



NEWSLETTER

Newsletter

ALBERTA STRING ASSOCIATION



Summer 2006

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

*Since the last newsletter, your Alberta String Association has not been idle. We have been planning an Honours Orchestra event for students aged 12-18 (minimum RCM Grade 6 or Suzuki Book 5), November 10-12, in Edmonton. This exhilarating weekend will culminate in a performance on Sunday, November 12th, in conjunction with the University of Alberta Academy Strings orchestra. To our great delight, **Petar Dundjerski**, profiled in this issue, will be bringing his musical and pedagogical expertise to the podium.*



Honours Orchestra rehearsals are scheduled for Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning at the University of Alberta. The concert will take place on Sunday afternoon at Convocation Hall on the University campus.

For more information and a downloadable registration form, please visit our website.

We are also pleased to announce that we are collaborating with the Royal Conservatory of Music on a series of province-wide workshops. The workshops will take place at the end of October in Grande Prairie (Oct 20), Edmonton (Oct 21), Calgary (Oct 22) and Medicine Hat (Oct 23). Please refer to our website for upcoming details.

In this issue, violin teachers will find extensive coverage of the much-anticipated Violin Series, Third Edition, including a review by Miriam Lewis. The Frederic Harris Music Company has made a complete set of books available to our members for perusal.

Finally, the Alberta String Association is a proud sponsor of the VIVO! Music Camp running this July, partly organized by Alberta String Association board member Frank Ho for ARMTA.

I wish everyone a relaxed summer!

Josephine van Lier, President



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*** ASA Newsletter also available online on the ASA Website.



ASA PROFILE: *Petar Dundjerski*

Submitted by Jim Cockell

"When I was a little kid I would conduct the radio," says Petar Dundjerski, the personable, Belgrade-born director of the Edmonton Public Schools' Singing Strings orchestra. That passion for music-making has since propelled him across two continents, through some of Canada's premier music schools and most recently to the front of the Edmonton Symphony, where he begins a term as Assistant Conductor in Residence this fall. In November 2006, Petar will direct the first Honours string orchestra ever to be organized by the Alberta String Association.

Growing up in socialist-era Yugoslavia presented both advantages and drawbacks for the young music student. Petar speaks appreciatively of the state-sponsored curriculum, which emphasized musicianship through solfeggio and theory classes. He also recalls the lively musical scene in Belgrade: "Because of where we were, geographically and politically, all the best artists came from both sides, the East bloc and the West. I heard the Borodin Quartet, the Glinka choir, Yehudi Menuhin...". But as the country's political situation worsened in the early 1990s, any hope of pursuing a career in music was overshadowed by the prospect of compulsory military service. Petar finished his secondary schooling in Sweden and then headed for Canada, where he turned his focus to conducting under the guidance of Earl Davey at the University of Brandon and Raffi Armenian at the University of Toronto. He has lived in Edmonton since September 2004.

Petar notes that the experience of working with a school string orchestra is no less engaging than working with professionals, and that it carries its own unique challenges and rewards. "One takes less for granted [working with students], but one should not necessarily expect less. I am quite tough with the Singing Strings and I

ask a lot from them, but I give them credit when they deserve it, which is all the time. They have made incredible progress." At the same time, Petar feels that public music education in general could benefit from a more European approach, with greater emphasis on ear-training, harmony and form. "[Learning instrumental technique alone] is like taking a painting course without knowing how to mix paint—'here are 1500 colours and a paintbrush, now create a masterpiece.' A student should relate to a composer's language on a more subtle level than just playing the notes."

In planning for the ASA Honours Orchestra, Petar already has specific goals in mind: "Internal subdivision of the beat, making use of the entire bow... these are some issues I have found to be acute with the Singing Strings." In other words, participants in the Honours Orchestra can expect to be kept on their toes the entire time. Petar also hints at possible repertoire choices, citing Grieg's *Holdberg Suite* as a personal favourite that is within the reach of an advanced student string orchestra.

On the subject of balancing his upcoming duties to the ESO with the Singing Strings, Petar is adamant: "Other than going against the first law of Physics—one body cannot be in two places at once—I'll work both positions any way I can. I love the kids, their energy and potential." If there is one aspect of conducting students that Petar enjoys more than any other, it is surely in seeing the music take hold of their imaginations just as it once did for the little boy who conducted the radio. "They don't quite realize it yet, but in learning respect for the music they are learning respect for themselves."



