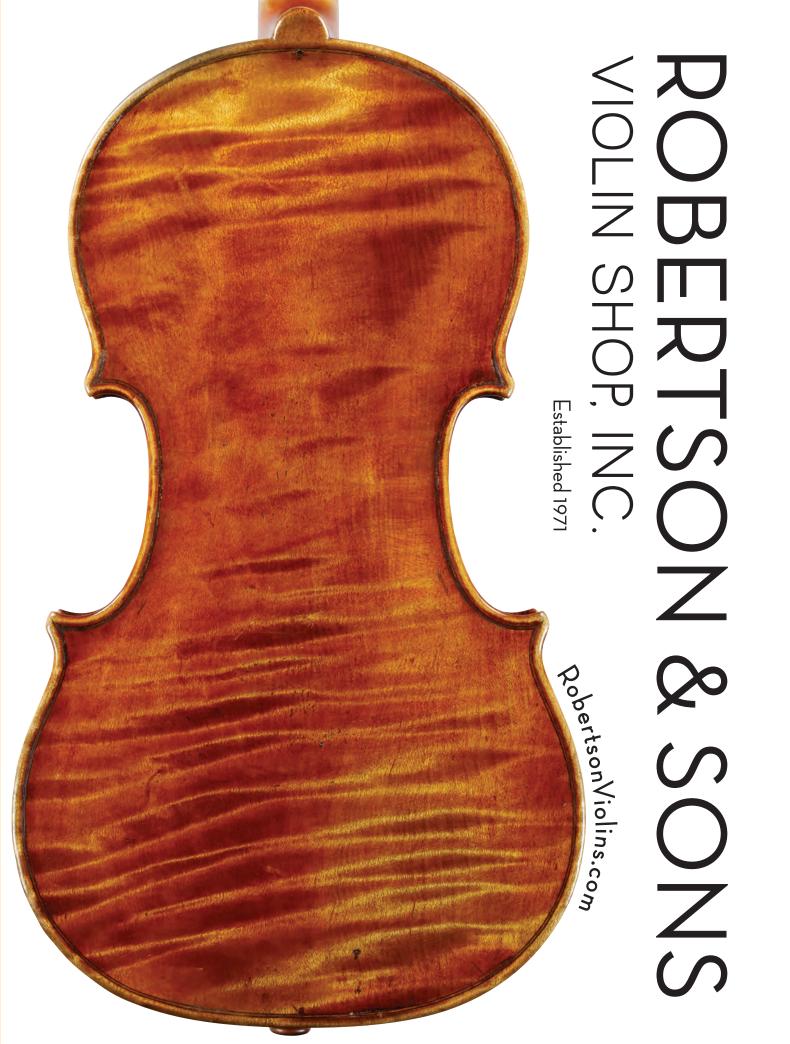




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Seattle Symphony's Benaroya Hall



here's a change in the air. Can you feel it? Last year, as the flowers and trees and assorted shrubberies here at Strings' California home burst into vivid technicolor, the world was stumbling into pandemic winter. Supplies were thin. The enormous, mounting impact of COVID-19 was beginning to show. The sun's triumphant return couldn't dull the razor-sharp anxiety that raced around the world as we tucked ourselves, as best we could, into our own pandemic bubbles. Hoping to wait it out.

It was a long, devastating winter.

It's now a little more than a year later, and cherry blossoms are again dressing the trees outside in frilly gowns of white and pink petals. But instead of witnessing our retreat, this year, they are a signal of our return. COVID numbers are plummeting, vaccines are making their way to more and more people, and life—in all its teeming, muddled glory—seems to be returning to something like normal, bit by bit. We may still mostly be masked, but there is hope in our eyes.

And there is reason to hope. Musically, organizations are taking a deep breath and

planning the return of in-person concerts. The Seattle Symphony, for example, has announced audiences may return to its Benaroya Hall in September for a "spectacular opening night." String players who have struggled to connect with their chamber-music friends, students who have deeply missed in-person lessons with their teachers, performers who have ached to hear a live cascade of applause—all have reason to look forward to brighter days full of in-person music making. When grandparents can finally hug their grandchildren for the first time in a year, everything suddenly seems possible.

I know we're not through this yet, but before you can all sprint to your nearest concert hall, summer festival, or chamber-music party, I wanted to take a moment to say thank you. Thank you for your support, and for your stories of overcoming the many obstacles you have found thrust in your path. It is a privilege to serve the string community, and we appreciate the time you spend with us.

Enjoy this issue, and feel the promise of spring.

-Megan Westberg

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19TH-CENTURY NOTIONS

Historically informed performance for the Romantic crowd

By Laurence Vittes

ith period-instrument orchestras and even some modern-instrument musicians turning their attention to what performances of Romantic 19th-century music might have sounded like in the 19th century, David Milsom has written a guide for violinists and other music lovers who want to get into an authentically Romantic mood. But be warned: It may be more freely expressive than what we are used to today. And be ready to hum that tune.

The book is (rather unromantically) titled Romantic Violin Performing Practices: A Handbook (Boydell Press, 2020). Its 335

pages include discussions of core philosophies and tools of the trade, treatises, editions, recordings, and more. The author-head of performance at Huddersfield University in the UK who also leads the Nineteenth-Century Performance Research Groupprovides technical and stylistic violin exercises, a bibliography, and a discography.

I asked Milsom about what he had deduced about our favorite Schumann and Brahms pieces, based on dusty documents and fragile sound archives, and how performances and listening experiences might be energized and illuminated by exploring the implications of his work, even if it means relying in part on scratchy old recordings of Joseph Joachim.

Milsom tells me that the book's purpose was to close the age-old gap between what scholars write about and what performers do. "I wanted to write something in a reasonably accessible way that would summarize how to start investigating and experimenting with what could be called 'Romantic violin performing practices," he says. "I wanted to provide resources with which a wider range of performers could start to engage with these things."

Milsom stresses the difference between performing practices that are notated and practices that are not. "I think one of the key messages of the book is to show that there are un-notated practices that are really exciting and interesting to investigate and experiment with, which open up the possibility of more multifaceted, richly lavered views of this music."

Milsom illustrates his point by comparing the edition by violinist Ferdinand David (1810-73) of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, with mid-20thcentury editions. "What immediately becomes evident is a very, very different way of being expressive. The opening phrase in David's edition includes annotated harmonics, where a modern player would probably play *molto vibrato espressivo*. And the slow movement has lots of fingerings in David's edition that suggest a much more obvious use of portamento, and which have been largely expunged from or suppressed in later editions."

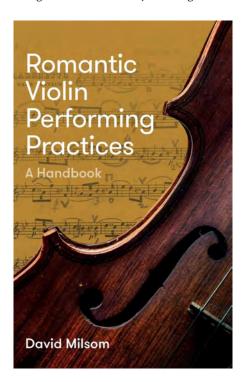
Milsom points to Louis Spohr's (1784-1859) distinction between what he describes as the "correct" and the "fine" styles or modes of delivery. "The correct style, in Spohr's view, is highly skillful, very polished from a technical point of view, and highly capable of observing the musical score in expressive ways. But he sees this as a starting point," Milsom says. "In his view, beautiful performances enter a realm of performer-generated expressiveness beyond the score. Joachim espoused this kind of much freer approach; allegedly every performance he gave was different. He didn't like to mark editions too heavily because he felt it was too prescriptive."

Milsom also stresses how profoundly 19th-century vocal ideals served as "the underpinnings" for much of the instrumental music of the time and its performance; his concern is for the disconnections he hears in modern performances "between declamation and song, and song and instrumental music."

Milsom cites Charles Auguste de Bériot's Méthode de violon of 1858 for its comprehensive descriptions of sound production and rhythmic realizations couched explicitly in terms of a vocal ideal. Bériot heard music "in a quasi-linguistic way," Milsom

says, "and his justification for choices of fingerings and bowings comes from that overriding vocal philosophy."

Historical pedagogical literature for the violin has led Milsom to perceive that "they felt there was a very direct connection between all of these things: how you shift, whether you remain on one string or another, whether you treat this rhythm flexibly or not. There was a clear aesthetic logic operating within this group of practices we call Romantic, and it can be invoked now to get people into a way of being that is other than just being literal-



minded about whether this is the right portamento or that is the wrong vibrato.

"It's a kind of hearts-and-minds exercise," Milsom admits, "to try and get people to recognize that this is very different aesthetically but no less worthy of investigation."

Milsom believes it may also be a matter "of thinking ourselves into the mindset of 19thcentury musicians by asking ourselves what we are trying to do and say as performers. If we can have more of an understanding of obvious things like portamenti or flexibility with notated rhythms, maybe we can begin to understand on a slightly deeper level things we noticed in early recordings, even though one has to deal very carefully with the distinction between generality and specificity."

The value of old recordings to an understanding of the 19th century cannot be overestimated. Eminent music critic Tully Potter, whose 1,400-page biography of Adolf Busch chronicles one of the great links to Romantic traditions, tells me that listening to the best players of any generation "is immensely helpful. They often knew the composers or were a heartbeat away from them. If you hear Karol Gregorowicz play Wieniawski's Souvenir de Moscou, you are hearing someone who actually knew the composer.

"On the other hand," Potter points out, "things never stood still. You can hear the cellist W.H. Squire playing with virtually no vibrato in 1898 or 1899, then in 1906 with some—having clearly heard Kreisler in the interim—and then in 1912 with a lot of vibrato, in fact rather a good sound. And who would you pick from around 1912, Ysaÿe or Kreisler? That's why I don't like being too doctrinaire."

The value of really old recordings is echoed by Brinton Averil Smith, principal cellist of the Houston Symphony. "I make my students listen to pianist Ilona Eibenschütz's (1872-1967) recordings to understand the idea that melody doesn't need to line up with accompaniment but should rather be moving around as the music dictates. When you listen to that History of the Cello on Record series [Pearl Records, annotated by Potter], the biggest difference besides speeds (usually faster in the old days) and flexibility of tempo was the use of portamenti. This is where Casals was a kind of revolution and you can see the change even from Feuermann's early recordings to his late ones, as tastes changed. But now, of course, so few know how to slide artistically at all . . . "

Which is where David Milsom's book comes in. "I'm extremely enthusiastic, because a lot of 20th-century performances of a lot of this music do it something of a disservice," he says bluntly. "So I think it's good for us to get back to first principles and experiment with these things. I'm not forcing players to play in a certain way. I very much dislike language that tells people how they should play something. I don't feel it's my place to do that. I simply hope to widen the range of available choices and make it better known to more people. I think that's basically my purpose."

5 MINUTES WITH . . . JOHN D'ADDARIO III

By Patrick Sullivan

ohn D'Addario III, president and CEO of D'Addario, a musical string and accessories company, triggered a few shockwaves earlier this year when he announced that his New York-based business had acquired the Super-Sensitive Musical String Company. Super-Sensitive, famous for its Red Label strings for student musicians, was established in 1930 and, like D'Addario, is a family-owned business. I asked D'Addario for a peek inside the process of bringing Super-Sensitive into the D'Addario fold.

How and why did D'Addario decide to acquire **Super-Sensitive?**

Last year, every business was dealing with the pandemic and had various degrees of challenges. Super-Sensitive was dealing with that, as were we. They had their facility shut down for quite a long time. And it got to a point where getting it back up and running was a pretty daunting task. So we got into discussions with Super-Sensitive president Jim Cavanaugh.

Initially we discussed maybe helping them in some way, in terms of getting them back in stock. But one thing led to another and we started talking about an acquisition. And that was consummated at the end of the year.

Super-Sensitive is an iconic company, and adding their brands to our portfolio was attractive. Over the last decade or two, we've invested considerably in our factory. And that's led to extremely high-quality improvements as well as increased capacity. So it's a nice fit for us.

Are you planning to discontinue any of the **Super-Sensitive products?**

Well, we're going through a pretty daunting transition right now. We've never had an acquisition before where we had to do due diligence virtually. But we've been able to

John D'Addario III



adapt. Our plan is to transition this business into our model in three different phases.

We're in phase one, where our focus is on the most popular Super-Sensitive products that the market obviously craves, especially Red Label strings. We're ramping up production right now for that. And we're pretty confident that by the end of March we'll be able to seamlessly supply retailers and distributors all over the world.

In the subsequent phases, we're going to study the overall portfolio of Super-Sensitive's brands and plan rollouts. Phase two will probably be in the second quarter. We'll have assessed the other portions of the line literally the Super-Sensitive brand itself among others—and put together a rollout plan. The third phase in the third quarter will be for a lot of the long-tail products.

Our plan is to study and honor the timetested formulas of Super-Sensitive strings, but where we can make improvements we absolutely will.

Why are you moving production of Super-Sensitive products from Florida to New York?

Over the last decade or two, the investments we've made in our factory have been immense and have made us incredibly efficient. We're producing our most consistent product ever. We're moving production to New York because we have a highly trained staff of workers in the factory and a very talented engineering team. We also have a wire mill literally next door to our factory that produces the majority of our string raw materials. Super-Sensitive products will tap into that supply.

You're already producing Super-Sensitive products in New York?

Yeah, we are. But like a lot of companies, we're dealing with supply-chain disruptions. In the case of Super-Sensitive, we're trying to get packaging materials and there are shortages. So we're making strings and building an arsenal of string material, but we're trying to get the packaging to catch up.

We're pretty confident that by the end of March we're going to be in a strong position, at least for the most popular Super-Sensitive offerings, namely Red Label.

Where do the Super-Sensitive products fit into your brand?

First, just having them as part of our brand enhances the options we can provide educators and students, and we're really proud of that. Where they fit in the portfolio, that's something we're still studying. Our focus right now is on getting the supply of the product resumed, because the market's been deprived of it for months now. As we get through that, we're going to make some decisions about how we position Red Label versus our other offerings. I don't have all the answers yet. The paint's still wet on the acquisition. But we're studying that very closely.

Both Super-Sensitive and D'Addario are family companies. How did that play into this process?

Well, as a family business ourselves, we understand there's an emotional connection that becomes part of your life. And that's actually really helping with the transition. Jim Cavanaugh is committed to working with us. At the end of the day, he wanted to make sure his family's business is in good hands. And it's really gratifying that he felt confident in us.

How will all this look five years from now?

When we look across our offerings of orchestral strings, we're really creating a journey for a player. And Red Label in particular is the beginning of that journey. It's another option we can provide to someone who is just starting out and who hopefully will continue to be loyal to our brands and step up to, let's say, Ascenté, to our Helicore brand potentially, Zyex, and eventually maybe Kaplan. And our teams are working on some premium offerings that we're hoping to launch in maybe a year or so.

What are the biggest challenges facing string makers?

First and foremost: supply-chain disruptions from the pandemic. I've never seen anything like it. They call it a bullwhip effect. It's wreaked havoc on different

portions of our business. Fortunately, we're highly vertically integrated so we've been able to mitigate that somewhat. We're not overly reliant on third-party suppliers. And with the school music programs being shuttered in many cases, that's put a strain on demand. But we're fighting through, and we think it'll come back in a big way.

Anything else you want to say?

Super-Sensitive is a highly respected

company, and we intend to honor its legacy as a family business. Twenty-some years ago, we were vigorous competitors and it drove me crazy when we couldn't convince some people that Prelude was maybe a better choice than Red Label. For me, having them as part of our portfolio now is really touching. For many years they forced us to get better, and to this day we're grateful. It's great to have them on our team now.





LIFE ON THE ROAD

Performing during the pandemic has led to some wild adventures

By Rebecca Roudman

m the leader of the international touring band Dirty Cello, a cello-fronted blues, bluegrass, and rock band that (normally) does around 100 shows a year. We're always on the road, all over the United States and around the world. It's been a struggle to keep rocking and rolling through the pandemic, but as COVID-19 shut everything down, I made it my mission to keep playing and performing. And we found a way. We've actually managed to do a lot of performing—all with safety at the forefront of our minds.

Our first stop was the world of livestreams and all of the technology that goes along with it, and we've continued a regular schedule of virtual concerts. One of our favorite ways of doing this has been to borrow empty

theaters, crank up the stage lights, and do a rockin' show to remind people what things will be like when we're back to normal. We've also partnered with a diverse group of organizations, from the Google legal team to a slightly intoxicated yacht club. I even got to be on a Facebook commercial with actor Ken Jeong.

There were plenty of missteps and near disasters early on. As regular Zoom performers, we learned the hard way that step one is reminding the audience to mute themselves (during one memorable 45minute show, the Zoom host kept clearing his throat and disabling our audio). Another early Zoom show found us working with an absent-minded host who forgot to be home for the virtual concert. We therefore serenaded a grocery store from her phone while she finished her shopping.

But livestreams don't feed an artist's soul, and our first attempt to get back out in the world resulted in a crazy viral video. I had contacted the Oakland Zoo after reading an article about the animals getting bored without the regular interaction with people. A small, mobile version of the band traveled over to the zoo, and the keepers led us on a veritable safari as we attempted to entertain a diverse selection of animals throughout the zoo. Many of the animals were harsh critics-an elephant shook his head, turned his back, and walked away; a tortoise turned around and gently lowered himself into a mud puddle; and the goats were only interested in snacks. While playing for the petting zoo, I felt a little awkward using a horsehair bow.

One of our last stops, however, brought us to a slightly molting green Amazon parrot named Brock, short for Broccoli. As we began to play, the parrot began singing an E flat. Our guitarist quickly called a blues jam in E flat, and I began trading fours with an actual parrot. Google "Dirty Cello and parrot" to see the local news coverage on this amazing new work.

As restrictions eased, I began to search out COVID-safe performance venues that were outdoors, could ensure mask wearing and social distancing, and wanted live music. This led to a whirlwind of bizarre adventures. First, the cul-de-sac concert tour. My guitarist husband and I built a large mobile stage that tows behind a truck and unfolds like a transformer to reveal lights and a sound system. We've dragged this creation all over the West Coast. For other gigs, we looked to ranches, farms, and other places that could do socially distant hay-bale seating. This series took us to two completely unrelated ranches that raise bison, and an apple orchard where an angry neighbor called the local sheriff over the concert. The sheriff arrived mid-set, took one look at the extensive safety procedures in place, and left us with her blessing to continue.

Our most exciting and unusual COVID-19 concert took us to another place known for sunshine, the outdoors, and lots of distance—a nudist resort. The bands' clothes were kept firmly in place, but we played a socially distant show for a dancing, maskwearing (and only mask-wearing) audience. Right before the downbeat, I reminded the band of the old adage that if you feel nervous, imagine the audience naked. In this case, not a stretch of the imagination. We also sold a surprising number of Dirty Cello T-shirts.

As things start to look a little brighter from our San Francisco-area home, with a potential end to the lockdown in sight, it's been interesting to reflect on some of the lessons I've learned from this experience. Leading a cello-fronted band that plays everything but classical music has always required creative thinking, and during

this weird time, it's been one of my guiding principles. I'm happy to say that this improvisational outlook has allowed me to keep paying my band.

I've also learned how deeply important live music is for many people. As our audience sizes dropped from hundreds to under 15 sometimes, there was no less value in working hard to put smiles on their faces. I was reminded that size of an audience is less important than the happiness music can bring.

No matter where this pandemic leads us as a society, I hope to keep pushing the value of live music and performing as much as I can. I've had very few regrets during the pandemic and made lots of great memories. Perhaps one of the only regrets from all these bizarre concerts was our second show at the Oakland Zoo, when NBC asked us to perform again with Brock the parrot.

On that day it was obvious that Brock had decided to pursue a solo career when he chose not to sing with my band a second time.



