THE EVOLUTION OF VIOLA TECHNIQUE

THESIS

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BY

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PREFACE

Material relating to the viola, its history, technique, use as a solo and orchestral instrument, and its use in chamber music, is practically non-existent. For this reason, this document is being written in an attempt first, to collect and discuss, for the benefit of the author as well as for any who might have some interest in the viola, facts which might eliminate some of the common misunderstandings about the instrument, and second, to show, through examination of viola music, the use to which the viola has been put in solo, orchestral, and chamber music from the Baroque period to the present.

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CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE VIOLA

Although the emergence of the violin family as a distinct form is conceded by most historians to have taken place during the latter part of the sixteenth century, its early development is to the present day very obscure. The general opinion is that the violin form emerged as a combination of the salient features of a number of different types of instruments. Francis Galpin says, in speaking of the violin:

> It was the happy combination of all the best points found in the earlier instruments we have already mentioned.[1]

The instruments referred to were of three distinctly different types:

1. The medieval fiddle (or fiedel)
2. The lyra da braccio
3. The rebec

The "best points" mentioned by Galpin in reference to the instruments listed above were:

1. The peg-box (similar to that of the violin) was used on the rebec for two centuries, as contrasted

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[1]Francis Galpin, A Textbook of European Musical Instruments, p. 145.

to the flat guitar-like head of the lyra da braccio.

2. The rounded bridge was used on the fiedel for predominantly melodic playing.

3. "On the 'Fiedel,' corners to the 'bouts' were much in evidence, and the string holder, formerly attached to the table like that of a guitar, had been replaced by the tail-piece since the twelfth century."[2]

4. The tuning of the strings in fifths was used on rebecs and fiddles.

5. The lyra had a shallow body (as contrasted to the thick ribs of the viols).

6. The back of the "Lira" was molded or arched, neither flat as on the "Fiedel" and viol, nor round as on the "Rebec" and "Geige." [The word "Geige" was the German for "fiddle" or "fiedel." It was later applied to the violin.] The embodiment of these two important factors gave to the violin its brilliancy of tone, without the harshness of the "Rebec" or the heaviness of the viol. . . .[3]

Continuing, Galpin asks the question: "Wherein, then, did the novelty of the violin consist?"[4] He answers this question with a restatement of characteristics five and six of the above list. In other words, he attributes the development of the violin almost entirely to the lyra insofar as

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[2] Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[3] Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[4] Ibid., p. 146.

the important unique features of the violin were concerned in comparison with the other instruments.

Hayes considers only the rebec and lyra as having any direct bearing upon the development of the violin family. In speaking of their relative influence upon the violin form, he says:

> As between the lyra and the rebec, the choice is delicately balanced; both instruments possess strong negative factors, yet both supply matter of close affinity, the one in form and the other in spirit. [The "one in form" is obviously the lyra. Comparisons between certain lyras and the violas of Gasparo da Salo show striking resemblances in outline. However, the most important resemblances of the lyra to the fully developed violin is the shallowness of the sound-chest and the flatness of the tables.] The lyra has a body which corresponds in fundamentals to that of the violin and is held overarm; the interval of the fifth is prevalent between its strings. Against this must be set the number of strings and their arrangement with the presence of the bourdons; and our slight knowledge of the use of the lyra postulates a very flat bridge to assist the bowing of two or more strings at once, with a long bow for smooth unaccented playing. Of the tone-colour we are at present ignorant. In the rebec there is the typical straightforward tuning in fifths and a sharply rhythmic use in single airs, exactly of the same musical atmosphere in which the violin had all its early associations. Yet in tone-colour it differs widely and the cause of this is in the construction, for the round body and flat belly cannot be connected by a sound post and act upon radically different principles from those of the lyra. So basic is this structural difference that, despite the early similarity of musical use, one might be tempted to dismiss the rebec altogether, were it not that its name became so entangled with that of the violin.[5]

Curt Sachs seems to credit the medieval fiedel with a closer relationship to the violin than he does the rebec, and

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[5]Gerald Hayes, Musical Instruments and Their Music, 1500-1750, Vol. II, pp. 175-176.

he does not mention the lyra as having any connection with the violin. He gives the following common characteristics of the fiddle and violin:

1. Both held on the shoulder and bowed palm downward.
2. Rounded soundboard, bulging gently toward the middle, with a depression near the edge.
3. Projecting edges of the tables.
4. Lateral pegs.
5. Four strings.

