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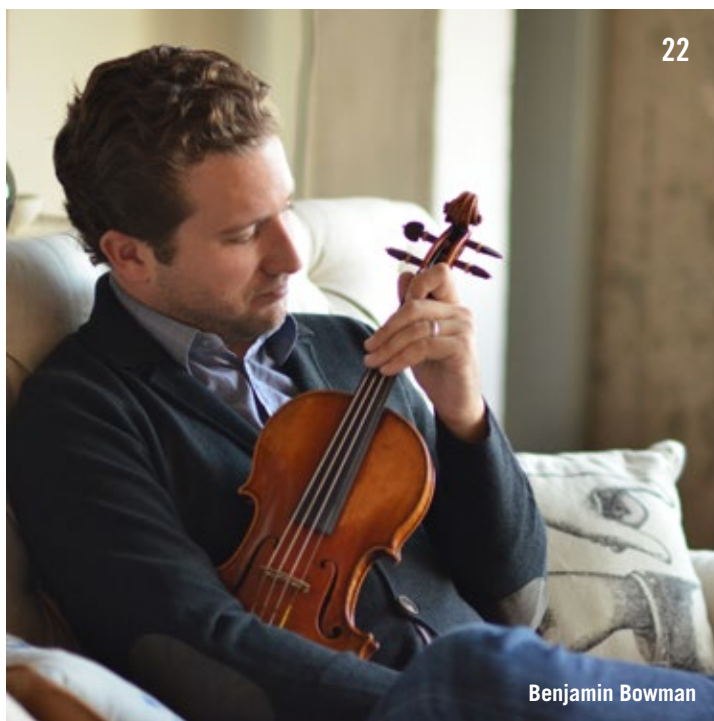
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# SEPTEMBER

2018

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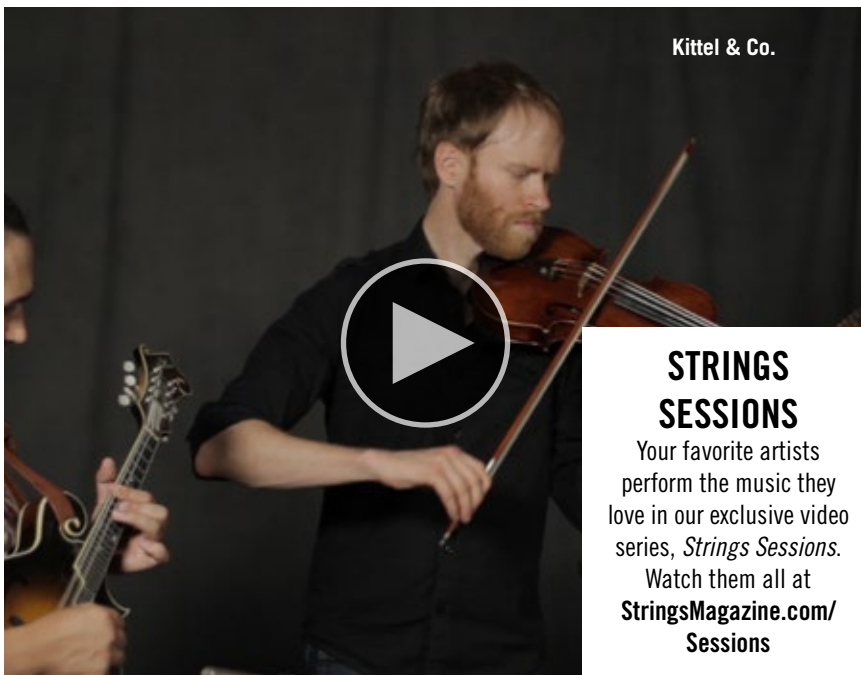
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Violinist Dixie Ortiz

**E**ach September issue, I have the pleasure of announcing the winner of *Strings*' Edith Eisler Scholarship Award. This year's recipient, violinist Dixie Ortiz, is a music-education major at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Ortiz has quite a lot of teaching experience already, and has made it her mission to deliver high-quality string education to underserved communities in both her Florida home and in the Greensboro area. Her goal, she says, is to promote diversity in string music and give students the tools they need to become leaders with the confidence to pursue their passions in life. Her enthusiasm for teaching and dedication to the idea that music can change lives honor the scholarship's namesake, violinist and educator Edith Eisler, whose wisdom, kindness, and passion for music and string playing touched so many. Congratulations to Ortiz, and we wish her all the best in her musical journey.

For any string player who began his or her journey at a young age (sometimes at age three or four), the years spent at a college or conservatory are best used to distill all of that experience into a vision of the future. In

this issue's special focus on the college and conservatory experience, we profile a master's program giving students real-world orchestral experience, discuss curriculum designed to help the 21st-century player succeed, spotlight programs that focus on improvisatory playing styles, and talk with pedagogue Steven Doane about how he encourages students to physically connect with the cello in a healthy way.

I hope you enjoy these stories and the many others in this issue, including features about the eclectic musical choices of violinist Lucia Micarelli, the benefits of an ensemble's decision to employ two (or more) concertmasters, and the power of American master composer Joan Tower's music; an inside look at Mahler's Symphony No. 3 by San Francisco Symphony cellist Barbara Bogatin; a peek into New York Philharmonic violist Cynthia Phelps' case; and a discussion about inspiring confidence in one's students by Scott Flavin, lecturer in violin performance and chamber music and resident conductor for the Henry Mancini Institute at University of Miami's Frost School of Music.

As always, I'd love to hear what you think!

—Megan Westberg

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: In a news story in the August 2018 issue, *Strings* identified a piece performed at the royal wedding as Fauré's *Sicilienne*. The piece was actually composed by Maria Theresia von Paradis. ACPM, mentioned in the article "How to Start an Adult Chamber-Music Ensemble," no longer stands for Amateur Chamber Music Players, but rather Associated Chamber Music Players.

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Cellist Anastasia Kobekina



Aris Quartet

## NEXT WAVE

Cellist Anastasia Kobekina and the Aris Quartet announced as BBC Next Generation Artists

By Stephanie Powell

The BBC has announced its newest lineup of **Next Generation Artists**. Among the musicians selected are Russian cellist **Anastasia Kobekina** and the **Aris Quartet**. NGA offers its members two years of opportunities to perform live and in the studio, and to collaborate with BBC orchestras and other NGAs.

"We are very much looking forward to all of the different experiences we are going to gain within the upcoming two years," **Caspar Vinzens**, violist of the Aris Quartet says. "The program offers fantastic opportunities to reach a wide audience not only in

live concerts, but also through media. We are already making our first recording with the BBC radio this year, and wonderful music festivals and concert halls are waiting for us. We are very excited about the chance to present ourselves to the British audience."

The quartet—made up of violinists **Anna Katharina Wildermuth** and **Noémi Zipperling**, violist Caspar Vinzens, and cellist **Lukas Sieber**—formed in 2009. This is not the first noteworthy milestone for the group: In 2012 the quartet won the **International Johannes Brahms Competition** in Austria, and in 2016 won the **International Joseph Joachim Chamber-Music Competition** in Germany.

Quartet members Vinzens and Zipperling note that the group's debut at Wigmore Hall is a milestone they are looking forward to, among the many opportunities that await.

"Now that we are allowed to dream," Vinzens says with a laugh, "we think about playing at the BBC proms or for her Majesty, the Queen."

"In all seriousness, depending on our schedule, we will do as much radio recording as possible. We love radio productions—we're

able to give our music to many people in the whole country and beyond."

The group will also be performing live concerts and working with composers on newly commissioned works. For the remainder of summer, the Aris' schedule is packed on the festival circuit throughout Europe, and will kick off fall with the September 7 release of their upcoming album of Shostakovich and Schubert string quartets.

As for Kobekina, the Russian cellist has studied with **Frans Helmerson** at the Kronberg Academy since 2012. She placed first at the **Tonali Competition** in Hamburg in 2015, and performs on a **1740 G.B. Guadagnini** cello, which she received on a three-year loan as part of the prize. In 2016 she won the soloist prize at the **Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** and second prize at the **George Enescu Competition**.

The NGA string players join a group of esteemed previous winners that include the **Ebène** and **Danish** string quartets, **Lisa Batiashvili**, **Tai Murray**, **Ilya Gringolts**, **Antoine Tamestit**, **Alina Ibragimova**, and **Sheku Kanneh-Mason**.



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## 5 MINUTES WITH...ETHEL CELLIST DOROTHY LAWSON

When ETHEL formed in the '90s, they knew they were tapping into something big. Two separate projects brought together the original members, who then decided to establish ETHEL as a full-time quartet. In the two decades since, the New York City-based, new-music-focused string quartet has become known for melding myriad genres and influences, and for launching socially engaging multimedia projects. ETHEL's 20th-anniversary season opens this fall. In November, they're bringing their latest multimedia project, *Circus: Wandering City*, to the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival.

"It was a unique, wonderful, powerful opportunity to open a new musical enterprise," says cellist Dorothy Lawson. The landmark season has prompted Lawson—along with violist Ralph Farris and violinists Kip Jones and Corin Lee—to reflect on how it all began. "I sometimes call it a moment of a tidal shift," Lawson says of ETHEL's formation. "In fact, people had been cultivating [this style of music] already for maybe 30 years . . . it was strong enough and ready enough that when the market became just unsettled enough to be willing to give it a chance, we were there to spring into action."

Lawson reflects on how the contemporary-music landscape has changed since ETHEL's inception. She also touches on why music is a "perfect vehicle" for human connection.

—Cristina Schreil

Since 1998, many artists have embraced what once made ETHEL unique—melding different genres, being adventurous with styles and

MATTHEW MURPHY



### CELLIST SEBASTIAN FRITSCH PLACES FIRST AT TONALI COMPETITION

The annual **Tonali Competition**, which alternates between violin, cello, and piano, announced its first place winner: 21-year-old cellist **Sebastian Fritsch**. During the finals, which took place at Hamburg's **Elbphilharmonie** concert hall, Fritsch performed the Schumann Concerto. He will be taking home \$10,000, in addition to a \$3,000 audience-favorite prize.



### RECORD SET FOR G.B. GUADAGNINI VIOLIN AT AUCTION

At a **Tarisio** auction in late June, the **c. 1773–75 "ex-Sinzheimer" G.B. Guadagnini** violin sold for \$2.1 million, setting an auction record for that maker. In 2016, the **c. 1743 "Havemeyer" cello** set the previous record, selling for \$1.5 million. The violin is said to be from Guadagnini's Turin period, and it's the first time the instrument has hit the market in almost 60 years.

### technology, social engagement, etc. What has it been like to see new music evolve?

I have felt for years this was inevitable—that this was a matter of human adaptation to the necessary conditions. I'm delighted with it. Actually, I am the oldest ETHEL, I have always been the oldest ETHEL, and I am lucky to have found my journey following this path because I was much more classically centered for a good long time before ETHEL began. But, it's so exciting, refreshing, and so much more appropriate for a world where people are more and more pressed together and need to find ways of communicating across ideologies and without animosities. With tolerance and curiosity about each other. Music is an ideal vehicle. It's maybe the most perfect human vehicle for doing that. Being agents of that is thrilling to me. It's become a wonderful mission as well as a professional capacity.

### Can you speak about how some projects over the years have reflected this philosophy?

It was our original character to offer ourselves as advocates for many different voices. Most certainly classically trained musicians are trained to do that anyway, to become the voice of the composer. But, it was really at the TED conference in 2006, the first time that we performed at TED, where we were exposed most significantly to Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth presentation. It sort of snapped for us: "Well, in a world where there's this rising emergency, what do we do? What can musicians do to contribute to a healing, a resource of saving grace?"

The year before, we had begun working among Native Americans as part of the

Native American Composer Apprenticeship Project run by the Grand Canyon Music Festival. And we realized that people from those indigenous traditions didn't regard themselves as separate from nature. They cooperated. They honored nature. They regarded themselves as servants of nature. That world had sustained the intelligent awareness of this larger environmental integrity and if we could be agents of bringing some of that wisdom back to *our* world—where we had become more distanced, more estranged from nature, less respectful of it—if we could be agents of communication, that would be a valid and very valuable process as musicians. And so, we started looking for ways to manifest that.

### This seems to link to ETHEL's multimedia concert presentation "Documerica." Can you speak about that?

When the Environmental Protection Agency announced that they were digitizing their collection, which is something like 20,000 images taken by professional photographers in the early to mid '70s, we thought, "Wow, this would be a great thing to celebrate. This would be a great thing to tap into and see if we can find points of contact." We generated this program with four guest composers, but we wrote about half of the music ourselves, and explored that archive. Non-judgmentally. We were just looking for inspiration in the images and we expected the audience to come and find their own points of connection with the images. There is not a direct story. It's just a respectful exploration of the archive. We love performing that show. It's very mesmerizing. Every audience member experiences it uniquely based on his or her own life and experience.

we were doing as a tribute to that museum became historically significant. It's going to be interesting and exciting to perform it at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. That's the fourth time we'll have performed [there].

The first time was a show we had designed called TruckStop, which was more of a quest across America to bring the classical music, fun, quirky New York skillset into communication with these very masterful musicians from all across the country [who have] unique languages of their own. We brought together a slack key guitar player from Hawaii, Native American flute player Robert Mirabal, a brilliant, kind of wonderfully bizarre singer-accordion player from San Antonio who is part of the conjunto tradition there, and a banjo master from Kentucky from the bluegrass tradition. All of these people were stars of their worlds but had never dreamed that they would be contacted by a new-music string quartet in New York City and invited to build music together—let alone that they would be challenged to meet each other and work across all of these borders, all of these genre distinctions. Each one was absolutely thrilled to try. It's a universal thirst, a universal curiosity about how to reach out, how to become part of a larger world, how to be both heard and useful in those settings.

### What has been the most surprising or gratifying to you about these many different people coming together?

Well, I think we anticipated this, but the biggest thrill for me has been what I've learned. The way it becomes an immersive bio-feedback system, where you can't stay untouched by the experiences. You're not just framing something and [it] runs all by itself. You're actually immersed in it and in the wash. It's changing you as you participate. And all of us, all of ETHEL, I think all of the people who have participated, have found themselves opened and enlarged and actually changed for the more optimistic. It is just an enormous pleasure and privilege, really, to see people who love their families and their lives and actually the whole human adventure as much as you do and are willing to give and give and give of themselves in service of better understanding and greater health. The moments that we've shared with each other, where people have just shown up in their best light to the benefit of all, is just such a life gift. A treasure to take forward. ■

## MILESTONES



Violinist **Zach DePue**, also a former member of trio **Time for Three**, has resigned as concertmaster from the **Indianapolis Symphony**. He was appointed in 2017 at the age of 27.

