completely prepared.

How did the recent strike affect you and what advice would you give other musicians about enduring a work stoppage?

For me personally, I learned much about how our family could get by on a lot less money. I also learned that the musicians in our orchestra are not supported much by our management or our city. Get ready for a new “view” of life. I am very surprised that my level of “loyalty” to this group has taken such a nosedive.

Committee work

I have served on many committees over the years, including several times on the Players’ Committee, Artistic Committee, and of course, 30+ years of serving on Audition Committees. I think violists are generally people who care a lot and who can see how they can make a difference and help.

What are some of your non-musical interests?

My husband and I love camping around the country in our RV, hiking in Colorado and spending time with our children. I love crafting and making interesting gifts for family. Other interests include genealogy and photoshop.

David Hermann, Associate Principal Viola

Biography

My hometown is Quincy, Illinois (population 41,000). Through the park board summer music program, I was able to take free violin and viola lessons. Performing a Brahms sextet on viola as a high school sophomore sealed the deal. I received bachelor and masters of music degrees from University of Illinois, studying with Guillermo Perich, plus a semester with John Garvey and Eduard Melkus. I came to Fort Worth directly from school in January of 1979. My viola was made by Philadelphia luthier Helmuth Keller.

What is your superhero power in the section?

Did you see Superman II? Once Clark revealed his superpowers to Lois the franchise was never the same afterward. . . .

What was the best piece of advice you received that prepared you for orchestra life?

To keep an open mind when presented with an interpretive suggestion.

What’s your favorite memory of playing in your orchestra?

The entirety of our 1983 tour of mainland China will always have a special place in my memory.

What do you feel your section is known for in the orchestra?

When there is an important part for the section, it will be good and it will be heard!

What is your favorite viola section soli to play?

Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, slow movement.

What do you want young violists to know about orchestra life?

We are taught to be soloists, to be individual, to project personality in our playing. Being an orchestra string player is about blending, making ten or twelve players sound like one instrument. Knowing when your line is not the most important (when to get out of the way) is also an important skill.

Committee work

I've served on a negotiation committee, as well as the artistic advisory committee. Maybe violists serve on committees because they don't get the melody very often.

What are some of your non-musical interests?

I'm a member of the Fort Worth Model "A" Ford club, which helps me keep my 1930 coupe "Johonkus" in peak condition.

What are three things would you like the viola world to know about you? 1.) I listen to classical music between rehearsals; 2.) I collect recordings of viola music; 3.)

As with any healthy obsession, I know when to take a vacation from it.

Note: Scott Jessup is the Assistant Principal, and is on sabbatical this season.

Joni Bacsewski

Biography

I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas. I was totally engrossed when a musician visited my elementary school. He played the violin behind his back and I was hooked. The 4th grade string group only had beginning violins so I played violin my 4th grade year. Right before the summer, my teacher asked me to play either cello or viola so I chose cello. My mom said she wasn't about to carry a cello upstairs—I was tiny and the strings class was up a couple of flights of stairs—so right after school was out for the summer, my strings teacher brought a viola to my house, handed me a book that had a really funny looking clef, pointed at a note and said, "this is 3rd finger on G string"—and then left.

I studied viola and music education with Dr. George Papich then studied with Dr. George Papich and Ellen Rose while working on my master's.

I started part time with the Fort Worth symphony while I was finishing up my senior year of high school. I had positions with the Dallas Opera, Lyric Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Fort Worth Ballet, and Fort Worth Symphony. I won my full-time position somewhere around 1987. I play on a Tetsuo Matsuda viola with a Hill bow.

What was the best piece of advice you received that prepared you for orchestra life?

If you don't like playing the same symphonies over and over, don't play in an orchestra! Doesn't matter if you are sitting on the inside or outside of the stand, help mark the music.

What is your superhero power in the section?

I wear the coolest socks.

What is your favorite memory from the FWSO, and what are your thoughts about the viola section?

There was a conductor that said the same things over and over again, so someone made bingo cards and passed them out. There were sayings on the card. If you got a bingo, you were to quietly cough. Lots of coughing that day! The Van Cliburn competition has always been a highlight—meeting Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Van Cliburn, and many more wonderful musicians and conductors. I've also loved getting so wrapped up in a beautiful and energetic piece of music that I forget I am on stage performing in a concert.