He gives the tuning of the fiddle as g g' d' a' e'', remarking, "if the strings were reduced to four, it would be natural to omit the doubling g' and keep g d' a' e'', that is, the accordatura of the violin."[6]

An examination of the foregoing conclusions of three musicologists in the field of instrumental history discloses that the instrument preceding the violin and most resembling it in outline and shape was the lyra da braccio, and that the influence of the fiddle on the violin was purely musical (style of performance), with the exception of a few minor details and the tuning. Now, the earliest known instruments of a construction definitely belonging to the modern violin were not violins but violas, mostly those instruments made by Gasparo da Salo and Paolo Maggini. Furthermore, the lyra

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[6]Curt Sachs, The History of Musical Instruments, pp. 355-356.

was approximately the same size as these early violas and in many instances of the same contour; its musical style was predominantly chordal and harmonic, the same style associated with the viola until very recent times. Thus it would seem that the viola was the first instrument of the violin family to emerge from the innumerable sizes, shapes, and types of the preceding stringed instruments, and that because of the need of a treble instrument of the viola type, the violin was made to fulfill this need. Because of its treble pitch and small size it quite possibly became associated with the fiddle.

Further proof of the precedence of the viola is had in the matter of terminology during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Once the viola and violin form (hereafter referred to as violin form) became reasonably stable, the greatest confusion arose in regard to the two instruments. Spellings such as Viall, Viol, Violon, Vyoll, Vielle, Viole, and Viola were used indiscriminately for any instrument resembling the viol or violin type. Furthermore, the term "violino" was nearly always coupled with the terms "viole da braccio" and "viole da gamba," this practice leading to either one of two theories:

1. That the term "violino" was often applied to the rebec, or

2. That the term "violino" meant the actual treble violin of today, and that consequently this instrument evolved completely apart from the lyra, the rebec, or the viola da braccio, thus being itself the progenitor of the viola and violoncello.

Hayes rather discounts the latter theory thus:

> Now normal violins of this period exist today to show that the instrument was then in use and hence, after all, it, and not the rebec, may be implied by the terms quoted. But the separation calls for some explanation that is by no means obvious. If the treble violin was evolved or introduced alone, the recognition of its distinctive character may have called for the construction of other sizes to have a family, after the custom of the times, corresponding to the human voices; and the later members, being widely separated in time, and being more comparable in size throughout to the viols, received an apellation for the latter. It must be remembered that we are discussing only rather isolated evidence; the complete absence of any such distinction in Praetorius offers a striking contrast.[7]

Further investigation of the terminology of stringed instruments during the period 1575-1625 leads to most conclusive evidence that the viola existed before the violin. Galpin states:

> Monteverdi, in his score "Orfeo" (1607), names "Violini ordinari da braccio" and also "Violini piccoli alla francese," and it has generally been thought that under the latter title he alludes to the French "Pochette," a little violin used for dance music. But the "Violino ordinario" was at that day identical with the viola or "Bratsche" and the "Violino piccolo" was the modern violin.[8]

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[7]Hayes, op. cit., p. 183. [8]Galpin, op. cit., p. 147.

Sachs gives a similar instance:

> For instance, Giovanni Gabrieli, who seems to have been the first composer to prescribe definite instruments for his scores, writes, in his "Sacrae Symphonie" (1597) a part for a violino; but having an alto clef and descending below "g" this is clearly a viola part. Correspondingly, Lodonico Zacconi, in his "Prattica di Musica" (first published in 1592), includes in the term "violini" both the violin and the viola.[9]

From these references to the viola in terms of the "violino ordinario," the obvious conclusion is that at the time of Gabrieli and Zacconi the viola was the more useful instrument, especially as the diminutive term, "violino piccolo," was applied to the violin. This latter instrument was thought of as a small viola. In fact, most of the music of the period preceding the Baroque period seems to have been written with an emphasis on the lower pitched instruments. Watson Forbes sums up the matter thus:

> Strangely enough, the viola and not the violin was the first of the violin family (violin, viola, and 'cello) to make its appearance. Both the violin and the viol family emerged by process of evolution about the beginning of the sixteenth century. They attained their perfect form between 1550 and 1600. Whether both families had a common ancestry is open to question, but there seems little doubt that the immediate precursor of the viola was the lira. . . . It is quite obvious that it would take only some small alterations to change the lira da braccia into a viola.[10]

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[9]Sachs, op. cit., p. 357.

[10]Watson Forbes, "For Viola Players," The Strad, LV (March, 1945), 249.