After 20 years as concertmaster of the **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra**, **Timothy Lees** will be stepping down. Lees has been suffering from nerve damage since 2016, and while he relinquishes the chair at the end of this season, he will remain a part of the orchestra.

### How does Circus: Wandering City also explore images and history?

It's based on the visual collections of the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida, where the material is all about the actual Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The Ringling parent circus closed earlier this year in a startling move nobody saw coming; in fact, the Ringling Museum itself was shocked when that happened. Suddenly this show that

# FINDING HER PATH

The eclectic  
musical world of  
Lucia Micarelli

*By Greg Cahill*



A

sk Lucia Micarelli about her knack for eclectic programming and the soft-spoken, classically trained violinist offers a characteristically modest response. “I don’t think it’s a big deal anymore, because so many people are playing around with all these different styles,” she says, during a phone call from her Los Angeles home. “Even people who are well-established in classical careers are exploring other types of music. The younger generation of soloists is much more open and interested in other genres, even more so than ten years ago. That’s exciting to me.”

That’s all true, but few other musicians can lay claim to being an ambassador of eclecticism with a global media platform. Earlier this year, PBS-TV debuted *An Evening with Lucia Micarelli*, a 60-minute showcase that found the 35-year-old violinist performing everything from a triple-fiddle Irish jig and Ravel’s rhapsodic *Tzigane* to Gershwin’s “Someone to Watch Over Me” and Led Zeppelin’s rock powerhouse “Kashmir.”

Jazz, folk, Cajun, classical, rock—it’s all part of Micarelli’s musical world. The music from that broadcast will be released in October on a 16-track live album. And in her first nationwide solo concert tour, the violinist is set to perform 24 dates, beginning in July.

It’s already been a long road. Micarelli, who is half Italian and half Korean, was born in Queens, New York, and began playing violin at age three. She studied at the Juilliard School’s pre-college division with legendary violin teacher Dorothy DeLay and then at the Manhattan School of Music for a year with Pinchas Zukerman.

But she left school before graduating. “I felt like I needed to figure out how to apply all the technique and skills I learned in a real way,” she told *Strings* in 2010. “School felt a bit myopic.”

She soon built a reputation as a go-to rock and jazz violinist, touring with the popular progressive-rock band the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, pop singer Josh Groban, classic-rock artists Jethro Tull, and pop-jazz trumpeter Chris Botti, among others. She also released two major-label solo albums: 2004’s *Music from a Farther Room* and 2006’s *Interlude*, both of which combine pop, tango, jazz, and classical selections.

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## As time has passed, I’ve realized that *Treme* really blew open my musical world.

In 2009, she appeared on Botti’s popular PBS-TV special *Chris Botti in Boston*—the video excerpt of her star-turn solo on plaintive Botti ballad “Emmanuel” has netted more than 7.6 million views on YouTube.

Landing a starring role in 2010 as a New Orleans street musician on the hit HBO series *Treme* proved fortuitous in unexpected ways. Initially, Micarelli’s management had received a call from a New York casting director looking for a violinist to fill the part. Micarelli had no acting experience (creator David Simon often uses amateurs to add authenticity to his projects), but the violinist began considering the offer after watching a video interview with Simon (whom *Esquire* has dubbed “the greatest man in television writing”) and being impressed by his intelligence and serious nature. Then, on the Fourth of July, Micarelli tripped and landed on a wine glass, severing several nerves in her left hand and leaving her worried that she would never again be able to play professionally. (She still has only partial feeling in three fingers.)

She went into physical therapy and decided to pursue Simon’s offer.

Her experience during four seasons on the show helped to expand Micarelli’s musical horizons and is reflected on the new album, which includes a rendition of *Treme* co-star Steve Earle’s ballad “This City.” Yet, she remains committed to classical music and is excited about introducing it to the uninitiated. “I’m aware that the majority of my audience isn’t your typical classical listener, so I feel more motivated to bring classical music to them,” she says. “I present it in its natural state alongside jazz and other styles.”

“One of the things that’s so exciting to me is that consistently what audiences are most drawn to are the classical elements of the show. Even little kids. After the show, I’ve had people come up to me with their seven year old and I’ll ask the child, ‘Did you like it?’ And they’ll say, ‘Yes.’ I’ll ask, ‘Was there a

song that you liked the best?’ And they’ll say, ‘I like the Ravel duo.’ It’s like, wow! It’s amazing. And I think it helps that it’s not presented in this sort of pretentious fashion.

“It makes it more interesting to the audience.”

*Strings* caught up with Micarelli earlier this summer to discuss her new album, her eclectic musical taste, and her desire to use the universal language of music to connect with a diverse audience.

### You acknowledge *Treme* on the new album. How did your experience on the show affect you personally and professionally?

I’ve been thinking about that lately. I didn’t expect that experience to be so musically challenging. I just thought, ‘OK, I’m gonna try to act and that will be a lot to do.’ But as time has passed I’ve realized that *Treme* really blew open my musical world. It exposed me to a lot of styles that I didn’t know about previously. But also there’s an amazing musical community in New Orleans and the musicians have this amazing spirit that’s expressed through their music. That really influenced how I feel about music because there’s an attitude in New Orleans about music just being so enmeshed in people’s lives. When the family gets together, they fix meals together and while food is cooking they’re playing music. When there’s a funeral, they gather in a second-line to play music to honor the dead. It’s a part of everything.

That’s really different from the musical world that I came from, in which you practice in private and work hard to get something down perfectly and then you perform it. There’s a preciousness about that approach to music—growing up in a conservatory environment can make you feel that the music is all about performance. It’s a recital. Obviously, that part of my brain isn’t going to change entirely, since that’s how I grew up. But seeing musicians incorporate music into their everyday lives and seeing them use it to

connect with people socially makes you realize that there's so much more to it—music can be about joy, it can be about celebration, it can be about history.

And *Treme* shifted my perspective, so I have more intention now with the music I play. I now have a different understanding about what music means to people. I'm more focused on connection, on sharing, on feeling that we've come together to share this moment. Now I feel that performances are a communal experience in which we've come together to create a beautiful evening. There's more joy that way—it's more fulfilling.

### Did that perspective inform the programming for the PBS special and the new live album?

When I first sat down to program a solo concert, I knew that I didn't want any filler. I wanted to play the music that I really, really love and that I feel super connected to. So, I decided that I was not going to think about genres or how we execute things—I decided

that I would think only about the music that I really love. As a result I came up with this crazy, seemingly incohesive list of jazz and classical and Cajun and folk and rock. It was all over the place and I just went for it. A little bit eclectic. *[Laughs.]*

But these songs all have meaning for me—you end up taking a journey through my musical life. It makes me feel that I am connecting with the audience—it's more intimate than anything I've done in the past.

### As a player, what are the technical challenges of shifting from classical to Cajun to rock and so on?

First of all, I have so many challenges to begin with *[laughs]*—the instrument is a challenge, the music is a challenge. I was worried initially that it might be difficult to switch back and forth. But I didn't program the show thinking that I wanted to showcase a lot of styles; I programmed it thinking I wanted to play music that I like. So because I'm attached to the music in a personal way, I look forward

to what I'm playing. It doesn't feel like I'm switching genres at all, it's more like telling a lot of different stories. So, in performance I don't think about those challenges.

Technically, I'm more aware of it when I'm practicing. For example, when I practice classical music, I do more technical work: string crossing exercises, flow work, and stuff with the metronome. It's more about cleaning things up so they're more precise. And when I practice jazz or folk, I just focus on slightly different things. I'll spend a lot of time just getting slides to sound the way I want them to or fussing over what kind of turn I want to do—is it a turn above the note or a turn below the note? Or do I do a little weird stop-bow thing someplace? But in performance, it doesn't feel like I'm shifting genres. The bigger challenge is shifting from playing my instrument to singing. That's the only time I feel aware of a challenge.

### You started singing when you filmed *Treme*.

Yeah, and it's the thing that I've done the least. So there's a certain apprehension about



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that. I am a very emotional player, but when I'm singing I feel really vulnerable. I've noticed that I get even more emotional when I sing. I don't have as much focus or muscle memory—it's a much more raw experience.

**I sense that you have a lot of curiosity about music.**

I can't really pinpoint it. I didn't listen to anything except classical music until I was 17. Then I started listening to Miles [Davis] and John [Coltrane] and Led Zeppelin, all in the same few weeks. It was a real interesting

experience. And a lot of it has been driven by the people I have met. I'd like to think that I'm curious on my own, but if I think about all the different paths I've taken, I can usually link them to a person that I've met or a world that I sort of came into.

So, when I was 17, I met the cellist David Eggar, who was both a classical cellist and a pianist who could improvise and play jazz. I was just blown away. I knew that I wanted to learn to improvise. I wanted to be able to do what he was doing. While touring with Josh Groban, I met [jazz trumpeter] Chris Botti

**I'd like to think that I'm curious on my own, but if I think about all the different paths I've taken I can usually link them to a person that I've met or a world that I sort of came into.**

and found myself on the road with a ridiculously legit jazz band—everybody I was around 24 hours a day was a jazz cat. I was so impressed. They taught me a lot—they told me about their childhoods and how they had experienced music, and they would play their favorite records for me and give me advice. It was the same when I was filming *Treme*.

I would find these musicians and learned that someone else's perspective is always going to be different from yours. So, to a certain extent I feel comfortable around most any musician—I feel that on a base level we get each other. But it's incredible how different everybody's story is and how their paths are different and how they came to the music and how they think about it.

I think I have a curiosity about people and I just happen to be around musicians all the time. They have given me so much. I've learned that it's a good thing to put myself in situations where nobody else has the same background as me. That's how I really grow. Now, I seek out situations like that so I can learn from people all the time. I just find people really fascinating.

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## Did Pinchas Zukerman encourage or discourage your eclectic interests?

Well, I was doing that secretly. *[Laughs.]* I don't recall that I ever brought that [eclectic side] into class or that we ever really talked about it. But Zukerman has his own program at Manhattan School and it required you to play chamber music. At Juilliard, in pre-college, you could play chamber music but you didn't have to. With Zukerman, you did. That was huge for me.

My love of ensemble playing really came from Zukerman. I knew about chamber music but hadn't spent a lot of time with it. He was adamant about playing chamber music. He also felt it was really important for our solo playing. I fell in love with it so hard. I mean, I had done some of it in pre-college and had done a healthy amount of quartet playing, but I didn't start to appreciate or understand chamber music until I studied with Zukerman. That was the beginning of . . . well, changing my mind, and I continue to do that. Up until that point, I was focused on the solo repertoire and preparing for competitions—you get really focused on that because solo repertoire is very different than chamber music. Not technically, or anything, but chamber music is all about listening, interacting, and sharing. It's all about connecting with other people and being reactive to them. That wasn't a strength of mine—it wasn't something I had practiced. I was pretty much in the practice room working on my concertos. But I loved chamber music so much, I loved collaborating and being part of a group, and having other people's opinions and ideas feeding my awareness.

When I look back, I see that what I am doing with my solo show has a very strong chamber-music element—I have essentially a string quartet onstage and I bring a lot of classical chamber-music arrangements into the program. I love playing with people; I love small groups like that.

## Do you still play chamber music for fun?

I get together with friends on occasion, but I don't have time to attend chamber concerts outside of my own program. I'm always looking for ways to fit in a chamber movement in my program. I'm trying to fill my show with all the things I wish I had time for in my extracurricular time. *[Laughs.]*

## Tell me about your upcoming national solo tour.

I'm really excited about going on the road and meeting so many people. Obviously, recording is so isolating—you have such a disconnect with your audience. But playing live, and with a program that isn't a rigidly structured classical program, I get to know my audience and to talk to people. That's been the most gratifying part. I also get to play with my friends: My husband, Neel Hammond, plays violin with me, and Vanessa Freebairn-Smith, one of the cellists, I've known since I played with Josh

Groban. I tour with Eric Byers, the cellist from the Calder Quartet. Ben Jacobson, the Calder violinist, has played with me a lot as well.

They're all really close friends and when we get together in concert, it's like family. I haven't always had that experience in my professional life and it feels like that New Orleans thing, getting together with my loved ones and celebrating and sharing. It's new and exciting and I still have moments onstage when I look around and think, "This is so cool. I get to play with you guys and I love you guys." I'm really enjoying that right now. ■



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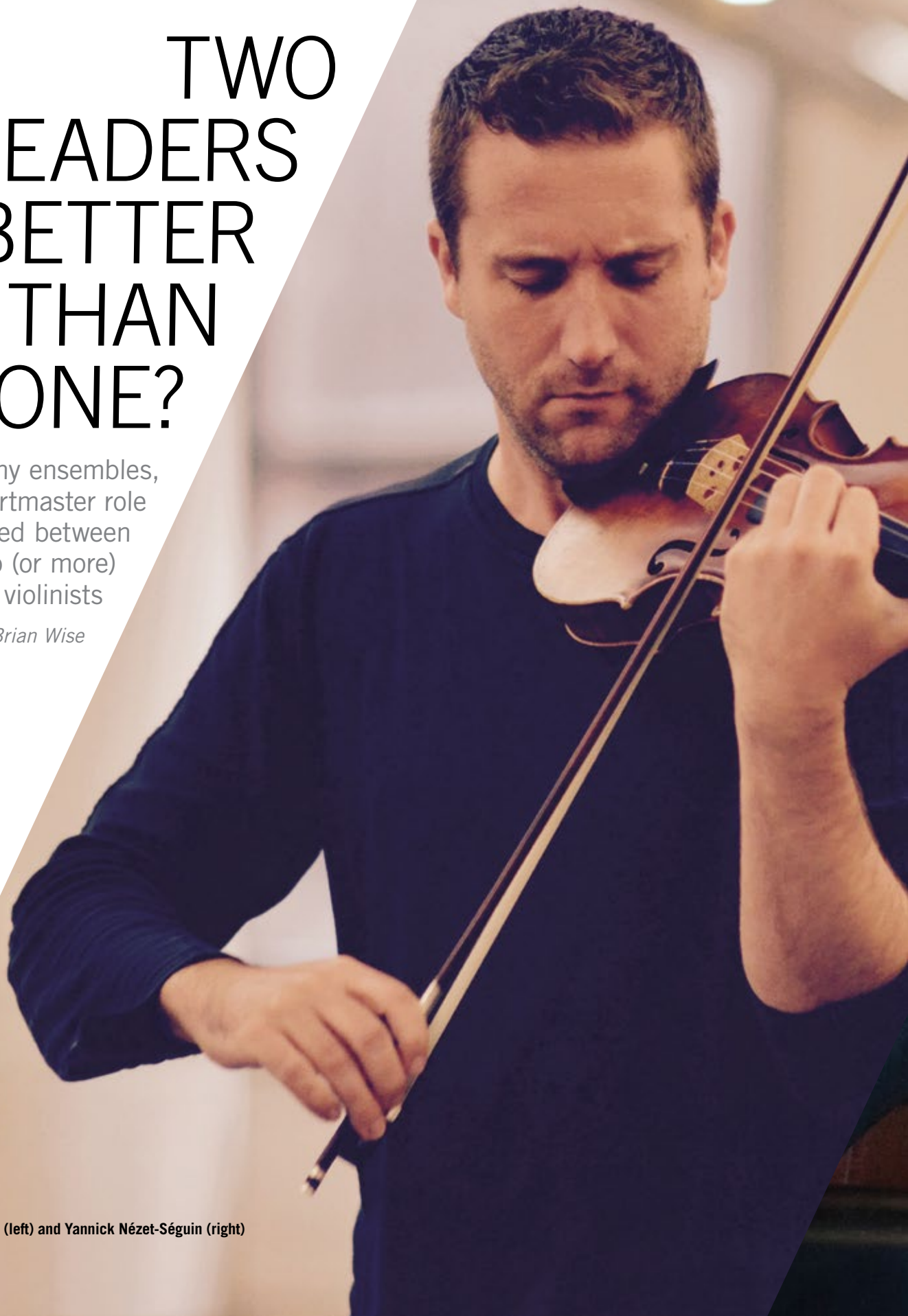
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YEVHEN GULENKO