Our section gets along with each other better than any other section in the orchestra. We have a good time and have the most awesome "Christmas" present exchange/white elephant! We have a very strong viola section because we all care about how we sound.

What is your favorite viola section soli to play?

One that has more than whole notes and rests.

What do you want young violists to know about orchestra life? Is there something you wish that someone had told you?

Learn the music correctly and as well as you can the first time, because later on there will be so much music

to learn all at once that it can be overwhelming. Play chamber music to keep your listening skills acute. Be considerate of your stand partner at all times. Just know that you will never have two days off in a row, and that your house will probably never stay clean for more than a week in a row. Know that not everyone gets to perform music like we do and that you will be lucky if you get to do this and get paid for it.

How did your recent strike affect you and what advice would you give other musicians about enduring a work stoppage?

I was on the negotiation team and it was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Every violist joined in on marching around Bass Hall and carrying signs and supported us in every way. However, it did “a number” on my health and I’m still tired. My advice to anyone thinking about a strike would have to be get prepared, really prepared. Call others that have been in a strike and ask for advice. Always keep in mind why you are on strike in the first place and don’t give up.

What interesting things do you do outside orchestra life?

I used to take Tae Kwon Do and have a 3rd degree black belt. I also enjoy working on my small lathe. I’m involved in an after-school strings program and conduct the beginning orchestra and the most advanced orchestra.

What are three things would you like the viola world to know about you?

1.) I enjoy playing with my Fort Worth Symphony viola colleagues and I’m proud to be a part of the section. 2.) I have a wonderful son and husband and think that they are the smartest people on earth. 3.) Music can be the catalyst that could help a child out of a tough situation and I hope that my friends remember to share their talents.

Sorin Guttman

Biography

I grew up in Bucharest, Romania. I started playing the violin when I was about 6, and switched to the viola when I was about 15. I received degrees and diplomas from the National University of Music (Bucharest), Scuola di Alto Perfezionamento Musicale (Saluzzo, Italy), the International Menuhin Music Academy

(Switzerland), the Harid Conservatory (Florida), and Temple University. My teachers were Valeriu Pitulac, Alfonso Ghedin, Johannes Erkes, Johannes Eskaer, Michael McClelland, Sylvia Ahramjian, and Choong-Jin (C.J) Chang.

I joined FWSO in 2002. After getting my bachelor’s degree, I served as Associate Principal Viola in the National Radio/Television Chamber and Symphony Orchestras in Bucharest, Romania.

I have 2 violas: one labeled “Copy of A Stradivarius—made in Germany,” and the other one made by George Van Pelt.

What is your superhero power in the section?

Probably the most often I hear wrong notes.

What are your thoughts about the FWSO viola section?

The viola section the best section, the most united, with the most friendly, fun, and cool people.

Do you have one piece of advice for violists who aspire to an orchestra career?

Persevere.

What advice would you give other musicians about enduring a work stoppage?

Again, best advice: persevere.

Aleksandra (Ola) Holowka

Biography

I grew up in Krakow Poland, and I started playing violin when I was 7 and studied with my mom who was a violin teacher. At age 15 I decided viola would be a better fit. I came to the United States to study viola with Eric Shumsky and later Igor Fedotov at Western Michigan University. After earning my bachelor’s degree, I got a scholarship at Rice University where I earned my master’s degree studying with James Dunham.

I’ve been with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra for 11 seasons. Before joining FWSO I played with Austin symphony and was principal violist of the Austin Opera. I had also played in numerous regional orchestras while earning my degrees.

What was the best piece of advice you received that prepared you for orchestra life, and do you have any viola superpowers?

Best advice: start from the string! Unfortunately, I don't have viola superpowers but I consider myself a pretty decent "sound chameleon." I don't like to stick out. I blend in with the surroundings.

What is your favorite memory from the FWSO, and what are your thoughts about the viola section?

I have lots of favorite moments from playing in the orchestra. Some include playing favorite pieces like Mahler symphonies that are always an emotional journey for me. Others are as simple as spending time with friends and having some giggles.

My favorite thing about the section, and what we are known for, is the fact that we all get along and know how to have fun together. We do well on raucous soli.