LUIS AND CLARK Carbon Fibre Cello

Submitted by Josephine van Lier



For quite some time, I wanted to purchase a cello that I could safely use for teaching; my 1870 Mirecourt cello suffered quite seriously from being picked up and put down a thousand times a day, not to mention being dropped against the stand, I confess. However, I could never find an instrument for a reasonable price (i.e. under \$10,000) that I liked well enough to play all day. Every time I tried a new instrument, I desperately missed my own cello after a few days.



Last November, one of my students inquired about buying a carbon fibre instrument. For those who have never seen one, look no further than the Edmonton Symphony cello section, where Derek Gomez's distinctive black carbon fibre cello (one of the first produced by the Boston-based firm of Luis and Clark) has been turning heads for some time now. Derek was kind enough to satisfy my curiosity by

lending me the instrument to try. I already knew that these instruments cost much less than any cello I ever considered to use for teaching, but I was not prepared for the sound and ease of playing! I could hardly believe my ears.

I decided to order one, as did eight of my students who were shopping for a cello in the budget price range. The much-anticipated shipment of nine Luis and Clark cellos arrived just before Christmas, as did my second surprise; impressive as Derek's cello had been, I was doubtful that a synthetic material would leave any room for individual character amongst the different instruments. When I had unpacked them all and played them for a few days, I found that they were as distinct from one another as any series of wooden instruments from the same maker. Some were brighter, some were mellower. All were amazing.

I stayed faithful to my old Mirecourt for all my professional work, using the Luis and Clark for teaching, until fate and the Alberta climate intervened in the form a heavy March snowstorm. Our readers hardly need reminding that inclement weather and wooden instruments do not mix, particularly when one is stuck in a snowbank, but I was due at a rehearsal with the Strathcona String Quartet and time was ticking. I took the Luis and Clark, reasoning that if carbon fibre could stand up to the abuse taken by golf clubs, tennis rackets and jet fighters, it might just survive an Edmonton

blizzard. But I was very nervous at the rehearsal. Had I been fooling myself about this miracle cello? Would my colleagues laugh me out of the room? Ten minutes in, I had my answer: three astonished musicians who could only say, "Ohh... we really like this!" They suggested I use it more often.

Since then, the carbon fibre cello has become my constant companion in rehearsals and on



stage, as well as in the teaching studio. It never gets cranky from one day to the next, meaning I can produce a certain sound or colour with much more consistency. It has a deep, warm, rich sound, with a clarity that has led my quartet companions to marvel at the amount of detail they can now hear in my parts. It has ample power to balance piano and wind instruments. And above all, it is just so unbelievably easy to play.

In my earlier, skeptical phase, Derek pointed out to me that the character of a player's sound depends on the individual,



not the instrument. I had lived with my Mirecourt for so long that I was convinced my musical personality was inextricably bound to it; I simply could not conceive of expressing myself the same way through any other cello, especially one whose components had been pressed and moulded together like an economy car. But the Luis and Clark has enabled me to express myself with an ease and control that my wooden cello never allowed.

I have always loved my old Mirecourt and forgiven its little failings—slightly too-large measurement, a wolf tone, an oversensitivity to changes in temperature and barometric pressure—after all, that's what love is all about. That devotion is still there, although I have to admit it has mostly meant opening the case once in a while to check the humidity.





VIOLIN SYLLABUS, 2006 Edition

Submitted by Marena Smith

The *Violin Syllabus, 2006 Edition*, is a significant step forward for violin education in Canada. Updates and changes to the *Violin Syllabus* have been chosen with the needs of teachers and students in mind.

Several pedagogues across North America have been involved with the preparation of the new syllabus, in which priority is given to convenience and ease of use. Students will find much worthwhile material from the earlier syllabus supplemented by additional repertoire, studies, and orchestral excerpts, plus a variety of other changes and additions designed to improve this resource as a whole.

Section 1, "General Information," covers valuable information for teachers and students preparing for examinations. Subjects of interest include application procedures, examination scheduling, theory examination prerequisites and co-requisites, requirements for certificates and diplomas, secondary school credits, and Gold

and Silver medal criteria.

Section 2, "Practical Examinations" – contains the core of the examination requirements: repertoire, studies, orchestral excerpts, technical tests, ear tests, and sight reading for all levels from Introductory to the Teachers' and Performers' ARCT. Here, teachers and students will discover a wealth of familiar and new material. This body of repertoire and technical requirements, organized into graded, comprehensive lists, is indispensable for examination preparation, and moreover constitutes an excellent resource for any curriculum based on smooth transitions and incremental steps from one level to the next, both technically and musically.