# TWO LEADERS BETTER THAN ONE?

In many ensembles,  
the concertmaster role  
is shared between  
two (or more)  
violinists

*By Brian Wise*



Benjamin Bowman (left) and Yannick Nézet-Séguin (right)



BOWMAN—ELIZABETH BOWMAN; NEZET-SÉGUIN—ROSE CALLAHAN/MET OPERA

**D**uring Benjamin Bowman's trial season (2017–18) as concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera, he quickly had to adjust to the fact that he would be sharing his role with another concertmaster: David Chan, an 18-year veteran in the ensemble. A role that in most American orchestras would stand as a first among equals—and one rung below the conductor—is split two ways at the Met, like a sports team with co-captains.

"I saw (and felt) the necessity of this two-leader system immediately," Bowman said in an email, using the European term for the position. The 38-year-old violinist had served as concertmaster of the American Ballet Theatre Orchestra since 2014, and previously was the associate concertmaster of the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra.

"Not only are the hours long and late with opera (also often followed by early rehearsals), but so are the physical and mental demands on a leader. Sharing the role means that we can get some relief—either by sharing a repertoire piece, such as *La Bohème*, or by playing as exclusive leader for a specific opera, and taking another completely off as a result."

Music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin made what could be one of his most critical decisions at the Met when, in February, he invited Bowman to lunch and offered him the permanent job. Bowman, a fellow Canadian, starts this September, succeeding Nikki Chooi, who held the post for a one-year term. The changing of the guard comes after a turbulent year at the Met, which saw music director James Levine fired amid sexual misconduct accusations and Nézet-Séguin's start date moved up by two years. Bowman will have to bring the enthusiasm of a cheerleader and the discretion of a statesman.

Wen Qian, a first violinist in the Met Orchestra, praises Bowman's "positive energy" and preparedness in performances. "He is a natural leader, and his body movement is very easy to follow," she says. "I am also glad that he has a very easygoing personality, warm and sincere."

**A**t a time when symphony orchestras are criticized for their rigidities, Bowman's appointment raises questions, both practical and philosophical:

While American orchestras have a top-down leadership structure, in Germany, the approach suggests that of a parliamentary democracy.

Would more North American orchestras benefit from having multiple concertmasters, as it's practiced in much of Europe, South America, and parts of Asia? And does a multiple-headed section make for a more flexible, inspired, and democratic one?

"It would be just impossible to be the only leader," says Vasko Vassilev, who shares the concertmaster role at London's Royal Opera House with Peter Manning. "We have performances six times a week. The schedule is killing. There's no way to do it physically. You'd be totally dead."

Opera musicians are not alone in this view. Noah Bendix-Balgley left his job as the concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra to become one of three full-time concertmasters of the Berlin Philharmonic. "We are playing over 30 subscription weeks a year in Berlin, in addition to pretty substantial touring, and that's a lot of challenging programs," he says. "For one person to do that would be a huge undertaking."

Most of the sections in the 129-member, self-governed Berlin Philharmonic have multiple first-chair players and Bendix-Balgley says many members perform in chamber ensembles or as soloists. While American orchestras have a top-down leadership structure, in Germany, the approach suggests that of a parliamentary democracy, with a greater emphasis on coalition-building and a mix of disparate voices. (The entire orchestra sits in on a personnel audition, not just the section with the vacancy.)

Bendix-Balgley recalls how when he started in Pittsburgh, he immediately notated the bowings in the core repertoire.

"Here in Berlin, I would always think twice about just putting my ideas in a piece that we play a lot because there will be different people reading it over the course of different seasons," he said. "I try to stick with more of the way the orchestra has traditionally played it and make only changes if necessary."

Not everyone senses a need for multiple concertmasters. "One reason why it's uncommon is that, from a practical perspective, it just doesn't work that great," says Drew McManus, a Chicago-based orchestra consultant who writes the blog *Adaptistration*. "Orchestra sections need single leaders to develop the sort of tight unity needed to really make a section more than the sum of its parts. Two leaders of equal (or near equal) status work against that goal."

Among top European ensembles, the Zurich Opera Orchestra lists a whopping six co-concertmasters on its website. The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra indicates three, the Vienna Philharmonic three, and the London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra each have two. In the United States, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra stands largely apart, with concertmaster duties divided between Nathan Olson and Alexander Kerr. (The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic for many years each had co-concertmasters but now a single violinist holds the role, supported by associate and assistant concertmasters.)

Regardless of how many concertmasters populate an ensemble, they occupy a rarefied realm. A concertmaster generally makes at least twice union scale—more than any

other player (and over \$500,000 in a handful of cities). At the Met, concertmasters are chosen not through screened auditions but by a music director appointment. (Bowman was invited to audition for Nêzet-Séguin “based on reputation and résumé,” said a Met spokesman.) And concertmasters are both executive and foreman: representing a section while conveying the ideas of a conductor.

**H**ow multiple concertmasters divide up a season’s programming is a somewhat opaque process. When there are two or more leaders, the senior player may enjoy first dibs, particularly when a plum solo is on the calendar, as when the Met performed Jules Massenet’s *Thaïs* in 2008 and David Chan took an onstage bow for his solo in the “Meditation.” But there are other factors.

“David has been doing this for a long time, so I’m really just following his lead on this complicated process,” Bowman told me. “We

obviously both have specific operas we would like to lead, but mostly it comes down to how evenly the schedule will be distributed. The primary focus seems to be ensuring that neither leader carries too large or too little of a load for any period of time.”

A similar division of labor occurs in Berlin. “With big solos and things like that, we see who is free and who wants to do it,” says Bendix-Balgley. “With things like *Scheherazade* and *Ein Heldenleben*, the big solos come up often enough that if I’m not playing it this year I’ll probably have the chance in a couple of seasons. We’re able to share the goods, so to speak.”

In a 2017 analysis of the concertmaster role in Brazil, Timothy David Jones, a violinist, notes how a two-concertmaster format enables the more outspoken violinist to take on a more managerial role, attending administrative meetings and board functions. “There’s one concertmaster sometimes who is the one who steers, who commands, and there’s one who plays,” Brazilian violinist

Telmo Jaconi tells Jones. “But he doesn’t open his mouth.”

An analogy might exist in professional basketball. When Michael Jordan was on the ascent in the early 1990s, his coach on the Chicago Bulls, Phil Jackson, named center Bill Cartwright as co-captain with Jordan. While Jordan was famously demonstrative and congenial, Cartwright was seen as remote, and someone who earned the players’ respect more than that of the fans. It wasn’t necessarily a happy relationship but a savvy one, aimed at uniting all parties.

Most of all, Bowman sees his co-concertmaster as a sympathetic voice in what could otherwise be an isolating role.

“Given the high-stress environment in which we work and the constantly oscillating stream of repertoire and conductors and singers,” he says, “it’s really a gift to have another concertmaster onboard. It’s a colleague who can fully understand what it’s like to sit in the hot seat, and who can shed a different light on familiar scenarios.” ■

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# FANFARE FOR AN uncommon woman

**T**he path from youthful explorer to respected elder takes many forms. One fascinating variation is illustrated by the career of Joan Tower. She entered the new-music scene, staked her claim to be heard, and developed her signature style over time, moving from the serialism of her youth to compositions that defy easy categorization, full of color and energy.

Tower went on to become the first woman to receive the coveted Grawemeyer Award in Composition in 1990, and she was the first composer overall to be featured in the *Made in America* project, spearheaded by the League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer—and funded by the Ford Motor Company Fund. Her one-movement orchestral piece, titled *Made in America*, (composed in 2004), was performed by 65 orchestras across every state in the US. The Nashville Symphony's recording of *Made in America* under Leonard Slatkin received three Grammy Awards.

A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 1998, Tower now enters her 80s as an eminent member of the pantheon of contemporary American composers. But a youthful sense of vigor and energy remain consistent thumbprints of her musical style. The Grawemeyer committee cited the “tension-building momentum” of *Silver Ladders*, the award-winning score that Tower composed in 1986 during a residency with the St. Louis Symphony. Such characteristic energy is particularly present in her writing for strings—from her series of six quartets to date, including *Wild River* (her most recent), to such solo pieces as the spectacularly virtuosic *Wild Purple* (1998) for viola.

Tower points to lasting impressions from a childhood spent in South America as a source for the rhythmic vividness of her music.

Though born in New Rochelle in Westchester County, just north of New York City, Tower left the United States with her family when her father, a mining engineer, was assigned to work in Bolivia.

She was encouraged to pursue her interest in the piano while growing up. “The piano is my instrument, and I took to it like a duck to water, even though I had to keep changing teachers since we moved around in South America,” says Tower. “I had never thought of composing before I was asked to write a piece during college. When I was young, I had been playing mostly dead composers—that’s what you do as a pianist.” After studying at Bennington College and then Columbia University as a graduate student, Tower became a founding member of the Da Capo Chamber Players in 1969—a Pierrot ensemble and prolific commissioner of new music that won the Naumburg Award in 1973.

But it took time to develop the confidence needed to establish her identity as a composer. Tower accomplished that in tandem with her identity as a performer. Serving as Da Capo’s pianist for 15 years, Tower found her compositional voice within the practical context of performance, of the give-and-take of chamber-music discourse. It wasn’t until she was in her 40s that Tower undertook composing for orchestra, but she immediately won acclaim with her first effort, *Sequoia* (1981). Her series of five *Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman*, which she began in 1986 for the Houston Symphony, has proved to be extremely popular, attracting performances by more than 500 ensembles around the world. The Fifth Fanfare dates from 1993, but Tower recently returned to the series to add a Sixth Fanfare for Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony in 2016.

## Composer Joan Tower at 80

By Thomas May

**T**ower came of age as a grad student at Columbia when serialism was the go-to choice advocated for emerging composers. But her interest in the sound worlds of George Crumb and Olivier Messiaen—in memory of whom she wrote the cello-piano duo *Très Lent (Hommage a Messiaen)* in 1994—gave her music a new orientation, enhancing her natural sensitivity to color and rhythmic nuance. Tower has since developed a unique harmonic language sometimes reminiscent of aspects of Impressionism (favoring, for example, whole-tone scales).

For all her success in the orchestral sphere, Tower remains especially at home with chamber music. She has made significant contributions to the string literature, above all in her ongoing series of quartets. The most recent of these, *Wild River* (No. 6), received its premiere this past June by the Jasper Quartet as part of a birthday tribute concert. (Tower's actual 80th birthday is September 6.) It's one of four new quartets—each by a different composer—that the Jaspers, the professional quartet-in-residence at Temple University's Center for

Gifted Young Musicians, have commissioned around a four-seasons theme. The entire cycle will be unveiled in 2020. (Of the other three composers, Lera Auerbach has to-date confirmed her commitment to the project.)

Founding violist Sam Quintal says that he and his colleagues, who formed the ensemble while at Oberlin, immediately perked up when Joan Tower was suggested as a composer with whom they should consider collaborating. "She was one of the names synonymous with American new music—someone we grew up revering. Joan writes a very appealingly energetic music that pulls you right in. I went back and listened to her earlier quartets. They take advantage of the medium in a wonderful way. Great string-quartet writing has an interplay between the voices and a sensibility of democracy and of the four players coming together as a unit."

The Jaspers, who take their name from Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada, have become savvy commissioners, garnering acclaim for their *Unbound* album of all-new works by composers of their generation in

2017. Next up is a new release forthcoming on the Solo Luminus label of A.J. Kernis' Third String Quartet, another Jasper commission.

"*Wild River* is the 'summer' movement of our new cycle," Quintal explains. "We were blown away by what a genuine and thoughtful individual Joan is. Working with her was really different from what we've found with other composers, partly because she performs a lot and her approach to music is very practical. Joan is so responsive to what is possible and is more concerned about what sound comes out than what is written. And she understands the struggles that you go through as a musician to make it come out."

"The fact that she wants the music to be alive and mutable in that way gives you a fantastic feeling as a performer. It makes you realize how much the notes on the page come from a human impulse to create—and we've brought that experience into things like our Beethoven rehearsal."

For her part, Tower beams when describing the experience of working with the Jaspers. "*Wild River* is the second piece in my entire



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life where I sat there and really liked it as it was—where I felt I got it right at the first rehearsal.”

How does Tower’s perspective as a pianist affect her writing for strings? “I don’t study books about string writing. But I’ve been around so many string players that I know more than I think I know. When my music started going around in the orchestral world, I became friends with the phenomenal violinist Elmar Oliveira, and he asked me for a violin concerto.”