Committee work.

I served on the strike committee which involved coordinating picketing and setting out water and picket signs for others on the picket line. I was also a member of the negotiating committee 4 years ago and I'm on the string rotation committee.

What interesting things do you do outside orchestra life?

Outside of my orchestra life I have a husband and a 4-year-old daughter (so 2 kids at home). We like to do all sort of outdoor activities as a family. I love nature and sports. I have a wonderful running community in Fort Worth. I've run 5 marathons and I'm sure I'll do more in the future.

Dmitry Kustanovich

Biography

I grew up in Worcester, MA, and switched to viola after getting an undergrad in violin at Manhattan School of Music. I went to Curtis on viola, studying with Joseph de Pasquale (and Philipp Naegele prior to that, during my transition). I've been in the FWSO section since 2005, and prior to that played for five years in the Detroit Symphony as a substitute.



Enjoying each other's company. Left to right: Dan, Scott, Laura, Aleksandra, Sorin, Dmitry, Joni, and Scott.

What advice do you have for violists who aspire to an orchestra career?

My best piece of advice prior to tenure: Show up early, say very little, watch the principal's bow. My best advice post-tenure: Never take it for granted and take care of your body. Father Time is undefeated.

What is your favorite memory from the FWSO?

Performing a Gala with John Williams conducting his own music.

What are your thoughts about the recent strike?

It is emotionally taxing. Take a deep breath and buckle down, because it will affect you. Having said that, the level of support you'll experience from the local community and your American Federation of Musicians colleagues is amazing! You'll realize how fortunate we are to be in the AFM.

Dan Sigale

Biography

I'm originally from Skokie, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago). Like many violists of my generation, I started on violin and switched to viola. I began playing violin when I was 4 years old. I started off strong, but eventually lost interest in practicing, and the other violinists began to pass me by. At the end of my freshman year of high school, my orchestra teacher came to me and asked if I was interested in switching to viola. When I switched to viola, I was immediately inspired, and many new opportunities opened up to me, such as All-State orchestra and Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. I could never have participated in either of these if I had stayed on violin.

I got my bachelor of music performance degree at DePaul University, where I studied with Rami Solomonow, then Principal Viola of the Lyric Opera of Chicago. I got my master of music performance degree at Northwestern University, where I studied with Peter Slowik. Finally, I did postgraduate work at the University of Notre Dame, where I studied with Christine Rutledge.

I have been in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra since 1998. Before that, I played for two seasons with the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra. I play on a 2001 Stanley Kiernoziak viola.

What is your superhero power in the section?

Everyone will tell you I am the equivalent of the class clown—I am always making jokes during rehearsal, which is a bad habit that I do not recommend. But I am also the equivalent of “Julie, your cruise director” (look up “The Love Boat” on Wikipedia), and I organize the annual viola section holiday dinner, along with the occasional end-of-year get-together.

What is your favorite memory from the FWSO, and what are your thoughts about the viola section?

I remember fondly the first time I went with the orchestra down to south Texas. Every year we used to play for students in the Rio Grande Valley over the course of a few days, and while no one would say it was a glamorous tour, I had such a great time getting to know my colleagues better. A group of us went across the border to Mexico and went out to eat at a nice restaurant, where Principal Violist Laura Bruton and I bonded over “Chateaubriand for two.”

We are definitely the friendliest section in the orchestra, and the section that gets along the best. I think violists are some of the friendliest musicians in general, because we are used to being team players, rather than showboaters. Plus, it takes a special kind of personality to be drawn to the viola, and when you get a group of those personalities together, it can be a very magical combination.

I love that we get to begin and end the third movement of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2. That movement is probably my favorite piece of orchestral music, and the fact that the violas are a big part of it almost makes up for the nasty excerpts we have to endure in the second

movement. Runner-up is the viola statement of the opening theme of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3.

What do you want young violists to know about orchestra life? Is there something you wish someone had told you about? Do you have one piece of advice for violists who aspire to an orchestra career?

I have often said that every music school should have a course about the non-musical aspects of being in a symphony orchestra, entitled, “The Politics of the Orchestra.” Some schools do have a class or at least a lecture on this subject, but it should be mandatory for all future professional orchestra musicians. If your school does not have such a class, find a mentor and ask questions, one of them being, “What do you think I should know about playing in an orchestra?”