Appreciating the string music of Philip Glass

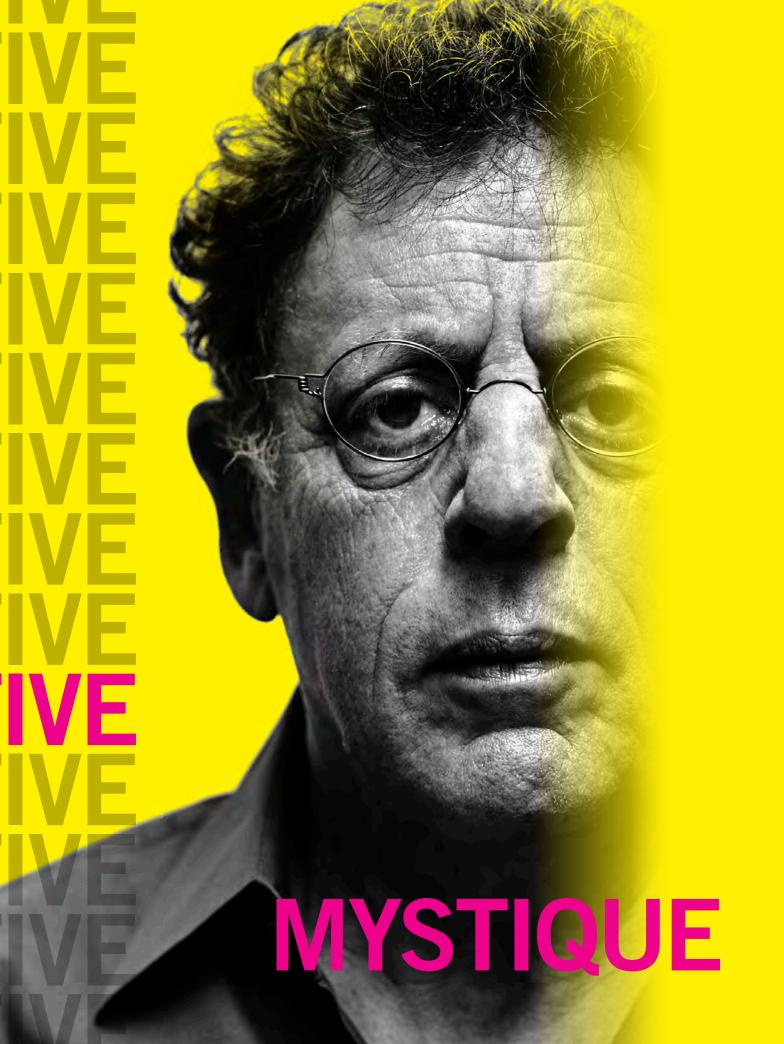
By Brian Wise

or conservatory-trained string players who came of age in the 1980s and '90s, a new score from Philip Glass could be met with a wary eye. Sure, he cast a bewigged violinist as the title character in his landmark 1976 opera Einstein on the Beach. And one of the earliest pieces in his trademark minimalist style was the 1966 String Quartet No. 1—the first of eight quartets to date. But orchestral musicians in particular bemoaned—even outright protested—being assigned to play Glass' churning, oscillating patterns, while singers, keyboardists, and screened films often seemed to reap the creative glory.

In the past 15 years, however, Glass has produced a spate of solo string works that has won him new converts. Most of these pieces feature traditional forms and often lyrical, reflective moods: the Sonata for Violin and Piano (2008), Violin Concerto No. 2 (2009), Partita for Solo Violin (2010-11), Pendulum for Violin and Piano (2010), and Sarabande in Common Time (2016). There are also two cello concertos, completed in 2001 and 2012, respectively, and two partitas for solo cello, from 2007 and 2010. Other works from the last decade include a Double Concerto for Violin and Cello and a Partita for Double Bass.

Even more noteworthy is how the Glass canon is being reimagined. Last summer, Chase Spruill, a San Franciscoarea violinist, cast Glass' Epilogue for Solo Violin as a musical protest over racial injustice. Another violinist, Tim Fain, has reimagined the Partita as Portals, a multimedia project with choreographer Benjamin Millepied. And the UK-based Carducci Quartet has filmed a lockdown-era arrangement of the String Quartet No. 5 with jazz-rock drummer, Cristián Tamblay.

Nicholas Cords, violist in the string quartet Brooklyn Rider, allows that Glass' music remains divisive in some quarters. "There are some string players out there who just don't touch





it," says Cords, whose own ensemble recorded the first five string quartets. "There are certainly major symphony orchestras that have never programmed a piece by Philip Glass, and he's written 12 symphonies. But on the other side, his music does seem to relate to so many other worlds and that's why it has such a hugely influential voice."

For those string players looking to take the plunge, where to begin? And what are the leading priorities when it comes to style, technique, and interpretation?

Navigating Glass' String Era

"I would advise anyone, especially with the solo works, to remember: Just because it's Philip Glass, and the 'M word'—minimalism -don't let that take you away from your own emotional investment in the piece," says Robert McDuffie, who in 2009 premiered Glass' Second Violin Concerto, The American Four Seasons (based, naturally, on

Vivaldi's Four Seasons). McDuffie remembers a time in the 1980s when it was fashionable to dismiss Glass' music as dull or simplistic. "I was an ignorant, cocky concertmaster of the Juilliard Orchestra," he says. "He was just a low-hanging fruit for us."

But McDuffie has identified a particularly soulful quality in Glass' string writing, ever since the mid-2000s. During that period, Glass was romantically linked to cellist Wendy Sutter and dedicated his Partita No. 1 for Solo Cello to her. "There was something he was going through at that time, as he was just writing this really heartfelt string music," says McDuffie. He cites the rippling slow movement of the Second Violin Concerto, likening it to the icy beauty of winter (Glass heard the same movement as summer and the two ultimately left the interpretation up to audiences).

"There's an evolution in some of his more recent works, particularly the works for solo strings," says Fain, who has toured

extensively with Glass. "It belies a shift in style toward a more linear form of storytelling in his music." The Partita for Solo Violin is loosely based on Bach's solo violin partitas, and includes two chaconnes, though Fain finds its robust expressive contours as closer to Brahms.

"I feel very strongly that one can bring an extremely wide palate of timbres, dynamics, and even flexibility to Philip's music, particularly the solo violin music that he's written in the last decade," Fain says. "Philip rarely writes dynamics below piano and above forte. But there are moments, particularly in the Chaconne No. 2, when I'm hardpressed to think of another work from the repertoire that I would be playing as fully." (Fain plans to livestream an all-Glass recital from his current home in Montana sometime later this spring.)

Glass himself began violin lessons at age six, before turning to the piano and the flute two years later. As he recalls in his 2015 memoir, Words Without Music, "for some reason the violin didn't 'take,' which is odd to imagine, given that I've written so much string music—solo, quartets, sonatas, symphonies since then." He continues, "Though I never became a decent violinist. I learned what I needed to write for the instrument. I've always worked closely with string players and feel confident now when I compose for them."

Another beneficiary of Glass' latter-day string focus is Matt Haimovitz, who premiered the Partita No. 2 for Solo Cello in 2017 (though the work was written in 2010). Like McDuffie, he was not an immediate convert, having previously gravitated to knottier works by Webern, Dutilleux, and Ligeti. But seeing the "instinctual" nature of Glass' craft won him over. He recalls how they jointly pared down parts of the sixth movement of the 35-minute partita. "There are these arpeggios that have a lot of double-stops thrown in," he says. "It was very much like a very difficult Gruetzmacher étude. As I played for him, he said, 'I wonder if I should take some of those out?' I said, 'I'm not going to complain if you do."

Glass' scores can also present a tricky roadmap for newcomers. Says Haimovitz, "When I first started playing Philip's music I would forget: 'Did I do that repeat or did I not? Did I go to the first ending or the second ending?' Now, I really appreciate it because it sort of helps me with the form."

String Quartets, 'Vulnerable and Raw'

Glass has shown a historical awareness of the string quartet, and, not unlike Beethoven or Shostakovich, has turned to the medium as a vehicle for introspection and gravitas. Several works in his catalog have been born out of film or theater music, from the Quartet No. 2 (from incidental music to a production of Beckett's Company) to a forthcoming Quartet No. 9, which began as the score to a 2019 Broadway production of *King Lear*.

"There's something very vulnerable and raw about the quartets," says Eoin Schmidt-Martin, violist of the Carducci Quartet, which has recorded the first five quartets, along with the String Sextet. Unlike more densely textured works, each player's individual parts are highly exposed and can reveal even the slightest mistake. But the Carducci has returned to parts of the cycle many times over.

"When we started performing them, some people would say 'Glass all sounds the same,' or similar things," he says. "But actually, each quartet has such an individual personality of its own." A frequent touchstone is the lush and undulating String Quartet No. 3, "Mishima," originally composed for Paul Schrader's film Mishima, about the Japanese author Yukio Mishima (the Kronos Quartet plays on the soundtrack). But the biggest challenge may be the Fifth Quartet. "You have a wider range of colors and textures and styles within it," Schmidt-Martin notes, adding that "there are some quite tricky passages in it."

Cords, of Brooklyn Rider, also admires the "Mishima" Quartet, but says the hidden gem

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There's something very vulnerable and raw about the quartets.

—Eoin Schmidt-Martin

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in the Glass catalog is the String Quartet No. 4, a 1989 score dedicated to Brian Buczak, an artist who died of AIDS. "The second movement is kind of like Glass meets Messiaen," says Cords. "It just has this sort of inexorable and timeless mystical beauty to it." He adds that each string quartet makes demands on stamina. "The endurance and the repetitive pattern that you have to get into is kind of a mantra-like."

Endurance Tests

Glass's repetition-based style has found fewer adherents in orchestral string sections. According to the notes for a 2016 CD set of Glass' symphonies, the Cleveland Orchestra's musicians hissed at the composer at the 1987 premiere of *The Light*; several other major U.S. orchestras have avoided his music entirely. Stylistic or ideological objections aside, there remain fears of repetitive strain injuries among some string players. These have been addressed by staggering passages amongst the desks (a technique that is especially common in opera pits).

Violinist Jennifer Koh remembers portraying the title character in the 2012 revival of *Einstein on the Beach*. "I was in pain all the time," she recalls, with a laugh. "I think you just have to invest in it and let yourself go with it." At some five hours in length, the opera requires the violinist to sit, motionless, on the stage apron for extended stretches before erupting into one of the five, whirlwind "Knee Plays." "You can't move at all and then suddenly you play really fast for an hour," she says. "It's not like you're walking on for a normal recital or concerto where you are going to warm up."

While Koh frequently plays a lot of "really thorny stuff" with extended techniques, she enjoys finding variety in Glass' patterns through varied bowings and colorations, as in the Sarabande in Common Time, which she premiered in 2016. "There's something really beautiful about going back to that old training," she says. "You really have to think about how to shape every single note, and how to create a whole world in one phrase."

Spruill, the California-based violinist, is expected to release the premiere recording of the Sarabande this year. It follows his 2020 video performance of the Epilogue for Solo Violin, drawn from Glass' score for the 1997 film Bent, and motivated by his intense feelings after the killing of George Floyd, and the racial justice protests that followed. "It came from months of feeling isolated and watching all of these tensions boil over due to these really historical ideas—the original sins of intolerance, injustice, and abuse," Spruill says. "I didn't have a lot of words to qualify how I was feeling."

For Glass, a composer whose music has accompanied Hollywood films, cast-ofhundreds choral works, and operas about Gandhi and Einstein, the solo violin offers a certain, poignant summation of his seven-decade-and-counting career. "It really does feel like late Philip Glass," says Spruill. "I was hoping to use my imagination, to let it feel a little dark, have a little more rub in it, and not shy away from things that feel like Philip Glass."

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Toby Hughes is on a mission to spotlight the double bass as a solo instrument

By Greg Cahill



all it love at first sight. At age nine, after watching a demonstration of Saint-Saëns' "The Elephant" from The Carnival of the Animals, British musician Toby Hughes knew he had to have a double bass. "The thing that grabbed my attention was actually its size," he recalls. "It's like wanting the biggest present at Christmas. I had to play it."

By the time Hughes had taken his grade 5 exams for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, he had mastered the Saint-Saëns piece.

"I always felt very cool carrying around such a big instrument," he says, "because you've got to be strong to do so, obviously."

He has stuck with the double bass, and "The Elephant" also has stayed with him throughout the years. "I recently recorded it with the Kanneh-Mason family for their Carnival of the Animals CD," says Hughes, 28, who joined in the pandemic safety-conscious Abbey Road recording sessions. "I recently moved from Manchester, where I had lived for the past eight years, to London. I'm looking forward to things getting back to normal, so I can see what its actually like to live here!"

Careerwise, Hughes had a lot lined up last year, before the coronavirus lockdown brought the world to a near standstill. Now, he's ready to move forward. With a charitable grant from the City Music Foundation, he has several solo concerts lined up and his debut solo album, recorded in late 2019, is set for an April 30 release. The album was recorded at Champs Hill, an estate in West Sussex administered by the Bowerman Charitable Trust and home to a concert venue and Champs Hill Records. With pianist Ben Powell, Hughes recorded Mišek's Sonata No. 2, Glière's Four Pieces, and Bottesini's Elegia. "I'll have my album launch in May at Bart's Great Hall in London, if the pandemic restrictions permit, and this will be my first solo performance in over a year.

"I am very much looking forward to it!"

So, how did Hughes choose the repertoire for his debut album? "The Glière suite is a set of four pieces I had been wanting to learn for years as a young bassist," he says. "They are tremendously beautiful and really show the bass' full capability—each work can stand alone and fits perfectly into any program. The Mišek Sonata is one of the most important sonatas we have for the bass. From its heroic themes throughout to its gorgeous second movement and challenging third, it has everything. It was actually the sonata I performed at Champs Hill where Mary Bowerman heard it and said we had to record it. The *Elegia* is possibly my favorite piece. It's the title of the album and dedicated to the memory of Corin Long, with whom I learned the piece. I would not be speaking now if it were not for him.

"I feel a sense of pride being able to play such wonderful music written specifically for my instrument, and a great sense of responsibility to bring this music to as many people as possible. Every time I play, people say they have never heard of most of the pieces, and often of the composers themselves."



WHAT TOBY HUGHES PLAYS

"I now play a fantastic Derek High bass that I had built back in 2019," Hughes says, "and before that I played my Paul Bryant bass that was built in 2001 that I still love—I owe a lot to that instrument. My Derek High bass has an extremely rich and sonorous tone that is very versatile. I currently play using a Brian Tunnicliffe German bow that is light and nimble, but with great sostenuto capabilities. For strings, I use a mix of Pirastro Flexocor Deluxe on the top two strings and Thomastik-Infeld Belcanto for the bottom two."

ughes, whose first Wigmore Hall performance in 2017 as part of the Tillett Trust's Young Artist Platform (now Tillett Debut scheme) drew rave reviews, has worked tirelessly to build a career as a soloist. "I think the reason I found the response so encouraging that night was that you don't get many double-bass recitals happening that often, especially in Wigmore Hall," he says. "It showed me that there are people keen to hear more of the double bass and the repertoire it has to offer."

The first bass teacher to have a major impact on Hughes was the late Corin Long, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's principal double bassist who died in 2007 in a diving accident. "His passion for life and music was enormously inspiring," Hughes says. "He helped me learn the pieces I wanted to play and always encouraged me to challenge myself. I then learned with the brilliant Graham Mitchell, who took my playing to the next level and sent me off to study with the world-renowned Božo Paradžik. Under his guidance, I developed a bulletproof technique and mastered repertoire that I still play today. I then returned to the UK and studied with Jiří Hudec until 2016; he helped me shape my own unique musical style."

Still, convincing people that the double bass is a must-hear solo instrument with a lot to offer in terms of a unique sound and a rich, diverse repertoire has proved challenging, despite the fair amount of classical repertoire for the instrument. "I enjoy performing Romantic and post-Romantic works, and have found many contemporary pieces I love performing," he says. "The most successful way I have found to face that challenge is to apply for trusts, such as the Musicians' Company and City Music Foundation, and also participating in competitions. Many of them have relationships with venues and promoters and with their reputation they can encourage promoters to give me an opportunity to perform."

Hughes also is commissioning new works—he recently premiered a piece written by Leo Geyer on the Musicians' Company YouTube channel. "I am in talks with Geyer to expand on the concept we came up with for his latest piece for bass that involves using a loop pedal," he says. "The

result was amazing, and we hope to build on the idea in the future."

He also performs in small chamber ensembles and is a full-time member of the 12 Ensemble, a conductorless string group that performs new music throughout Europe. But it is his mission as a solo artist that drives him. "My main goal is to bring the solo double bass to as many audiences as possible," Hughes says. "I hope that by doing so it will encourage more venues to consider the bass as a viable solo instrument, and expose the instrument to more potential young players. In terms of what I hope to achieve artistically, I truly love performing and hope I can pursue a career where I can explore and commission more solo repertoire and concertos for the bass in a concert environment.

"You'll always run into people, as I have, telling you that this or that is not possible and a solo career isn't a feasible option. We need as many aspiring young bassists to achieve as much as they can, to help bring the bass out of the shadows and into the spotlight."











A BEACON OF HOPE

The Chicago Sinfonietta serves as a model in the classical-music industry's elusive quest for diversity

By Thomas May

rom its very inception, the Chicago Sinfonietta was well ahead of the curve. Its longstanding commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion predates by a generation the present cultural moment's demand for social justice.

"I first came to Chicago Sinfonietta as an admirer from afar," says Mei-Ann Chen, the organization's music director since 2011. It was a sense of adventurous programming that initially captivated her, the Taiwan-

born conductor recalls during a recent phone interview.

Chen is referring to a 2006 New York Times article about a concert that premiered David N. Baker's Concertino for Cellular Phones and Symphony Orchestra. "I thought to myself, that really is brave! Little did I know that I would later find myself on the podium guest-conducting the Chicago Sinfonietta in a concert of music from East and West."

When she was serving as assistant conductor with the Baltimore Symphony, Chen says she regularly consulted the Sinfonietta's "African Heritage Symphonic Series" recordings (Cedille) led by the ensemble's founder, Paul Freeman; she regarded them as the authoritative source when searching for African American repertoire.

The breadth and intensity of Freeman's achievements are indeed astonishing. Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1936, Freeman set about showing how to dismantle the pernicious effects of systemic racism in a field that had too long preferred to regard itself as



immune from them. His sustained commitment to supporting hitherto marginalized groups was inextricable from the conductor's drive to expand the repertoire and to enhance the conventional concert experience with bold programming.

Freeman's brave gamble was that an American orchestra guided by these principles could flourish—above all by reflecting and celebrating the diversity of the community that it serves. Despite some setbacks along the way, the Chicago Sinfonietta remains an inspiring model for classical-music ensembles that are heeding the cultural imperative to embrace inclusivity.

Freeman traced his inspiration to create the Chicago Sinfonietta back to a chance encounter at the Atlanta airport with Martin Luther King, Jr.—mere weeks before the latter's assassination in 1968. After the young conductor explained that he was in town for a guest gig with the Atlanta Symphony, he later recollected, MLK remarked: "The last bastion of elitism . . . glory hallelujah!" Chicago beckoned because of the city's vibrant diversity and the need for a mid-size orchestra to represent audiences outside the concertgoing mainstream.

The Sinfonietta, which runs on an annual budget of \$2.3 million, has achieved levels of diversity that still sound utopian within the larger context of classical music in the United States. Of the 63 regular members of the orchestra, more than 35 percent are musicians of color and more than 45 percent are women, according to figures cited by Chicago Sinfonietta management. For context, according to the latest figures from the League of American Orchestras (from 2014), the average figure nationwide for orchestra members is only 1.8 percent African American and 2.5 percent Latinx.

And it doesn't stop with the orchestra. The board, associate board, and staff overall comprise 58, 73, and 36 percent people of color, respectively. The audience averages 46 percent people of color (which can be broken down to 37 percent African American, 5 percent Latino, and 4 percent Asian). It is a diverse audience watching a diverse ensemble with diverse leadership.

Since accepting the music-director role directly from Freeman a decade ago, Chen has not only reaffirmed but expanded the original vision that inspired her predecessor, who died in 2015. "This mission to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion has been the great joy of my career," she says. "It's an honor to be involved with this wonderfully creative work that was started by Maestro Freeman."

The orchestra's season finale concert, which will be livestreamed on June 5, is the latest testament to this shared vision. Titled FUSION: Stronger, Together and spotlighting the orchestra's strings, it continues Chicago Sinfonietta's unique policy of presenting a

commissioned world premiere by a composer of color in each concert. This evening will mark the premiere of La Lección Tres by the Grammy Award-winning composer and bassist Victor Wooten.