The successful result, premiered in 1992, led to many more encounters with string players. Violist Paul Neubauer got to know Tower when working on her clarinet quintet *Turning Points* at Lincoln Center’s Chamber Music Festival in 1995 and, for her 60th birthday in 1998, asked her to write a solo piece. The composer recalls: “He said to be virtuosic and yet deeply lyrical, but then I was terrified because as a pianist I didn’t think I had enough knowledge. I took up the viola and got to first position non-vibrato, and that did help me a lot in terms of how the

physicality of this instrument works as compared to the piano. It changed my focus a lot as to what this instrument is about. Then I started to write and not worry about the instrument.”

In fact the fiendishly difficult piece, *Wild Purple* (1998), has become a kind of cult favorite among violists. Tower says that violists started coming up to her after rehearsals to ask for her autograph. According to Neubauer, “*Wild Purple* caught on because there is a great deal of variety in the piece: a lot of drama, a lot of color, and it stretches the boundaries of what is possible. But she makes sure it is all possible.”

In 2005, Neubauer organized a consortium to commission the viola concerto *Purple Rhapsody*, which he considers “the most Romantic of all her viola pieces, a lush work that is also used at Juilliard for a viola competition piece.” Two more solo viola works have followed: *Simply Purple* (2008) and the recent *Purple Rush* (2016). “Joan writes spectacular music,” he adds. “And she’s extremely down-to-earth—always the life of the party in a wonderful way.”

As for the color association, Tower thinks of the viola’s sonority as the color purple. “Its deeply resonant and luscious timbre seems to embody all kinds of hues of purple.” Yet she “never thought of the viola as being particularly wild. So I decided to try and see if I could create a piece that had wild energy in it and meet the challenge of creating a virtuosic piece for solo viola.”

Tower has also written a pair of solo violin showcases: *String Force*, commissioned by the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis for the 2010 competition, and *Second String Force* (2014), commissioned by violinist Bella Hristova. “In both of these works,” the composer observes, “I tried to show the ‘force’ of a solo violin—both in terms of its capacity for high and fast energy as well as its deep lyrical-melodic capabilities, particularly how it can play very softly in the highest register.”

Tower suggests that her background as a pianist influences her sense of the musical sound even when writing for strings. “I think active pianist-composers—particularly Stravinsky, Copland, Beethoven, Mozart, and

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Brahms—possibly tend to project the pitch content of a work more strongly because the piano they work with is the strongest instrument that can project pitch immediately.” Quintal remarks that when working with her on the string quartet, “Joan talked about some of her music as originating in a pianistic sensibility. Often we think about that: imitating the piano struck-note shape, even when we are playing Beethoven string quartets—that kind of attack can be a helpful device.”

In 1994, Tower wrote her first string quartet, titled *Night Fields*, on a commission from

the Muir String Quartet. Each subsequent essay in the medium has been for a different quartet and occasion: No. 2, *In Memory* (2002), for the Tokyo Quartet (a reflection on death and loss that also embodies a 9/11 elegy)—Tower has transcribed this for string orchestra as well; No. 3, *Incandescent* (2003), for the Emersons, co-commissioned by Bard College (where Tower has taught since 1972); No. 4, *Angels* (2008), for the Miami Quartet and the Angel Fire Festival in New Mexico; No. 5, *White Water* (2011), for the Daedalus String Quartet and Chamber Music Monterey

Bay—and one of the composer’s own favorites; and No. 6 (2018), *Wild River*, for the Jasper Quartet, as previously mentioned.

Another recent piece is *Wild Run* for cello and pianos, a complement to *Très Lent* that was premiered over the summer at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival by Paul Watkins and the composer. Tower is also working on a viola quintet for the Boston Chamber Music Society. “And I have four piano trios. I sure have written a lot of string music, come to think of it,” she observes with a slight note of bemused surprise.

Beethoven has been an enduringly powerful influence. Distinctly uninterested in composing to texts, Tower is committed to the abstract power of music that makes sense on its own terms. “One of my goals in writing any piece of music is trying to make it as architecturally strong as possible. Beethoven is my model for music that is motivated by itself. The context is what makes things happen.

“You could write a beautiful passage, but if it’s not in the right place, it won’t sound beautiful. It could be contextually out of whack. So the question becomes how to make a piece go from beginning to end with a narrative that is motivated strongly.”

In terms of form, Tower often favors single-movement spans that trace out unique shapes with each new piece. “Form to me is not a predetermined thing. It’s an organic process that develops as you compose. Instead of the type that could plan the whole thing out in advance and then write the piece, I’m like a novelist who starts with a character and listens to that character to see who this could be and what happens when they see another person. I call it a profile: an idea that has to have a presence that is remembered.”

Tower is known for her closely collaborative style, for tailoring each work to the personalities of the players involved. Yet amid all this variety of performers and occasions, there is an underlying aesthetic. “What I’ve learned over the years is that you have to write the best piece you can, and sometimes that does not involve so much the instrument as the piece of music,” says Tower. “I think different composers have different relationships to the instruments they write for but the music is the higher priority. Ultimately, the music itself is what drives everything for me. You can know a style and a personality, but you still have to write a piece of music, and that comes first and foremost.” ■

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# REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Shanghai Orchestra Academy taps international principal players in cutting-edge curriculum

By Cristina Schreil

It's the second day of spring in Shanghai. China's thriving financial hub pulses with its usual activity: cargo boats zip along the Huangpu River; shoppers clutter posh commercial thoroughfares; scooters bolt through traffic.

Down in the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra's basement, however, things are much less hurried. "I'm not quite hooking up with you on measures 152 to 153," says Cynthia Phelps, principal violist of the New York Philharmonic.

She's coaching and playing alongside two graduate students from the Shanghai Orchestra Academy: violinist Renchao Yu and cellist Dunbang You. Moving meticulously, they chew through the first movement of Beethoven's String Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3. Not one measure goes unchecked or unpolished.

The trio pauses as You navigates a tricky interval on the cello. He searches for the right intonation, bowing several times and adjusting his fingering. "Sorry," he says sheepishly.

Phelps' answer is simple: "That's why we're here."

The violist later explains how the post-graduate level is where students can really rectify problems. It's about "always figuring out your limits and how to expand on them, how to meet those challenges, and become a more sophisticated, aware musician," she says. "You're never in a box." In offering examples, Phelps morphs into a diagnostician, explaining how to ferret out issues with fingering or bow control. The uniqueness of this education model is not lost on her. "There was no orchestra repertoire class when I went to school," she adds. "Now, I teach one."

The Shanghai Orchestra Academy (SOA) launched in 2014, offering professional training along with a master's degree in music curriculum (from the nearby Shanghai Conservatory of Music). There is a heavy emphasis on internships with professional orchestras. The academy is also a joint effort between the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and Germany's NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester. Principals comprise the faculty. The rigorous two-year program is the brainchild of Chinese maestro

Long Yu. While SOA is international, its origins are very much homegrown. It rose from a booming classical-music movement sweeping China: In the past 20 years, the number of Chinese orchestras jumped from around ten to 72. Naturally, this proliferation demands skilled players. Maestro Yu dreamed of an epicenter for training the next generation. Students undergo mock auditions and learn how to draft a resume, create audition recordings, and communicate with donors and journalists. Perhaps due to the country's need of highly trained musicians, the SOA's employment rate has been 90 to 100 percent. Almost all alumni play in Chinese organizations. While this program arose out of conditions specific to China, it begs the question: Is this *the* new graduate model? Should it be?

There are many orchestra academies worldwide, with several, like SOA, directly affiliated with long-established orchestras. Yet SOA leaders stress the helpfulness of this experience-based master's degree. The goal is to show students exactly how an orchestra runs, from

a conductor's way of thinking to how sections work together. SOA players have performed with several foreign orchestras, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Singapore Symphony Orchestra. Doug He, SOA's executive director, underscores that the program hones musicians to be "team players." Students perform eight to 12 season concerts a year. They face professional expectations and penalties, such as being docked for tardiness. "They get a lot of knowledge of how to be a professional musician—what the standard is," says He, a classically trained bassist. This kind of experience is particularly useful to Chinese students. He describes classical training in China, which has long venerated Russian virtuosos, as prioritizing solo performance. Conservatory students as a result sometimes graduate with gaps. Thus, making students well-rounded is key.

"It's a big difference from a student orchestra," says Chen Li, associate principal viola of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. He adds that the repertoire is broader and more

advanced. He recalls his first orchestra job, and its breakneck pace. "This is a very good way for students to channel how to train, how to read music very quickly, and how to join with the musicians," Li says. "Otherwise, they will be lost."

Principals from the New York Philharmonic and NDR visit multiple times a year for intensive sessions. There are master classes, chamber-music coaching, professional seminars, repertoire classes, and even conducting workshops. Just within smaller groups or private lessons, there are myriad facets to address. "It's everything on technically what needs to happen: A lot of details about articulation, sound quality, phrasing, shape, general energy and style, color, you name it," says Sheryl Staples, principal associate concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. "Probably most, or all, of them have never really approached orchestral music at this level of detail before." In coaching several SOA violinists on orchestral excerpts, Staples alternates between relating how a

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piece might play out in a rehearsal or concert, and zeroing in on specific passages. There's exhaustive feedback on technique. "We're opening their eyes, I think, to how complex the orchestral music is, even their own individual part and how it fits into the whole picture of the orchestra," she adds.

One of her students is 24-year-old Renchao Yu. He's long aspired to an orchestral career. While he describes first performing with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra as a bit terrifying—involving a short solo—he says there's plenty of guidance. "My teachers may tell us what happens in the whole orchestra, which sections in *this* part are most important or how we can play with *this* section," Yu offers.

Learning to listen to sections beyond one's own is a central mission. Shanghai Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Li Pei—one of Yu's coaches—says they both dissect new pieces. They listen to recordings. "We'll look at the total score and know every section [and ask], 'What are they doing?'" Pei says.

Besides the musical rigor, there are other challenging aspects to SOA. There are

mandatory English classes, as well as cultural learning curves. Students only interact in person with most principals four times a year. Some students have expressed that all of the insights from so many principals is difficult to distill into their own method.

Connecting with different principals, however, helps double bass student Kaixuan Zhang, 24. Zhang has an interesting circumstance. Before SOA, he interned with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and passed both his SOA and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra auditions. He is now a full-time member while attending SOA. "The first rehearsal, I realized that my voice, my sound, is different as a partner in the bass section," he says. Dynamics, for one, required deeper scrutiny: "For example, what is a forte? Piano?" Focusing on sound quality pervades his studies. NDR bassist Michael Rieber coached Zhang on their March trip. They covered the differences between chamber playing, where each note should be clearly played with intention, and orchestral playing, where a section unites. "I try to understand every note without

explanation," Zhang says. "I try to go inside the music."

Rieber shared it was exciting to delve deep. "At my time, when I was studying, there was no academy and support like this," he says. "I had to find it all for myself."

Amid all the pressure on students to practically shoot out of the gate and into an orchestra seat after graduation, faculty do remind students that they're just beginning. New York Philharmonic principal cellist Carter Brey sees their work as part of a long musical tradition. "A lot of teaching is just fostering a kind of awareness or alertness in these students so they can be equipped to teach themselves this stuff," he says. During Brey's first orchestra job, sitting at the back of the Cleveland Orchestra, he soaked up lessons on phrasing and repertoire. It's a kid-in-a-candy-store mentality he hopes to inspire. "We do the best we can to apply a combination of instrumental instruction and musical awareness beyond their little world of their instrument and its technical concerns," he says. "It's up to them to integrate all of that in the real world." ■

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# ALL THAT JAZZ

Violinist Scott Tixier  
on studying  
jazz music on a  
conservatory track

*By David Templeton*

“S he’s classically trained.” For decades, those iconic words, “classically trained,” have stood as a defining measure of musical accomplishment, a dividing line that succinctly separates players into two camps: those with classical training—those who’ve played classical music with some level of skill—and those without classical training. The unspoken message, of course, is that any form of education that is not classical training is more or less the same thing as having no training at all.

An accomplished Celtic fiddler who was apprenticed under another accomplished Celtic fiddler? Untrained. A bluegrass legend who somehow avoided ever learning a Mozart concerto? Untrained. A jazz violinist who knew from the beginning that they wanted only to play improvisational jazz, and pursued that kind of musical education wherever they could get it? Get ready to be labeled untrained.

“That whole ‘classically trained’ thing, I heard it all the time as a musician in New York,” says Scott Tixier, 32, the internationally acclaimed jazz violinist from Paris, France. Though Tixier did initially receive classical training at the Conservatoire de Paris, he began studying jazz and improvisation early on, seeking out his education through a series of jazz camps and master classes with some of the greatest living jazz players. At age 19, he moved to New York, where he admits it was a

challenge, being one of the few dedicated jazz violinists in the area.

"When I first came here, I was kind of lost," he says of that time 13 years ago. "I brought my education as a jazz violinist, but I was immediately lonely, because I was one of the only ones playing this music. It was very hard to find other jazz violinists, even in jazz clubs."

Lacking other forms of jazz education on the violin, Tixier says he began hanging out with jazz saxophonists and jazz piano players, from whom he was able to continue his own education in a significant, if somewhat unconventional way.

Through it all, he became acutely aware of the limitations and prejudicial assumption put on musicians by the classically trained/untrained label.

"I think it's a very big problem, one that is more about attitude and bad thinking," says Tixier, who believes that things are shifting a bit, as the definition of "education" itself is now finally beginning to broaden. "The more I explore the scene," he says, "the more I see classically educated players who have no education

in improvisation, who are wanting to learn to improvise, and are turning to jazz violinists. At the same time, I see a lot of jazz players trying to merge into the classical world, to maybe play with an orchestra.

"And now some universities and conservatories are beginning to understand that perhaps different violin styles have something important to teach each other. Until now, improvisation has not been recognized by musical institutions as being important. But I think that is beginning to change."

