

# INTERMISSIONS

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## FEATURED INTERVIEW: MARGARET PRESSLEY

Founder and Director of the Seattle Conservatory of Music and Pressley Violin Studio, Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation Artistic Director of Violin Studies in the Pacific Northwest, and Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

*Margaret Pressley, founder and director of the Seattle Conservatory of Music and Pressley Violin Studio, is well-known throughout the United States as one of its foremost instructors of violin pedagogy. Pressley Violin Studio alumni now hold positions as professional violinists in orchestras and chamber music ensembles around the world, and have won nationally and internationally in competition and are featured annually as soloists with orchestras. Margaret Pressley, who had the rare distinction of observing Dorothy DeLay's private teaching studio at the Aspen Music School for fifteen years, will become Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Colorado at Boulder in the fall of 2008, commuting weekly between there and Seattle. She is the Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation's Artistic Director of Violin Studies in the Pacific Northwest. Margaret Pressley has previously held faculty positions as Lecturer at Western Washington University and Adjunct Professor at Seattle Pacific University. She was Master Teacher of Violin at Indiana University's Summer String Academy, Schlern International Music Festival in Italy and the Heifetz Institute. In addition to directing the Seattle Conservatory of Music,*

*Margaret Pressley continues to guide its Collegiate/Performance Preparation Program. She has served as a clinician in several states and has sat on regional and national advisory panels. Margaret Pressley was a featured author in American String Teacher and was the recipient of the 1994 Outstanding Studio Teacher of the Year Award given by the Washington State Chapter of the American String Teachers Association. At the 2008 ASTA National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, she joined colleague Steven Palincsar for a presentation on "Collegiate/University/Conservatory Audition Preparation." Recently, she spoke with INTERMISSIONS.*

INTERMISSIONS: You had the opportunity to observe Dorothy DeLay's private studio teaching for several years. Would you talk about what you learned?

MARGARET PRESSLEY: When I began watching Miss DeLay teach, I thought, "This is not what I know at all", and it changed my life. Everything that I previously knew about the violin and how to teach it was now incorrect. Initially, I went to Aspen for two weeks to observe lessons. I took notes and



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tape recorded everything, came home, took what I learned and began to rehabilitate the form of teaching I had previously used with my students. After a couple of years, I began watching Miss DeLay's assistants as well. I started inviting them to the Seattle Young Artists Music Festival to adjudicate, too. The first students I sent to Aspen studied with Naoko Tanaka, a wonderful teacher on the Juilliard faculty, who at that time was one of Miss DeLay's assistants. During the course of each year in Seattle, I applied what I had learned in Aspen. Every summer, I would seek more pieces of the puzzle. If just one piece was found, it was totally worth my time. I did that for fifteen years.

INTERMISSIONS: Can you describe what the lessons were like?

2 MP: The first lesson I observed, was a girl from Japan who was at Aspen studying with Miss DeLay for the summer. Miss DeLay called her up to her desk and began asking her questions about the repertoire she'd studied. "Have you played this? Have you played this? Have you played this?" The list contained everything from Bach concerti to modern concerti, and I was very impressed by the fact that she'd played every one. Miss DeLay made it clear that to be considered "studied," the entire concerto must be learned. That made a huge impact on me.

The second lesson I saw was with a little Korean girl who was playing the Bruch G Minor. Miss DeLay worked with her on how to articulate the two arpeggios on the first page clearly, through a string crossing

awareness exercise. She asked her to stop the bow, name the string she intended to cross to before she crossed, and then cross over. Miss DeLay explained that the first and second arpeggios had different string crossings, and that the reason they weren't clear was that the crossings were subtly different. She wanted her to become aware of the differences between the two. She then asked the girl to play the arpeggios again, thinking through the string crossings (but not saying them), and the girl got it perfectly. The first two lessons I witnessed were eye openers for me and I knew I was in for a life-changing experience.

One of the first master classes I observed focused on pitch differences within the note A. Miss DeLay demonstrated by playing every A on a handheld electronic tuner that someone gave her from the crowd, one at a time—A440-A441-A442-A443 through A446, asking us as she went along, which one we personally liked. I liked A442. She preferred A442 also, and then explained that America (in the 1980's) used A440 as a base. In Europe it was higher. Asia preferred the highest.

In observing my personal students in their lessons with Naoko Tanaka the first year, I saw that Ms. Tanaka focused a great deal on intonation. You see, in Seattle my piano was tuned to A440. Miss DeLay's studio pianos were all tuned to A442. I realized that there were two sets of pitches my kids needed to understand, so I had my piano tuned to A442, and my pianist (we rehearsed at her studio) tuned to A440. The kids learned to match whatever piano they collaborated

with. The next summer at Aspen, it was interesting for me to see a shift in focus at Naoko Tanaka's lessons with my kids to a broader range of subjects.