Section 3, "Theory Examinations," presents a brief and clear synopsis of the necessary content to be studied for theory examinations, which are required for certificates in Grades 5 to ARCT.

(Almost) everything Old is New again!

For those looking for what *hasn't* changed, a broad summary follows. The division of repertoire into lists remains the same, as does the required number of studies. Older, out-of-print selections popular amongst teachers and students are still designated "[op]," although every effort has been made to make sure that almost all the publications listed are in print and available in North America. Scales and arpeggios are for the most part unchanged, since the technical tests were thoroughly revised for the 1999 edition of the *Violin Syllabus*. Requirements for ear and sight reading tests have also remained the same.

Repertoire, Studies, and Orchestral excerpts

For the most part, changes and additions to the lists of repertoire and studies are based on the RCM *Violin Series, Third Edition*, and reflect a balanced and equitable variety of keys and styles at each level. The Sonata (List B) requirements at several levels have been modified owing to considerations of length; in some cases, a requirement for two movements has been reduced to one. The lists of studies have been enhanced to deliver a balance of keys, styles, and technical challenges, plus include selections by both traditional and contemporary composers.

One exciting innovation is the inclusion of all orchestral excerpts listed in the *Syllabus* for Grades 7 to 10 and ARCT in the *Violin Series, Third Edition: Orchestral Excerpts*.

These lists have been expanded in all grades so as to include a more comprehensive range of styles, composers, periods, and technical challenges; selections for Grades 7, 8 and 9 were made with particular attention not only to the needs of intermediate students but also to common requirements for youth orchestra auditions. Excerpts for Grade 10 and ARCT, while specifically directed at senior students considering an orchestral career, are also appropriate for those who go on to pursue orchestral playing at an amateur level. The *Syllabus* also provides measure numbers and rehearsal letters/ numbers for students wishing to prepare excerpts from standard first violin parts instead of the *Violin Series*.

Technical Tests

Keys and tempo indications for scales and arpeggios are unchanged from the previous *Violin Syllabus*, although bowing patterns for some levels have been revised and minor fingering adjustments have been made. The most significant change will be found in scale forms: for Grades 4, 5 and 6, there is only one bowing pattern for two and three octave scales, while for Grades 7 to 10, the Galamian eight-note pattern is required.

Bibliography

The bibliography in Section 5 is a valuable addition to the *Violin Syllabus*. Sight reading texts, ear training texts and general reference works are followed by a section on violin resources, including anthologies

and collections of repertoire and studies. The reference and pedagogy books listed are invaluable not only for teachers but also for senior students, particularly those preparing for ARCT examinations. Bibliographic information for each item includes author, title, publisher, and place and date of publication.

We are confident that the *Violin Syllabus, 2006 Edition*, with its innovative blend of old and new, will be welcomed by all violin teachers and students interested in expanding their musical horizons.

Marena Smith, a native of Calgary, Alberta, holds an ARCT Diploma in Violin Performance from The Royal Conservatory of Music and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Calgary. She has been a member of the RCM Examinations College of Examiners since 1984. Ms. Smith was also involved in the evaluation and revision of the Violin Syllabus, 1999 Edition, the Violin Syllabus, 2006 Edition, and the Violin Series, Third Edition.



VIOLIN SERIES, Third Edition

Submitted by Katharine Rapoport

While the Third Edition of the *Violin Series* includes many favourites in all levels, there is also much that is new and exciting. Two important additions

will improve students' access to a comprehensive set of graded materials for the violin at each level. First, all repertoire albums include selections from each examination list. This means that students can prepare their entire examination program from the repertoire and technical requirements book for their levels. Secondly, the Third edition includes an *Orchestral Excerpts* book, which we know will be a welcome addition for both teachers and students. Let's look at the details!