Beyond that, young musicians need to realize that the landscape has been changing in orchestras around the country. As hard as it is to win a job in an orchestra, once you get a job you are frequently underpaid and underappreciated by your management. If your orchestra does not have strong leadership with a solid, long-range plan for artistic and financial growth, they may turn to the musicians to shoulder the load through cuts at the first sign of financial trouble. (Or so I've heard.)

Committee work and the recent strike

I was the Chairman of the Negotiating Committee and Players Committee during our recent strike, and I am so proud of my colleagues throughout the orchestra. We were dedicated and unified, and although it was not an easy period in our lives, we supported each other through the worst of it. Most importantly, after we took major cuts in 2010, the musicians decided to work to improve our visibility in the community, and the relationships we established over the last several years helped us during the strike, and indirectly led to the resolution of the strike altogether.

As you can imagine, the strike was a difficult time for each of us, individually. But it helped to have a support system . . . and a sense of humor. In fact, having a support system and a sense of humor are my biggest pieces of advice for enduring a work stoppage, along with being prepared in advance by having a strong savings account, as well as a plan to have alternative sources of income, should you need them. As I mentioned

earlier, violists are team players. Some might even call us peacekeepers. That is why so many of us are willing to step up to serve on committees.

What interesting things do you do outside orchestra life?

Along with violinist Kathryn Perry, I am one of the directors of the Spectrum Chamber Music Society, which puts on six chamber music concerts each season at two churches in Fort Worth. Another violist in our section, Dave Hermann, was a founding member and longtime director, and I am proud to continue the tradition he upheld for over 30 years!

About a year after I arrived in Texas, I decided that, cliché as it may sound, I needed to learn how to two-step. Dallas, Texas (a suburb of Fort Worth) has one of the largest LGBT country-western dance bars in the country, and when I went to lessons, I was immediately hooked. Since then, I have competed in couples and line dance competitions, taught and choreographed line dances, and even helped organize and lead a gay country-western dance team.

I am currently captain of a weekly trivia night team that is mostly made up of FWSO musicians. Our team name is “Magnificent Implosion,” because most weeks we find a way to implode magnificently.

I may or may not be one of the leading proponents of the Sonata for Viola, Four Hands and Harpsichord by P.D.Q. Bach, having performed it many times across the country. I actually have a suitcase filled with the necessary props, and I try to add one new prop every time I perform the piece. Pro-Tips: Find someone to dress as a butler and bring you food during the third movement . . . and be sure to ring a bell to summon him. Also, add a page-turner to the cast, and give him/her the job of reluctantly—or happily—accepting the applause at the end of the piece after the musicians unceremoniously leave the stage.

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The Accompaniment in “Unaccompanied” Bach: Interpreting the Sonatas and Partitas for Violin

Reviewed by David Rose

The Accompaniment in “Unaccompanied” Bach: Interpreting the Sonatas and Partitas for Violin

By Stanley Ritchie

136 pages

\$33.00

ISBN: 978-0-253-02198-4

I cannot possibly hide the biased nature of this review. During my time with him at Indiana, Stanley Ritchie walked me through the Bach cello suites, and little by little, week after week, small lights would turn on in a previously dark room.

We all know this dark room—possibly the most wonderful dark room in all of music. The room where we eagerly stumble around Bach’s music, groping around for familiar bits of furniture. We may find something to help us navigate, only to doubt its usefulness days or months later. And the groping around begins again. We don’t mind at all, as the treasures in this room are so vast.

Stanley Ritchie has been walking string players through this dark room for at least thirty-five years in his capacity as Distinguished Professor of Violin and Early Music at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. He knows and understands the solo string music of Bach better than anyone else I know. I feel blessed to have studied under him.

His new book, *The Accompaniment in “Unaccompanied” Bach: Interpreting the Sonatas and Partitas for Violin* (Indiana University Press) follows on the heels of his *Before the Chinrest: A Violinist’s Guide to the Mysteries of Pre-Chinrest Technique and Style* (also IU Press).