I also learned from Miss DeLay that people have certain pitches that they prefer in their ear. She said it was sort of like going to a deli and ordering a ham sandwich. Some people would like to have ham with tomato, mustard, relish, and onions. Somebody else would rather not have mustard, but might want mayo and lettuce. She said everyone has their own sense of pitch, and it is up to us to decide what that pitch is. She also explained that the notes within a key that have to be perfectly in tune are I, IV, and V. Other notes can be chosen. I have come to the conclusion over the years, that the relative key and the leading tone within the key must also be perfectly in tune, which leaves us with a balance of two pitches of choice, usually II and III or perhaps VI.

Miss DeLay told me to get the Gaylord Yost shifting book. I discovered it was out of print, but fortunately managed to obtain a copy. I use it as a violinist's shifting "bible."

INTERMISSIONS: Did Miss DeLay explain to you how to use the Yost *Exercises for Change of Positions*?

MP: No, she did not.

INTERMISSIONS: How did you learn to use it?

MP: Well, I discovered that the Yost shift was the first shift ever invented. Created by the French, it was named the 'French' or

'Original Finger' shift. The first note of the shift, and its correlating finger, move lightly on the string from the original position to the new one. As the finger arrives at the new position/note, the shift has completed itself. The top note/finger of the shift is called the 'Intermediate Note' which eventually becomes a *ghost* note after being reached silently. It gives way to the 'New Note'. The 'New Note', the one that we hear in the end, is not the shift at all. It is the note after the shift. Shifting to an 'Intermediate Note' and then switching quickly to the 'New Note,'

sets the hand in the new position for perfect intonation and clarity. Yost explains that to learn to shift correctly, we must practice as slowly as possible, and to take great care to keep the thumb free (not pressed too firmly against the neck). I laugh at his wording that "A disregard of this important rule is fatal", but when you think about it, it's true! Another thing I've discovered through experimentation is that the thumb leads the shift, not the arm. I found an article Miss DeLay wrote, diagramming the shift from the original note through the release

of motion and onto the new note. I use this technique to this day for every student. Point A to B is the fingered shift. Point C is the note to be played after the shift. (*See diagrams below.*) It's an art to learn how to do the French shift well. It is used for every scale and every arpeggio. The major shift in music even today is the French shift. Violin playing is all about press-releases and about weights and balances. This shifting process is one of the major press-releases to perfect.

## FINGER PRESSURE RELEASE SHIFT



### FRENCH SHIFT: E-string example

#### POSITION TO POSITION

FIRST POSITION

A

THIRD POSITION

(B) C

THIRD POSITION

C

FIRST POSITION

(B) A

#### NOTE TO NOTE

F# .....> G A

A .....> G F#

#### FINGER TO FINGER

1 .....> 1 2

2 .....> 2 1



Margaret Pressley shares a laugh with a student at a lesson.

**INTERMISSIONS:** Could you talk about your left-hand exercise progression?

**MP:** When students come into my studio, I assess their forms and body types. We work initially on how to set up the violin to their unique body. Students learn to keep spines aligned and to release the shoulders and jaw. I've fashioned an exercise that strengthens the left arm, by holding the arm up in violin position with the use of the bicep rather than the back, and with an arm that hangs with gravity. Students then place their violins high on the collarbone, using the bicep with no jaw. They are asked to lay the tip of the bow comfortably onto a string with a straight bow to discover where the violin positions itself naturally. Everyone has a different

arm length, so each body type must find its own comfort zone. Students then hold the violin in that position for one minute, concentrating on bicep use rather than shoulder, jaw and back. At first, the bicep will ache because it has no muscle definition. Over the next few weeks as the muscle grows stronger, we add more time until students are able to hold their violins up comfortably for as much as three minutes. This relieves the shoulder and jaw. It gives flexibility to the arm and hand and makes everything easier to play. This is probably the most crucial exercise in my progression, because it ensures long life to the violinist.

Exercises progress from there to one I've coined 'Target Practice'. Fingers are

strengthened by dropping and lifting them, left of the center of the fingertip next to the nail on the A-string. Twelve repetitions for each finger are assigned three times a day, always thinking about bicep use, keeping the violin parallel to the ground.