Referring to the large number of violas made by luthiers such as da Salo, Maggini, the three Amatis, and others, Forbes says:

> This "flying start" was later to prove the downfall of the viola. When, early in the seventeenth century, Italian music sought a public platform in the "Academies of Music," the churches and, more especially, in the opera houses, the louder voiced violin family ousted the viols. It was the violin itself which became the most popular instrument. Musical activities in the Italian cities of Venice, Naples, and elsewhere assumed incredible proportions, even by our own standards of today. Everywhere there was a demand for more and still more instruments, and, as the strings gradually became the backbone of the orchestra, the cry for more and more violins could hardly be met. Then it was that the famous school of Cremonese violin makers first arose. They came in answer to a definite call. The early makers, as we have seen, had been generous in the supply of violas, so the real need was for violins and 'cellos, but especially violins.[11]

Thus, at the same time that the violin was coming into prominence, the Italian vocal school was flourishing. The coloratura style was predominant and the violin was the ideal imitation or approximation of this style. Because of this, the classical violin sonata made its appearance, and the overwhelming popularity of this style (viz., a violin melody accompanied by a bass line with the harmony filled in at sight by the keyboard player) practically obliterated solo music for any of the stringed instruments other than the violin. Concerto solo parts were invariably composed

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[11] Ibid., p. 250.

after the style of the sonata, with the middle voices practically non-existent. Consequently, the appearance of the viola in the music of the period 1550-1750 was solely orchestral and then, to quote Forbes, "only as a lowly maid of all work."[12] This lamentable situation appears even more tragic when the following statement is considered:

> During this period the greatest violin makers of all time lived and died. . . . They must have found little encouragement to spend time on making violas. But some of these craftsmen did occasionally make a viola and thus it was possible for the string quartet to eventually come into existence.[13]

The tragedy is the fact that, among the hundreds of the world's priceless violins made during this period, there exists only a mere handful of violas of the same quality. For this reason, viola players are constantly faced with the difficulty of obtaining an old instrument of even average quality.

One other theory might partially account for the absence of worthwhile viola music during the Baroque and Classical periods. Almost all of the violas existing during these periods were of a very large size (the da Salo violas all measure seventeen inches or more in length; the Amati violas measure from seventeen to seventeen and three-fourths inches), this size causing considerable difficulty of execution. This

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[12] Ibid., p. 251.

[13] Ibid., p. 253.

clumsiness must hardly have been bearable for players who loved the small, easy-playing violin, especially when the brilliant coloratura style was so popular. Consequently, the viola parts were written as simply as possible, with little or no shifting, making viola playing an easy job at which any violinist could recreate himself. By the time some of the larger instruments were "cut down" and smaller violas were being made by Stradivarius, Stainer, Gofriller, and others, the viola had acquired a style all its own, one devoted exclusively to filling in the middle part of the string score. In addition, the violin, with its soprano pitch and possibilities of apparently easy brilliancy, appealed strongly to the prevalent tendency toward virtuosity, as witness the success of such composers as Tartini, Corelli, Vivaldi, and later Paganini.

Apart from the small number of violas made by luthiers of the Brescian and Cremonese schools, few really good violas have been made. Various attempts at large instruments have been made from time to time (Stradivarius made a tenor twenty inches in length), but the exceptionally large instruments have proved too difficult to play for all except players gifted with large hands. In recent years Lionel Tertis and Arthur Richardson have jointly designed what may prove to be

a very suitable viola for the average player, being large enough to produce a good viola sound, but constructed in such a manner as to provide the maximum comfort in playing for its size.

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUE: 1650-1900

The Baroque Period

According to William Flackton, an English composer of the late Baroque period, no solo pieces for the tenor violin (the name usually applied to the viola during this period) were to be found in London "circa" 1760. He, therefore, proposed to write three sonatas for the instrument, prefacing them with the following statement:

> These Solos for a Tenor Violin are intended to shew that Instrument in a more conspicuous Manner, than has hitherto been accustomed; the part generally allotted to it being little more than a dull Ripiano, an Accessory or Auxiliary, to fill up or compleat the Harmony in Full Pieces of Music; though it must be allowed, that at some particular Times, it has been permitted to accompany a Song, and likewise to lead in a Fugue; yet even then, it is assisted by one, or more Instruments in the Unisons or Octaves, to prevent, if possible, its being distinguished from any other Instrument; or, if it happens to be heard but in so small a space as a Bar or two, 'tis quickly overpowered again with a crowd of Instruments, and lost in Chorus.
>
> Such is the Present State of this Fine Toned Instrument, owing in some Measur, to the Want of Solos, and other Pieces of Music, properly adapted to it.
>
> The Author takes this opportunity of acknowledging his particular Obligation to Mr. Abel, for inspecting this Work in Manuscript before it went to the press; the Publication of which, it is hoped, may be productive of other Works of this kind from more able Hands, and establish a higher Veneration and Taste for this excellent, tho' too much neglected Instrument.[1]

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[1]William Flackton, Sonata in G for Viola and Piano, p. 8.