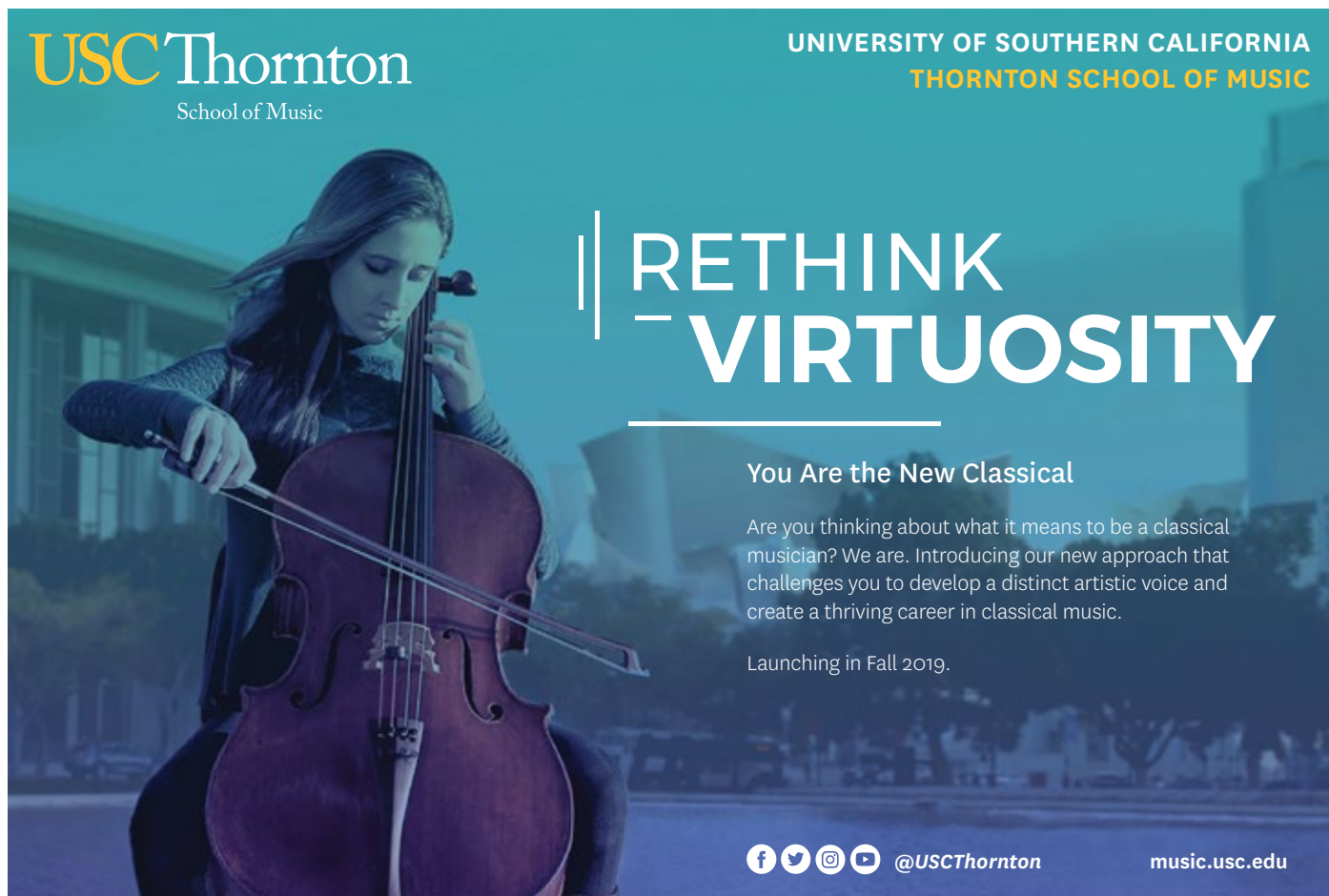
Case in point, Tixier has recently joined the faculty of the University of North Texas, as its first ever professor of Jazz Violin and Alternative Styles. The move is being made, slowly, at a number of other esteemed universities around the country and beyond. Natalie Padilla, who learned Texas-style fiddling from her mother, the acclaimed bluegrass fiddler Nancy Padilla, is now an instructor of Fiddle, Folk, and Bluegrass at the University of Northern Colorado. At the highly esteemed Carleton University, in Canada, Denis Lanctôt has been teaching fiddle students through the University's

post-secondary Fiddle Studies program. Berklee School of Music in Massachusetts, where violinist David Wallace is chair of the strings department, offers students a chance to gain an education at a high level, regardless of the style of music they wish to pursue.

For the University of Northern Texas, in Austin, Tixier's appointment is a positive step forward in a number of ways.

"We're excited about Scott Tixier joining our faculty for many reasons," says John Murphy, chair of the division of jazz studies in the UNT College of Music. "He's a brilliant improviser and a gifted teacher. Scott's presence will enable us to accept upper strings students as jazz studies majors. He will enable our classical string students to gain experience with improvisation in a variety of styles. And he has much to contribute as an instructor for all of our jazz studies majors, not only the string players."

Tixier says he plans to incorporate all of the lessons he learned earlier on as a young musician in France, where his first jazz teachers conveyed the importance of passion and hard



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work, regardless of which style of music a young player wanted to learn.

"I grew up in Paris," Tixier says. "When I was 12 years old, I started going to an annual jazz camp in the South of France, where I met Stéphane Grappelli and Jean-Luc Ponty and all those gypsy-jazz guys. In the program, there would be master classes with these amazing musicians. And I took a lot of inspiration from what I learned there. At UNT, I'm definitely using all of that background I had, learning to play jazz from these iconic players."

For Tixier, who's been teaching privately since shortly after he arrived in New York, the lack of any established higher-education text books for jazz violinists is not going to be a problem, as he's been writing his own book for the last several years.

"There are many books about how to play jazz on other instruments, but I learned when I came to America that there were no books about how to play jazz violin. I was very frustrated and disappointed. There was so little for me to learn from, so I started writing my own book. As I began playing more, and recording, I

would get questions from jazz students all over the place, so I would make those answers part of the book."

For example, he eventually included a chapter on amplification. "In clubs, it's very hard for musicians to find the right pick-up or to use an amp in the right way," he says. "When you are amplified, you can't use the same phrasing that you would use if you were not amplified. So the book will teach that as well."

With a laugh, Tixier admits the book might never have been finished were it not for his new gig at UNT. "I realized this was the perfect opportunity for me to finish this book, finally, and to use it for the students," he says. The finished book, which will include contributions from Jean-Luc Ponty and others, should be published by January 2019. He plans to use it immediately in his work teaching improvisational skills at UNT.

There are, of course, many styles that use improvisation, not just jazz music, Tixier says. "There is also Indian music, historic Irish music, and many other styles," he points out. "In Europe, we have a different relationship with

improvisation than violin players do in America. It's grounded in Gypsy music and classical music from the Romantic era. In America, people who are doing improvisation are borrowing from fiddle music and bluegrass music and country music. What I'm going to bring to the program is the French and European influence."

As it happens, Tixier admits that as a professor of jazz violin, he plans to include a certain amount of "classical training" in his curriculum. "Improvisation is based on a thorough understanding of music and your instrument," he says. "For cello students, I encourage them to learn the Bach cello suites. Because to be a good improviser, you have to be very good at playing, and Bach really opens doors for any improviser. I think sometimes people come to improvisation with the feeling that it's all about freedom. Which it is, but it is important not to forget that you also need some structure, and sometimes that can come from knowing the classical repertoire."

"Classical music," Tixier adds, "does have good things to teach jazz—just like jazz has good things to teach classical music." ■

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# GET COMFORTABLE

Eastman cello professor  
Steven Doane  
on the lessons his  
incoming students  
most often need to learn

*By Sarah Freiberg*

Cello professor Steven Doane has received prizes for his teaching from both the New England Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music, where he is currently professor of violoncello. He is known for emphasizing how to play freely, in a highly ergonomic way. When I spoke to him, he was on his way to teach and lecture at the National Summer Cello Institute, presented by cellist and pedagogue Uri Vardi's "Your Body Is Your Strad" program, which incorporates Feldenkrais movement principles with "private lessons, master classes, and seminars dedicated to expanding artistic freedom."

Doane has an interesting take on prospective college students and the audition procedure. In general, he feels that many students play repertoire that is just too hard. "When you are talented in high school, you may spend the last year and a half trying to get the audition repertoire down. Sometimes it's a 'reach' piece—and it seems too far."

Doane worries that both student and teacher become slaves to the repertoire. "A young player may get tense because the reach piece is really hard. If they come in with physical tension, but have something to say, I enjoy helping them become really comfortable."

If his new students have concentrated on advanced repertoire before they have gotten the fundamentals down, their skills may be customized to just a few very difficult pieces. Then Doane's role is to help them fill in the missing technique. He would much prefer that students play less difficult pieces well than try to tackle very challenging works when they aren't quite ready for them.

Doane suggests playing "a piece that showcases your strengths. It's much better to play something well at the top of your level. And play something in which your musical voice can emerge. I'm looking for someone who has something to say. I want to see some instrumental fluency, but that can develop. A sense of musical engagement, sense of sound, and sense of fluency are what are most important."

As a young performer, Doane spent a memorable year on a Watson Foundation grant studying with various European teachers, with a particularly magical time working with Jane Cowan in Scotland, who was Steven Isserlis' teacher. "She had an intuitive sense about physical playing. She used to say, 'If it's difficult, it's impossible.' In other words, no matter how hard the music is, it shouldn't be physically hard to play.

"My goal is to develop a technique that supports and 'disappears' into the music making—the best technique (Jane Cowan termed this the 'transcendental technique') is that

which is not noticed at all." Incorporating natural movement principles into technical work is key to his teaching. Doane mentioned Feldenkrais work, Tai Chi movement concepts, and the Alexander technique as "superb ways to connect to one's spatial and postural awareness and skeletal freedom."

**F**or Doane, finding ease of motion is central to cello technique. Much of his work is based on circles and ellipses. "If someone plays with a lot of straight lines, or very angularly, we know we need to work on that." Toward that end, he produced a series of 18 brief videos on cello playing for the European String Teachers Association and produced by the Hidersine Company in the UK, which are all available on YouTube.

In all these brief videos, Doane clearly and colorfully shows how to play in a relaxed and motion-centric manner. In explaining string crossings, Doane references the *Karate Kid*—going from a lower-string down bow to a higher-string up bow is a "waxing on" or

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counterclockwise motion, while starting a down bow on a higher string and going to a lower-string up bow is a “wax off” or clockwise circular motion. As you watch his videos, you will also notice that his body is always in motion—his torso rotates slightly to the right on a down bow, and back to the left on an up bow. It is a dynamic way to play.

Whether performing, practicing, or warming up, Doane stresses comfort in playing. “The best warm-up exercises should incorporate a strong kinesthetic sense—comfort is a first priority, and freedom and fluency will follow. This applies to both bowing and left-hand fluency—I sometimes refer to the left-arm motion in shifting as the ‘left bow arm’ as the motions are similar to bowing, but on a different axis.” Doane feels that a beautiful sound created by “a satisfying and comfortable motion is a magical piece of our ‘cello puzzle.’ An emphasis on sound sensations frees us physically; we can then do our job of constantly listening and monitoring the quality of the sound and the musical results.”

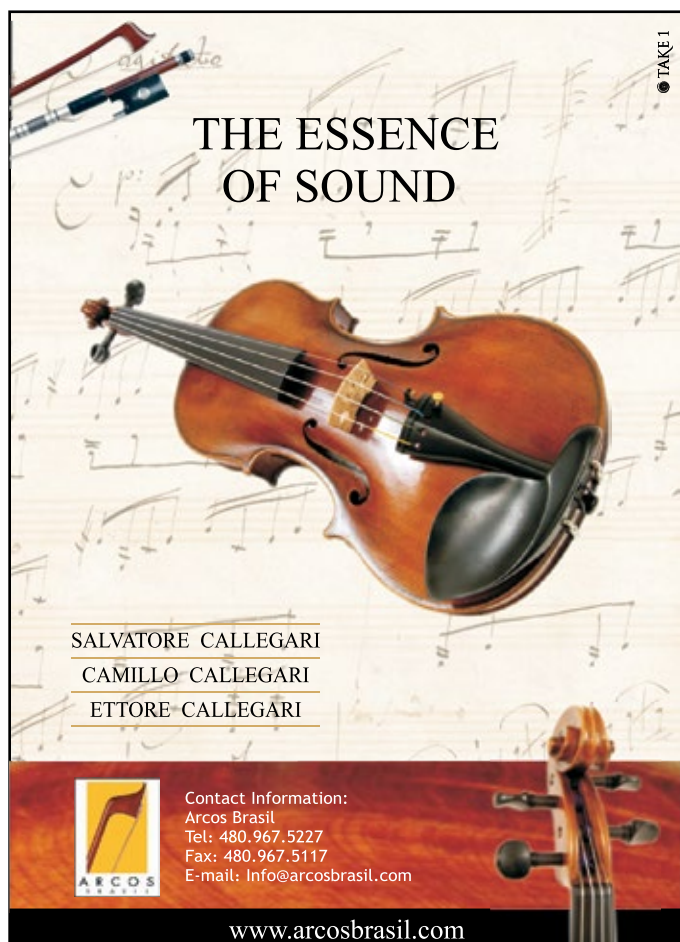
Most importantly, Doane wants to nurture the musician rather than the technician. “In practicing and preparing a work, always make the connection between the musical concept and its technical realization—the first must absolutely guide the second or we are putting the cart before the horse.” Doane encourages lots of singing in his lessons, as he says, “The best cello lesson is to sing your phrase with complete musical intention, and then try to realize that shape instrumentally.” He believes that bow distribution must mirror one’s use of the breath in singing. “If you can model the musical shape by singing, you can do so with the bow.”

Doane says that artistry can only result “when the musical goal is paramount, and is supported by a fine technical craft.”

For Doane, it is important to nurture the individual voice of a student, and to help that voice emerge. Prospective students should “play music that really engages you, and shows what you care about and can make a statement with.” At the beginning of the

year, Doane and his new students compare their “wish lists” of what both teacher and student think needs to be addressed in the student’s playing, coming to a consensus before starting to work. Sometimes, Doane says, “I need to tell them to slow down.”

He works to instill this mantra in his students: “Don’t play faster than you can hear. Don’t play faster than you can feel.” He hopes that over the course of four years, his students will find comfort, security in “mapping the fingerboard,” and fluency through regular scale and arpeggio work, selected études, and progressive repertoire challenges, and will be ready to go out on their own. As he says, he plans for the “built-in teacher-obsolescence principle.” By then, his students should be feeling physically comfortable and confident as players, having found their own musical voices. His goal is to develop musical comprehension, stylistic awareness, and constantly raise his students’ level of “listening both instrumentally and through active use of musical imagination.” Great ideas for all musicians. ■



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# A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

**O**ften, conservatories are associated with philosophies from years past: intensive artistic training that's anchored in years of tradition. This hardly means that conservatory programs aren't looking to the future.