The prominence of women composers on the program (50 percent of the bill) accentuates another aspect of the quest for diversity that Chen has made a signature of her tenure as the second music director in the Chicago Sinfonietta's history. "Freeman's last concert passing the baton to me, in 2010, consisted of all women composers," she recalls. For the ensemble's 30th anniversary, Chen led Project W, a year-long initiative promoting diversity and gender equity. (The FUSION concert will be available online for 48 hours following the virtual premiere.)

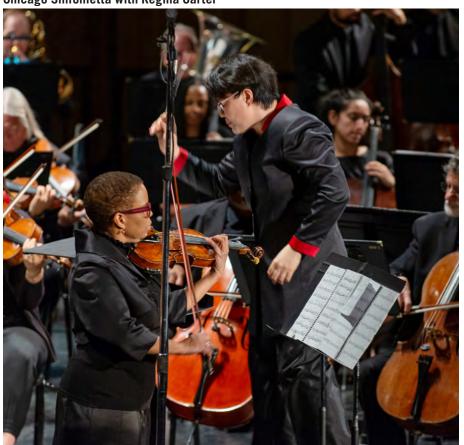
Project Inclusion

"These opportunities are still very rare," says double bassist Christian Dillingham, who began playing with the Sinfonietta in 2007, just a year after moving to Chicago upon completing graduate studies. "Although they are beginning to be addressed, these issues [of inclusivity] are still a big problem if you look at orchestras around the world. It's amazing to me to think Freeman had this vision and was able to create a sustainable orchestra."

Freeman initially handpicked Sinfonietta players, explains Chen. But in 2008, the organization launched Project Inclusion to nurture talent with a more systemic, multitiered approach. The program began with paid fellowships for promising instrumentalists in early career pursuing orchestral or chamber music; four to six fellows each year are mentored by Sinfonietta musicians, acquiring hands-on skills to navigate a life devoted to music.

It was as a Project Inclusion fellow that Dillingham began his association with the Chicago Sinfonietta. He moved on to become a regular member of the ensemble; he also performs regularly in jazz and chamber settings. "This was the first orchestra I had ever played in where I could look around and see other people who look like me," he recalls. "Prior to that, it would be maybe one or two people of color at the most besides me." Dillingham believes the program is so effective with the Sinfonietta because "it really immerses the musicians in the orchestra."

Chicago Sinfonietta with Regina Carter



Along with the musicians, "the programming has always been a key part of the Sinfonietta's inclusiveness," he adds. "This is another area where you don't see representation across the board—of composers of color but also women composers—in many other orchestras."

Like Dillingham, violinist Karla Galva first played with the Sinfonietta as a Project Inclusion fellow, joining the program when she was about 30. "The program pairs you with a mentor and gives you so many other angles to help young musicians get a footing in the field," she says, "like master classes, preparing for auditions, learning how to speak to audiences." Galva had previously been a member of Orchestra Iowa and became a regular member of the Sinfonietta beginning in the 2018-19 season; she also freelances for Broadway shows in Chicago and other events.

From her perspective, Chicago Sinfonietta "charts its own path" in comparison to traditional orchestras. There's a richness to the concert experience, she says, that is "very holistic not just for the musicians but for the audience—a holistic approach to this idea of music bringing people together. It's worked well since that is now reflected in the makeup of the audience."

"The Project Inclusion Freeman Fellowship program was designed to bridge the gap between obtaining a music degree from a conservatory or other institution and a professional career," Chen explains. A fellowship in administration was added to foster the careers of decision-makers behind the scenes who have a powerful impact on the shape and ethos of an orchestra. To honor Freeman, and "as a way for me to give back," in 2013 Chen introduced the Project Inclusion Freeman Fellowship for conductors.

According to a 2016 report from the League of American Orchestras, the complete tally of Sinfonietta project fellows outnumbers all other similar fellowship programs in the United States combined.

Looking ahead to the increasingly digital future, Blake-Anthony Johnson-in his inaugural season as the Chicago Sinfonietta's CEO—has announced plans for a large-scale video series that intends to boldly expand Project Inclusion's scope. Scheduled to



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launch in June, the new program involves a series of short videos through which each fellow in the instrumental program will learn to use the medium to enhance their careers. Johnson-who, like his colleague Chen (a trained violinist), began his career as a string player—played cello at the New World Symphony and last year became the first Black executive to helm an American orchestra with national stature.

Programming Diversity

But diversity among the orchestra members is only one of several areas where Chicago Sinfonietta consistently promotes its core mission. The season finale program lined up for June underscores the priority given to diversity in programming. Chen speaks of the importance of offering a selection of works that allow audiences to create meaningful narratives for themselves. "We thought it would be great to include some of our favorite composers to honor their particular genres and cultures."

Along with the world premiere of Victor Wooten's La Lección Tres, the program includes a suite from Astor Piazzolla's tango opera Maria de Buenos Aires, and the work of two female composers: Gabriel Lena Frank's Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout for String Orchestra and Valerie Coleman's Suite: Portraits of Josephine, inspired by the paradoxes of entertainer and activist Josephine Baker's life. All of these are living composers save Piazzolla (whose 100th anniversary is celebrated this year).

Chen attributes her success at attracting audiences with so much contemporary fare to the sense of authenticity listeners recognize when they get to know these composers. Accessibility is, at its heart, about relationships. "Take Gabriela Lena Frank. She embodies diversity in her own mix of Peruvian Chinese and Lithuanian Jewish heritage, and her music reflects all these influences."

Even more, the program's flavorful combination of pieces celebrates "the principle of variety," Chen says. "It lets people know that classical music can be fun." The sense of liberating enjoyment isn't limited to audiences. From the musicians' point of view, as Galva expresses it, being part of the Sinfonietta entails being able "to do things you wouldn't normally get to experience with a symphony orchestra"—such as a "battle of the bands"

Victor Wooten plays The Bass Whisperer, written in collaboration with Conni Ellisor.



concert with the underground marching band Mucca Pazza or a puppet show concert.

That sense of fun extends to the ways music gets talked about. During the pandemic livestreams, Chen has explored other ways to engage audiences by experimenting with the notion of "real time" program notes, communicating interesting points to consider via a running commentary bar. "We're so used to the tradition of the program book; I think this is the next nut for orchestras to crack."

In addition to its series of commissions. the Chicago Sinfonietta has begun to sponsor a composer residency. Chen points out that the new program is intended to forge closer relationships with composers of color and at the same time to explore new channels of communication with audiences in an effort to offset the pandemic-related cancellations of so many new works.

The Sinfonietta has also launched an artist residency: composer Kathryn Bostic served in this role during the 2020-21 season. Her Portrait of a Peaceful Warrior was premiered last October in the opening program of the season's online concert series. Bostic describes the brief piece as "my tribute to the common ground we all experience as community, coming together especially in this time of chaos and turbulence."

On the topic of programming, Chen returns to the importance of forging a personal relationship with music. "The sound of the bandoneon makes me forget the reality of the world," she says. "Piazzolla's music helped me survive the pandemic and meant a great deal to me personally." But the Argentine tango master, with his fluid boundaries between cultures and aesthetic expectations, also embodies a core value that goes hand in hand with diversity: the power of authenticity.

Chen refers to Piazzolla's period of study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris: "She said to him: 'Why are you trying to sound like we do in Europe? Embrace your roots!' I'm so grateful to Boulanger for having said that. In our new Zoom reality, I would like to use this program as a way to say it's OK to embrace who we individually are. To allow others to interact with our own culture is so important and that is what will make our civilization even stronger out of the COVID world."

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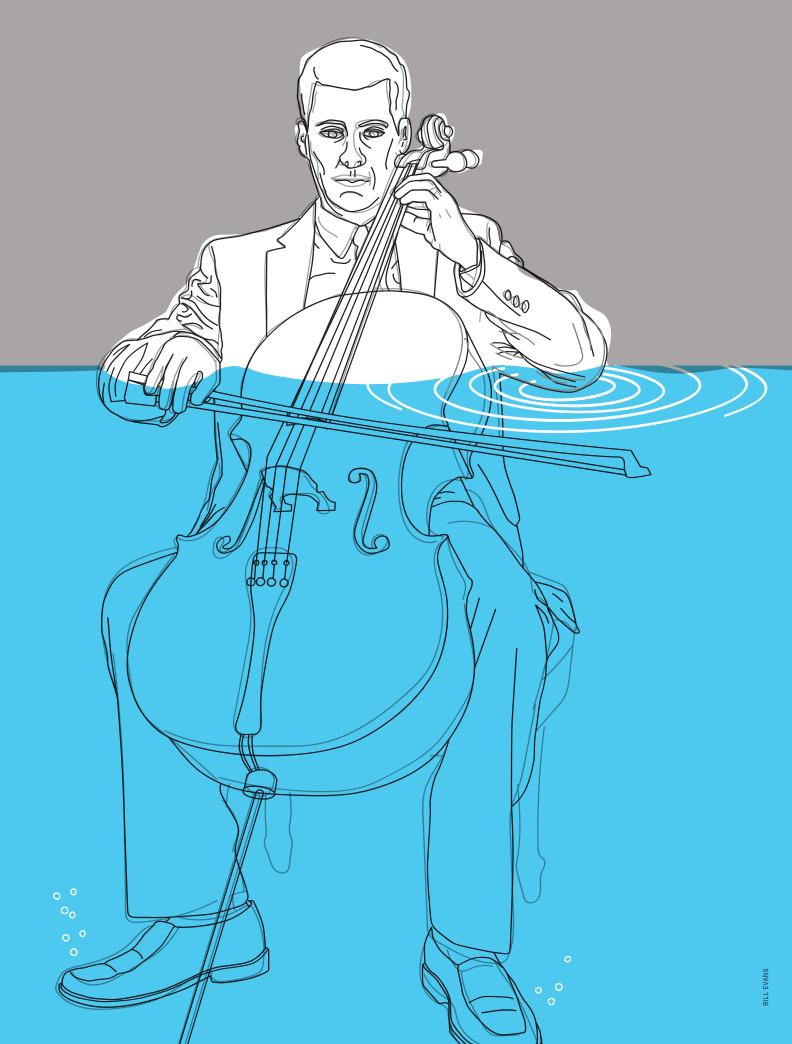


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When communicating musical ideas and cello technique, a little imagery goes a long way

BY BRIAN HODGES

hortly before my graduate auditions, my teacher, Pamela Frame at Eastman, encouraged me to think of my bow like a paintbrush in order to inspire more nuance in my interpretation of Haydn's Cello Concerto No. 2 in D major. Inviting me to think more creatively about musical expression in the Haydn was also a sneaky way of getting me to relax and to have a looser wrist and fingers in my bow hand. I likened myself to a painter, creating new depths of color and shadingwhich affected the piece, but also my technique. After all, if I wouldn't hold a paintbrush with an iron grip, neither should I hold the bow that way. This was much more successful and meaningful for me than if she had simply said, "Play it more musically, and while you're at it, relax that right hand of yours."

The use of imagery in teaching has been around for many centuries. From the earliest examples of analogies and metaphors in Classical Greek writing to parables in the Bible, teachers have used pictorial representations to communicate ideas. In the many lessons, coachings, and rehearsals I've participated in throughout my career, both as a student and professional, teachers and conductors have often used images to explain their musical ideas.

However, many of the standard treatises and method books upon which much cello pedagogy has been built are pretty straightforward in their language: simple, direct instructions on how to hold the cello, proper left-hand formation, various bow maneuvers, and intonation.

One example: In his Violoncell-Schule für den ersten Unterricht, Op. 60 (Violoncello School for Primary Instruction), published in 1839, Friedrich August Kummer wrote: "The left hand holds the instrument in a curved form. The thumb lies on the back of the neck, opposite the forefinger and middle finger, and serves a support to the whole hand . . . "

This is typical of the writing in these method books, conceived at a time when cello pedagogy was a relatively new concept, but rapidly becoming more codified. More recent cello method books have delved into a more poetic way of looking at the instrument, not as a means to supplant, but to stand alongside the classical instructional books from the past.

Phyllis Young's book, Playing the String Game, written in 1978, is a paradigm of creative teaching in its use of allegory and games to translate the basics of cello (and other stringed-instrument) technique. While mostly geared toward younger students, it is no less potent and relevant in its unabashed sense of wonder and discovery about string playing.

In her foreword, Young explains about the mini-games and activities she created for the book: "I am further convinced that the formation of good hand, arm, and body positions that prove workable for string playing can best be evolved by sampling motions required in advanced techniques . . . Though

cloaked in naive terms and often taking only a few seconds from the actual music making, these little timesavers, when incorporated with any method or music, can assume the gigantic roles of problem recognizers, predictors, and solvers. In addition, they can be uncannily effective communicators." She goes on to say, "I have frequently chosen to use words not traditionally associated with string playing. It has been my experience that students of all ages and teacher trainees respond enthusiastically to the style of language which they consider relevant."

In her activity titled "The Buoy," she instructs the player: "Place your left hand in a good playing position on any string you choose. Fill the room with imaginary water until your left elbow is slightly submerged! Let your elbow bob around like a buoy until you find the location that makes your fingers feel the most clingy." In another activity named "The Chipmunk," she asks the student if there is room for a chipmunk to walk between his or her shoulder and the neck of the cello, in order to make certain that shoulder is relaxed.

Steven Doane, professor of cello at the Eastman School of Music, is a longtime proponent of using creative language and ideas in his teaching, compiling them into a book titled Cello Ergonomics: A handbook to help develop freedom of movement, balance, and fluency at the cello (2006). In his introduction, he writes: "[These exercises] stem from my constant aim, both in teaching and practice,

to uncover the essential sound—sensation connection—to find the motion pathways that help us to release sound from the cello more effortlessly, and enable us to make connections more naturally from one musical gesture to the next."

This approach is inspired largely from his studies with the late Jane Cowan, famed cello teacher and director of the International Cello Centre in Edrom, Scotland, whom Doane says "was a walking-talking musical genius, and was infinitely creative." Her free use of language influenced his teaching style, which is full of metaphors, analogies, and pictorial representations. (In a master class, he once had me imagine a couple of chubby elves sitting at the tip of my bow in order to achieve more sound.)

"I loved creative writing and storytelling growing up, so maybe that's where the propensity comes from," he says. "I love imagery because I love language. A lot of imagery in lessons comes unplanned. I use it because it has the potential to create that 'aha' moment with a student, to see if it triggers a reaction in them."

Exercises like "The Owl" (finding the horizontal axis of movement in the torso) or "The Inchworm" (to develop flexibility, strength, and independence in thumb position) are legendary Doane activities that loosen up the body and mind to get the player away from thinking so hard about playing the cello and into a more free and natural state of playing. In his mind, he says, "Imagery is incredibly helpful psychologically in helping us relax and to transcend any sense of struggle in mastering a particular skill." Where direct language can force the issue to a certain degree, creative language and visuals can approach the issue from a non-

FURTHER READING

CELLO ERGONOMICS by Steven Doane (Bartholomew Music Publications, London, 2006)

THE FIRST HOUR by Amit Peled (CTM Classics, Maryland, 2018)

PLAYING THE STRING GAME by Phyllis Young (Shar Publications, Ann Arbor, 1978)



threatening viewpoint. He says that coming up with imagery in teaching, "is as much play as anything else. It adds a real sense of fun and a really enjoyable sense of discovery in teaching that I never tire of."

His students can attest to this, as many of them continue to use and pass down his unique approach to teaching the cello. Elisabeth Reed, who earned her master's degree under Doane and is currently teacher of Baroque cello and viola da gamba at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, states that Doane's approach helped form the cornerstone of her teaching. She says, "He inspires awareness in the lesson with the quality of his attention. He's so interested in what's going on with you at the cello that it raises your own level of attention and interest. The imagery he uses particularly affects the physical aspects of playing the cello."

This is something that Reed strives to bring to her own teaching, particularly through her work with the Feldenkrais Method. She likes to use imagery in a way that "evokes the quality of a movement; it's not about storytelling so much as it is about creating a specific kinesthetic sense in the body."

Another area in which Reed uses imagery to great effect is her work in early music. Because the music from earlier time periods is based so much on dance and involves far less stabilizing equipment (no chin rests, endpins, etc.), she says, "there are many more moving parts. In Baroque music in particular, there is an emphasis on affect—and the primary emotion or feeling being expressed in the music. I'm interested in what you need to do physically to create that effect. Where is the musical gesture initiated in your body? How are the musical gesture and the physical gesture related? I work specifically with imagery by helping people visualize different parts of themselves (the sit bones, the spine, the ribs, the shoulder blades) in order to build a clearer internal self-image, which they can then access to express themselves musically."

A more recent example of a cello method book based on imagery is Amit Peled's The First Hour: A Cellist's Daily Technical Regimen (2018). Peled, who is professor of cello at the Peabody

Institute, incorporates what he calls "symbolic images" to instigate the correct and proper movements in cello playing. In his book, he states, "An important component of my teaching is the use of a system of images that convey the essential elements of advanced cello technique." He explains that these "cello emojis" are an effective means to communicate fundamentals of cello technique.

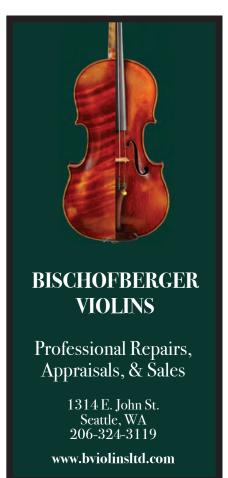
The musical examples throughout are technical exercises and are accompanied by simple images, the emojis, such as a cobra or a bridge. Each emoji corresponds with a different technical meaning, and when the player sees the image, it is designed to trigger the correct motion and physical feeling. For instance, when the player sees the strawberry emoji, he or she is supposed to reflect on the sensation of holding a strawberry between the thumb and second finger, instantly releasing tension in the hand.

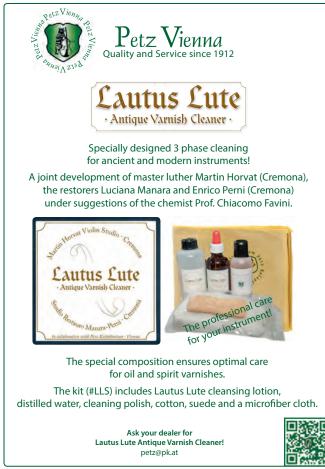
Peled says he was inspired to come up with this concept as it stemmed from his experiences with music and sports. In both, he was looking for a simpler way to understand his physical approach in order to be more effective and successful.

He says his approach is to bring the cello into the player's world rather than the player adjusting to the cello—something that most of us do. He's been developing this method of using imagery to teach for many years in order "for students to simplify and to better understand the physical sensations of playing the cello." He's always telling his students that they need to "learn to express emotions at the cello with the right motion. I developed the emoji system as a way to do that."

Peled's method has expanded since the onset of the pandemic last year. He created an online course in multiple parts based on his cello-emojis concept. It now includes participants from all over the world, something he never would have imagined in pre-pandemic times. He says while there are many accomplishments in his long, distinguished career, this online course ranks among the top projects he is most proud of, as it has opened doors to a whole new crop of students who are learning to approach the cello creatively and naturally. Peled says these concepts aren't just for the cello either; he recently had an oboist from Turkey join the online class and it helped tremendously.

Imagery can lead to both musical thoughts as well as revealing truths about the physical way we approach the instrument. While a more direct, cut-and-dried approach certainly has its place and can produce solid results, thinking creatively and metaphorically can yield a deeper and more sustainable approach to one's technique at the instrument. Teachers like Jane Cowan, Phyllis Young, Steven Doane, Elisabeth Reed, and Amit Peled are but a handful of pedagogues who are taking creative approaches to teaching—and playing—the cello, inspiring future generations to unleash their imaginations as well. May we all be so inspired.









Rachel Podger and Christopher Glynn

olfgang Amadeus Mozart loved to play billiards. The story goes that as he set up his next shot, he was composing his next piece of music. He enjoyed mathematics too, scribbling equations in the margins of his compositions. There is even a piece attributed to him in which a roll of the dice determines what will happen next.