It might be good to confront the elephant in the room and agree first off that one of the great advantages of

being a violist is the ability to choose from either the cello suites or the sonatas and partitas. There is no compelling evidence that Bach cared greatly which instrument fulfilled his music (and much evidence in fact that he was flexible, adapting his own music frequently with no obvious concern for the new timbre or key signature). Ritchie shares Bach’s flexibility, and celebrates these works on the viola, making this book equally valuable for both instruments.

Interpreting the Sonatas and Partitas is organized first with general principles of interpretation, followed by an in-depth look at every single movement. Bowing, fingering, phrasing, and stylistic suggestions are offered for many of the more tangly bits of writing (worth the price alone!). However, Ritchie’s focus never wanders from the grounding factors of phrasing based upon harmony and managing the four voices in our choir (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—all frequently corresponding to the four strings of the violin). The cheeky quotation marks surrounding “*Unaccompanied*” in the book title are of course a reference to the fact that these pieces are not unaccompanied at all, at least not by another person—the lights won’t appear in our dark room until we realize that our job in solo Bach is more choir director than lonely string player.

Ritchie also has a soft spot for the inner voices (alto and tenor), a realm very well known to the violist. In the book, there are some ingenious exercises for bringing out the middle voices in Bach; care and love for the middle voices is, I think, the final and most exquisite stop on the road to performing Bach. The usual road trip begins with an early preoccupation with the top line (the familiar preoccupation in post-Baroque music). This is followed by a sense of the importance of the bass. The richness of the middle voices (strings) in solo Bach rounds out the journey, and one can readily hear in a given performance whether or not a performer holds a deep love for the

middle voices. One can hear this in Mr. Ritchie's fine recording of the Sonatas and Partitas, *Sei Solo à Violino senza Basso accompagnato*: Musica Omnia—MO0503.

Ritchie also frequently points out our selective relationship with Bach's manuscript. We are simultaneously willing to discard or change slurs, yet can show dogmatic heroism in trying to sustain out the notated values of certain notes. The earnest student will not know, unless told, that one needn't always take note values literally. It is immediately apparent to the keen eye that the very first chord in the G minor Sonata is not possible to play as it appears—with a quarter note on each string. We need to be told that Bach wrote many of his note values in the acknowledged shorthand of the era.

Regarding slurs, Ritchie writes, "Because of our training, it is normal to perceive slurs as 'bowings', and therefore changeable when convenient or awkward; in 18th century music, nothing could be further from the truth." (page 8). If one follows Ritchie's technical advice, one will soon come to feel that Bach's invention with articulation and slurring was no less vital than his harmonic and polyphonic adventures—and that every single slur in the manuscript is not only possible, but *preferable*.

On a related note, in a recent *Strings* article on Bach, there is a wonderful admission from the fascinating Albanian violinist Tedi Papavrami, who has transcribed some of the immense organ fugues for solo violin, and performs them brilliantly. He confessed that although technically comfortable with such fiendishly difficult composers as Paganini, Sarasate, and Wieniawski, he was

surprised that his bow technique "was not good enough for Bach."¹ I felt such comfort and absolution in this confession. After learning much of the standard post-baroque viola repertoire myself, I always felt that the lessons learned in Mozart, Brahms and Hindemith did not adequately equip my bow arm for solo Bach.

The book finishes with a chapter each on the right hand and the left hand, and the final two chapters are drawn almost identically from Ritchie's prior book, *Before the Chinrest*, which contains many pages of great exercises for learning to play on a baroque violin (with no chinrest or shoulder rest). For someone looking to go 'full baroque,' I would say that *Before the Chinrest* is essential reading.

Stanley Ritchie has spent a lifetime in close connection to these works, and the fruits of his experience are here for the taking. If you feel yourself stumbling around a dark room, get a copy of Mr. Ritchie's book! I only hope it will turn on little lights for you, as it did for me.

David Rose is Associate Professor of Viola at the State University of New York in Fredonia. Prior to this he served in the symphony orchestras of Kitchener-Waterloo, Vancouver, and San Francisco.

Notes

- ¹ Laurence Vittes, "Titans Talk about the Bach Solo Violin Works," *Strings*, January 1, 2007, <http://stringsmagazine.com/titans-talk-about-the-bach-solo-violin-works>.

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(Continued on page 2)

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