For Eden MacAdam-Somer, a department co-chair at the New England Conservatory of Music, adaptability amid today's eclectic musical landscape is a vital trait for a modern-day musician. "In the 20th century, as a people we became very focused on specialization. For a while that was working and serving us really well, especially for the recording industry," she says. As time has passed, however, "versatility and individuality, combined with a really strong grounding in fundamental skills" have become new ideals. Broad training is also vital for young musicians who need to tackle whatever gig comes their way. "In addition to being so much more rewarding, I think it's also important for the purpose of surviving as a contemporary musician," MacAdam-Somer says.

Plenty of programs are geared toward preparing students to be innovative 21st-century performers—offering hands-on training that helps students sink deep into their craft, while providing them with an arsenal of different skills.

We take a look at a few tracks that do so: Peabody Institute's chamber-music program, NEC's contemporary improvisation program, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's new concertmaster track.

Traditional conservatories offer specialized tracks for the 21st-century performer

*By Cristina Schreil*





New England  
Conservatory  
of Music's  
Contemporary  
Improvisation  
Program

## SFCM CENTENNIAL

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, which celebrated its centennial during the 2017–18 season, welcomed more than just its new concertmaster track this year. The conservatory also announced the arrival of a few other programs for the modern musician.

"This season sees the launch of our new Roots, Jazz, and American Music program, a partnership with our neighbors at SFJAZZ that brings the SFJAZZ Collective to SFCM to work with the program's inaugural class," Kate Sheehan, SFCM provost and dean, says. "We will also launch our innovative new professional development curriculum, which equips our students with skills they need to be musicians in the 21st century. Our academic year will incorporate our centennial celebration with courses that examine the history of music in San Francisco, literature over the course of the past 100 years, and much more."

The conservatory celebrated yearlong with guests and artists-in-residence, including cellist Steven Isserlis, the Takács Quartet, Pamela Frank, the Kronos Quartet, and more. SFCM, founded in 1917, is the oldest institution of its kind on the West Coast. The conservatory finished off 2017 celebrations with a lineup of concerts at Carnegie Hall, which included SFCM's quartet-in-residence, the Telegraph Quartet, performing its Naumburg Competition-winning program and giving the world premiere of Robert Sirota's Third String Quartet.

## Peabody Chamber-Music Program

The chamber-music program at Peabody, in place since the institute's founding in 1857, is a key example of balancing both old and new. For one, the degree of musical languages that a student encounters is different from decades past. "The number of styles that a real musician needs to be fluent in has exploded," says cellist Michael Kannen, the program's director for 16 years. On top of Baroque and Romantic, there's a panoply of classical sub-genres that evolved in the 20th century in particular—not to mention jazz, rock, and world music. "A working musician's going to encounter all of those," he adds. The chamber-music program, therefore, aims to bring students in contact with these many forms while offering options to go deeper. Students can branch into an "authentic exploration," as Kannen says. He directs this program with this in mind. Students should feel supported in whatever intrigues them.

For example: Several years ago, Kannen heard that one of the program's chamber ensembles—a piano trio—was arranging Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven." He was fascinated. "I coached them on it just like I coach them on Beethoven or Mozart," he says, adding that he connected it to a classical piece. In concert, the trio began with a Bach Prelude before morphing into this unique rock arrangement. At Peabody, where performance is central to this chamber-music program in particular, creative programming is often a vehicle for this investigative spirit. In another concert, several ensembles—renaissance, jazz, and computer music—improvised variations on *Death and the Maiden*. They created their own variations before everyone performed together. "Those concerts are emblematic of what I think the 21st-century musician should be like and how I, at least in my little part of the world, am trying to promote that," Kannen says.

The structure of the chamber program itself reflects professional post-conservatory life. For one thing, students must form their own ensembles upon signing up, taking initiative to seek out or form a group. (If students don't know anyone, Kannen helps match players.) Unlike some chamber-music programs, Peabody faculty encourages students to follow their interests and choose their own repertoire. There's more to this, however: It forces students to listen to a trove of repertoire to decide. This





Peabody  
Chamber-  
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San Francisco  
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Track

**I could walk in and say, “Wow, these are the people I’ve been looking for—they get what I do.” They may never have heard it before, but they totally get it.**

—Eden MacAdam-Somer

process also exposes them to negotiating with one another—a crucial skill in chamber music. Kannen reminds students that professional gigs often require repertoire a musician might not enjoy. “You’re trying to breed flexibility,” he says.

#### **New England Conservatory of Music’s Contemporary Improvisation Program**

NEC’s contemporary improvisation program also supports students seeking ways to creatively adapt all of their passions. “The CI department is all about addressing the unique needs of musicians who are seeking to move beyond traditional boundaries,” says MacAdam-Somer. It’s not a genre-based department; students with backgrounds in rock, classical, jazz, folk, and beyond rub shoulders while digging deep into the musical techniques underpinning improvisation. “They all tend to be folks where it’s hard to say, ‘I’m just a bluegrass musician or I’m just a classical violinist.’ They are people who have a lot of interests,” she says. MacAdam-Somer herself once felt

fragmented as a violinist, having a foundation in both classical and Appalachian fiddle. At NEC, she found her tribe. “I could walk in and say, ‘Wow, these are the people I’ve been looking for—they get what I do. They may never have heard it before, but they totally get it.’”

The department, supplementing the conservatory’s traditional classical-music course program, was established by NEC founder Gunther Schuller. Schuller was a pillar of the jazz-and-classical-fusing Third Stream Movement. It’s a small program of 52 students, compared to the overall student body of around 800. Students walk away being able to read music well and—naturally—pick up things by ear. There’s a strong emphasis on ear training, oral training, and vocalization. “In our ear-training classes students come in and they are working with repertoire right away. They are listening to a piece of music by, say, Miles Davis and they are analyzing the chords,” MacAdam-Somer says. “They’re figuring out how to hear what the harmonies are, they’re transcribing those chords, they’re learning his

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solo by ear, and they're singing the solo back by ear."

After graduating, the idea is that students can adapt to anything and, therefore, say yes to any gig. They're well-equipped for the 21st-century landscape. MacAdam-Somer also emphasizes that the CI program breeds a positive, collaborative atmosphere that penetrates the rest of the student body. Students compete more with themselves than with each other, and there's plenty of cross-department cooperation.

### SFCM's Concertmaster Track

There's also a choose-your-own-adventure spirit at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where several unique programs supplement traditional classical training. Several courses provide a critical thinking-based approach to music making. There's a new professional-development program comprising courses in health and wellness, technology, community engagement, and business. The winter term is dedicated to student projects—a deep dive into

a certain subject or a risk-free chance to realize their own dream productions, such as operas or concert series. "We're not training students to do one particular thing; we're training them to do a range of things and inspire them to do what they want to do as an individual," says Kate Sheeran, provost and dean. Via interconnected courses, there's a conscious balance between practical approaches and pedagogical methods, she says.

One example of a deeper, more specific plunge that previews real-world experience is SFCM's recently formed concertmaster track, within the violin major for graduate students. It's a small program: There's only three students in its first year, with three more coming in. The program is the brainchild of San Francisco Symphony concertmaster Alexander Barantschik, who is a faculty member along with San Francisco Ballet Orchestra concertmaster Cordula Merks and San Francisco Opera concertmaster Kay Stern. The idea, Sheeran explains, was "to pass on the knowledge of great concertmasters and the specific

skillset [they are] using." Concertmaster students serve as principal players in SFCM's large ensembles. They also tap into the day-to-day life of a 21st-century working musician: They observe rehearsals, perform beside professional orchestra players, study orchestral repertoire in private lessons, and receive career-specific coaching from their concertmaster mentors.

"They're seeing everything in real time and then getting to talk to their teacher about it," Sheeran says. The program also encourages them to be interesting thinkers. For instance, they learn how to problem-solve the best ways to lead a section and exude leadership, in the music world and beyond. Their studies culminate with a mock audition simulating a real-world experience. "They can apply what they've learned in leadership both on and off the stage," adds Sheeran. "Whether it's a brand-new piece by a composer or a new chamber group, or they're a sitting concertmaster in an orchestra, these confidence and leadership qualities really shine through." ■

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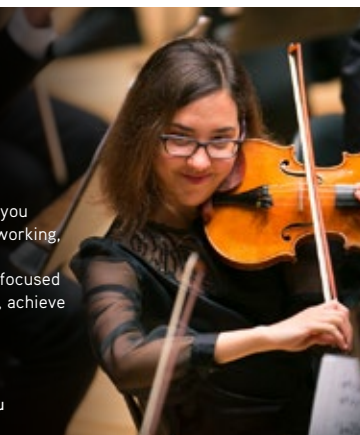
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## LARGER THAN LIFE

Violist Cynthia Phelps reflects on the depth and warmth of her Gasparo da Salò

Many might assume that Cynthia Phelps' quest for a new viola was an instrument shopper's dream. The principal violist of the New York Philharmonic since 1992, Phelps learned at the start of her tenure that the philharmonic would purchase the instrument that she would play. One surprise was how confusing the process became. "Because a lot of people knew that I was looking—a lot of *dealers* knew that I was looking—my phone was ringing off the hook," she says. "All of a sudden I was inundated."

Phelps shares that it was difficult to judge what felt right. Thinking long-term, she also strived to find a viola that wasn't too gigantic and unwieldy. After four years of searching, she found the viola: a Gasparo da Salò, circa 1560–80. It's a "monster," she says, at 17 3/16 inches. But, it's the one for her. "I thought I'd start with something I thought I could handle easily . . . It evolved into a bigger instrument that I love the sound of."

The violist took time to speak about her viola in China, where she was teaching at the

### GEAR

**STRINGS** Pirastro Evah Pirazzi Gold for C and G, Jargar A. "And I like the Jargar D. I like it because sometimes in the middle registers, violas can sound a little tubby, and because it's a big instrument, I like using a steel D," Phelps says. "It takes away that little tubby factor in the sound."

**BOW** Tubbs. "I got it when I was playing on my Tonini. I'm not sure it's the perfect marriage with this instrument but it does work well . . . Tubbs are very, very sturdy, kind of heavy, which suits me. One day I'll get another bow. Maybe."

**CASE** Custom cello-shaped fiberglass Tonareli outfitted with wheels and a luggage handle.

Shanghai Orchestra Academy. Phelps detailed its warm, throaty sound, how she combats any tubbiness, and how swimming, tennis, and red wine complement the viola more than you'd think.

—Cristina Schreil

### What were you playing before?

A beautiful [Giovanni] Tononi. It's just 16 inches. It's the instrument that I won every competition, every audition on. It's beautiful. I had two students play on that consecutively before they got jobs. My one student, who was my TA, played on it for about five years, and she got into the Baltimore Symphony. When she made enough money to buy her own, she gave it back, and my other master's student is playing on it now and she's taking auditions. She actually got a one-year position in the Baltimore Symphony with my other student. They all said, "Oh! That's the viola!" It's really nice.

### Tell us about how you found the Gasparo da Salò.

When I first learned that I would have the opportunity to play on an instrument that the philharmonic would buy for me, it was very exciting. I thought, "This is the chance of a lifetime. I'm going to find something I just can't live without." And as it's a very heavy

orchestra schedule, I didn't want something so big that I'm going to kill myself. I started out moderate. I thought, "Oh, Amatis!" I do love Amatis, but I just wasn't finding something that fit my sound priorities until I got a little bit bigger.

### What do you know about its history and others who have played it?

I know that the principal in the Detroit Symphony played it. Abe Skernick, who was a professor at Indiana University, played it. I'm not sure of the provenance behind that.

### Can you describe its sound?

It's very chocolatey. It's very warm and dark, very mellow. It's very special. It's got cello qualities. Sometimes when I'm warming up backstage, I've gotten the comment before: "What cellist was that? And then I saw it was you!" [Laughs.] I really like that. I love the cello; I just love that burnished amber warmth. I'm a sun girl—I grew up in California.

### What are its strengths and limitations?

Its strength is that it's a cannon. It's really got so much power. I love that.

A weaknesses is that it's big. I have to be careful not to start doing this [*slumps*]. I really have to be very, very aware of my posture and that I'm not slumping and letting it drag me down. I also have to stay pretty fit [because] it's big. I swim, I play tennis. I do anything to stay fit. [Laughs]. And I think it's really important anyway as a player. This is a very unnatural position to put yourself in for hours and hours and hours a day. To sound lithe and very fluid and quick, that's a little bit of a challenge on this instrument because it's so big. On my smaller instruments it's much easier to toss things off and be sparkling.

### In what situations does it perform best?

Well, it likes sea level. So, when I'm in high elevations like Vail—the orchestra goes to Vail, Colorado—I have to be careful with it. It really opens up more when it's humid. Some instruments, it's the opposite. They start squeaking and squawking. I do have to say, I got a carbon-fiber soundpost put in. That's the new thing . . . I would say that this used to be very temperamental and it's not as temperamental [with the soundpost]. I think it's great. People say, "Oh man! No way! The wood doesn't vibrate with something that's not pliable." But I'm telling you, I love it.

### If given the ability, what would your instrument say to you if the two of you sat down for tea, or any drink of your choice?

[Laughs.] "Put me down once in a while!" That's so funny. That's a very creative question. First of all, it would definitely be red wine, you know? With this instrument, it would be red wine.

### Red wine can pair well with chocolate.

That's right. Probably, "Let me do more of the work myself," because I tend to be very Type-A and I have to play so much music all the time—orchestra music, solo, chamber—I'm constantly having to switch gears. I realized, I can do so much more with this instrument. I feel that I need to be able to trust the instrument to respond, to help me use it more to be part of the process rather than just imposing myself on it. That's what you do with a great instrument: It becomes a marriage. You become really good friends, because you know where to push and where to be pushed, you know?



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# COMPLETE SET

Thomastik-Infeld  
launches Alphayue  
strings for viola and cello

By Stephanie Powell

After the launch of Thomastik-Infeld's Alphayue violin strings in 2015, the string manufacturer recently added sets of Alphayue strings for viola and cello. The latest sets offer resonant sound and easy playability at an entry-level price. The viola G and C strings are wound with monel, while the A and D strings are wound with chrome steel. Monel is a natural alloy that acts as an alternative for players with a nickel allergy. The cello set is wound with hydronalium, multialloy, and chrome, depending on which string. The hydronalium-wound A string, for example, is thicker and easier for beginner-level musicians to navigate. The viola set is designed with lower tension and is wound with a synthetic core.