This agile playfulness lines up nicely with our conception of Mozart as a person. We have a very different take on Mozart the composer, imagining him to be a kind of divinely inspired genius, committing his flawless works to paper. From his mind to the manuscript.

But what if this daunting image of perfectionism is wrong? What if there was an element of randomness in Mozart's compositional process? Could it be that with a change of weather, patron, or performer, some of Mozart's most famous works might have been very different-yet still unmistakably him?

That's the intriguing premise behind a recently released recording of new completions of Mozart sonata fragments, featuring period-instrument violinist Rachel Podger and keyboard player Christopher Glynn.

For this new Channel Classics disc, the person who carried on composing where Mozart left off is Timothy Jones, musicologist and deputy principal at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London. His work and this disc provide a glimpse into Mozart's working methods, challenging our notions of infallible artistic genius while, counterintuitively, confirming Mozart's talent and technical mastery.

It's fitting that Rachel Podger, the highly regarded period-instrument violinist, whose recordings of the complete Mozart sonatas with fortepiano player Gary Cooper are regarded as landmark interpretations, would be the one to take this on. It all began when Jones approached Podger one day to ask for advice on the violin writing for his fragment project. She was intrigued and the project began to develop through the RAM, where they are colleagues. The



third side of this Academy triangle is Christopher Glynn, best known for performance on the modern piano in many vocal recitals. He also plays historical keyboard, including with the prominent vocal group the Sixteen.

When I spoke, separately, with them on Zoom in mid-March, their mutual admiration came through. Jones admires Podger's Mozart sonata series, while she says of him, "He knows every note of Mozart. He just understands how Mozart works, his whole being, not just his musical mind, but also his personality. I would say that lot of people who think they know Mozart don't know the whole person. So, I think any more windows into his life are really beneficial."

imothy Jones began his project of completing Mozart fragments over ten years ago. He was preparing to write a book, Mozart and Expressive Density, when he received an irresistible challenge from a colleague. "He bet me a pint of beer that I wouldn't be able to apply all the stuff I've been writing about," says Jones. "[He said], 'If you've got some understanding of how this music is really fitting together in detail, let's see if you can synthesize it and make a completion."

Once he started, Jones found, rather like the character in the movie Sliding Doors, he had many ways to go. "I thought, OK, I'm following a particular thread of the music through in this completion, but I could equally easily imagine five different threads."

The experience was revelatory. "The music could have gone forward in a similar stylistic way, but just taken a different direction. I thought, 'Why don't I just do several completions of this to see, not so much that one is better than another, but that there are different pathways through elaborations of the material?"

Jones was also surprised by the high quality of an unfinished concerto for violin and piano. "We know from a letter that the reason Mozart didn't finish that was because the concept fell through and other things took over. I thought, well, how many more of these fragments are really





top-quality Mozart? I started exploring more and more of them. It took on a momentum of its own in the end." He adds, "I've looked at 20 of these fragments. There are about 100 of them altogether."

My ears perk up when Jones mentions a string quintet in A minor and a string quartet in E minor, tantalizing glimpses of what the composer might have done next. Jones has also turned his hand to the Requiem, which figures prominently in Amadeus and (wrongly) in the Mozart mythology about his death.

Podger says she came to the completions "with a completely open mind." Did she have any input into the pieces? "I didn't have as much impact as you might think. I was very aware that it was his baby. Also, I don't really feel like I have any place in making suggestions in that way, because I'm not a Mozart scholar. But there were a few times where I played a different accidental and I did query a few things, little passing notes and so on. And then he said, 'Oh yeah, you're right. I think that needs to change."

The Fantasia in C minor fragment, the disc's centerpiece, is bracketed by two completions each of three different sonata fragments.

The B-flat sonata fragment that opens the disc dates from around Mozart's

arrival in Vienna in 1781. "In a letter to his father, Mozart says this was 'a sonata I wrote for myself with Antonio Brunetti playing the violin," Jones says. "I think you can tell he is writing it for himself because the piano writing is more technically challenging than any of the piano concertos, and the violin, although it has some melodic material, is there to support the virtuosic kind of piano writing."

The G major fragment, dating from 1789, is "very expressive and operatic," says Podger. Adds Jones, "Mozart had this genius for being able to juxtapose material in the most unexpected ways but make it work. Part of that is the fact that the violin and the piano are much more equal partners than they were in the earlier sonatas." The second completion of the G major is quite a tour de force for Glynn. "It's really virtuosic, actually!" he says. "The other [completion] is more conversational, more subtle and interesting."

The disc's centerpiece is the Fantasia in C minor, well known as a solo piano work, although a violin part was visible in the manuscript. "I just had to find my role," says Podger of the added violin part. "And my role would change from bar to bar. So

sometimes I was like the cellist doing a bit of bass. Sometimes I was the conversational partner. Sometimes I was preempting, agreeing, questioning all of those things. In any Mozart, but especially in such a kind of free fantasy, that was tricky to find."

The UK's pandemic lockdown wreaked havoc on the recording preparation. "The blueprint would be that you perform it a thousand times before you record it, but in a pandemic situation that's not really possible," says Podger. She and Glynn were able to perform some of the fragments at Kings Place in London in November, the night before the second lockdown. "It was a special vibe," Podger recalls. "People felt like they were about to go back to prison. It felt very significant, very moving somehow."

Two weeks later, the two performers were at a south London church, in a carefully socially distanced recording session with a piano tuner, sound engineer, and producer. Podger describes her relief at performing. "When it's winter and it's cold, you just cannot imagine it to be warm. How could it ever be summer again? Then again, in summer, when everything is glorious and colorful and free, you're thinking, Oh, how could I have felt so dismal then?"

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hat insights has Jones gained from his work on Mozart's fragments? "The first thing I've learned is that just because these pieces weren't finished doesn't mean that he wasn't learning an awful lot from doing them and that they didn't have a really big effect on the way he was developing. So often I find

that he's taking more risks at the start of some of these unfinished pieces than he did in the finished works. And maybe one of the reasons he put them aside was that he just needed to think through the implications.

"Another constant is that [the pieces] seem to be ahead of their time. Part of me was thinking what would have happened if Mozart had recovered and didn't die in

December 1791. He'd have finished the Requiem by March 1792. Presumably he'd have gone back to these string quintets and sonatas at some point in the next few years. So, part of this project is a counterfactual history of what Mozart might have done had he lived into the mid 1790s. And my hunch is that it was turning into what we would recognize as late Schubert."

Jones continues, "He's becoming more and more innovative and bolder. He does stuff in that late music with an economy and confidence that you really see, even in those amazing masterworks at the middle of the decade. No doubt at all, he was getting more and more original and technically adept from what was already at a high level."

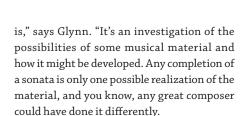
"I think what the project does is go to the heart of what a sonata is, what a sonata form

> " I just had And my role would change

-Rachel Podger

to find my role. from bar to bar.

"



"It's totally fascinating, because what Jones has done is not imitating Mozart, it's like channeling Mozart. We easily forget that he was a great composer, but he was a working composer and he had to please. He had to be aware of different audiences and the different nuances he needed to bring. He wasn't totally free, you know. He had to earn a living."

You can see other Mozart-Jones completions at ram.ac.uk.

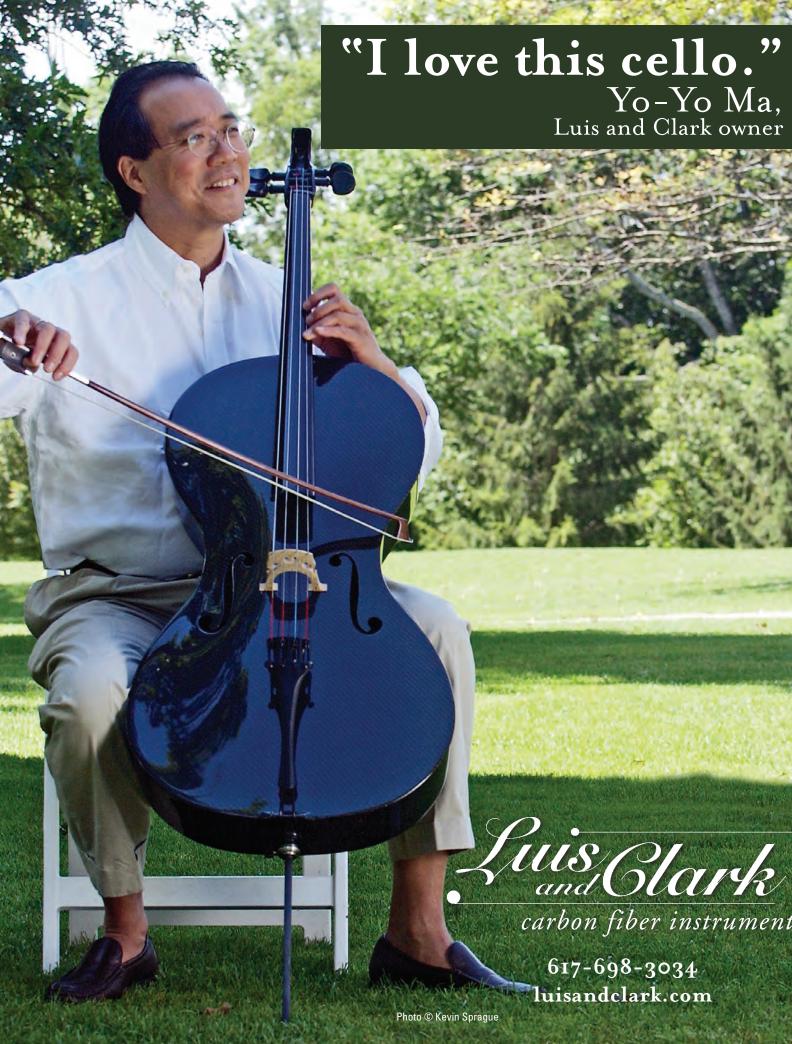


WHAT THEY PLAY

For the Mozart fragment recording and many others, Podger played her Antonio Pazarini violin, (Genoa, 1739). "I've got a slightly longer fingerboard than a Baroque fingerboard so that I can play later music; it's a bit of a transitional setup with a Baroque-style neck."

Podger is a big fan of gut strings. "You can actually push the sound, or maybe 'push' is the wrong word, but you can weight your bow in a certain way that really inflects so many different shapes and subtle differences that you don't get with a wound string." She used a Classical-era bow by modern maker Pieter Affourtit.

Glynn played on a fortepiano from the RAM that is a copy of an 1820s Conrad Graf. "It's slightly late to the period, but it's all part of that silvery Viennese soundworld."





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CONTEMPORARY INSTRUMENTS&BOWS



Born of Redwood, Pinesap, and Cow Tendons

Andrew Carruthers' Redwood Violin Project takes the 'Go Local' mindset to self-challenging extremes

By David Templeton

ive years ago, violinmaker Andrew Carruthers had an idea. "Inspired by the 'Go Local' movement, which I really believe in, the initial idea was to build a violin out of materials from within in a 25-mile radius of my home," he says.

That he currently lives and works in Sonoma County, in Northern California, means that those "materials" would possibly include California redwood, better known for its use in backyard fences and living room furniture than in the making of violins, cellos, and violas.

"When people first started making violins 400 years ago, they would never have dreamed of using redwood, because, of course,

they were making violins on the other side of the globe," admits Carruthers. "And the people who did know about redwood didn't know about violins."

The notion of creating such a violin was exciting, inspiring, and necessarily timeconsuming. Because of the latter, Carruthers would probably never have attempted it were it not for the spare time handed to him by the coronavirus pandemic and its ensuing slowdowns in the violin-making industry.

"In many ways," he says, "it was the pandemic that allowed this thing to happen, because my business had slowed down quite a bit."

Following months of research and assembling of materials through much of 2020—"I collected everything myself, short of actually chopping down trees with an ax," he says—Carruthers officially closed his shop in January to devote himself full-time to crafting his locally made violin, though he has been continuing to sell instruments already hanging on the rack. In addition to building the new violin, he decided to produce short videos documenting every major step in the process, requiring him to learn the art of filmmaking along with a number of other new skills.

But with the Redwood Violin Project, as the undertaking has come to be known, everything begins with Carruthers' understanding of the nature of redwood. "Redwood has a very high thickness-to-weight ratio," he explains. "The top of the violin needs to be strong enough to resist the forces from the strings, but it can't be heavy. It has to be light so that just a small amount of energy from the strings will start it vibrating. That's the main characteristic you look for in a top wood. Redwood possibly has a better thickness-to-weight ratio than spruce, which is what I'd normally use."

Swapping in different kinds of wood is something Carruthers is more than familiar with, adding that it's a good way to learn and to test one's knowledge and skills. "I've done a lot of experimenting with different kinds of wood, mainly with making violas and cellos, not so much with violins," he says. "Different woods have different tonal implications. It's a test of your understanding of

> violin making, because in order to make a good substitution you have to understand how that original wood functions, what qualities are the most important about it.

> "It's a bit like baking," he continues. "If you are out of flour, you need to understand what chemical function it serves if you try to substitute something else. Or you are likely to say, 'Well, flour is a white powder, and sugar is a white powder, so it's probably more-or-less the same thing as flour.' That's a good way to create an unsuccessful cake."

> Redwood, of course, was only one ingredient in a very demanding recipe. While local redwood groves provided the top plate of the

instrument, the head, neck, ribs, and back would be made of local Gravenstein applewood. As for the tailpiece, chinrest, fingerboard, and other fittings, they would be carved from the twisty, reddish wood of manzanita trees from nearby mountainsides.

Nearby, of course, being the critical distinction.

Unlike Carruthers—who was born in Oxfordshire, England, and moved to Santa Rosa after stints in Berkeley, Chicago, and Tacoma—every single bit of the Redwood Violin would have to originate in Sonoma County (other than the strings, mainly because he didn't want to "deal with smelting"). And those bits would include more than just wood. Also locally sourced would be the glue that holds the instrument together, in this case not

I collected everything myself, short of actually chopping down trees with an ax.









Talking with Gabe Naredo, who donated the sheep's intestine

Applying the homemade glue to the violin

just made locally, but made, from scratch, by Carruthers—from cow-ankle tendons. Then there's the pinesap-based turpentine used in the varnishing process, and actual sheep intestines (40-feet worth) used to make the tailgut that anchors a violin's tailpin to the tailpiece.

"I made that too," he says. "It was an interesting process."

It's one thing to carve a violin from unconventional woods, but boiling down the extremities of demised bovines and untangling knots of intestines displays a level of commitment to going local that many would give an understandable and relieved pass. For Carruthers, though, it was something he was somewhat looking forward to, having once encountered someone who tried something similar, but with a twist.

"I heard about someone who was going to get kicked out of violin-making school, when I was in school myself, because he was a vegetarian and didn't want to make animal glue," recalls Carruthers, who studied his craft at the Welsh School of Violin Making and Repair, near Cardiff. "They wouldn't let him use synthetic glue, and he was going to be expelled. So he started making his own glue out of roadkill, because the animals were already dead. I don't know if he's still a maker, but for a while there was an ad with his name on it in the back of a magazine saying that no animals were 'intentionally' harmed to make his violins."

n early March, when this conversation took place, Carruthers was working seven days a week to complete the violin in time for a March 2021 concert presented by the Young People's Chamber Orchestra, a program supported by the Santa Rosa Symphony Institute for Music Education. The Carruthers Redwood Violin was to make its debut with Concertina for Violin and Strings, an original composition by Gwendolyn Thalia Przyjazna, a high-school junior from nearby Cotati, California.

Such a debut for a new violin—involving scores of musicians, educators, staff, and the audience who will view the performance virtually—is a clear demonstration of how Carruthers' "Made in Sonoma County" mission has inspired people across his community. Many of those have already joined in on the craft side of the project in a number of ways.

In adherence to the stipulations Carruthers set for himself, his collaborators included only other Sonoma County craftspeople. One is Sebastopol wood turner Kalia Kliban, who supplied the pegs and endpin. Mark Tindley and Greg Zall, acclaimed woodworkers from Petaluma, took on the job of carving an intricate, ornamental tiger salamander design for the violin. This adds another local touch, as the California tiger salamander is an endangered resident of Sonoma County's grassland pools and underground burrows.

One of the trickier DIY elements of the violin is the making of the turpentine.

Talking with Shawna DeGrange, who donated horsehair to polish the tailgut











Making the tailgut from sheep's intestine

The finished salamander inlay by Mark Tindley and Greg Zall

"I thought that making my own turpentine was going to be easy, so I've left it to the end, and it's giving me the most trouble, it turns out," Carruthers says. "The way I'm making it is that I've collected pinesap, which exudes from pines when they are damaged. For the tree, the sap is kind of like blood, and the turpentine in it is a bit like an insecticide that trees use to protect themselves."

To collect the turpentine, one has to heat up the sap to break it down into various byproducts, and then capture the little bit of turpentine that is produced through steam distillation. "It's also fairly volatile, so if you warm it up, it off-gasses fairly easily," he says, noting that turpentine is a hazardous material if breathed or ingested in large quantities. "In the old days, they used to take a bit of sheep's fleece and put that on top of a simmering pot," he says, allowing that he also learned of that practice at school as well, but never saw it demonstrated. "The turpentine collects into the fleece, and then you wring it out," he

explains. "So I wanted to try that, and I did. But sadly, I couldn't make it work."

As he draws closer to perfecting his turpentine-making proficiency, and to completing the violin itself, Carruthers says, "Actually, 200 or 300 years ago, a lot of these steps would have been done by the violin makers themselves. Nothing I'm doing it particularly new. It's just new to me."

As Carruthers comes close to the moment when he strings the Redwood Violin for the first time and witnesses its sound and tone at the hands of violinist Aedan Seaver—YPCO's co-concertmaster and the player soloing in the instrument's debut piece—he admits he's excited, and perhaps a little nervous, his feelings enhanced by how public he's made the entire process through those videos and a quarterly newsletter.

"I really can't wait to hear how it sounds," he says. "And I'm not alone. Because of how many people have been following this project, and have become involved in it, there are people all around the world—South Africa, Switzerland, Scotland—waiting to see how this all turns out." After its debut, the community will have plenty of further opportunities to hear the Redwood Violin, as it will be made available to local artists to borrow for performances and recordings.

Asked if he's looking forward to going back to making instruments out of traditional materials, Carruthers says, "I am, largely because I'm looking forward to bringing along some of the things I've learned through all of this. Every time you set yourself up with a complicated exercise like building a redwood violin, or sourcing all local materials, it changes all of your preconceptions, and you end up learning something."

And would he do it again?

"Well, I am a violin maker," he says, with a warm laugh. "If someone orders something, I'm always game to make it."

Videos showing the steps of making the Redwood Violin can be seen at AndrewCarruthers.com.



Trade Terminology

A quick guide to lutherie affiliations, awards, and education By Emily Wright

hen looking for a new instrument or bow, a number of musicians turn to contemporary violin makers—forgoing the cachet of ancient provenance for the pleasure of knowing the craftsperson who created their musical tools. If you are such a player, you may have noticed that many luthiers distinguish themselves within the market by detailing competition wins, membership in trade associations, and certificates from prestigious schools. While Concours Etienne Vatelot and

Entente Internationale des Maitres Luthiers et Archetiers d'Art sound exotic and impressive, it can be overwhelming to attach the right significance to titles and competition results. Here's a primer describing some of the relevant bonafides you might run into the next time you're exploring the works of modern makers.

ASSOCIATIONS

One of the more common forms of quality assurance a luthier can offer is proof of membership in a professional trade association. The Violin Society of America (VSA), for example, is a well-established organization likely to appear on the resume of many luthiers. It was founded in 1973 and is open to anyone who would like to be a member. Its mission is the general promotion of all things lutherie, and is purposefully broad to encour-

age makers and musicians of all levels to participate in the organization. The VSA's roughly 1,200 members are eligible to enter the competition held at its eponymous convention each year. While the association isn't exclusive, winners of its medals are generally recognized as excellent makers, and there is significant prestige associated with taking home any of their prizes.