Next comes one measure of Ševčík's *School of Technique, Op. 1, Part I*, which I call the "Sprint." One bowed measure starts with each sixteenth note being played as a quarter note at 40 on the metronome. Using Galamian rhythms of fours and sixes, students drop and lift fingers with 'Target Practice' application. We then accelerate to two notes per beat as eighth notes, then sixteenths as written, followed by dotted eighth-sixteenth patterns (backwards and forwards). We then

proceed to six-note patterns, using dotted eighth note-sixteenth notes (forwards and backwards). The metronome moves up a click at a time until students reach the top (about 216 for the “fours” and 160 for the “sixes”) in sixteenths. It usually takes about a year and a half to do it really well.

Then we add Schradieck’s *The School of Violin-Technique, Book 1, Exercise 1*. The 25 units are done rhythmically with the same hand, arm, finger application and perfect intonation. This exercise also begins at 40 and raises a click at a time to 120 on the metronome. I give them a section or two at a time until they can do all 25. I call this the “marathon.” Students must play this perfectly without stopping.

Next we go into double-stops. For the youngest students, I use Trott’s *Melodious Double-Stops*, and for students who are a bit older, I use Whistler’s *Developing Double-Stops*. I teach the students to understand intervals and how we can perfect our intonation through intervals. Eventually, we leave the exercise books and begin double-stops in the Flesch *Scale System*.

Yost’s *Exercises for Change of Position* is next, beginning with first to second position. It is important to think about three things: 1) what position, note and finger to start in, 2) what position, note and finger to end in, and 3) what note and finger to play after the shift is completed.

Next we work to apply the position knowledge gained. Whistler’s *Introducing the Positions* (Books 1 and 2) are used. I correlate

Whistler with Yost, beginning Whistler with Volume II in second position.

At the end of the left-hand exercises, we add vibrato. Wrist vibrato was invented first, so we begin with that. I learned an exercise from Miss Delay: apply a rounded third-finger G on the A-string in fourth position. From there, press the note enough to sound and then flatten the finger back to F# with a release of pressure. It will sound like a ghost note. We practice releasing the wrist, flattening the first joint of the finger and rolling it back up to a rounded position on the original note. Beginning with one oscillation at 40, we work in increments up to eight oscillations per beat, and then move into other fingers on other notes in fourth or fifth position using the same method. When students can successfully oscillate eight times per beat, we move to Simon Fischer’s *Basics* to bring the exercise down into first position. I use the first movement of Handel’s *Sonata No. 3 in F Major* to begin vibrato integration into repertoire.

This concludes my left-hand “basics” progression. For more advanced students, I assign Dounis’s *Absolute Independence of the Fingers* (which is really fun for the kids) and I sometimes use Ševčík’s Op. 8 and Op. 9 for shifting and extra double-stop work.

INTERMISSIONS: What about the right hand?

MP: I begin my right-hand practice order with a pencil exercise I learned from Miss DeLay, called the ‘Teeter-totter’. I have expanded this initial exercise to include three

sections. Each one has a purpose. Starting with the ‘Teeter-totter’, fingers rest naturally on the pencil (not the finger tips). The pinky rounds up and places onto the stick naturally. The thumb also rounds up gently and places itself under the stick lightly. Position the pencil—hand and fingers horizontal to the ground. The index and pinky teeter-totter back and forth while the thumb and middle fingers remain inanimate as the post of the ‘Teeter-totter’. This activates the hand into the rebalancing motion of the fingers on the bow, demonstrating in a miniature fashion the use of rebalancing the bow arm.

The second section, I call the “Rotary”. Position A: fingers rest on the pencil. The exercise begins by straightening the rounded pinky, pushing the pencil (or bow stick) forward. An initially-rounded thumb straightens, creating Position B. The pinky and the thumb then round back up to Position A. This exercise helps students understand finger use at the tip.

The third exercise I call the “finger follow-through,” which initiates collé use. We start by resting the fingers on the pencil in a gentle fashion on Position A, leading the wrist and fingers to the left and around in a circle back to Position A. This can be done by leading the wrist to the right as well. The motion creates the lifting of the wrist and hand off the string for an up and down bow collé stroke. We visualize the string underneath the hand so that everything stays flat between the first knuckle and the elbow, and the fingers don’t dip lower than the string itself.

From the pencil exercises we go to the “Shadow-bow” (a Paul Rolland technique). It’s a simple way to learn rebalance of the bow and is done in front of the mirror, feet facing toward the mirror. Placing the bowhand and frog on the left shoulder, we draw the bow through the Galamian points of the triangle, the square, and the isosceles triangle, then back to the square and frog. I use post-it flags to divide the bow into sections. It’s easier to draw the bow on the shoulder than on the string. We practice how the hand releases from the back of the hand at the frog, to the front of the hand at the tip while applying more pressure on the downbows and less pressure on the ups. This, when applied to a string, will create an even sound and a fluid bowstroke. If you can

turn the bow around with the fingers by  
6 leading first with the elbow and wrist, the arm follows through with gravity for seamless turns. The motion looks like an infinity symbol.

