



VIOLA

Viola News

by J. David Arnott

Having been given the opportunity to guest write the viola column, the question of picking a suitable topic has not been easy. It has been so difficult, in fact, that several topics will have to be explored.

Harold in Italy

I had the pleasure of attending the Minnesota Orchestra this week (I am writing this on Black Friday) to hear Tom Turner play the Berlioz' *Harold in Italy*. I invited my viola section/students to come with me to hear the concert (it was \$10 student ticket week) and to my horror, I discovered that none of them had ever even heard of *Harold in Italy*. So after explaining to them about Lord Byron and Paganini's commission and ultimate rejection of the work as well as about solo viola concerto vs. symphonic form, it was off to Orchestra Hall.

The performance was first-rate and was executed in a way I had never seen before. The first movement was performed in the traditional manner with the violist in the front of the orchestra. The second and third movements were played from the front of the left and right balconies, and the fourth movement began with Mr. Turner strolling down the aisle while playing the viola, eventually making his way back on stage.

Minnesota Viola Society

What's new with the Minnesota Viola Society you ask? On January first Stella Anderson became past-president and Dawn Anderson took over as president, becoming the fifth president in the history of the society. The MVS forges ahead and continues to promote all things viola on all levels from professional to amateur with special emphasis on students. This past October, the MVS, in conjunction with MacPhail Center, sponsored a multi-media lecture/presentation on William Primrose presented by David Dalton. David Dalton was one of Primrose's protégés and is a leading proponent and expert on the work of Primrose. Though I missed the event, it did lead me to read a book I have owned for more years than I care to remember but had never opened. The book, *Walk on the North Side*, is an autobiographical memoir by William Primrose written with the assistance of David Dalton. It was an enlightening read

and came at a neat point in my career. As I evaluate my teaching from year to year, the distance between those who influenced me the most grows wider. My main teacher was Joseph de Pasquale who studied with Primrose. Primrose studied with Camillo Ritter who studied with Joseph Joachim and Otakar Ševčík. Primrose also studied with Eugène Ysaÿe who studied with Henri Vieuxtemps and Henryk Wieniawski. While reading this book I was able to see where many of my pedagogical values originated: second generation Primrosian pedagogy, third generation Sevcik technique, and several generations of romantic ideals. Who is in your musical family tree? Does your tree lead to Mary West? To Mary Horozaniecki? To Stella Anderson? If so, ask them with whom they studied! You will be splendidly surprised.

The MVS also recently sponsored several events for MYS and GTCYS students. In an effort to acquaint young violin students with the glorious dulcet tones of the viola, MVS members brought a variety of violas to MYS and GTCYS rehearsals and put violas in the hands of willing violinists. Led by Jim Bartsch and Judy MacGibbon, the events generally include some clef reading and some simple tunes to get everyone playing. Of course, the first time a fiddle player experiences the C string, well, there is no going back. The goal is, of course, to convert all our young violin players into viola players (just kidding—but converting a few would be nice and useful!).

Can students be members of the viola society? Yes of course they can! There is a greatly reduced membership rate of only \$4.00. For that you get into viola society events and a newsletter now and then. Plus you get to associate with the friendliest members of the orchestra! Minnesota Viola Society contact: www.minnesotaviolasociety.org.

J. David Arnott is an Associate Professor of Music at The College of St. Benedict/St. John's University where he directs the symphony orchestra and teaches violin and viola. He holds degrees in viola from The Philadelphia College of Performing Arts, The Curtis Institute of Music, and The University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Arnott is currently violinist of Trio Benedicta and a member of the viola section of The Duluth-Superior Symphony Orchestra. He is the past-president of the Minnesota chapter of the American Viola Society. ♯