The American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM) was created to "... provide the musical community with a standard of work and expertise upon which they could depend." As such, membership is reserved for established professionals aged 30 or older with nine or more years of experience. Multiple letters of recommendation—from members already admitted to the federation—must be submitted on behalf of a candidate. Applicants should be full-time makers or restorers, and if there is any question as to their credentials, they are subject to the Journeyman's Examination, which is no mean feat to pass. The federation votes on new members every two years. Suffice to say, this is a serious organization with extraordinary standards.

Entente Internationale des Maitres Luthiers et

Archetiers d'Art (EILA) was founded in 1950 as a Europe-wide association of string craftsmen. Initially conceived as a postwar Stradivari exhibition, the idea morphed into something larger as meetings between European makers kept turning into conversations about the need for a stronger network and sense of fraternity as nations and economies rebuilt. Its mission is expansive: lobbying for improved working conditions, creating opportunities to bring more people into the trade, and to "... promote a revival in the art of violin and bow making."

Membership has two tracks. Full members are master craftspeople over the age of 35 who have completed educational courses from institutions of international repute or an apprenticeship under another master and are at least five years post-completion of this course of education. "Constant and direct con-

tact with musicians" is a further stipulation to separate enthusiastic hobbyists from professionals whose work stands up to the test of performance at a high level. Associate membership requirements are only slightly less stringent, with a minimum age of 30 and full-time employment by an EILA member in good standing a must.

"

Opinions on competitions are astonishingly varied, and it would be impossible to determine which would be considered the most prestigious.

COMPETITIONS

Opinions on competitions are astonishingly varied, and it would be impossible to determine which, if any, of the following would be considered the most prestigious. However, a win



VMSA student Yu En Hsu

at any of them does make a positive statement about the skill of the maker.

The VSA Competition is the largest, owing to its comparatively robust membership. It awards the following medals: double gold, gold, silver for tone, silver for workmanship, certificate of merit for tone, and certificate of merit for workmanship. If a maker has won three or more gold medals, he or she is deemed hors concours (French for standout), and is ineligible for future competitions. To provide a sense of scale, as of the 2019 results, the VSA had awarded nearly 1,600 total awards in 23 competitions held.

The city of Cremona holds the **Concorso** Triennale Internazionale Strumenti Ad Arco Antonio Stradivari, colloquially known as the Olympics of violin making, every three years. Instruments are judged by master luthiers and musicians, and must have been completed within the last three years. Instruments must not have been aged artificially in any way, nor given an advantage by being "played in" for a long period. This is a competition that favors traditional sound and craftsmanship, from the place where the name Stradivari casts an especially long shadow.

The Mittenwald Violin Making Competition is similar to Cremona's, with a few key differences: examples must have been completed within two years of the submission date, and bows are also adjudicated. The emphasis is very much on traditional techniques, proportions, and quality of sound.

Henryk Wieniawski lends his name to the International Violin Making **Competition** in Poznan, Poland, held every five years. While hundreds of examples are submitted each year for evaluation in the hopes of taking home the top prize, it is as much an event for young luthiers to learn about the craft as it is for them to enter their instruments to be judged. Indeed, Poznan is a wonderful place for developing lutherie: it is one of the few places in the world where students can receive primary and secondary education in violin making the way other schools offer emphases in language or mathematics. Prizes are awarded for a wide range of qualities, including acoustic properties, craftsmanship, and ornamental merit.

In Paris, the Concours Vatelot is held intermittently, and prizes are hard to come by: a single first place and one runner-up diploma per category are awarded. Only five of these competitions have taken place, the first in 1991, and instruments and bows are judged by a jury of five experts on sound, style, and handwork.

The British Violin Making Association **International Violin and Bow Making Competition** is a relative newcomer, first held in 2004—although the association itself has been around since 1995. In order to acknowledge the subjectivity of judging the instruments, each jury member makes his or her own independent choices, and awards prizes individually.

China, an ancient country with a dazzling upstart industry, has become a force to reckon with in the world of fine instruments. The China International Violin Making Competition has only been held a handful of times, but the most recent event had over 400 entries from around the world. Fifteen violins, 10 violas, and 11 cellos were promoted for distinction, based on a combination of acoustic qualities, artistry, and craftsmanship.

SCHOOLS

When thinking of rigorous programs that have minted generations of highly skilled luthiers, one might imagine rolling Italian



Oberlin Violin Makers Workshop

hills or misty Bavarian peaks. And rightly so: given the instrument's history, some of the finest schools are located in Cremona and Mittenwald, as well as France's Mirecourt and "the Cremona of Germany," Markneukirchen. However, American violin-making schools have added their own names to the list of programs renowned for turning out superb violin makers.

The rivalry is intense between Salt Lake City's Violin Making School of America (VMSA) and Chicago's School of Violin Making (SVM). Founded in 1972, students at VMSA undertake three years of intensive training—totaling 3,900 hours of work focusing on traditional methods and materials, plus lessons in sketching, history, and violin playing. A few hours east, SVM was founded in 1975, with a similar curriculum and program length. Over 200 of its graduates are currently working in the United States and abroad.

Admission to both programs is limited, but not on the basis of previous mastery of the instrument or woodworking tools. Evaluations during the initial application period and frequently during the semester make sure students are willing to devote

themselves entirely to this craft. This, above all, is the criteria for success.

Perched a stone's throw from the Boston waterfront, the North Bennet Street **School** is a mecca for all manner of old-world crafts, including cabinet making and bookbinding, in addition to violin making and repair. Enrollment is limited to 12 students and yields the benefit of being connected to a thriving scene that is prepared to pay for the services of a highly trained luthier.

Located just outside the Twin Cities, Minnesota State University Southeast (known colloquially as Red Wing for its home city) offers a full-time instrumentrepair program and a diploma in violin repair. Students without experience are welcome in this track, and it boasts a 100percent job placement rate upon completion of the certificate. The curriculum focuses heavily on the nature of wood itself as well as the practical aspects of repair work.

No discussion of American schools of lutherie would be complete without **Oberlin**, whose summer-program participants populate highend workbenches the world over. This is more of a continuing-education program, and a weeklong haven for professional luthiers looking to learn from their peers and share their own methods. To get a sense of what makes Oberlin unique, I chatted with alumni Rozie DeLoach (owner of Caraway Strings and co-creator of the omo podcast) and Carolyn Foulkes (bow specialist at Perrin Violins), who both agreed it's the sense of community that sets it apart. While any learning environment creates a temporary cohort, continuing mentorship is baked into the Oberlin model of education: makers of various levels are encouraged to reach out and help the people who are newer to the discipline. And it is an opportunity to be coached by master craftspeople.

Another novel feature: students can bring whatever they're working on. So in a class of 20 people, there might be 20 different complex problems to solve—and to witness being solved. It's also an excellent place for cross-pollination; the bow-restoration classes take place across from the violin course, offering the chance for people who are used to working in a largely solitary profession (bow folks) to talk shop with their counterparts (violin makers). Attendance confers a strong sense of community and networking that can have a real impact on professional trajectory.

CONTEMPORARY INSTRUMENTS&BOWS



A Trip to Norway

An introduction to the Hardanger fiddle, and how one learns to make them By Karen Peterson

esmerizing, the droning asymmetric tone of the Hardanger fiddle, with its distinguishing double-decker string set, haunts the opening soundtrack of the movie Fargo, as a car towing a mangled truck slowly emerges from the ghostly whiteout conditions of winter in North Dakota.

The music the Hardanger is playing is not a moody construct imagined by filmmakers Ethan and Joel Coen. It is a Norwegian folk song, "The Lost Sheep." To truly understand what has made the Hardanger synonymous with the sound of Norway, jump over to YouTube and hear one of the country's most famous Hardanger (or hardingfele) players, Annbjørg Lien, coax out the same tune on this most unusual violin.

Fargo isn't the only film to feature the Hardanger. It had a starring musical role in The Rohan Fanfare, the signature theme of the second episode in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, The Two Towers. Karen L. Rebholz of Madison, Wisconsin, a Hardanger player, maker, and teacher, gained a 12-year-old student from the Hardanger's LOTR exposure.

Until popular culture unwrapped it for a worldwide audience, the Hardanger had remained Norway's best-kept musical secret, a treasured national instrument that rose from the orchards and farmland in the Hardangerfjord region of southwestern Norway. While the spotlight hasn't created an overnight mass trending event, interest in the Hardanger has increased worldwide and in the U.S., where the attention is most welcome by the Hardanger Fiddle Association of America (HFAA), founded in 1983 to resurrect the Hardanger for younger generations that had lost touch with their Norwegian roots.

Today, Rebholz, an HFAA member—as all serious U.S. Hardanger makers and players are—has an inside track on gauging interest among players. As a volunteer, she is in charge of merchandise. Going through the roof? Sales of authentic strings imported from Norway. You can't use regular violin strings for the Hardanger; they're too heavy and can damage the lighterweight fiddle. Rebholz has also noted an increase in the number of players and dancers who attend and perform at the HFAA's annual summer workshop, this year scheduled to take place July 22-25 online, according to the website.

For all its charms, the primary role of the Hardanger is the same as for fiddles everywhere: music to drive the dance. It can be played for waltzes and schottisches, but it is primarily used for Norwegian regional dances. More than 1,000 distinct Hardanger tunes (slåtter) have been identified by researchers, handed down over generations.

Each tune delivers a story, which can vary from region to region. The hypnotic, polyphonic sound of the Hardanger, with its set of resonating strings, directs the movement. Slow as they begin, posture straight, two dancers circle the floor. As the dance story unfolds, the couple in this version becomes more flirtatious and demonstrably, by the male, more acrobatic.

From the beginning, Hardanger playing and the songs played were passed down by ear. But in the 19th century there was concern that the old ways would be lost or forgotten. The solution came from 13 years of correspondence between Hardanger player Knut Dahle and Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. Dahle's pleas to save the music came to fruition in Grieg's Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72, which contains 17 of Dahle's traditional slåtter.

eloved as much for the way it sounds as the way it looks, the Hardanger is a stunning piece of folk art, reflective of a rural homeland that is known for brightly colored embroidery and home arts that celebrate nature and country living.

On the Hardanger, that love of design translates into delicate hand-drawn black ink motifs on the body, called rosings; intricate mother-of-pearl inlays; and the crowning feature, the hand carved figurehead that replaces the volute. Traditionally, it's a lion's head honoring Norway's coat-of-arms, but variations are acceptable and depend on the creativity of the maker. Fingerboards and tailpieces are also made of ebony, and tailpieces can include details such as inlaid mother-of-pearl, bone, and metal.

"Compared with the violin, the Hardanger fiddles leave more space for creativity," says Wiebke Lüders, fiddle maker and conservator at Ole Bull Academy in Voss, Norway. Named for Norway's most famous violinist, Ole Bornemann Bull, Ole Bull Academy is the world center for Hardanger music education and Norwegian folk music.



An old fiddle from about 1750, and a modern-day copy

"Hardanger fiddle making is closer to artisan craftswork than violin making," says Lüders. "Even though decorations can be standardized, there is always freedom to make your own. One can often recognize who made the fiddle by the way it is designed or decorated."

Lüders joined Ole Bull after studying at Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts and completing a scholarship with the Metropolitan

FURTHER RESOURCES

For everything Hardanger, including a list of fiddle makers and teachers in the U.S. and videos of Hardanger folk dancing, visit the Hardanger Fiddle Association of America at HFAA.org.

The Ole Bull Academy can be found on the web at felemakeriet.no/english/.

To listen to Annbjørg Lien playing "The Lost Sheep," visit: youtube.com/ watch?v=ajLDYzPjtj4.

Museum of Art's conservation department in New York. Her decision came after a workshop with the Academy's well-known Hardanger maker, Sigvald Rørlien, now retired. "We had an instant connection and Sigvald asked me if I would like to work with him," she says. "The work is creative, there is contact with musicians, and there are always challenges and new things to learn."

Rebholz, who attended a workshop at Ole Bull Academy, also studied with Rørlien, and remembers the experience fondly. "I spent a month immersed in the local culture of the valley where he was born. It really gave me a better appreciation for the music," she says, particularly "the sounds of nature in the songs."

The oldest-known Hardanger, the Jaastad Fiddle, named for its maker Olav Jonsson Jaastad, possibly dates to as early as 1651. By the mid-1700s, the Hardanger had become a dominant folk instrument in parts of Norway. While the instrument's origins are still under study, most accept that it was inspired by the European viola d'amore or similar Baroque instruments with a drone sound, says Lüders.

Its kinship to the violin, she says, is recognizable in its classical body shape, which clearly resembles its Italian counterparts that issued from the workshops of Stradivari or Guarneri.

Setting it apart are the elements that drive the dramatic echoing sound delivered by the "sympathetic" understrings. The f-holes are usually longer and carved so that the wood overlaps on the bottom and the top, giving the opening a more vertical alignment. Designed to create a perpetual "open" sound, you can see through the fiddle from one f-hole to the other.

Since Hardanger fiddles usually have four or five resonating understrings, the pegbox is longer. The bottom strings run under the fingerboard, which is carved out on the underside, and the bridge has a cutout for the understrings, which are tightened on hooks at the tailpiece. The neck is shorter by about an inch.

The fingerboard and bridge are flatter than those of a classical violin, making it harder for a player to play a single string. Double-stops are the norm, and bowing style, using standard bows, is smoother and with a bounce. Stylistically, ornamentation is done with trills, says Rebholz, and not vibrato. Hardangers are traditionally played in first position.



Hardanger fiddles are distinctive in their intricate rosings and inlay.

As for tuning, Rebholz advises that there are 29 ways, at least, to tune the top and bottom strings based on the tune to be played. She says a common tuning for the top strings is ADAE, with the understrings tuned BDE F# A (lowest to highest). The D and higher A strings would be the same pitch for the top and bottom strings, with the E understring an octave below the E top string.

Hardanger fiddle-making is a part of the curriculum at the Ole Bull Academy, and a new program in historical instrument making at the University of South-Eastern Norway includes Hardangers. That's about it, until next year when Ole Bull launches a oneyear postgraduate course in Hardanger fiddle making, open to international students with a degree in instrument making.

"As far as I know, these are the only places in the world where you can officially study Hardanger fiddle making," says Lüders, adding that in Norway, "fiddle makers have become more and more secretive, and knowledge has not been passed on" as in the past. The opposite is true in the U.S., where only a handful of makers are at work fashioning traditional Hardangers with their own special touches. Rebholz,

for instance, carves women's heads, not lions', on her scrolls.

Lynn Berg, a violin maker before turning to the Hardanger, enjoys the challenges of making these traditional instruments in his

The work is creative, there is contact with musicians. and there are always challenges and new things to learn.

-Wiebke Lüders

Eugene, Oregon, workshop—"it's a learning curve," he says—and also the company afforded by being part of a niche market. "You get to know the other makers," he said. "It's fun to be a part of a small community."

Berg, who has traveled to Norway numerous times to study, and who has won awards in competitions there for his fiddles, says the switch to the Hardanger was partly due to his Norwegian roots—"100 percent second-generation," he says-but also because "there are just too many darned violin makers."

Hardangers in the U.S. usually range in cost from \$4,500 to \$6,500, depending on the wood and the ornamentation (Berg uses maple from Slovakia and spruce from British Columbia). "The prices are often lower or similar to violin prices, even though the work is more elaborate and takes much more time," says Lüders. Violin makers have access to prefabricated parts, like fingerboards and bridges. "Hardanger fiddle makers make all these parts themselves by hand," she says. "Nevertheless, as folk instruments, they are unfortunately not considered quite as valuable as the classical violins."

ONE VIOLINIST, ONE VIOLIN . . . AND SIX ARMED **GUARDS**

Francesca Dego on what it's like to play Paganini's "Il Cannone"

By Laurence Vittes

hen Niccolò Paganini, around 1802, needed a powerful new violin, he found (or was given) an instrument by Guarneri del Gesù. It had been made in 1743, near the end of the great luthier's career. Paganini called his new instrument "Il Cannone" (the Cannon) and used it for the rest of his life. After his death, it was given to the city of Genoa, where it is exhibited in the town hall.

Il Cannone has its original neck (though it was extended and reset into the body at some point in its life), the plates were never regraduated, and the instrument has never been polished. The Sala Paganiniana, where Il Cannone resides inside the Palazzo Tursi, is monitored by scientists, experts, and bodyguards. The instrument is played monthly by curator Bruce Carlson and each year by the winner of the Premio Paganini contest for young violinists. It is occasionally loaned to exceptional artists like Salvatore Accardo, Shlomo Mintz, and, most recently, Francesca Dego. Born in Lecco, Italy, to Italian and American parents, Dego performed Paganini's first Violin Concerto in Genoa on the composer's birthday in 2019, and the



following week recorded an exceptional recital of Paganini and other composers for Chandos with pianist Francesca Leonardi.

If not for the pandemic, 2021 might have been Dego's breakthrough year in the U.S. She was scheduled to spend two months playing Shostakovich with the Indianapolis Symphony and also perform a Lincoln Center recital. I spoke to Dego in Milan a few days before her press launch for the recording from Genoa. She was in Italy working with her husband, Daniele Rustioni, chief conductor at the Opéra National de Lyon and the Ulster Orchestra.

What makes "II Cannone" special?

It's the violin that everybody heard. Schumann, Chopin, Berlioz, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Goethe, Schubert. I always dreamt of playing it. I think it's the single most famous instrument in history because it's the violin of the violinist and because its last continuous owner and player was Paganini. Most violins like mine, a gorgeous Francesco Ruggieri from 1697—also made in Cremona and which I fell in love with right away eventually go from one person to another. But Il Cannone just stopped after Paganini. Everyone who has played it since has played it for a maximum of a few days or a week like I did. He shaped the sound, how it vibrates, how it reacts.

Why do you think Paganini loved this violin?

He was a connoisseur of violin making, a collector who made money buying and selling Cremonese violins. He knew what he was looking for, something reliable but also really powerful, and that is what Il Cannone is; the depth of the sound is really extraordinary.

How could such a violin have inspired him?

He could have been inspired by this violin to invent some really revolutionary technical things. Nobody before him had really done any double harmonics and he did whole passages of them. And harmonics work wonderfully on this violin. The overtones in the instrument itself mean that flageolet and other technically demanding things are a tiny bit easier than you'd expect. The G string is amazing all the way up—although there is a very in your face wolf tone on the high, high C that's kind of notorious. I wonder what Paganini did with it.

To what extent does it have its own sound and personality?

I think it has an incredibly distinctive sound, and I remember adapting to it, letting it inspire me, and also playing a bit differently because it doesn't react very well to pressure. I was a bit nervous at the beginning and was kind of overdoing it—I may have been a bit tense. The sound was getting a bit rough and I realized it was not going to have any of that at all. It needed to be listened to, to be allowed to breathe, to react to every nuance. I had a deep connection with it very quickly.

What was the condition like?

It was extremely dark with much more of the original varnish remaining because it's been

> It needed to be listened to. to be allowed to breathe, to react to every nuance.

-Francesca Dego on Paganini's "Il Cannone"

sitting there since Paganini stopped playing it. There is some damage under the bridge and elsewhere that they haven't touched for historic reasons, because it's original damage. If you look at any Strad or del Gesù being played by the top soloists today, it'll look much shinier because it's been restored in a less historically conscious way. In Genoa, it's not only about conservation of the violin but conservation of the state the violin was in when it was left to the city in 1840.

How did you set it up?

Bruce Carlson and I decided to use Peter Infeld strings because they're very reliable, would underline the qualities of the violin, settle in very quickly, and still have good projection and power. We did not want to risk creating extra problems with gut. I played it first for the concert and they literally only gave it to me the day before, so we needed strings that would really react quickly.

What would Paganini have strung II Cannone with?

He used gut strings, which broke all the time. What we don't know is what bow he used. There was a bow with Il Cannone when it was left to the city, but it was not in good condition and they don't know if it was the "great new bow" from Naples he spoke of in some letters. He did buy a bow in Naples but nobody can figure out who the Neapolitan bow maker could have been. So I used my own bow, a really top Peccatte, which put me in the most comfortable condition possible to meet a violin I didn't know.