The next exercise in my right-hand “basics” order is Galamian’s ‘Long Bow’, which is played only on the A-string. This also is studied in front of the mirror. To do that, feet angle a little differently. When we’re in front of the mirror (i.e. front and center for ‘Shadow-bows’), the feet go directly towards the mirror. If we’re looking in the mirror with the violin on the collarbone, parallel to the mirror and to the ground, the feet angle to the left along with the torso. The jaw comes off the chinrest and the head faces the mirror. In this position, excellent posture and vision for bow-work can be done. The jaw doesn’t need use, nor does the shoulder, except to

balance the violin on the collarbone. I use post-it flags to divide the bow into quarters, then thirds, half and whole bows. We study how to take a straight-bow, guiding it through the rebalance system; parallel to the bridge. I then explain the three elements of sound: 1) bow-speed, 2) bow-weight, and 3) sounding point or point of contact. As the speed of the bow moves faster, it impacts the weight needed. This impacts the sounding point use. This exercise is first done as a hooked-martelé and then as a smooth, slurred bow at 60 per quarter note on the metronome.

Next, we move into Ševčík’s *School of Bowing, Op. 2, Part 1, No. 3*. This develops an awareness of arm-level use. It explains the seven arm-levels first as single note strings, G,D,A,E and then continues with the ones we don’t think about, G/D, D/A and A/E). The Long Bow exercise is used. As a supplement, I use Louis Kievman’s *Virtuoso Technique, Part 1*, which has some excellent bow-speed exercises.

This completes my right-hand “basics” practice order. From this point, we move into combined hand work through scales/arpeggios and etudes, solo Bach, concertos and pieces or sonatas.

INTERMISSIONS: Could you discuss your approach to teaching rhythm?

MP: Beginning students, or those that are rhythmically challenged are assigned *Winning Rhythms* by Ayola. Everyone claps and counts aloud fractionally, using the metronome at one quarter note = 60. I’ve

learned that clapping gently in circles easily facilitates the ability to exact rhythmic pulses. Handel sonata slow movements are excellent for teaching fractional counting, because baroque rhythms must be concrete, and they can be very complicated. Slow movements from Bach’s *Solo Sonatas and Partitas* are great teaching tools as well. Usually, if students can count baroque rhythms, they can count anything.

Coordination in counting and playing can be done by adding one coordination at a time; first by counting/clapping the section aloud, then adding the left-hand while counting the rhythm aloud, then pretend-bowing while playing the left-hand and counting aloud, and lastly, putting it all together, counting silently. I use the metronome at all times.

Miss DeLay said that we need to know what’s on the page first. Many students listen to CD’s while initially learning repertoire. This encourages playing by ear without visual knowledge, and leads to rhythmic assumptions that quite often are incorrect. My students listen to CD’s for tempos and musical ideas *after* they’ve learned the basic notes, intonation, rhythm, fingering, and bowing. Miss DeLay told a master class that the left-hand decides the rhythm. Most people think it’s the bow-hand. I’ve discovered that this is true for the most part, but not always. If the left-hand is blocking a chordal string crossing, the bow decides the rhythm.

Rhythmic work through the Seattle Conservatory of Music is a great supplement for my studio, too. We offer classes in



*Dalcroze-Eurhythmics* where students use body movement as well as their own instruments, to respond to elements of music, such as rhythm, pitch and dynamics. The Seattle Conservatory's Ear-Training classes teach rhythmic and melodic dictation, which is also very helpful.

INTERMISSIONS: Let's talk about scales. Which book do you use?

MP: Beginners are assigned Hrimaly's *Scale Studies* to understand one and two-octave scales and arpeggios. We then evolve into the Flesch Scale System, implementing three-octave scales and arpeggios. Flesch uses just *three* sets of fingerings: open string, first finger and second finger. From B-flat on,

the second finger leads the scale through the positions and keys. The fourth octave, or the "top story" of the violin as I call it, is usually foreign territory for violinists. Approaching it through Galamian's *Contemporary Violin Technique* works perfectly. After students have learned three-octave scales in all keys, I introduce the fourth octave with this book.

INTERMISSIONS: And how do you incorporate rhythms into the scales?