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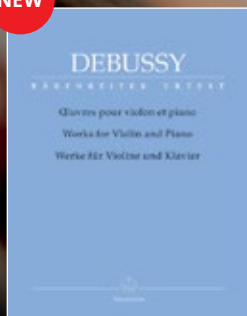
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## Claude Debussy Works for Violin and Piano

Ed. D. Woodfull-Harris  
BA 9444

In addition to the Sonata, this edition contains arrangements of „La fille aux cheveux de lin“ and „Il pleure dans mon cœur“ by the American violinist Arthur Hartmann. It was Hartmann who inspired Debussy to make an arrangement of his well-known piano piece „Minstrels“, also included in this edition.

NEW



## Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Concerto in E minor for Violin and Orchestra op. 64

Ed. D. R. L. Todd and C. Brown  
BA 9099-90  
Piano reduction of the late version

As proof sheets for the Violin Concerto in E minor were long considered lost, it could be described as somewhat of a sensation when proofs for the solo violin part recently resurfaced. They reveal how the young Belgian virtuoso Hubert Léonard played the concerto with Mendelssohn. Evidence from these proofs has been integrated into this revised edition.

NEW



## Johannes Brahms Piano Quintet in F minor op. 34

Ed. D. F. Boomhower  
BA 10915 Score and parts

Johannes Brahms first conceived the music that would become his Piano Quintet op. 34 as a string quintet. This early version did not survive, but the long gestation of the Piano Quintet is documented in the composer's correspondence. Brahms first reworked the string quintet to a Sonata for Two Pianos and then a third time to his Piano Quintet op. 34.

NEW



## Antonín Dvořák Concerto in A minor for Violin and Orchestra op. 73

Ed. I. Cividini  
BA 10422-90 Piano reduction

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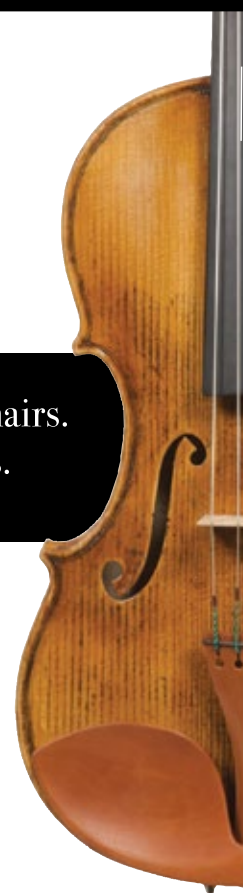
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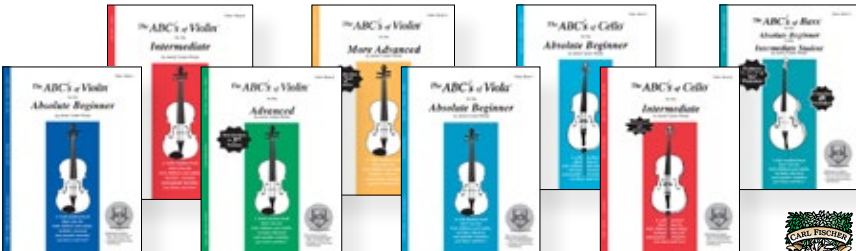





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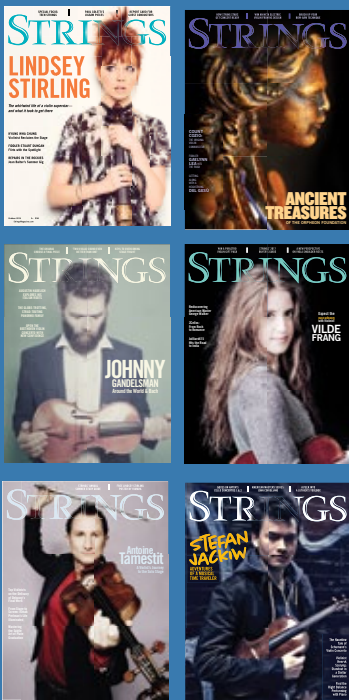
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## POETIC NATURE

Cellist Barbara Bogatin on the qualities found within Mahler's Third Symphony

**G**ustav Mahler wrote his Third Symphony as an homage to nature, finding inspiration in the view outside his mountain retreat as storms swept across the lake and forest animals serenaded from dawn till dusk. He wrote poetic titles for each movement: "Summer Marches In"; "What the Flowers in the Meadow Tell Me"; "What the Animals in the Forest Tell Me"; "What Man Tells Me"; "What the Angels Tell Me"; "What Love Tells Me."

I find that knowing Mahler's descriptions and the poems that inspire them adds to my enjoyment of this music. As a member of the San Francisco Symphony for all 23 years that

our Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas has been at the helm, I have immense appreciation for his passionate commitment to Mahler's music. I've been privileged to perform much of this canon with MTT, as the SFS-MTT-Mahler collaboration has deepened over the past two decades. In that time I have witnessed our partnership evolve to yield a transcendent freedom of expression, and together we've recorded his orchestral works on our SFS Media label and performed them throughout the world. A particular highlight for me was playing this symphony in Vienna in the magnificent Musikverein Golden Hall, imagining Mahler himself conducting the Vienna Philharmonic on that very stage and reveling in the warmly enveloping acoustics that enliven every nuance of the music.

Although the Third Symphony is Mahler's longest, clocking in around 100 minutes, this cello part is not the most difficult. (Nos. 5 and 9 vie fiercely for that honor.) Yet it contains all the unique Mahlerian slides, trills, ornaments, fleet passagework, and expressively complex melodies that make practicing these symphonies so challenging.

Certain thematic ideas that show up in the cello part require a lot of clarity to be heard through the full sonic power of the orchestra.

We cellists need to cultivate a heavy, off the string staccato, played in the lower half of the bow, often suggesting peasant folk music. It takes careful attention to enunciate well, especially on the low strings. For this type of stroke, plus the long sections of repeated dotted rhythms, it really helps to have a strong bow that catches the string at the head of each note, and cleanly articulates on the string changes. The other big technical challenges are the fast, scale-like passages in awkward keys with constant shifting of position, and when I put on my metronome I'm surprised at how much I need it to keep me honest. In my practice, it's all about maintaining clarity and keeping the rhythm very steady.

The lyrical playing in Mahler's Third is just as crucial. The first couple of movements feature brief, flowing legato motives requiring imperceptible bow changes. In the final sixth movement the cellos sing out heart-wrenchingly beautiful melodic lines, made all the more treacherous by the need to play with utmost tenderness while implementing Mahler's elongated grace notes and specified slides. No matter how depleted I feel toward the end of this lengthy reverential praise to nature, man, and angels, I feel a swell of gratitude to the composer for giving the cello section a moment to savor the poignant feelings expressed in the final melody of "What Love Tells Me."

**PLAYER** Barbara Bogatin is a member of the San Francisco Symphony, and has previously held the position of principal cello for Milwaukee and New Jersey symphonies. She performs at chamber-music festivals and has led workshops on music and meditation at Esalen, Spirit Rock, Stanford University, the Juilliard School, in Italy, and in South Africa.

**TITLE OF WORK BEING STUDIED** Symphony No. 3

**COMPOSER** Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

**DATE COMPOSED** 1896

**NAME OF EDITION STUDIED** European Edition, 1974

**PUBLISHER** European American Music

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Scott Flavin with a student

# FINDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH FREEDOM

Solutions can be found in taking a broader view

By Scott Flavin

In over 20 years of teaching in higher education, I've been fortunate to work with and help many wonderful students. Fairly recently, I had a fascinating and moving pair of linked experiences with two graduate students who were everything a teacher could ask for: fine players prepared for every lesson with great attitudes. While both were playing advanced repertoire at a high level, they had different shades of an issue that kept them from achieving greater heights. Student A worked hard and learned music well, but in playing would hesitate and doubt himself technically to the point that he had difficulty

getting through a phrase. Student B also prepared extremely well, learning the music with technical assurance and familiarity with ideas from any number of great violinists' recordings and performances, as well as different written editions. This student took in so much information that he was not able to invest in an interpretation, and what came out was a jumble of different approaches rather than a unified and personal concept.

Working with these students at the same time was an opportunity to discover solutions for two different manifestations of the same issue—lack of confidence. For Student A,

confidence to surmount technical difficulty; for Student B, confidence to invest in and connect with a personal musical interpretation. For both students, this was not related to performance anxiety, but was linked with learning style, affecting their practice and lessons, as well as performances.

My solution was to approach this issue with repertoire. For Student A, I assigned a virtuoso encore piece, containing great technical difficulties. For Student B, I gave one of the greatest masterworks of Bach—a piece with many possible interpretations, as well as numerous performance traditions.

Both students' usual approach got them stuck. Student A became fixated on specific technical difficulties, practicing very slowly and carefully with the metronome, in rhythms—taking apart specific passages to the smallest degree. All fine work, but yielding limited results in slow tempi, and almost no success at tempo. Student B gathered different printed editions of the Bach, listened to recordings of famous musicians, and researched performance style diligently. The result after all

this work was a patchwork of interpretive ideas. Not a convincing performance.

Rather than helping Student A continue exclusively on the path of detail work, we looked at the fact that he was painting a landscape starting with each blade of grass, without a concept of how each detail fit into the whole. We started analyzing the entire work: first the overall structure and mood, then each section, then each phrase. We then related each of the technically difficult passages to the whole, and found strategies that never lost sight of *why* each passage was written. As a result of this top-down strategy, Student A was able to maintain the gesture and flow of each difficult passage, rather than doubt his ability to overcome a specific difficulty. Freed from technical boundaries, the result was a stunningly higher level of technique, combined with cohesive phrasing that was musically satisfying.

With Student B, we focused on what was actually coming out of the instrument. Where were the highs and lows of each phrase; what was the character and spirit of the music at any given moment? We set aside issues of performance style and delved wholeheartedly into discovering the truth of every phrase of this music. Next, the student performed the Bach in lessons, studio classes, and studio recital, with great emphasis placed on connecting with the moment, and investing completely in what was played, for better or worse. With help, Student B began to listen and react differently, finally freed from the weight of expectation of others, and started discovering his own voice. In this student's graduating recital, the interpretation was absolutely his own, resulting in an intensely engaging performance, and a teacher nearly in tears of joy.

In both cases, the solution to finding confidence for these students was in helping them discover new perspectives. For Student A, connecting with the flow of the music helped him surmount technical difficulty; for Student B, discovering his own voice gave him the confidence to directly communicate his vision of Bach.

Sometimes the best teaching solutions can be found if we are willing to broaden our vision and take a fresh look at the big picture. With these students, it certainly was exciting to experience!



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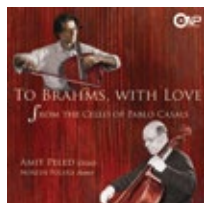
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## BACK IN TIME

Cellist Amit Peled on finding his voice with Casals' cello and an atypical recording process



**TO BRAHMS WITH LOVE**  
Amit Peled, cello;  
Noreen Polera, piano  
(CAP Records)

When Amit Peled received the historic 1733 “Pablo Casals” Goffriller cello six years ago, he knew there were certain cello repertoire highlights he’d love to record with it. Peled’s latest CD, *To Brahms with Love*, tackles Brahms’ sonatas for cello and piano: No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, and No. 2 in F major, Op. 99.

It’s repertoire that he and pianist Noreen Polera have performed countless times. While they’ve recorded many albums already—this being number 13 for Peled—this project plunged them into an unconventional recording process. They invented a method that may seem bold: minimize the engineer.

“We actually had to tell the engineer, ‘This is how we’re going to do it.’ We basically came to an agreement that he pressed the button for the whole session,” Peled says. The idea behind this: capture a live-concert atmosphere that remained faithful to their “souls as artists.” Amid what Peled largely describes as a market saturated with overly squeaky-clean recordings, this spontaneous, daring method helped him bring forth his personality. It was the best way, he says, to honor the legend of the cello, Brahms, and, especially, Casals.

—Cristina Schreil

**A lot of personal, historical, and musical connections converge with this project. When did you think to record the Brahms sonatas?**

I knew that Pablo Casals himself as a child played for Brahms. I studied with Bernard Greenhouse, who was a student of Casals, so there’s a direct connection. And of course, I love, love his recordings of [the Brahms sonatas]. [I] thought this would be a sort

of homage to the cello rather than Casals, to take this piece of wood and congratulate it for being alive for so long and for experiencing so many hands and approaches to this music.

**What was the recording process?**

Last June, we spent the whole week in Miami; we spent three days recording it and the following day we performed it, which is how you would normally *not* do it. You would normally perform and then record. But since we played them so many times we wanted to have quiet time during the week with the producer. We stayed in a beautiful hotel next to the church where we recorded, which had beautiful acoustics. It was really a nice process of diving into each phrase and recording it as many times as we wanted to.

#### ABOUT THIS DEPARTMENT

Each recording represents a body of choices an artist makes to define its character. This department gives musicians the opportunity to discuss some of those choices and other aspects of a specific recording project.

We were synchronized. We felt really comfortable in the space, with the instruments. Even with the weather, because it was extremely humid and we were sweating like crazy. All of those things you have to take into account. It's an environment you have to feel completely comfortable in because you're trying to produce the secret diamond inside you, to share it with a microphone, hopefully with the world. It's not an easy process.

#### Why did you adopt the unconventional recording approach?

We wanted to feel that this is a concert. This is something flowing, something that is alive. A lot of recordings, I have a problem with—where it becomes just a puzzle and the engineer stops you every second, every note. Then, you don't even know what the tempo is anymore. You just play and all of a sudden you get a master and it sounds better than you could ever play, but it's boring. We decided not to do that. We recorded each movement twice and we told the engineer, [for example], "We felt the second one was better." And then without even going into details, we started from the beginning until, let's say letter A, and then we played that twice. And then from A to letter B; we did it twice. And B to C, and so on. So, we felt we covered enough material, but nothing was just a note or just a bar or even just a phrase. It was just the feeling and flow of a concert.

I must say, this CD, with the history of the personal story and the way of recording, is by far the only CD of myself that I can listen to. I feel good about it. I think I will adopt this way of recording.

#### What are other ways you captured a live-concert experience?

I looked at the microphones and I imagined they were actually humans. They're all around me and they're listening to me. I tried to perform a big chunk of the piece and not just a phrase. Even at times when we felt that it was a good run-through and we probably didn't need to do it again, we stuck to this format of doing a [complete run-through] twice and then in big chunks twice.

#### It seems like you set yourself up to be in the right headspace.

You're totally right. I also think it's a matter of experience. You make your first CD and you want it to be clean. And then you always

want to be clean, and be clean, and be clean. You forget: There are enough recordings that are clean. Not to say that it shouldn't be clean, but if it loses what I call direction—if a phrase loses the punchline, the gravitation point, or the black hole where it pushes you somewhere—it's a beautiful sound, but it's the same dynamic and it doesn't go anywhere. I feel that if that [direction] doesn't happen, it's not worth listening to it.