How did II Cannone like the Corigliano, Szymanowski, and Schnittke on the recording?

It was great. One of the curators looked extremely alarmed while I was recording Schnittke's A Paganini. He was looking at me like, "Oh my God, should I stop her?" because the music looks a bit crazy, looks like it might be a bit rough on the violinwhich of course it isn't; it's all very controlled. It was a reminder that in addition to the purely historic value linked to Paganini, there is the value of the violin per se, of hearing an extraordinary instrument playing other music.

What was it like being around such a valuable instrument?

At some point I imagined what would happen if I actually dropped it with these six armed guards around. Would they shoot me or throw themselves onto it? I wondered what would happen if I just made a run for it.

What's your next recording?

I am in the midst of recording Mozart's violin concertos with the BBC Scottish Symphony conducted by Sir Roger Norrington. So far, we've done two and a half of them. He's never recorded the violin concerti before, and he said he's going to finally retire after that. I started working with him a few years ago and we did Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Mozart; he is wonderful.

GET TO KNOW THE STROH

These horned instruments played a role in early music recording and are still in use today

By Karen Peterson

orget everything you've read about the Stroh violin, if you've read anything at all about this curious-looking instrument with a horn attached to its slimmeddown body. It was far from a novelty, and it hasn't gone away, even at age 122. The Strohviol, as it is also known, was invented and patented in 1899 by German watchmaker Johannes Matthias Augustus Stroh. He was at the time living in London, and his invention revolutionized the classical violin and the nascent music-recording industry at the dawn of the 20th century.

"There is a common misconception that it was developed for the early acoustic recording studios, but this is completely false," says London-based Aleksander Kolkowski, a composer and musician. His numerous restored original Strohs and similar-styled instruments of the era-all of which he plays at live performances and for recordings-make up the world's largest private collection. It is almost impossible to find original Strohs anymore.

Johannes Stroh, says Kolkowski, was already "one of the most brilliant scientific and mechanical engineers" of the late 1800s when he turned his attention to the violin. "Stroh conceived of it as a new and improved form of violin, a new departure from the centuries-old design that relied on a resonating corpus," says Kolkowski, who is also a senior research associate at the Science Museum, London.

"This was cutting-edge late-Victorian science," says Kolkowski of Stroh's invention. Electric violins and the Dobro steel resonator guitar are descendants of this re-imagined



vision of traditional stringed instruments. Historically, the Stroh violin, later to include viola, cello, bass, and ukulele models, is celebrated for giving the violin family a voice in the early recording studios, where the attached metal horn provided directionality-meaning it could be aimed directly at the corresponding larger "recording horn."

This was the solution to a problem that vexed early recording artists: the sound of stringed instruments was difficult to capture. Their sound was too "open" and wafting. The horn took care of that.

In construction, about the only thing reminiscent of a violin is the sound. The Stroh's body is basically the fingerboard. The bridge connects to a diaphragm that turns the musical vibrations into sound blasted out of the Stroh's trumpet-like horn, usually made of aluminum. Though the large horn was the part that defined the Stroh violin in the public consciousness, in actuality, there were two horns: the large horn and a smaller one attached to the body near the player's ear as a sound monitor.

Kolkowski's collection includes several Stroh violins, two violas, a cello, "an extremely rare" two-string Stroh "Japanese Fiddle," and its more common one-string version, along with what the Stroh also inspired—variants like the Phonofiddle by A.T. Howson. All date from the 1910s to the

In their heyday, Strohs were used almost exclusively by major recording studios in Europe and the U.S., says Kolkowski, who adds that two amplified violins and a viola could replace entire string sections. Even as recording techniques improved apace, Strohs were still on the job. If you listen to recordings made anytime before 1925 that feature violins, chances are you're hearing Strohs. Classical violinists Jan Kubelik, Carl Flesch, and Eugène Ysaÿe recorded with them.

hen recording technology did surpass the Stroh, it went on the road with jazz and dance bands, allowing violinists to compete with saxophones and trumpets. (Kolkowski says the Stroh was advertised as a substitute for a tenor sax and the Stroh bass for a tuba.)

By the late 1920s, the Stroh was seemingly on its way out, but fast-forward to the 1970s and it reappears, this time as the vioară cu goarnă ("violin with horn") played then and now by Roma violinists from the Bihor region along Romania's border with Hungary. It was in Hungary that Kolkowski first heard the Stroh in 1998. "My interest was piqued," he says.

While Kolkowski says he was attracted by its appearance, he was struck by its sound— "reedy and fluty," not tinny or metallic—and the potential it held for a musician of his tastes, one "deeply involved in new music

and experimental forms of music-making." In 2000, Kolkowski released his first Stroh CD, Portrait in Shellac, and he has composed pieces featuring Strohs for groups including the Kairos Quartett in Berlin and the Apartment House ensemble in London.

Kolkowski was also a member of the Kryonics, an improvisational Stroh-playing trio—for which he supplied the instruments—that included Matthias Bauer and string impresario Jon Rose, the Australian violinist known for his sound-bending experiments, notably with violins but also with most anything that can be played or manipulated with a bow. Beginning in 2002, Rose and violinist Hollis Taylor have traveled through Australia bowing the wires on that country's outback fences.

"Aleks Kolkowski is a friend and colleague," says Rose. "We performed improvised music using the instruments from his collection and very satisfying sonic combinations were achieved."

Rose describes the sound of these 100-year-old-plus technologies as evoking "a feeling of memory if not loss." Despite the advantages of the digital age, he says, "many long for a scale of technological engagement that retains a physical connection. Early radio and film also inhabit this space."

Rose spent part of 2020 performing solo in YouTube concerts—his "COVID-19 lockdown project"—that included a Stroh. In "10 Violins," he plays a contemporary Stroh from an instrument maker "living on the border between Thailand and Myanmar."

"Compared to the real thing," he says, "the sound is a little abrasive and the auxiliary ear-horn doesn't function that well."

Still, you'll get the picture behind the Stroh's role in the early days of recording



This was cutting-edge late-Victorian science.

--- Aleksander Kolkowski

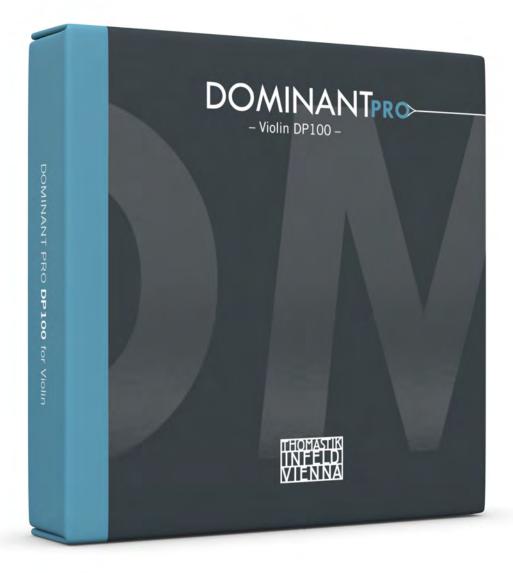
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technology: Rose is playing his Stroh next to an old gramophone playing an LP.

What Kolkowski and Rose both enjoy is the creative space the Stroh opens up between the instrument and the player. "You do feel quite detached from the sound—with a conventional fiddle you feel the sound as well as hearing it, through conduction," said Kolkowski. "With the Stroh you have a small monitor horn which is not very effective, so you hear it mainly in the room."

According to Rose, being independent from the instrument and the confines of the classical playing position opens new worlds of sound to reconsider. "One of the unsaid issues with the standard violin is that the performer always gets a false perspective of the sound produced," he says. "What happens under the ear and through the bone is sonically very different to what is going on a few meters away, or at the back of a hall."





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STRING SPIN-OFF

Thomastik-Infeld celebrates the Dominant and launches the Dominant Pro

By Megan Westberg

ifty years ago, Thomastik-Infeld launched its popular synthetic-core Dominant strings, made with "extremely fine nylon fibers." The Dominant series was designed to deliver tuning stability and bow response combined with low string tension, modulation capacity, and colorful tone. The company is celebrating the Dominant's golden anniversary by launching a new, related string set: the Dominant Pro.

Not meant to supplant its predecessor, the Dominant Pro builds on its successful features and adds characteristics players have been requesting: more power, resistance to

bow pressure, and sustain; a greater dynamic range; and a longer lifespan. Tonally, the Dominant Pro's sound is described as "belllike" and is darker and more focused than the Dominant, which sits right at the crossroads of broad and focused, brilliant and warm on the Thomastik-Infeld soundchart. For further reference, the Dominant Pro tone is considered broader than the Peter Infeld string but carries about the same warmth.

The set is recommended for orchestral players, chamber musicians, and soloists, especially those who need greater resistance to bow pressure due to the playing requirements of extended techniques. The medium-gauge set available now includes a tin-plated carbon-steel E string; an aluminumwound synthetic-core A; a silver-wound synthetic-core D; and a silver-wound syntheticcore G.

In July, the company plans to release further options in the Dominant Pro line. These include gold- and platinum-plated stainlesssteel E strings; another tin-plated carbon-steel core E without any underlaid nickel; a chromewound carbon-steel A; and an aluminumwound synthetic-core D.

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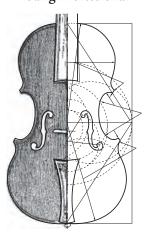
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PLAYER

Solo violinist Anne Akiko Meyers has dramatically expanded the modern violin repertoire with significant new commissions. She has given the first performance of major new works by many of today's leading composers, and is scheduled to premiere new concertos written for her by Arturo Márquez, 'Blue Electra,' written by Michael Daugherty about Amelia Earhart, and new cadenzas, described below, by John Corigliano for the Beethoven Violin Concerto.

Title of Work Being Studied New cadenzas to Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Composer John Corigliano

Date Composed 2021

Name of Edition Studied Own copy; an edition with the Corigliano cadenzas will be published by G. Schirmer.

SHEER PERFECTION

John Corigliano's new cadenzas to the Beethoven Violin Concerto complete the masterpiece

By Anne Akiko Meyers

he Beethoven Concerto is a monumental work and one of my favorites to perform. I grew up listening to it from the time I was born. My mother read that music is a magical elixir that helps a baby's brain develop, and so began my journey with the Beethoven Violin Concerto, with David Oistrakh performing it.

I've performed the Kreisler cadenzas many times and asked Mason Bates to rewrite them back in 2007. I'm always open and curious to mixing it up and asking questions. What take do today's composers have on the Mt. Everest of concertos? Why was everyone so wedded to the Kreisler cadenzas? Over the

Anne Akiko Meyers



years I have looked at many, including the Schnittke, and wondered how today's leading composers would rewrite them, from their perspective.

John Corigliano is a magnificent composer and possibly the Beethoven of today. I wondered what he would see in them and what new language he would set to the concerto. He composed the gorgeous "Lullaby for Natalie" for the birth of my first daughter back in 2010, and with its beautifully crafted storytelling, I thought it would be fascinating to have him write new cadenzas for the Beethoven Violin Concerto.

Playing these cadenzas feels like looking through a Beethoven prism, with colors and themes sliding around and glistening in some alternate dimension

"

The first major hurdle was getting John to agree to write them, but I knew it would be worth the effort! His father was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for more than two decades and he performed the Beethoven Concerto with them. As a result, John was incredibly intimate with it. He understands the violin deeply, as evidenced in his Red Violin concerto, which is a masterpiece I have performed frequently. John has a profound love of Beethoven's compositions, including, of course, the concerto. He was grateful for the opportunity and almost sounded relieved to get his cadenzas on paper and out of his head!

They are sheer perfection.

I see them becoming the gold-standard version, as they are powerful and virtuosic,

with Red Violin overtones in them. John studied the piano version that Beethoven composed, and was inspired by the timpani included in the first movement. Playing these cadenzas feels like looking through a Beethoven prism, with colors and themes sliding around and glistening in some alternate dimension. They are respectful of Beethoven from an authentically contemporary viewpoint.

I am ecstatic about the new cadenzas and cannot wait to premiere them. It feels like they complete Beethoven's masterpiece, which somehow was always missing that special something in the cadenzas for me.

Technically, they are very challenging. Learning the notes definitely takes time and hard work—interpretation comes later. Studying the score and listening to the piano version are helpful, especially to hear the timpani woven into the cadenzas that Beethoven wrote. This imparts some insight into the structure and feel of John's cadenzas and helps with interpretation.

There are so many elements that need to be studied in order to help clarify the many layers of intricacy. It's time-consuming yet empowering. I got frazzled many times (if walls could talk . . .) but patience is critical when learning something demanding and new. Slowly stringing things together (no pun intended) and being nice to yourself in the process is helpful!

Every piece of music I learn, read through, or perform helps me become a better player. I feel like every note is a challenge but also an opportunity to decode and impart the music's soul. I worship and kneel before a composer's ability to create music that helps us transcend to another dimension.



WHAT ANNE AKIKO MEYERS PLAYS

"I perform on the 'ex-Vieuxtemps' Guarneri del Gesù, dated 1741, and the 'ex-Rosand' Tourte bow.

"V is very happy with the Larsen Solo 'II Cannone' strings. I'm obsessed with my case, which is a custom-made beauty by Howard Wiseman. It carries four bows and also has space for a shoulder rest, rosin, and cleaning cloths. It seems to do everything—even make martinis!"

Masumi Rostad



SNOW DAY

6 things cross-country skiing has taught me about bowing technique

By Masumi Rostad

t snows a lot in Rochester, New York—we often get those obscene days where you can go outside and watch the little hairs on your face freeze into icicles. Of course, this encourages staying indoors and practicing, but you can only practice so much! Helped by the mantra "There's no such thing as bad weather—only bad clothing," I've learned to love this winter wonderland that I now call home.

I grew up in New York City, where snow was mostly a disappointment that quickly went from a titillating pristine blanket to a lingering filthy mess. Nonetheless, I've long nurtured my boyhood fantasy of embracing my Norwegian roots, strapping on a pair of classic cross-country skis, and working out my practice-room frustrations in the woods. Well, thanks to numerous pandemic cancellations, this winter I finally did it.

A healthy lifelong study of instrumental technique can benefit immensely from the exploration of many different physical disciplines. There are fundamental principles that underpin the mechanics of our bodies and guide the efficiency and effectiveness of our movement. What we know and even celebrate about technique is that there are infinite ways of doing the same thing.

I taught myself how to ski by heading out on that first snowy day, embracing life and a willingness to fall . . . hard. Then, I went home and scoured YouTube for instructional videos. After that, I went back out and fell down, a lot, again. Eventually, I stumbled into a rhythm and began to pick up helpful skills along the way. Having skied almost daily now for nearly two months straight, I've discovered some things in the frozen wilderness that have direct string-playing parallels. It turns out violists can learn a lot about bowing from a set of ski poles.

1. Keep the Arms Moving

Cross-country skiing is arguably one of the most comprehensively demanding outdoor sports, requiring full-body strength conditioning, from aerobic endurance to bursts of raw power. The repetitive action of skiing requires efficient motion. It is essential to employ fluid motion and to avoid chunky, inefficient pole movements—otherwise, you're not going to make it home!

The same applies to bowing technique. You have to keep the bow arm moving. Your bow speed is equivalent to a singer's breath. You can't sing without air. You should strive to keep the bow singing and avoid hiccups through string crossings, shifts, even bow changes.

2. Don't Grip the Poles

A few weeks into my adventures, I met Randall, a local ski guru, and made an offhand remark about the stress on my forefingers. Randall raised an eyebrow and asked how I was looping the pole straps on my wrists. Apparently, the pull stroke is transferred through the poles by the straps around your wrists, not your hands! Where the straps were previously loosely dangling around my wrists, I now have them cinched up and lean into them on the downstroke. A good practice method for this is to ski with open hands. You don't even need to hold the poles.

Over time, I've settled on a pole stroke that connects lightly through my middle fingers. Optimally, I aim to do the same with my bow grip. Rather than lean on my forefinger, I've learned that I've got much more natural power through the center of my hand. So, like Sasha Schneider said, "Don't squeeze de bow!"

3. Pull With Core-Based, Full-Body, **Torsional Movement**

It can be overwhelming to break down the mechanics of how we walk but basically,

> Rather than lean on my forefinger, I've learned that I've got much more natural power through the center of my hand. "

we're twisting in a controlled fall and catching ourselves. Our largest muscles originate from our core and basically diminish as they move outward. In skiing, like walking, the left arm advances with the right leg and vice versa. We're twisting as we move forward. It is sometimes enticing to indulge with an intervention by the biceps or shoulders. However, we're most powerful and efficient when those parts neutralize to support the cleanest and most direct action.

The same applies to bowing. Your most powerful bow strokes bypass the shoulder and other superficial muscles to stem directly from core motion. Ideally, you can feel the connection of your deepest bow strokes through the full-body torsion all the way down to your feet.

4. Control and Anticipate Your Pole Placement

Efficiency and accuracy are paramount, and endurance benefits from not wasting energy. Swinging your poles up too high and making them strike the ground hard is inefficient. Ideally, the pole tip follows the upswing of the arm and meets the ground with gentle precision. You have to maintain a sense of where the ground is, how soft and deep the snow is, and how long the pole is.

As a string player, you need to know where the string is and bring the bow to it with this same intentional accuracy and anticipation for conditions. Finding and settling into the string is one of the most important aspects of bow control. It is an unnecessarily difficult task to try to nuance your articulation from the air.

5. Follow Through

This seems obvious, right? Well, it is complicated because, shuffling along, you can actually ski without poles and it is a good thing to practice for balance and as a movement study. A kind of skiing étude. However, skiing is a stick sport just like tennis, baseball, and golf. That thrilling glide that makes me feel like I'm flying over the snow comes from the skate of the skis plus the complete stride motion of the pole.

Bowing is a stick sport just like skiing! A full open stroke that can fill a concert hall requires the same attention to follow through.

6. Remember to Look Up and Enjoy!

I often start predawn and use a headlamp to see ahead. After a short while I usually find myself hunched over, staring down at the rolling snow before me. As the sun slowly rises, the snow begins a chromatic ascent with it and glows and glistens with every color of the rainbow. It is an incredible crescendo as I transition from foreboding and forlorn darkness to discover myself floating gleefully through a full forest that is teeming with life.

It is too easy to fixate on the individual components of technique only to lose sight of the goal. Yes, practice but remember to make music!







Image 2: Extended hand position



Image 3: Non-extended finger position

TENTHS! NOT TENSE!

How practicing scales in tenths can be useful and pain-free

By Scott Flavin

dvancing students of the violin practice their scales, arpeggios, and doublestops in thirds, sixths, and octaves. When they have achieved a fair level of consistency and ease (especially in octaves and octave scales), they can add scales in tenths. But why *should* they practice tenths?

While tenths show up in virtuoso repertoire (like Paganini, Wieniawski, etc.), they

are more fundamentally important as a way to improve left-hand technique. Tenths are a great way to monitor and resolve lefthand tension, as the stretch between the first and fourth fingers can only be accommodated with a flexible left hand. In addition, cultivating an effective and ergonomic extended hand position can facilitate large shifts and extensions, in essence making the traversal of the fingerboard more manageable from bottom to top.

Get Balanced

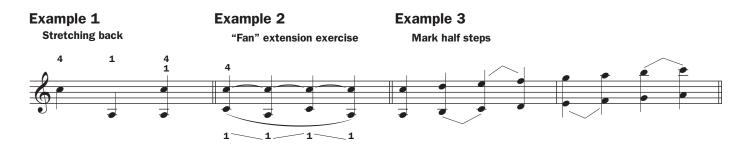
An important difference between playing octaves and tenths is in the balance of the left hand. In octaves, your point of balance is the first finger, which should feel heavy on the fingerboard (not squeezing, but with the finger weight comparable to playing a melodic note with vibrato), while the fourth finger should be very light (Nathan Milstein encouraged placement of the pinky on the string as light as for a harmonic, then adding only enough weight for the solid note to speak).

With tenths, it's the exact opposite!

The upper note (the fourth finger) is your point of balance, while the index finger should be as light as possible without compromising tone. Proper balance between the two fingers will keep your hand from being tense and rigid.

