

## IN MEMORIAM — ALICE PREVES

Violist Alice Preves passed away in November after a three-month struggle with liver cancer. A longtime member of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, she will be remembered as a performer, teacher, motivator and friend.

Alice began playing the violin when she was about 8 years old. She was the youngest of three children, and wanted the opportunity to play with a passion. She begged her parents to let her play the violin. She switched to viola at the age of 17. She attended the University of Illinois. While she was there, she toured with the orchestra to South America. This was a four-month tour that included 50 orchestral performances. While on that tour, she also performed in a string quartet that represented the school.

Her love for chamber music continued when she moved to the Twin Cities. In the 1970s, she played in a string quartet with David Preves, Doug Overland and Vince Bastien. Doug Overland recalls that they rehearsed every Sunday morning and had a vast repertoire of music. He remembers it as “the best experience of my life.”

Alice’s daughter Laura Preves Helgeson fondly recalls the string quartet rehearsals in their living room, as well as lessons and practicing that was customary in their

house. “The quartet always rehearsed in our living room when my sister and I were very young. We would listen to them as we fell asleep at night. When it came time for the concerts, we were conditioned to fall asleep to the music — so that’s what we did during the performance!”

Alice’s first concert with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra was in October of 1967, with music director Leopold Sipe. She stepped down twice after giving birth to her daughters, Laura and Sharon. When Pinchas Zukerman became music director, he added a permanent fourth chair to the section. “I remember her practicing one particular excerpt from Mozart’s *Sinfonie Concertante* over and over again.

I think it is what won her the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra position.” As a member of the SPCO, she was a frequent performer on the Chamber Music programs. Her stand partner of 22 years, Tamas Strasser described her as “a very good stand partner and very positive about everything. She was forthright and one you could rely on.”

As a teacher, Alice received the MNSOTA Master Teacher Award in 1998. Her students have won local, national and international competitions. She always believed that a little bit of regular practice far outweighed a lot of infrequent practice.

She often brought real life into the studio. Many of her students have mentioned that she helped them with so much more than learning to play the viola. One of those students is Kate Holzemer, who currently is a member of the Buffalo Philharmonic.

Kate recalls a very difficult time in her life. “My father died only a few months after being diagnosed with cancer. It was a terrible year. One thing that I remember clearly from those days is my viola lessons. Sometimes it felt like my only anchor to the future was playing the viola. Alice seemed to intuit and respect my emotional boundaries. She didn’t ask for more than I could give and she helped me stay focused and moving forward. In this way, her support was literally life saving. Alice’s unique brand of stern tenderness ushered me through the worst period of my life. I have had many wonderful teachers, but Alice is the one who instilled in me the musical values I hold most dear.”

Those who performed with her describe her as a natural musician. Longtime friend and colleague Annette Caruthers said, “For Alice, technical matters would serve the phrase and music. Alice taught through the music. She played with warmth and intelligence. Her playing was very natural.”

Her interests outside of music extended to tennis, alternative healing and she later became certified as a Life Coach. She spent seventeen summers performing with the Grand Tetons Festival. She adored that experience and regarded the Tetons as her spiritual home.

Before her death, Alice made a contribution to the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra to endow her viola chair. Her place and memory will live on in the orchestra.

*Mary Sorlie*

