

Clinic: Viva la Viola Ensemble!

presented by Korey Konkol
reported by Judy MacGibbon

Well, as expected, the always entertaining, animated and expressive Korey Konkol introduced the fortunate attendees of the 2009 MNSOTA clinic to a sampling of viola ensembles, including new, original pieces along with delightfully effective transcriptions. Korey has been the viola professor at the University of Minnesota since 1992 and the ensembles were splendidly performed by a collection of his gifted graduate students (and Nancy Bjork, bass). The program:

Funeral March of a Marionette by Charles Gounod, arr. D.M. Levenson
Partie Polonaise for 2 Violas and Bass by George Philipp Telemann
Lament for Two Violas by Frank Bridge
Primavera Porteña "Spring" from *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* by Astor Piazzolla, arr. Everaldo Martinez

Korey's favorite topic, of course, is the viola. Creating viola ensembles, which he refers to as the "viola-ization" of compositions, is specifically, the conversion (or *improvement*, Korey quips) of borrowed,

transcribed and stolen works for various combinations of violas. Two of the great violists of the 20th century, William Primrose and Lionel Tertis, commissioned many great works for the viola and Korey encourages violists, conductors (and anyone) to consider the exciting proposition of commissioning a work for your orchestra and viola!

We all enjoyed Korey's attitude toward violists, practice and performing! He believes violists are more stable and less high-maintenance than other musicians, and we appreciate ensembles because of the safety in numbers! Not exactly circling the wagons, but something like that, and at the same time being an ambassador to the instrument and the repertoire throughout the universe.

A sketch of Korey's approach to practicing and presentation included some wonderful and fresh-feeling concepts. I appreciated being reminded of these:

- 1) Take chances or you will not be able to feel the highs and lows
- 2) Work methodically

- 3) Forgive yourself so you can make music (my favorite!)
- 4 (credit to Roland Vamos)- A beautiful sound; ultimate fingerings, always; and the importance of playing on a quality instrument with proper set-up.

If you can't resist trying to find more resources for viola repertoire and information, try these websites:

PIVA (Primrose International Viola Archive) <http://music.lib.byu.edu/piva>
International Viola Society www.viola.ca/ivs/ivs_home.html
www.americanviolasociety.org
www.minnesotaviolasociety.org

And remember to always lock your car when your viola is inside lest someone break in and leave more violas!

Judy MacGibbon is treasurer of the Minnesota Viola Society, board member of Thursday Musical, orchestra committee member (and violist) of the Duluth Symphony Orchestra dso.com. †