Finding Tenths—Open the Fan

Here's where it gets weird, but important: In order to find the optimal hand position and balance for tenths, you must start from the upper note (fourth finger) and open the hand back, which is anatomically much easier than stretching "up" from your first



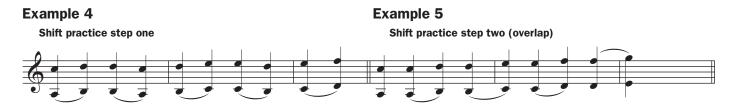




Image 3a: Extended finger position



Image 4: Normal left-arm position



Image 5: Left arm coming around violin

finger. Look at Images 1 (normal left-hand position) and 2 (the left hand opening like a fan) and note how the tenth affects lefthand position before trying **Ex. 1** yourself.

The concept of finding the upper note first can be difficult to grasp; just make sure to start with the hand in position for the upper note.

A good way to feel balance on the fourth finger is to play with a nice, relaxed vibrato as the finger sinks into the string. Next, add the first finger an octave below the fourth finger, and, using the lightest possible finger pressure, slide down to the tenth below the upper note (Ex. 2), maintaining weight on the fourth finger throughout. Remember, the first finger should be almost harmonic-light in terms of finger weight, only adding enough weight for the note to sound. Also, make sure that your wrist is not in an abnormal position, and that it is flexible as well.

What will probably feel unfamiliar is that the first finger's point of contact with the string will now be a bit on the side of the finger, not so much on the pad (see Images 3 and 3a); this is OK! You will get used to it. You'll be surprised how little weight it takes for the note to sound, even on the G and D strings: About 70-percent weight on the fourth finger and 30 percent on the first finger should suffice. Make sure you play with a rich mezzo-forte bow tone.

Tuning Tenths—A Counter-Intuitive Conundrum

Intonation can be a bit daunting in tenths, but just remember that the lower note is the fundamental pitch, so even though

your first finger has very light finger weight, it is the most important tuning note, and the fourth finger needs to be tuned to it. When adjusting your fingers, make sure to keep the balance of heavy fourth and light first fingers.

Shifting Tenths—Let 'Em Flow

When playing scales in tenths, your shifting must be fluid and controlled; the arm, powered by the bicep and pivoting on the elbow joint, carries the forearm and hand as a unit (a flexible unit, but a unit nonetheless). Shifting the entire arm and hand allows you to maintain the relationship or extended framework between the first and fourth fingers.

When practicing these changes of position, shift smoothly with a glissando to eliminate tension and to "hear" the distance between notes (you'll hear the train pulling into the station, so you won't shift too far). Once you can shift consistently with smoothness and accuracy, you can play with lighter bow during shifting so the glissandi will not be heard.

TENTHS AT **A GLANCE**

- · Balance on the fourth finger
- · Shift the whole arm, pivoting on the elbow joint
- · Hear position changes (glissando)
- · Have fun with it!

You must also be aware of how far each finger will be travelling. Are both shifting by whole steps? Both half steps? One whole, one half? I recommend marking the half steps in your music (Ex. 3). If one finger is shifting a whole step and the other is shifting a half step, focus on the finger shifting the larger interval, and allow the other finger to just "follow along."

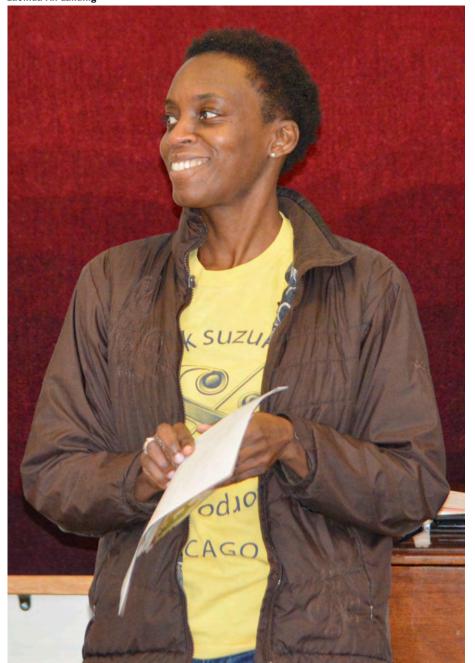
Practice each shift up and down (Ex. 4), watching for accuracy, consistency, and no tension. Next, overlap (Ex. 5), always monitoring quality and ease of shifting. In tenths, especially on the lower strings, the arm will come around a bit more to accommodate the stretch (see **Images 4** and **5**).

So, while tenths initially may be very difficult, the benefits gained with the increased flexibility of the left hand will show themselves in your entire technique.

TENTHS TIME

- Don't start off your practice session with tenths! Be fully warmed up and flexible.
- · Don't practice tenths for too long. The goal should be finding a little more ease with them each practice session, even if you only work on them for a few minutes.
- · Constantly monitor the left hand for tension. If something feels odd or painful, stop. Stretch, take a break, go get coffee. Don't hurt yourself!

Lucinda Ali Landing



CRITICAL **CONNECTIONS**

The fundamental concept at the Hyde Park Suzuki Institute in Chicago is love

By Lucinda Ali Landing

or years, I've known that one day I would need to find a way to articulate precisely what makes our music school unique. By that, I mean what makes us who we are, why this experience feels special, and why our students generally do so well in music and life.

The short backstory is that the Hyde Park Suzuki Institute is a music school that I started on Chicago's "South Side" (that's code for mostly Black people) near the University of Chicago. We teach music lessons like every other music school in the city. But the question that I've been asked from day one has been, "Why does it feel different than any other music school when I walk in the door?"

And the answer is exactly what inspires my passion in teaching: my connection and commitment to families in our music community. But community isn't something that just happens, and it isn't something I could create on my own. It takes the will to connect by everyone involved. These are a few of the things I've learned about creating the right environment for that spirit to thrive.

Building an intentional space where families can come together with a shared purpose

for the children is only the start of building a community.

As a child, my dad drove my sister and me to the "North Side" (that's code for mostly white people) for lessons at a community music school. It was really far, so we spent a long time in the car. We learned how to play our instruments well, and the people were nice enough. However, that music school was not where I went to see my friends, laugh, or have fun-or find lifelong relationships.

When I started the Hyde Park Suzuki Institute, I was young. I didn't know much about business. I did have a vision that I wanted the kids to have what I didn't have growing up in classical music. I wanted friends and fun, with rigorous classicalmusic education close to home. In hindsight, I realize that I must have willed this

into existence. With no strategic plan, metrics, or data, I just knew that individualism would not work for us. We have to connect socially in love to thrive.

That meant this community music school needed to be more than iust a school—it had to be a part of the fabric of life for the students and the teachers. And it is. An

early personal experience of this connection in love is when I had my first baby. When I opened my eyes from my C-section, I saw my mom. Then I saw my student's mom, Imani, who was there to help with my baby's first latching on to nurse. When I got home, my Suzuki-parent-class teacher Martine was there, teaching me how to wrap the baby and bringing me meals.

Neither of these love actions had anything to do with music. Still, we became connected forever because of those acts of love. Martine recently spoke about her experience at HPSI in an interview. "Parents, families, students, teachers, and staff all come together to create first and foremost a community, and music is taught in this environment of trust, love, and care. When new students join my class, I work on connecting them to the rest of the class."

Maintaining relationships is part of the job.

Showing up for celebrations, crises, or just taking responsibility for another person's child are acts that bind the community together: parents, faculty, and staff know it is part of the job. The best part of HPSI is that "bring your child to work day" is every day. For parents with multiple children at HPSI, there is the peace of mind that comes with knowing your children are loved even when you're not watching. In the hallway, teachers will say hello to your child with a smile.

Someone else is going to ask your child how they're doing, and someone else's mama is going to sternly tell them to stop running in the hall, but with love. There's always a builtin babysitter around to give parents a moment to breathe!

Today in education, I think they call it (SEL) Social Emotional Learning. But

We have

to connect socially

in love to thrive.

at HPSI, we've always known intuitively that when children feel emotionally connected, that is the foundation for all learning. The commitment to connect, help, and collaborate as parents and faculty is contagious and almost palpable to a new parent as soon as they walk in the door.

I am passionate about teaching families that are committed to learning and committed to each other, resulting in children who excel. The children are friends beyond music. They encourage and cheer for each other to be their best, or at least not to quit so they can see each other.

My passion for teaching children intentionally to a high skill level is fueled by

this extended family, however, this ideology doesn't always come naturally, and our school is not a good fit for everyone. After 21 years of nonstop parenting, I understand wanting to be a "JDO" (Just Drop Off) parent. My favorite sign we have posted at the entrance says, "Children without a parent will be given an espresso and a puppy." Families do best here when they're deeply involved—and there is definitely extra encouragement not to be a JDO parent!

Perpetuating and sustaining this community model into the future is my new work.

How do you mandate love in an employee manual? How does one convince funders that this critical connection is the measurement that creates excellence in children? How does one train teachers to be open to the extended family concept?

We shall see: HPSI is a work in progress. But for now, I use this as a gauge: I tell our new teachers in training, "If you're not receiving invitations to students' birthday parties, bat mitzvahs, baby showers, and anniversaries, then you haven't connected to the family yet." Just start with being genuinely interested in the student and family, and then teach the lesson.



An HPSI student performs for the school community.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A VIRUS-RESISTANT **OUTDOOR CONCERT**

COVID-19 has imposed tight restrictions, so know before you show

By Greg Cahill

n March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic forced most of the world into extended lockdowns. Musicians, like hundreds of millions of others, went into quarantine. The development of vaccines and adherence to safety measures has eased restrictions, but musicians still face an uncertain future as the world struggles to return to "normal" behavioral patterns. "My season was almost entirely wiped out until September," says concert violinist Philippe Quint, who during the winter played a pair of restricted indoor concerts in Florida and Texas, in which the audience members were masked and socially distanced. "I do hope summer stages bring us some outdoor possibilities—fingers crossed."

In the pre-pandemic world, the summer season was an especially busy and lucrative time for string players of all stripes, thanks to the large number of outdoor classical- and folkmusic festivals. But at press time, those events are in jeopardy as organizers wrestle to schedule events that will be dependent upon the uncertain availability of vaccines and potential spikes in the infection rates.

"Music@Menlo is exploring a number of possibilities for the 2021 summer festival," says Claire Graham, communications director for the popular Northern California chambermusic fest co-directed by cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han. "Closely following state

Most of the Aspen Music Festival summer concerts will be held in their open-air Benedict Music Tent.



and county guidelines, our paramount concern will be the health and safety of our artists, patrons, and staff. We have surveyed our audience and prospective audiences and are mindful of potential attendees' safety concerns for the coming summer. We will be presenting online concerts again, with the hope that attendees may be able to convert their online tickets to reduced-capacity, socially distanced in-person events.

"The practicalities of this depend entirely on the evolution of the COVID-19 situation over the coming months, and we are monitoring local and national guidelines closely to make informed planning decisions accordingly."

The Aspen Music Festival and School in Colorado is also taking a cautious approach to the resumption of outdoor concerts. "We are actively planning for an in-person season that is safe and distanced, running July 1 to August 22," says AMFS publications and PR coordinator Kristin Cleveland, "To achieve our goal, we have revised the scope and scale of our programming and educational offerings in order to present music instruction and daily performances that are safe and distanced, with the majority of performances taking place in the AMFS's open-air Benedict Music Tent, as well as other outdoor Aspen venues.

"For all in-person events, we have established rigorous safety protocols at our venues—for students, faculty, staff, guest artists, and patrons. At all stages of the planning process, the AMFS has been closely monitoring public health conditions and following local public health guidelines and will continue to do so, offering in-person events if and how it is safe to do so at the time."

For now, outdoor concerts are the best hope of audiences seeking solace in music. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, has even offered hope that indoor concerts and theater performances could return later this year. Speaking at a recent virtual conference for the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, Fauci said that in order for indoor events to resume, the country should reach herd immunity, when 70 to 85 percent of the population has been vaccinated. He noted that the "overwhelming majority" of superspreader events have occurred at indoor gatherings.

"If everything goes right, this will occur sometime in the fall of 2021, so by the time we get to the early to mid-fall, you can have people feeling safe performing onstage as well as people in the audience," Fauci said, adding that it's more responsible for venues to hold outdoor concerts.

"If you're out there, with the natural breezes that blow respiratory particles away, it is so much safer," he said.

Given the recent pandemic-induced liveperformance drought, some music lovers are taking matters into their own hands and staging their own outdoor concerts. If you are considering taking this step, what kinds of safety protocols should you follow? Here are 11 suggestions you'll want to keep in mind.

Think Local

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control on its website offers an extensive list of suggestions for "enhancing protection" while staging a large outdoor event. Most importantly, "event planners and officials can determine, in collaboration with state and local health officials, whether and how to implement these considerations, making adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community." These local and regional health rules can vary—for example, some counties require businesses to take the temperature of patrons before providing admission. Ask your local authorities.

Forget the Cash

Cash is an anachronism in the COVID-19 era, due to the possibility that paper bills can spread the virus. Set up an app-based PayPal or Venmo account for online payments. If you choose to allow ticket sales at the gate, consider app-based Apple Pay or a Square pointof-service system.

Masks Required

Properly fitted facial masks can reduce infection substantially. Masks are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult (such as when moving within a crowd or audience). Display clear signage noting that masks are required, but there are exceptions: Babies and children younger than two years old; anyone who has trouble breathing; anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. If a patron refuses to wear a mask, ask politely that they comply. If they still refuse, decline admission. Be firm, but don't invite confrontation unless you are prepared to handle it.

Basic Etiquette Rules

Encourage staff to cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing.

" Masks are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.

"

Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Encourage attendees to wash hands often (set up sanitation stations) and cover coughs and sneezes.

Attendees often exchange handshakes, fist bumps, and high-fives at meetings and sporting events. Display signs (physical and/ or electronic) that discourage these actions during the event. Consider developing signs and messages in alternative formats (large print, braille, American Sign Language, announcements from the stage) for people with impaired vision or hearing.

Safety in Numbers

The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the CDC notes, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with or spreading COVID-19. So a smaller event is safer than a larger event. The size of an event or gathering should be determined based on state, local, territorial, or tribal safety laws and regulations.

Manage the Traffic Flow

Clearly designate aisles that permit patrons to move to their seats without walking through congested areas. There should be designated entrances and exits.

Keep Your Distance

Social distancing, including markings or physical barriers that define areas at least six feet apart for individuals or small pods of three or four people, is essential.

Do Not Share Objects

In the interest of containing the virus, the less interaction, the better—thus the popularity of the elbow bump in place of the handshake. Forego souvenir stands or food concessions. You might be tempted to offer pre-packaged meal items or permit patrons to bring their own food and beverages, but even safe disposal of used utensils and drinking cups can put the festival staff at risk of infection.

Restroom Rules

Keep restrooms disinfected and well stocked with supplies. Limit the number of patrons allowed in the restroom (you may need to assign staff to monitor). Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the bathroom. The longer and larger the event, the more likely you will have to face restroom challenges.

Set Up a Safe Stage

Keep the musicians safe by building an elevated stage that is set back 20 feet from the audience. If you choose to cover the stage to shield the sun or curtail the wind, keep the tenting open on at least two sides to facilitate ventilation. Musicians should be distanced and masked unless the mask inhibits their performance.

Add a Touch of Grace

Be kind. Be patient. Make everyone comfortable. Remember, the lengthy quarantine has isolated us from friends, family, and colleagues. It's been a year since most musicians have performed for a live audience and equally as long since most of us have attended a concert. Expect a bit of a learning curve on how to do this.

FROM THE STRINGS ARCHIVES

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Audiences can be noisy learn how professionals handle performance distractions

By Laurie Niles

[The time is coming when in-person performances will again become the norm. For all those who have exclusively been performing virtually during COVID, or haven't been performing much at all, here is a little refresher on handling those noisy live audiences.]

othing beats the energy of a top-notch performance, given in the moment, before a live audience. But when thousands of humans gather in one place, the potential for disruption grows high.

How does a performer handle the unpredictable nature of a live audience?

It's a question that caused heated debate after a concert in December 2014 at London's Royal Festival Hall, when a coughing child caused violinist Kyung-Wha Chung, under pressure after a 12-year hiatus from performing, to suggest from the stage that the child return when she was older. Apparently the entire audience had been particularly stricken with coughs throughout the



concert, as well. Should she have tolerated the disruption? Or did the audience noise detract so much from the musical experience that it needed to be addressed?

The criticism over Chung's handling of "The Cough" eclipsed in the press most conversation about her playing. On the other hand, Slovakian violist Lukáš Kmiť became an internet darling in 2012, when he showed his wit and good nature by playfully mimicking the Nokia ringtone that interrupted his recital at an Orthodox synagogue. The audience was delighted, and the YouTube video went viral and still circulates. More recently, in May 2014, Joshua Bell was performing with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra when an Amber Alert caused a high-pitched din as several thousand cell phones squawked to life. Reviewers gave him high marks for the poise and control he showed, calmly proceeding with Ravel's Tzigane right afterward.

So how much is too much disruption and what can a performer do when faced with it?

Expect Interruptions, No Matter the Venue

Cellist Matt Haimovitz, who performs in both concert halls and nightclub settings, described some typical interruptions that a performer might encounter, besides coughing: cellphones, someone passing out in the middle of a concerto, giggling teenagers, candy wrappers, foot-beating (in time, and not in time), electrical outages, and earthquakes. "Remember the image of Isaac Stern wearing a gas mask, playing with the Israel Philharmonic during the first Iraq War during the Scud attacks on Tel Aviv?" he asks. "Rocket fire is a pretty big distraction, and he kept playing."

Though people typically think of the concert hall as a bastion of good etiquette, it's not necessarily quieter than a nightclub, nor does it always have a more attentive audience, Haimovitz has found.

"We played Beethoven's five sonatas for piano and cello in February in Seattle at a honky-tonk bar, to a capacity crowd of about 250," Haimovitz says. "You could have heard a pin drop while we were playing. My colleague Christopher O'Riley pointed out that the applause and cheering was so loud between the movements, that the audience was much louder than we could ever hope to be with our period instruments, a fortepiano

and gut-strung cello." But the audience's level of concentration made all the difference.

Practice in a State of Distraction

Violinist Rachel Barton Pine draws a distinction between something distracting the performer and something that detracts from the audience's experience. As a child, Pine practiced playing through distraction. When she was about six, "my mom would put me on top of this old trunk, and then my little sister's job was to run around, talk, wave her arms, and do whatever she could to distract me. It worked really well. to the point where, when I was eight years old, somebody fainted during one of my concerts and was carried out. With all of the commotion, I didn't even notice! I had

> How much is too much disruption and what can a performer do when faced with it?

learned to stay focused, no matter what was happening. I don't think it's too late for anybody to improve their skill at that."

"

Learning that skill can be as simple as practicing with someone who agrees to be a distractor: have him rustle paper, cough, whisper to his neighbor, check texts, and generally try to throw off the performer, she says.

Understand Your Own Boundaries

"I think you have to balance what's appropriate for the audience with what's human," Pine says. "If somebody actually answers their cell phone and starts talking on it, then that's crossing the line. But if somebody's cell phone goes off, I don't even get angry about that because it could happen, one time, to any of us. I try to be understanding and forgiving of these little slipups, and keep in the back of my mind that I'm grateful that every person in that hall chose to come to my concert that day."

That said, there are incidents that cross the line, and there's no substitute for experience when it comes to managing those situations.

"My ability to cope has evolved dramatically," Haimovitz says. "I have experienced such a range of venues over the last 15 years, not a whole lot can faze me. I had a fight break out once in a club in Los Angeles. After mediating, I sat down and continued playing. I've always had good concentration, and can tune quite a lot out. I draw the line when I feel that it is an unfair distraction to the audience. Although this line can also shift."

One time, Haimovitz simply had to stop. "I was once playing solo Bach at a restaurant venue in Burlington, Vermont. The noise coming from the drunken chatter at the bar, dishes clanking, and insensitive wait staff made it impossible for anyone there to engage with the music," he recalls, "After one suite, I apologized to those who had come especially for the music, and assured them that I would choose a more appropriate venue next time. That has happened once, maybe twice, in my entire performance career."