Repertoire Albums

The repertoire albums present plenty of new pieces for teachers to enjoy with their students. Care has been taken to select engaging pieces in a great variety of musical styles and keys. As noted above, the most significant change is the decision to include pieces from every list for each level. This expansion is particularly important in Books 5 to 8, each of which includes two List A (concerto) selections. While many teachers and students will choose concerto repertoire from the wider choice of selections listed in the *Syllabus*, the comprehensive approach in the repertoire books greatly improves the availability of basic violin repertoire for students across Canada, both in large cities and in smaller centres or remote areas. With a variety of attractive repertoire choices in each repertoire book, students will be encouraged to learn more than the minimum number of selections required for their examinations, and this in turn will introduce them to a broader skill set at each stage. Keys, articulations, and finger patterns reflect skills developed in the Technical Requirements for current and past levels.

For the first stages of violin study (Introductory and Books 1 and 2), the albums include a good variety of picturesque and charming pieces. *Dinosaur Plod* by Edward Huws Jones, a new addition to the Introductory Album, requires strong and steady counting of both notes and rests. The *pizzicato / arco* combination, great for developing coordination, is basic enough for beginning violinists to play successfully. A spirited new arrangement of the march from Handel's *Scipione* in Book 1 presents contrasting dynamics and encourages the development of bright and dark tonal colours. In Book 2, Stephen Chatman's arrangement of the *Minuet alla Zingarese* from Haydn's String Quartet in D major, Hob. iii:34, presents challenges in syncopated counting, "road map" reading, and shaping of accompaniment figures.

At the intermediate levels—Books 3 to 5—the many finger patterns represented develop lateral finger movement, flexibility, and shifting skills. In Book 3, *Minor Mode* by Canadian composer Frank Blachford requires left hand passage work in third position and slow bowing to produce a smooth melodic line. There is also an intriguing contrast between the poignant minor tonality of the opening and the dance-like texture of the middle section. *March of the Pirates*, op. 65, no. 5, by Johannes Palaschko, a new addition to Book 4, will likely become a great favourite with students and teachers alike. This colourful piece has plenty of rhythmic variety, bold dynamic contrasts, and agile shifting. Ricky Hyslop's *Broken Baroque* in Book 5 is a playful, airy piece featuring complex syncopations and extensive position work.

The selections in Books 6, 7, and 8 are designed to prepare students for their first encounters with concert repertoire. Fritz Kreisler's *Aucassin and Nicolette*, a new addition to Book 6, is a charming character piece. The light brush strokes and detailed *rubato* will spark the imaginations of students and encourage them to develop a greater range of articulation with their own personal stamp of interpretation. In Book 7, the first movement of Friedrich Seitz's Concerto in G minor, op. 12, will foster tonal projection and offers plenty of double stop and chord articulations to further build bow skill and agility as well as left hand coordination. In Book 8, both students and teachers will enjoy the snappy rhythms and colourful harmonies of Béla Bartók's *Sonatina*.

Studies

As in previous editions, the two *Technical Requirements* books include a number of studies for each level that are intended to challenge students and develop a broad range of techniques. New additions include a number of contemporary studies that serve specific technical purposes but are also a lot of fun to play! Studies were chosen from a variety of sources in order to expose students to a variety of composers and technical styles. Paul de Keyser's *Puppet on Two Strings* (Grade 2) is a playful piece with plenty of string crossings and fourth finger work. Mary Cohen's *Fivepenny Waltz* (Grade 3) introduces students to 5/8 time in a simple and delightful setting. The D major double stop study by Enrico Polo (Grade 7) requires consistent and melodic bowing on two strings with smooth position changes, providing excellent preparation for concerto cadenzas and other advanced repertoire.

Orchestral Excerpts

The most innovative publication of the *Violin Series, Third Edition* is the new *Orchestral Excerpts* book. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for students to obtain

required orchestral excerpts either from anthologies of excerpts or from standard published parts. Indeed, logistical difficulties observed in candidates' examination preparation was a major incentive for preparing this new addition to the *Violin Series*. The *Orchestral Excerpts* book includes *all* the excerpts listed in the *Syllabus* for examination requirements from Grade 7 to ARCT level, but students and teachers will find this progressive collection useful not only for preparing examination and audition requirements but also as a comprehensive introduction to orchestral repertoire.

The *Orchestral Excerpts* book goes beyond the often rather fragmentary approach of existing anthologies, which are primarily useful for professional players needing to prepare tricky passages before a rehearsal; it presents a model that is appropriate to students making their first acquaintance with orchestral playing at the Grade 7 level, building skills to pre-professional levels in Grade 10 and ARCT. For example, excerpted passages are coherent portions of movements or sections. These longer passages provide better continuity within a given work, allowing students to learn well-known repertoire in a recognizable and musically meaningful context. Care has been taken to ensure a consistent approach to fingering and editorial markings. In addition, measure numbers match those in the complete work, allowing quick and easy reference for students who want to study the orchestral score and listen to recordings of the complete work.