MP: Using varied rhythms while practicing daily scales and arpeggios is always essential. The commitment to this fact stands alone as the basic 'basic' for any violinist. Beginning with the G major three-octave scale, long-bow rhythms begin with one-note per beat,

Margaret Pressley works with student on left handframe.

four notes per bow at one quarter-note = 60. Then we move to two notes per beat, four notes per bow. I've devised my own progression that includes three against two, dividing the bow into thirds, then three notes per beat/six notes per bow dividing the bow in halves, then four notes per beat/eight notes per bow, five against two, six notes per beat/twelve notes per bow, seven against two, seven notes per beat/fourteen notes per bow, and eight/sixteen, and nine/eighteen. Once in awhile I'll go to ten and twelve.



Seattle's Dorothy Richard Starling Violin Scholars

INTERMISSIONS: Could you also talk about how you teach your students to structure their practicing?

MP: It's age-progressive, but no matter how old the student, I must line their bodies up for success first. So, practice starts out with just a few minutes each day of muscle-building awareness exercises. As students grow stronger, more exercises are added. Eventually, a full practice schedule will be in place, which includes, in order: basics, scales/arpeggios, etudes, solo Bach, a concerto, and an alternating piece and sonata. Students are asked to bring to their first lesson, an 8 ½ x 11" spiral notebook. I then write weekly outlines of reminders and goals that I expect them to follow and I can refer to. Moving from one subject to another adds variety and relieves boredom. As the practice order grows, a structured

practice schedule is implemented, which includes homework and free time. The structure begins from the time they put their feet on the floor in the morning until they go to bed. Right now, I have a 13 year-old who needs to get in a third hour of practice. With all good intentions, she sleeps through her alarm clock every morning. I have now given her two more alarms to put around her room. We experiment a lot. Daily structure changes quite often as a student's needs change. This year, my students range in age from 6 to 18. They all take two-hour lessons (an hour of basics/scales/etudes and an hour on their movements/pieces). I believe in the Galamian 50-minute practice rule. If they can get in one 50-minute session before school, come home in the afternoon and take half an hour to snack and relax, then be ready for a second 50-minute session, this is good. They may elect to do an hour of

homework after that. Dinner-break is one hour. A third 50-minute session could take place after dinner. I think brains work best after eating, so I encourage practice after breakfast, after an afternoon snack, and after dinner. My students (both current and former) and I have continually received words of praise from parents and college administrators, who are pleased to see such excellent organizational structure and daily discipline.

INTERMISSIONS: Could you talk a little about the Seattle Conservatory?

MP: I started the Seattle Conservatory of Music in 1994, after researching for twelve years. Growing up in Seattle, I participated in orchestras, choirs and a string quartet. When I observed the Juilliard Pre-College, I saw that kids were learning at age eight what I had learned at age eighteen at the University



of Washington. It was no wonder Juilliard grads were getting jobs and management. They were ten years ahead of everybody in the Pacific Northwest. My goal was to train the Northwest as to what is expected in other major metropolitan areas of the world. We began at Seattle Pacific University with three classrooms, teaching music theory, music history, and ear-training. The school was designed to be an outgrowth of the Seattle Youth Symphony. I asked area teachers to send us their most promising students. We still rent our facilities. There are no private teaching studios, so we have become the support for private teachers in the greater Seattle area. Currently, the Seattle Conservatory has fifteen academic music and chamber music faculty. Conservatory graduates have been extraordinarily successful and now attend every major music school in the country. They are also starting to branch out into European music schools. As the students progress, so does our curriculum. Today we have composition, orchestration, score-reading, piano literature, piano lab, and two separate chamber music programs as well as the basics of theory, ear-training, music history and *Dalcroze-Eurhythmics*. Eventually, I intend to see the Seattle Conservatory become a college.

INTERMISSIONS: When did you start your Collegiate Preparation class at the Seattle Conservatory?

MP: Originally, it was a seminar of varied subjects. Our Collegiate/Performance Preparation Program has taken on a life of its own over the years. It offers as many as 20 solo performance opportunities per

year and guides students through research projects regarding college choices, the application process, audition preparation, college tours, and finally admission (and acceptance). Students can join the class in eighth grade. Eighth graders are given assignments regarding structuring their time for practice, homework, and free-time. Freshman, sophomores, and juniors are researching colleges, learning repertoire, and taking lessons from prospective teachers. At the end of the junior year, students have got their audition repertoire down and know what colleges they intend to apply to. At the beginning of their senior year, they're applying to colleges and are honing audition repertoire. It's all paced over several years, so students are well-equipped to apply and audition successfully for their chosen colleges.

INTERMISSIONS: Would you please say a few words about your Starling Foundation program?