Don't Assume Noise Will Ruin Your Performance

On the other hand, occasionally a mild distraction can cause both audience and performer to focus even more. Once while on tour, playing solo works by living American composers, Haimovitz was scheduled to play at a Boston club.

"It was a sold-out show, a few hundred in the audience standing shoulder to shoulder on the dance floor," he says. "The atmosphere was electric, but when I took the stage and the applause died down, all you could hear was the booming bass, thumping from the hip-hop club below. 'What have I done, bringing these people here to listen to Elliott Carter?' crossed my mind, in a split second of panic. I began to play, and I was overwhelmed to see not a soul leave the venue during more than two hours of challenging music.

"They had tuned out everything else; the bleeding strains of hip-hop had become white noise. It was a revelation. Sometimes making an effort through distractions heightens the artistic process."



Mike Barnett, fiddle (Compass Records)

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY **FRIENDS**

Fiddler Mike Barnett releases a duo album while he recovers from a medical emergency

By David Templeton

f there's one thing a premier fiddler knows about, it's the art of improvisation—also known as the ability to always expect the unexpected. For Grammy nominee Mike Barnett (a regular member of Ricky Skaggs' band Kentucky Thunder and the David Grisman Quintet), however, the unexpected came in two waves. First, when the pandemic forced a shutdown of his touring plans. And second, when he suffered a severe cerebral hemorrhage in late July, at his home in Nashville.

After a pair of lengthy surgeries to remove a sizable clot in his brain—apparently the result of a congenital arteriovenous malformation he'd been unknowingly living with his whole life—Barnett found that it was, indeed, time to improvise. His plans to

Mike Barnett



release a new album of duets in late 2020 were put on hold as he redirected his energies into full-time recovery and physical therapy.

Barnett's wife, fiddler and teacher Annalise Ohse, along with bassist Jeff Picker, a longtime friend, quickly set up the Mike Barnett Recovery Fund, a GoFundMe campaign to support the fiddler's recovery. Barnett's remarkable progress is being chronicled in a number of stirring videos and reports on the campaign's webpage.

And now, nearly one year after its planned release, Barnett's delayed duets album, titled +1, is set to be released by Compass Records.

Years in the making, +1 features collaborations with an array of performers representing a spectrum of styles and musical forms. In addition to duets with Skaggs and Picker, Barnett is joined on the project which was completed before his medical event—by guitarist Stash Wyslouch, multiinstrumentalist Ric Robertson, mandolinist Dominick Leslie, singer-songwriter-guitarist Sarah Jarosz, Scottish harpist Maeve Gilchrist, banjo-guitar master Molly Tuttle, cellist Nathaniel Smith, singer-instrumentalist Sierra Hull, saxophonist Eddie Barbash, banjoist Cory Walker, and crossgenre violinist Alex Hargreaves.

In a recent email exchange, Barnett—with the keyboard assistance of Ohse—described his excitement about the upcoming release of the album, his approach to pairing tunes with musical partners, and what he's learned through it all about the power of collaboration.

Let's start with the concept of the album. Each track features you plus one other player. What made you decide to do a duo album?

I've always loved duo playing. When I was 19, my good friend Alex Hargreaves and I traveled to Europe. We made absolutely no plans, but one thing led to another and we sort of pieced together a tour, playing duo gigs in Rome, Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Paris. It was so fun, just two fiddles. That trip was one of the best three weeks of my life.

How did the album turn from an idea into an actual recording project?

When I followed my girlfriend (now wife) to Austin, there really wasn't much there for me musically. So I started writing and recording as a way to stay sane. Recording duos was a way for me to travel and see friends without having to coordinate too many schedules. Making a duo album just made sense.

The album features people vou've worked with before, and some you haven't. How did you select these specific collaborators?

Every person on this album is a good friend of mine, each from different phases of my life. I originally just called it Duos with Friends, but +1 has a better ring to it.

Most of the time I chose the collaborator based on the song. For example, when writing "Hollow City" and "Righteous Bell," I knew right away that I wanted to record those with Sarah Jarosz. Same with Sierra Hull on "Anna Marie." Other times I wrote or chose a song based on the collaborator. I knew I wanted

66_Z

Every person on this album is a good friend of mine, each from different phases of my life.

Eddie on the album, but it took a while to figure out what we should record. We started with some old-time tunes, recorded a few, but none felt right. I was racking my brain to figure it out. Maybe jazz?

Two years went by and it was actually Sarah Jarosz who suggested I go in a totally different direction and do something Irishinspired. It clicked. A day later I had written this four-part pseudo-Irish medley, "Breath and the Bow." It was really fun getting Eddie's perspective. Some parts of the medley just didn't play well for the saxophone. He made a few tweaks here and there and that was it. It came together fairly quickly.

That's an example of a collaboration working out easily. Were there any big challenges, or

unexpected surprises, that you encountered during the project?

"Higher Ground" was really tricky to transcribe into a duo. I wrote it back in 2015 in Brooklyn on a beat-up tenor guitar with only two strings. At first, I thought it might be a good fit to play with Molly Tuttle. She and I took a whack at it, but it just wasn't the right choice. We ended up recording a version of "Born to Be with You" instead. I figured I'd put "Higher Ground" back in my pocket and save it for another project. But then I thought of Ric Robertson. His unique style just made it work! It took me a while to figure out my part. I re-recorded many times before I landed on something I liked. Unlike the Irish medley, this one took a while to come together.

What did you learn from recording with so many different artists?

I learned that I have really great friends who kindly humor my OCD. Sometimes I can get pretty "in my head" during a session.

Your fans will definitely want to know how you are doing after your medical emergency, and what your recovery has been like. What role has your wife, also a violinist, played in your recovery?

It's hard. Initially, I couldn't walk, talk, or move my left arm or hand. Now, I'm walking, and my speech is improving, but my left arm and hand are being stubborn. There is still time. It's only been about seven months and I'm still making gains. When they start working again, I'll most definitely enlist my Suzuki violin-teacher wife to get my fingers back in shape! Annalise has been my beacon of light, going to all my therapy sessions, and helping me out with all my exercises. I love her so much. This whole situation still shocks me. It doesn't feel real. How did this happen to me? The whole thing is tragic and unbearable—but at least I know I am not alone.

What is the most important thing you want people to take away from this album, the way it was recorded, or what it means for you at this stage of your life and career?

Simple. Make music with your friends. At this stage in my post-hemorrhagic life, I'm so glad to have this special collection of recordings. Whatever you do, wherever you are, keep making music.



ELGAR VIOLIN CONCERTO I VIOLIN SONATA Renaud Capuçon, violin; London Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle, cond. (Erato/Warner Classics)

TRY A LITTLE **TENDERNESS**

Renaud Capuçon on recording Elgar's lush Violin Concerto

By Greg Cahill

ondon Symphony Orchestra music director Sir Simon Rattle has called Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61, "a monster . . . a masterpiece." At about 50 minutes, that late-Romantic masterwork is one of the longest and most challenging concertos in the violin repertoire. It is also one of the most beautiful, filled with lush lyrical phrases. French violinist Renaud Capuçon, 45, was up to the challenge. In the midst of the pandemic lockdown, he recorded the concerto with the LSO, under Rattle's direction, and a cast of masked musicians.

The orchestra has a long history with Elgar and his famous violin concerto: The LSO accompanied Fritz Kreisler in the premiere of the work in 1910 and Elgar became the venerable orchestra's principal conductor the following year. On the newly released Warner Classics album, the concerto is paired with Elgar's Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82

Renaud Capuçon



(featuring pianist Stephen Hough), which Capuçon has described as "a work of nobility and tenderness." I spoke with Capuçon about his approach to the works, and what it was like playing with an orchestra that has such a strong connection to the composer.

Tell me about your personal connection to Elgar and the violin concerto in particular.

I discovered this concerto when I was quite young—it was a recording of Sir Elgar and Menuhin, and I always loved it, but I didn't have the opportunity to practice it when I was studying in Berlin between 1994 and 1996, and then began to work. I played the piece for the first time in 2006.

> " It felt like surfing a wave of sound because they played the music so well.

> > "

What was it like working with the LSO, which has had such a long and illustrious history with Elgar?

While working with the LSO is always a treat, I have to say that knowing that the LSO had played it with Elgar himself—and Menuhin, and Kreisler, and Heifetz-made me feel very, very small. But it also felt like surfing a wave of sound because they played the music so well.

Elgar himself was a violinist. How is that reflected in this concerto?

You can certainly feel that Elgar was a violinist, because he's really using the violin to think, and it's very well written. Also, the fact that it was written for Kreisler makes it clear that it's a violinist's piece.

You paid tribute to Kreisler on your 2007 recording *Capriccio*. What has drawn you to this legendary violinist and how has he inspired you?

Kreisler is a frame of reference for everybody. I remember my teacher speaking to me when I was about eight or nine about meeting Kriesler. She met him when she was young and heard him in concert, and she was always fascinated with what she heard and spoke to me about him and his amazing and sweet sound. Of course, I am incredibly inspired by him, and the chance to play one of his violins, his 1721 Stradivari, was an incredible opportunity. Being a violinist, you always have to give homage to Kreisler because he's the one that inspired us most.

The lyrical phrases in the concerto's Allegro Molto movement are some of the most beautiful ever composed in Western music, so very tender. How did you connect to these?

I think everyone knows the concerto thanks to this amazing moment, and its lyrical phrases are all around the concerto, returning over and again. It's one of the concertos you can feel the most with the violin. It's just incredible.

Your chamber partner, pianist Stephen Hough, has described the sonata as "dangerous music, in that it can get so close to sentimentality, but it never tips over the edge."

When Stephen plays the sonata, it's clearly a love dialogue between the piano and violin. It's like he wants to say he's in love, but he can't really say it and it's going back and forth. Stephen is an amazing pianist, and we've been able to dig into the music. It was clear that we both are in love with the piece, which made it easy to meet in the middle.

What should violinists understand when approaching these works?

I think if there is one thing that you should know as a violinist when you play the Elgar concerto and sonata, it is that they should sing. You should let the violin sing from the beginning to the end and let the opalescent tone of your sound be the first to appear in this amazing music.





LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: THREE QUARTETS FOR PIANO, VIOLIN, VIOLA & CELLO, WoO 36 Bärenreiter, €44.50 (score & parts)

A BEETHOVEN RARITY

Three piano quartets, written at age 15, are the only pieces he wrote in this genre

By Mary Nemet

hen Beethoven, aged barely 15, composed these three piano quartets, the genre was rare and not yet part of an established chamber-music tradition. The two by Mozart, Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor (1785) and No. 2 in E-flat major (1786), are the only significant comparable contemporary works. However, it is hardly likely that Beethoven knew of Mozart's still-unpublished G minor quartet. Instead, he modelled his piano quartets after a set of Mozart violin sonatas published in 1781; for example, Beethoven's C major quartet borrows thematic material from Mozart's Violin Sonata No. 17 in C, K. 296. Apart from Beethoven's own arrangement of his quintet for piano and wind instruments



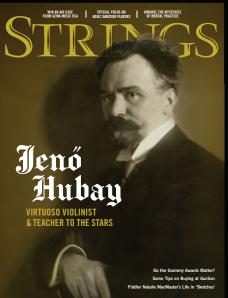
(Op. 16) for piano quartet, these three works are the only compositions he wrote for piano, violin, viola, and cello.

What else was happening in the year 1785, when these three piano quartets first saw the light of day? King George III was on the English throne, Louis XVI on the French, and Catherine the Great ruled in Russia. The first airborne flight of a Frenchman and American crossed the English Channel from Dover to Calais in a hydrogen gas balloon.

At 16, Napoleon Bonaparte was a year older than Beethoven and still only a lieutenant. Benjamin Franklin, as U.S. ambassador to France, left his post that year to become governor of Pennsylvania.

Back on the musical front, piano quartets, still a rarity, had been dominated by and led from a keyboard, which was usually the clavecin. They were essentially concertos or sonatas with string accompaniment. But we can see the beginnings of an advancing form













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that found further fulfilment in Brahms' works and those of later composers.

Beethoven gave the strings increased exposure rather than their earlier accompanying role. Already in the first quartet in E flat, piano and strings are equal partners. Opening unusually with an Adagio slow movement, the finale has seven variations on a theme.

All three hark back to Mozart, but look forward to remarkable changes, with Beethoven expanding on long-held traditions and introducing innovations as the potential for improved keyboards and stringed instruments grew. Many elements and themes already anticipate the composer's later works.

First published posthumously in 1828, these lively juvenile oeuvres are lyrical and charming, dominated by a sparkling piano part, forming an ideal introduction for budding players to the unique world of chamber music. Bärenreiter's large-size score and clear, unfettered parts on their customary buff-colored paper make reading a sheer pleasure. The autograph score is the primary source for this fastidious edition. An extensive Introduction, illuminating notes on performance practice, and a critical commentary complete these desirable volumes.



FIDDLE TUNES: IRISH MUSIC FOR STRINGS

edited by George Speckert. Bärenreiter, €14.95

Here is the latest addition to Bärenreiter's Easy String Ensemble series. Music has always

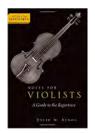
played an important role in Irish culture. The merry sounds of the fiddle, drum, and harp help drive away bad spirits (and hopefully, foggy weather), enhancing a sense of magic and fantasy, bringing hope and comfort to a land of often hard times.

These six simple but catchy melodies are ideal for early ensemble training and for first concert performances. The sometimes cheerful, often melancholy tunes such as "A Lovely Lass," "Quiet Sailing Waters," "The Green Glen," and "The Foggy Dew" are expertly arranged by George Speckert and will appeal to young string players. First violin gets the lion's share, but most themes

are evenly distributed in the other parts so that everyone gets a chance to shine.

The score and parts contain five separate parts for violins 1, 2, and 3, viola, and cello and bass combined. (A separate doublebass part would be very handy.) In all pieces the viola can be replaced by the third violin. The spacious, easy-to-read printing is exemplary.

-MN



NOTES FOR VIOLISTS: A GUIDE TO THE REPERTOIRE by David M. Bynog. Oxford

University Press, \$125

Oxford University Press' newest title in its Notes for Performers series offers historical and analytical

information on 35 pieces for the viola, from Bach to Weber. The author is David M. Bynog, head of acquisitions at Fondren Library, Rice

I knew I had made the right choice when my teacher told me that it had its own clef. I had learned how to read the treble and bass clefs, so the idea of getting my own special clef seemed awesome.

—David M. Bynog

"

University, a violist himself who has edited more than 40 compositions. He knows the music inside-out and is the ideal guide for viola explorers.

In addition to the usual suspects, like the Walton Concerto and Harold in Italy, Bynog has included major works that are not yet regularly heard on the programs of major orchestras, like Bartók's Concerto and Martinu's Rhapsody-Concerto. Three works were written in the last 50 years (Penderecki, Shostakovich, and Toru Takemitsu), two by women (Rebecca Clarke and Lillian Fuchs).

Each entry begins with the details of the work followed by a one- or two-paragraph capsule consisting of a pertinent, often eye-opening quotation from the composer or a perceptive observer, a biographical sketch, and the analysis. The persuasive capsules will be invaluable to programnote writers and casual music lovers, while the scope of the music provides an insight into the world of the viola.

Bynog himself didn't take the common route of switching to the viola from the violin. "I knew I had made the right choice when my teacher told me that it had its own clef. I had learned how to read the treble and bass clefs, so the idea of getting my own special clef seemed awesome," he says.

Bynog's Guide is available hardbound, as a paperback, and, at a more affordable price. on Kindle. (The Kindle version is identical to the excellent print edition except that the dynamics and certain music symbols are a bit fuzzier.)

—Laurence Vittes



MARIAN PARADEISER: **DIVERTIMENTO IN E FOR TWO VIOLINS, VIOLA & CELLO** Doblinger, €21.95

This addition to Doblinger's Classical Music Series is a first printing, based on the

autograph score in the Austrian National Library. Paradeiser's Divertimento in E major is one of a set of six, with all original manuscripts in the form of separate string parts. They provide suggestions as to contemporary performance practice with extant accidentals, articulation, and dynamics.

Editor Günter Stummvoll mirrors these in his meticulous and clear edition of this littleknown composer. Paradeiser's six quartets (of which five exist today) reflect the era of Haydn and Mozart, when divertimentos were all the rage for singing, dancing, and instrumental events.

Paradeiser's history was a tragically short one. Born in 1747, he had become a choir boy in Melk, Austria, by age 12. On the day of his inauguration to the Chair of Divinity at the

monastery school there, the young composer and cleric died, aged only 28.

The boy-violinist mainly wrote divertimentos, already penning works in that genre from age 14, though his 65 known secular works also include concertos and symphonies. The divertimentos were popularly received, some reaching the court of Emperor Joseph II, who liked to play the cello part in these quartets.

Akin to Michael Haydn and early Mozart, this charming four-movement divertimento is replete with cantabile tunes in the opening Moderato, followed by an elegant minuet, a poignant Adagio, and a sparkling Presto finale. Like Schubert and Mozart, who knows what even greater heights the young composer and violinist would have scaled had he lived longer?

Bravo to Doblinger for bringing this beautiful work to light.

-MN



PLEYEL: SIX EASY DUOS FOR TWO VIOLINS, OP. 48

G. Henle Verlag, \$20.95

Although it may astonish us today, around 1800 Ignaz Pleyel was one of the most

prolific and popular composers in Europe. In innumerable printed editions, his works traveled far and wide, even reaching North America. Little wonder though, as Pleyel founded his own music retail business and an extremely successful publishing company. Additionally, he set up the piano-building company in Paris that bore his name, making him even more famous in the music world.

As a composer, Pleyel's focus was on the symphonic repertoire and chamber music. He penned over 40 duos for violin, many self-published, but competing companies climbed onto the bandwagon, and even fraudulently published duets purporting to

be by Pleyel. Those published here are thought to be original works, or possibly an authentic version of his sonatinas for piano and violin, Op. 27.

In any case, the first edition of the version for two violins is the primary source here. A preface and commentary offer helpful notes on their history and provenance.

First appearing in 1796, in increasing order of difficulty from beginner levels to intermediate (Pleyel was ever the pedagogue), these delightful duos are ideal for sharing a rainy Saturday afternoon with your playing buddy, or as a post-lesson treat.

Edited by Norbert Gertsch and with fingering and bowing by Evelyne Grüb-Trauer in supplementary separate parts, players can choose to share the music stand and read from the pristine and very spacious double score, or from the separate violin parts.

-MN

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Ryan McLaughlin



Of all the instruments that have passed through your hands, which one do you most wish you could have kept? What made it special?

It's hard to pick my favorite instrument. It's always tempting to say "the first Guarneri I worked on" or "this really great Stradivari." Andrea Amati's "King" cello. Or maybe Nicolò Amati's "Brookings" violin, after which I'm modeling my own violins at the moment. Those are all really important instruments, and each one deserves its own careful study.

But I'd rather talk about a cello by Matthew Noykos.

It's a copy of the 1757 "Teschenmacher" Guadagnini. It's a not a big cello, with a string length of 675 mm or so, but it sounds humongous. My client Kelly Quesada is a really fantastic cellist. However, she's small of

stature, and was starting to wonder how many years of cello playing she had left. She felt she was pushing toward injury with hours of stretching her hand over a 690 mm string length. Matt's cello completely changed that. Kelly now has an incredible-sounding cello that is a brilliant match for her. She's also excited to be able to support a living maker.

This is satisfying for me for several reasons. Matt's a great guy and a friend of mine. Kelly is way too young and talented a cellist to be thinking about the limits of her cello playing. She's now working on repertoire that she had put aside. I get to contribute to the music world by finding someone a cello that really promotes her art. And I would love to have that cello back so that I could help someone else in the same way.

-Ryan McLaughlin, violin maker



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What Color Do You Play?

Lion Cases come in limited edition colors that turn heads wherever you go. With its sleek carbon-fiber shell, the Lion Case is suprisingly light, weighing in at as little as 3.6 lbs. Don't count it out because it's a featherweight, though: this is a case engineered to go as many rounds as you need.