A broad range of historical style periods and orchestral forms includes selections from the Baroque and Classical periods (Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven), the Romantic era (Schubert, Schumann, Rossini, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Smetana, Weber, Bizet, Wagner, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky) and the Twentieth Century (Dukas, Gershwin, Prokofiev, and Richard Strauss); specific works have been selected with close reference to audition lists used by youth and professional orchestras. This book will undoubtedly be a valuable addition to a violin student's library, and teachers will find it useful in the studio, not only for examination preparation but also as a resource for a comprehensive program of listening and study.

Katharine Rapoport teaches Violin and Viola Performance and Chamber Music at the University of Toronto and at the Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music, and she is a member of the RCM Examinations College of Examiners., Ms. Rapoport has also worked as a principal contributor and editor of the Violin Series albums to the 1995 and 1999 Violin Syllabi, as well as the 1994 and 2002 Viola Syllabi. She has written articles for Strad Magazine and the University of Toronto Quarterly.



ASA REVIEW: *Violin Series, Third Edition*

Submitted by Miriam Lewis

The Frederick Harris Music Co. recently published its Third Edition of the popular *Violin Series*, which serves the violin curriculum of the Royal Conservatory of Music. Included in this set of books is the *Violin Syllabus* 2006 Edition, *Violin Technique* Introductory to Grade 4 and Grade 5 to 8, *Violin Repertoire* Introductory Level through Level 8, and *Orchestral Excerpts*. The books have a new cover

design, featuring a bright violin graphic in place of the violin photo, and each book is distinguished by a colored stripe at the top of the cover.

As a violin teacher I have made great use of the *Violin Series, Second Edition* and I was eager to peruse the latest reworking of the series. I am already a big fan of the first two editions, having always appreciated their layout, variety of repertoire, and clear fingerings and bowings. I am equally delighted with the third series and I have a few observations below on the changes made to the new books.

The new *Violin Technique* books are very similar to the Second Edition books. They no longer supply a French translation of the technical requirements, creating a bit more room and eliminating what was, in my opinion, unnecessary repetition. The technique books have some new studies and, more important, a greater number and variety of studies from which to choose.

The new *Violin Repertoire* books, like the Second Edition books, contain a broad variety of composers and styles. Many new pieces have been added, which I look forward to exploring in more detail, while a few old ones have been removed. Many of my favorites remain in the Third Edition, such as "Pirate Bold," "Gabby Ghost," Kuchler's "Concertino in G," and "Hornpipe" by Coultts. I am pleased to see once again the inclusion of many pieces by Canadian composers such as Jean Coulthard, David Duke, Jean Ethridge, Ricky Hyslop, and Gary Kulesha. New to this series is the inclusion of concerto repertoire in Books Five through Eight. For example, in Book Five, movements from Kymlicka Concertino Grosso and Rieding Concertino in G Major, op. 24 are added, allowing for more choice when it comes to deciding on exam repertoire.

I am most excited by the new *Orchestral Excerpts* book. This book is a compilation of all the orchestral excerpts listed in the RCM syllabus from Violin Grade 7 through to ARCT. Having purchased and used the awkward Gingold excerpt books, I find this collection very accessible. As in all the other *Violin Series* books, the music is easy to read, with clear fingerings and markings.

I do think it is important not to rely solely on one set of teaching materials. There are so many method books, study books, and pieces from which to create a varied and interesting educational experience; one can and should draw from a wide variety of resources. That being said, the *Violin Series* is one of my favorite tools and the *Third Edition* will be invaluable, not only for those teachers who put their students through the annual rigor of an RCM violin exam, but for all teachers who value a progressive and logical approach to instruction in scales, studies, and pieces.

A complete set of the *Violin Series, Third Edition* is now available in our ASA music library. If you would like to borrow any of the books, please email me at info@albertastringassociation.ca.

www.albertastringassociation.ca

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The Alberta String Association (ASA), formerly known as the Association of String Teachers and Performers of Alberta (ASTAPA), was founded in 1979 as a non-profit, charitable society.

The ASA strives to support and to develop programs serving a network of string professionals, string students, and string-interested parties advocating quality string playing and quality string education in the province of Alberta.

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