MP: The Dorothy Richard Starling Violin Foundation called me several years ago, asking if I would be interested in being funded as a teacher in the Pacific Northwest who could train classical violinists on a high level, to become professionals. I accepted the challenge and have been a recipient ever since. The Starling Foundation funds as many as eight of my students for thirty weeks of private lessons, for Conservatory classes, for their pianist, hall rentals, administration, summer camp supplements and miscellaneous needs. Once chosen, they must accept the responsibility of what it means to become a Starling Scholar. It

becomes their "job." They sign a contract. They must learn not only to play well, but in effect to be "Ambassadors of Music in the World." They learn to be respectful and respected. We plan to do a self-directed concert at the end of 2009 and will work all year toward this goal. The concert will be the fifth such performance. The Starling Scholars are really phenomenal and are a real inspiration. The support of the Starling Foundation has truly changed all our lives. Starling Program grads now attend collegiate music schools and conservatories throughout the country and study with its greatest teachers. I'm very proud of my students and their accomplishments, and have been very, very honored to have this opportunity.

INTERMISSIONS: Next year, you're joining the faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Could you talk about what you'll be doing there in addition to teaching violin?

MP: I'd love to. I will be the Scholar-in-Residence at the College of Music at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The College has invited me to teach violin and to design a pedagogy program and a "Teaching Teachers How to Teach" program. In the fall, I will fly to Boulder one day a week to teach both undergraduate and graduate students. I will also begin designing programs which hopefully will be implemented the following year. I will have the wonderful opportunity to work with students in Colorado, while continuing to work with kids at my Seattle studio, and to direct the Seattle Conservatory of Music. It's really exciting for me! I can truly say I lead a wonderful life!

# IN CONVERSATION

## STEVEN PALINCSAR ON VIOLIN TEACHING

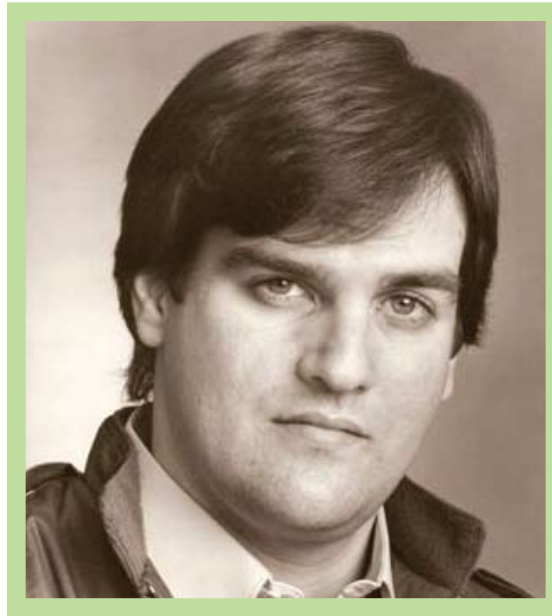
QUESTION: Could we begin by speaking about the difference between volume and dynamics?

STEVEN PALINCSAR: Certainly. To me, there is an important difference between these two concepts. *Dynamics* are written. *Volume* is produced. If I put a CD in the stereo of say the Prokofiev 2nd Concerto and play it, the opening violin solo is marked *mezzopiano*. If I crank up the volume, the opening dynamic will *still* be *mezzopiano*. If I turn the volume way down, the opening dynamic will *still* be *mezzopiano*.

Written dynamics are only an *indication* of volume. We must take this written information and apply it to violin playing.

What determines volume is not only the written dynamics, but the size of the room that we're playing in and its acoustics. For example, if we go into the bathroom, even with a cheap violin, we are immediately struck by the clarity and power of our sound, but a cheap violin will not project on the stage at say, New York's Avery Fisher Hall.

Every time we play in a different location, we must adjust the amount of volume we produce to serve the dynamics that the composer (or sometimes the editor) notated in the sheet music. The volume level we need in our bedroom at home is different from what we need in the teaching studio. That level is different from what we need in the local high school auditorium. Each time we play in a different concert hall, we may need a slightly (or completely) different volume level. Avery Fisher Hall needs a different level than Orchestra Hall in Chicago which needs a different level from the Vienna



Musikverein which needs a different level from London's Wigmore Hall and so forth.

QUESTION: How can we increase volume on the violin?

SP: We can increase the weight of the bow (or actually how much weight we put into the string with our own bow-arm). We can bow closer to the bridge. We can increase the speed at which we draw the bow. We can use higher quality strings. We can change our strings. We can have a luthier make sure that there are no separations between the violin's belly or back and its ribs. We can play more with the flat of the hair on the string. We can have someone like John Becker at Bein & Fushi adjust our violins for the concert hall. We can buy (or borrow) a better violin. We can buy a more responsive bow. We can rehair the bow regularly. We can add more rosin to the bow. Each of these actions will help us to increase the volume.