#### You've performed these sonatas so many times. Did any new insights arise about this music during this recording experience?

Totally. Many. When you make a recording, it is a statement. Of course I play those sonatas by memory [in concert]. Recording, and having the urtext edition in front of me and always looking at it, all of a sudden you find, "Wow, this is an eighth note and not a 16th note, and I've played it so many times like a 16th note." You want to make sure that doesn't happen because [a recording] is a statement for life. This is something that will stay forever.

And then, having the producer, who in this case is a pianist, was wonderful. Because she is not a cellist, she raised questions that normally cellists don't, and that was a great learning experience, having those pairs of ears over there.

#### Was a live, organic feeling also important because you are gesturing back to Casals?

Yes. Casal's recording—this was the '30s—came at a time when you didn't cut. You just did run-throughs, and if one was good, that was it. I think it's much more spontaneous. You know, you're jumping into the water and you have to swim to the other side. That's it. And you tell the engineer, "I'll see you on the other side." You have to get there. You cannot stop and fix. And that's exactly what you do in a concert.

That kind of feeling, of "I'll see you at the end!" is something that we lost completely in recordings because we tried to become perfect. Technology took over us. The albums became the CDs of the engineers, not of the artists. One of the things Marta Casals Istomin told me when she gave me the cello was, "There are two things I want you to do. One is to share the legacy of Pablo Casals and the voice of the cello with the world. But, the other thing is, I want you to find your own voice through it." I think that finding my voice, a lot of it is to dare to go back to how it used to be. ■

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Violinist Tessa Lark performing the 'Red Violin: Suite' in Central Park

## EVENING IN THE PARK

Violinist Tessa Lark delivers Corigliano's 'Red Violin: Suite' with gusto

By Brian Wise

It's not often that a violinist performs a significant piece of American music in New York's Central Park as its composer is seated steps away, among passing skateboarders, joggers, birds, and several hundred other listeners. But that was the backdrop for Tessa Lark's graceful performance on June 12 of John Corigliano's *Red Violin: Suite*. Not only was Corigliano on-hand—at a youthful-looking 80—but so was the violinist Lara St. John, who recorded the suite a decade ago and who was evidently keen to hear a next-generation account.

Lark's performance opened the summer concert series at the Naumburg Bandshell. She was joined by the 20-piece Ensemble

LPR, the house orchestra at the Downtown venue Le Poisson Rouge, led by conductor Ankush Bahl.

Earlier in the day, Lark had strolled the park's Bethesda Terrace, telling viewers on a Facebook Live stream that performing outdoors felt natural to her, having grown up around nature. (An early website photo showed the young violinist performing ankle-deep in a creek near her childhood home in Kentucky.) Now in her late 20s, the New York-based Lark has earned diplomas from the New England Conservatory and the Juilliard School, as well as a growing clutch of prizes, including a silver medal at the 2014 Indianapolis International Violin Competition—on whose loaned “ex-Gingold” Stradivari she performed this evening.

The 25-minute *Red Violin: Suite* is culled from Corigliano's score to the 1998 François Giraud film of the same name and uses a haunting chaconne as its organizing principle. As such, each variation poses distinct challenges for the violinist. When the solo part featured a soft, ghostly melody in the extreme upper register, Lark was especially secure, her intonation and tone control pristine.

Some variations turned fast and furious, with heavily accented 16th note and triplet

patterns, overlaid with double and triple stops. In these showier passages, Lark ratcheted up the intensity, applying quicksilver bow strokes, perhaps carried over from her work in bluegrass fiddling and Appalachian music. The piece's heart lies in its darkly soaring main theme that returns at pivotal moments. If Lark's reading could have benefited from a bit more old-Hollywood schmaltz, there was much to admire in her supple phrasing and focused, amber tone (which was unperturbed even by a wayward clothespin that supported her sheet music, later rescued by conductor Bahl).

If there was one aspect of Lark's performance that was more difficult to gauge, it was in the realm of projec-

tion, as the tinny amplification system muddled the balances. But having previously performed Corigliano's *Red Violin Concerto*—which uses similar material on a larger canvas—Lark was a persuasive advocate for this modern but readily approachable music.

The program opened with the premiere of *Fanfare & Fugue (for a Fish)*, composed by Ensemble LPR's founder and violinist David Handler. Moving from a stately, Handelian introduction to scampering counterpoint with percussive interjections, the engaging score was given a bright, incisive reading. This was followed by Thea Musgrave's *Aurora*, presented in honor of her 90th birthday. Composed in 1999 for the Colburn School, the string orchestra piece at times evokes the lush, moody textures of Bernard Herrmann's Alfred Hitchcock scores.

After intermission, the focus turned to composers whose death anniversaries were marked in 2018. In Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, the relatively small forces produced a more sinewy sound than one usually hears; the heightened clarity revealed the music's textural blend as well as some occasional ragged edges. To conclude, Bahl led a finely shaped account of Debussy's beloved *Clair de Lune*, just as the mosquitos were reclaiming their corner of the park. ■

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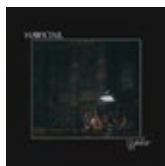
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**UNLESS**  
Hawktail  
(Paddle Records)

## REVAMPED RECORDING

Hawktail's debut recording weaves homespun progressions with bluegrass

By Pat Moran

Two years ago, acoustic power trio Haas Kowert Tice—fiddler Brittany Haas, bassist Paul Kowert, and guitarist Jordan Tice—started recording material for the follow-up to their 2014 debut *You Got This*. In the process, they chunked the recordings and started from scratch twice, added mandolin ace Dominick Leslie to the fold, and transformed into the newly christened quartet Hawktail.

Despite this convoluted history, and recordings drawn from several locations, including a studio, a church, and two live shows, the music on the resulting collection *Unless* seems consistent and effortless, a seamless fusion of virtuosity and directness, the homespun and the unexplored.

"Abzug" kicks off with Haas' unaccompanied John Silakowski-built fiddle, coiling and wheezing like an antique pump organ. Like

tributaries, Kowert's pulsing bass, Leslie's jangling mandolin, and Tice's simmering guitar gradually pour into the quickening stream.

Kowert's bowed bass bubbles under "In the Kitchen," while Haas' bowing sashays lazily like rising smoke rings. Riding sprightly switchback fiddle, "El Camino Pt. 2" is Haas' showcase. The ping-pong guitar progression of "Britt Guit" allows Tice to strut his stuff.

On "Boatwoman," Tice's pensive guitar and Haas' fluting fiddle are disrupted by interjections from Leslie's mandolin. The piece grows restless and slippery, as free jazz techniques are applied to bluegrass' traditional round robin of instrumental runs.

*Unless* closes with the deceptively placid "Frog and Toad." Here, bounding bass, cascading guitar, and sighing fiddle lock into a groove that swoons as much as it swings. It's serene string band jazz with dreamlike

undertones, a spinning jenny veering slightly off-kilter.

As the quartet's name suggests, listening to Hawktail's tunes on *Unless* is much like watching a hawk swooping, soaring, and hovering. We know that physical laws apply here, but it's still like witnessing a miracle.



#### SPECTER

Duo Odéon

(Sono Luminus)

On their debut album, Duo Odéon's Hannah Leland and Aimee Fincher offer

brisk antidote to the comforts of familiar music. *Specter* is a collection of previously unrecorded works by American composer George Antheil. For seekers of the truly obscure, this is a treasure: Two of the pieces are unpublished, recently unearthed when a colleague of the late composer passed away and his family turned the trove over to a university.

Listening to this bristling, vibrant album is more edifying with a cursory knowledge of his improbably cosmopolitan biography. Born to German immigrants at the turn of the 20th century, Antheil's obsession with experimental music led him to Philadelphia, studying with one of Franz Liszt's star pupils, then onto New York, pestering Ernest Bloch—who initially rejected Antheil's music as jejune—into taking him under his wing. Upon completion of a first symphony, he attracted the attention of Leopold Stokowski, who agreed to debut the piece. Alas, before the program could come to fruition, Antheil decided to move to Europe.

In the early '20s, at the behest of Igor Stravinsky, he and his wife took up residence on Paris' Rue de l'Odéon, above the famed, rare bookstore Shakespeare and Co. Unfortunately, Antheil's proclivity for whim would once again strike down a lucrative relationship, failing to show up to a concert Stravinsky had organized to formally launch his

career, preferring instead to vacation in Poland with his wife.

Antheil titled his 1945 autobiography *The Bad Boy of Music*, and listening to *Specter* is bracing evidence of his self-belief. The *Sonatina* consists of three brief movements, each a test of any violinist's technical fortitude. Leland fearlessly accepts every leap into the highest registers and demonstrates a quickness that feels like a dialogue between two challengers. Antheil doesn't blink, and neither does Hannah Leland. Soaring and confrontational, it gets richer with each listen, particularly the achingly unadorned Andante.

The Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is a time capsule of mid-century modernist thought, and does not suffer for the reduction from large ensemble to piano accompaniment. Pianist Aimee Fincher makes an urbane collaborator as Leland toils away in a cloud of rosin dust and sky-high harmonics. This is the sound of a composer who almost

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had it all, and it seems a shame that it is not a larger part of the lexicon.

Valses from *Specter of the Rose* are the perfect complement to a film noir about a ballet company with a murderous principal dancer. The reassuring structure of the waltz underpins alternately chaotic and cloying melodies, once more showcasing the talents of the musicians—perhaps even more than the skill of the composer himself.

—Emily Wright



### MYSTERY SONATAS

Christina Day Martinson,  
violin; Boston Baroque;  
Martin Pearlman,  
harpsichordist-organist  
(Linn Records)

Heinrich Biber's 15 Mystery Sonatas for violin and continuo are some of the most fascinating and eccentric pieces in the repertoire. Predating Bach's compositions for solo violin by 50 years, they also predate modern violinistic convention. In this exciting disc by violinist Christina Day Martinson and the Boston Baroque, you find a modern virtuoso who is more than equal to the extraordinary demands Biber places on the violin itself. In each of the 15 sonatas, Biber experiments with a different *scordatura* tuning, not only to increase resonance but to heighten or release the tension of the string, and with it the sonority. In Sonata No. 8 ("The Crowning with Thorns") the violin's G string is raised an entire perfect fifth to D, and this disruption to the usual balance between the strings produces a color taut with tension.

Even more impressive in this disc is Sonata No. 11 ("The Resurrection"), in which the violin's two middle strings are crossed at the peg-box and behind the bridge to represent the cross. Here, as elsewhere, Martinson deftly navigates the difficulty of the unfamiliar tuning in a darkly dramatic tone, her phrasing rich with expressive rubato.

Martinson is joined on this disc by excellent collaborators: cellist Michael Unterman and theorboist-guitarist Michael Leopold, deftly directed from the keyboard by harpsichordist-organist Martin Pearlman. Unlike the majority of recordings of these sonatas—which tend to use spaces with ultra-resonant acoustics and/or a lot of reverb—the engineers of this disc have chosen an acoustic and a microphone placement

that produce a very "direct" tone quality. This doesn't detract from the listener's enjoyment, but rather gives a sense of the raw emotion of Biber's subject matter. Martinson's gutsy, strongly articulated performance has something new and different to say about these works, and her disc is a thought-provoking contribution to the recorded literature.

—Miranda Wilson



### PAGANINI: 24 CAPRICES

Roman Simovic, violin;  
London Symphony  
Orchestra  
(LSO Live)

Violinist Roman Simovic describes Paganini's 24 Caprices as "Violin's Everest" for good reason. This collection of unabashedly difficult and showy bonbons brings to mind certain techniques that serve as gatekeepers to the realm of virtuosity: skittering spiccato, intricate multi-note chords, and passages requiring absolute fluency and confidence. It is natural to listen to these movements with an ear for flaws, and miraculously, Roman Simovic offers none. Setting this rendition apart is the way in which the prolific skill of violinist and composer embody secondary roles, with a focus instead on an opus treated with incredible love and curiosity, each note curated with complete devotion.

This daring and affectionate treatment of the Caprices makes even the most risky movements sound like an invitation, rather than a contest. No. 6 "The Trill," for instance becomes a dark meditation with no hint of duress, even while tritones tense and resolve, contorting the left hand devilishly as the intervals flutter. The octaves of No. 3 are given the space and time to truly resonate, thanks to Simovic's uncompromising intonation and patient bow. The hunter's calls of No. 9 are articulated with playful delicacy, while the variations tease the ear with a sweep of characters ranging from pompous to pristine, all of whom make it very hard not to smile while listening. No. 24's theme and variations manage to be as breath-taking as they are tidy. The left-hand pizzicato section is effervescent, while the string-crossing section is a clinic in mechanical fluidity. Each variation is a resounding declaration: This is what it sounds like when a player moves beyond the technical demands of a work and becomes a vehicle for the essence of the music.

—EW

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My favorite step in bow making, other than playing a new bow for the first time, comes at about 25 percent from completion. Getting to this stage involves more than a bit of “delayed gratification.” In abbreviated form, this phase comes after the frog has been almost completely sculpted and polished, and after the stick has been planed within about .5mm of its final dimensions. Its fundamental curve is established, after the handle has been meticulously drilled to receive the screw and the mortise slot chiseled in. During this time, the frog has been fit to the stick, confirming that it is square to the bow head, and the button screw has been fashioned and fits parallel and straight to the stick. And, it’s after the ebony- and mammoth-ivory tip plates have been securely glued on.

With these days of meticulous work completed, the bow is now ready for a serious drive to its final playing form. I use a method borrowed from the Hill bow workshop. To simulate the tension of actual hair, a wire is extended between the frog handle using a substitute frog fixture pinned into a square hole, drilled in the bottom face of the bow tip. This permits the bow to be tensioned up to near straight.

Compared to the previous stages, this work feels quite fluent. The bow maker tests the straightness of the bow under tension and judges the positioning of the camber curve, making necessary corrections. The wire permits the bow to be drawn up straighter and straighter, so that longer planes can be employed, flowing from the handle to the tip.

With long glides, various planes, and the intermediate use of files, the bow maker gets closer to the final dimensions, stiffness, and weight. If the stick cooperates, this phase can be completed in about an hour. Your artistic judgment and experience are fully employed. It’s almost like you’re flying!

—John Greenwood, bow maker

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a vibrant blue sleeveless dress and a wide black belt, is seated on a black chair. She is holding a violin and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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