QUESTION: What if we want to play softer?

SP: Well, we can reduce the volume in a number of different ways too. We can reduce the speed of the bow. We can bow closer to the fingerboard. We can reduce the weight with which we draw the bow. We can draw the bow more on an angle than on the flat of the hair.

Of course, some things we can't change. For example, even for Itzhak Perlman, Avery Fisher Hall will not be reconstructed. They won't knock out the walls. They won't take out the cloth seats. They

won't keep the audience out. We shouldn't worry about what we can't change; only what we can.

Once we decide how much volume we need to play the opening *mezzopiano* in the Prokofiev 2nd, we must then base every other dynamic in our performance on the amount of volume that we produce in order to play that opening *mezzopiano*. We use the written dynamics as a kind of musical roadmap. We respect and follow the dynamics, but understand that playing the Prokofiev 2nd in our bedroom at home requires a different level of volume than we would use on the stage at Carnegie Hall.

QUESTION: Could we shift gears now and talk a bit about practicing?

SP: *Practice* is such a dreadful word. It conjures up hours of mindless, repetitive drudgery, boredom, frustration, misery, and even martyrdom. I'd like to try to eliminate it from a student's vocabulary. I prefer "exploration and development sessions."

This is more positive and also relates more to my goals for the outcome of the sessions.

QUESTION: In Elizabeth A.H. Green's recently-published book, *Practicing Successfully*, she recommends certain rhythmic variations to be used in practicing. Would you comment on that?

SP: Certainly. You're referring to Elizabeth Green's suggestion on page 22 of using the dotted-eighth sixteenth pattern first and then its reverse: sixteenth dotted-eighth. I totally agree. This technique forces the student to think in groups of two notes at a time rather than a whole scary passage. It's a technique that absolutely forces the student to slow down. I'm a huge advocate of practicing slowly as you know. She's careful to point out that the student must reinsert the isolated passage in the music by going back to the beginning of the phrase. Yes, Elizabeth Green's book is a wonderful addition to the private teacher's library, or the public school teacher's library for that matter.

QUESTION: In his book, Ivan Galamian defined three types of practice: building time, interpreting time, and performing time. What is your opinion?

SP: I agree with him on this to a certain extent. The problem is that most students don't "build" anything; they merely repeat exercises endlessly and uncritically. Leopold Auer said that when students don't practice critically, they are worse than wasting their time. I'm with him. Interpreting time is often dictated by the teacher, which of course I totally disagree with. I firmly believe, as did Dorothy DeLay, that kids are entitled to their own interpretations. Finally, most kids don't practice performing time much at all. At the Meadowmount School of Music, I once heard a friend practice Sarasate's *Carmen*

*Fantasy* extensively, using every conceivable rhythmic variation. He got really good at practicing how to practice, but when he stood up to play the piece, it was just plain awful. There was absolutely no continuity whatsoever. He was a player who couldn't play a complete piece.

QUESTION: How much time should a student put in each day?

SP: Leopold Auer said to "practice" three hours a day if you're talented, four if you're not. He said if you need to practice more than four hours, you should choose another profession. I think that pretty much covers my opinion too. I always think about Dorothy DeLay's kids at Aspen who would put in seven hours a day, but didn't sound any better than those who did about three hours a day. Both Jascha Heifetz and Itzhak Perlman said they practiced three hours a day. Three hours is just fine.

You know at Meadowmount, students were required to practice in five 50-minute sessions each day with a 10-minute break after each session (in hours that comes to just over four). That's fine, but here we must be very careful not to spend 50 minutes on one goal. I object to spending more than 15-20 minutes on any one topic without a break. Most kids have a very hard time concentrating on any one goal for longer than about 20 minutes, which is why I believe the *exploration and development sessions* should be broken up in just that way. A student must learn not to let his/her mind wander. If that happens, the student should immediately stop what they're doing, take a break, and then refocus their attention.

A student should never be told how much time to put in on working to achieve a goal, because they must become *goal-oriented*,

rather than time-oriented. Each pupil must be taught what to listen for and what to watch for. Their individual assignments must be quite specific. Never say, "Oh, just practice Kreutzer 27 for thirty minutes." No, break it down very specifically into units. Each unit can be explored individually—more than one session per day.

Students need to understand why they're playing a particular piece, what their goal for each unit and session is, how to play with a critical ear, when to stop (and when not to), how to adjust what they're doing, when and where to resume, at what tempi to play, how to determine tempi, when to take a break, etc., etc. We must begin teaching students the basics, then patiently and gradually add to what they're doing, always celebrating their successes. In lessons, I focus on teaching all this to the student breaking everything down very specifically, and I also write down everything for them to refer to later. 11

In addition, students tape record each lesson. In fact, most students now videotape each lesson.

Exploration and development sessions must never descend into drudgery. We must constantly be looking to explore the violin's possibilities and what we can do with the violin. Then we must try to develop what we can do until we can do more and more things on the violin, so that, in effect, it becomes our musical voice. Once that happens, a whole new world will open up for the student, and they will experience great joy, excitement, and true pleasure in playing the violin.

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## NOW ON CD

### *Leonid Kogan Recordings* *Reissued*

Over the past few years, CDs from some of the world's all-time greatest violin virtuosi have been appearing more and more in new reissued versions. The great Russian master Leonid Kogan is no exception. Kogan whose flawless technique, impeccable musicianship, brilliant and rich tone, and unequalled virtuosity is no exception.

Born in the city of Dnepropetrovsk in the Ukraine on November 14, 1924, Leonid Kogan made his debut at age ten in Kharkov, and became a pupil of Abram Yampolsky, a student of legendary violin pedagogue Leopold Auer. His official debut came in 1941 as soloist in the Brahms Violin Concerto with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Ten years later, Kogan won the gold medal at the Queen Elisabeth of Belgium International Violin Competition and his international career took off.

During the course of his career, he performed throughout the former Soviet Union, as well as Europe, South America, Japan, and the United States. His performance of the Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra enthralled then-sixteen year-old violin student Steven Palincsar, who has called Kogan, "the greatest violinist that I have ever heard in concert."

Kogan, who was married to fellow violinist Elizaveta Gilels (sister of master piano virtuoso Emil), was the father of two children. His son Pavel became a well-known conductor and his daughter regularly accompanied Kogan on the piano in recital.

Leonid Kogan was also a leading violin pedagogue, who taught at the Moscow Conservatory and numbered Tchaikovsky Competition winners Ilya Kaler and Victoria Mullova among his students. Kogan formed a trio with Emil Gilels and Mstislav Rostropovich, which toured for ten years. Composer Aram Khachaturian dedicated

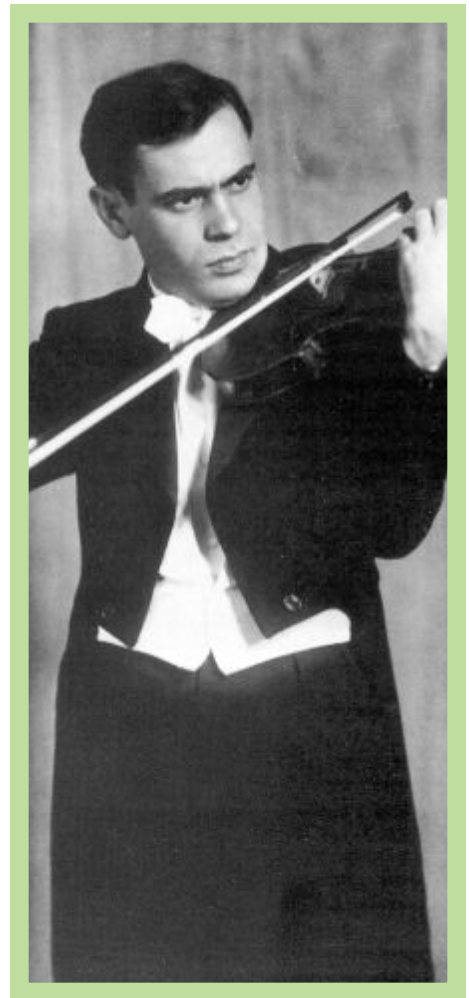
his Concerto-Rhapsody to Kogan. Leonid Kogan died while on tour in 1982.

Kogan left a large recorded legacy including albums on EMI and RCA, as well as on the Russian Melodiya label. He recorded concerti of Bach, Barber, Beethoven, Brahms, Khachaturian, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Paganini, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, and Vieuxtemps, as well as the Lalo *Symphonie Espagnole*. He also recorded sonatas of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Franck, and Prokofiev, as well as showpieces of Paganini, Saint-Saëns, Sarasate, Vieuxtemps, and Waxman. With Gilels and Rostropovich, he left a number of trio recordings as well. Among his recordings which have recently been reissued are the following:

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Leonid Kogan

Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky; Piano Quartet by Fauré\*, etc.) • Leonid Kogan (violin), Mstislav Rostropovich (cello), Emil Gilels (piano), Rudolf Barshai (viola)\*; • Doremi DHR 7921-5 (5 CDs)

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