The Sonata in G (being, to the best of the author's knowledge, the only one in use today) contains technical demands of the most elementary nature, there being no actual necessity for the use of the third position (or second, for that matter), except for purely musical reasons. Double-stopping is used frequently, but never in a difficult manner, as compared to the complexities of some of the Bach works for violin or the Handel violin sonatas. The bowing consists of the three main styles of the Baroque period, namely, the legato, the detaché, and the martelé.

The remaining work of the Baroque period for viola solo (with orchestra) extant is the B Minor Concerto of Handel. Although there has been much discussion as to the authenticity of this work, the actual viola part will be considered authentic, insofar as this paper is concerned, until proof to the contrary is actually published.

The technical aspects of this concerto are numerous, especially in the light of present knowledge of the demands made upon viola players of the Baroque period. The most outstanding aspect of the first movement is the number and type of shifts required. Not in any music until the Symphonia Concertante of Mozart are such requirements to be found. Wide skips such as those shown in Figure 1 are representative of technical practices of at least fifty to one hundred years later than the date of this concerto.

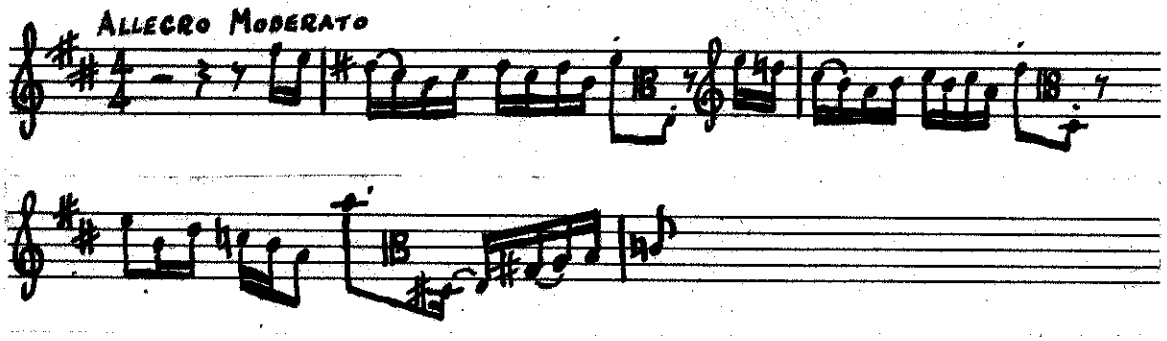

Figure 1

Handel, Concerto, First Movement,
Measures 14-17 and Measure 38

Such alternate string crossings as those in Figure 2 are perhaps the second most important technical consideration in this movement, as they pose a decided difficulty in bowing technique; they should be played with a vigorous martelé stroke with a space between each note. This stroke will greatly simplify the problem of a silent string crossing.

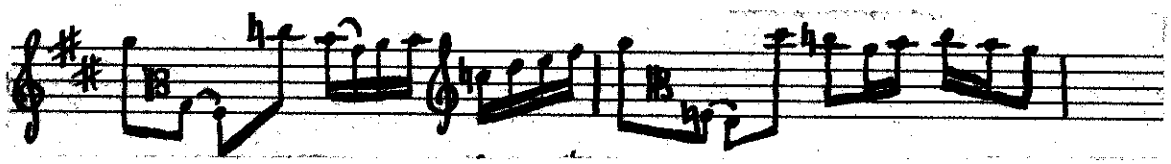

Figure 2

Handel, Concerto, First Movement, Measures 67-68

The shifts in Figure 3 must certainly have been considerably beyond the ordinary demands for viola players of Handel's day.

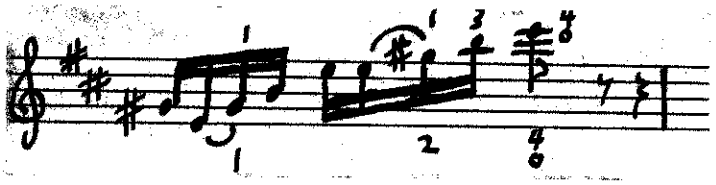

Figure 3

Handel, Concerto, First Movement, Measure 69

The two fingerings are given to show the possibility of a simplified method of execution. The lower fingering allows the harmonic e''' to be taken only by a shift. This the easiest method, technically speaking, but the upper fingering is the smoothest in a musical sense, as no smearing of the clear harmonic desired is likely to result.

The bowings in the first movement are in the typical Baroque style, consisting mainly of combinations of broad detaché strokes and slurring. They are as diverse and as difficult of perfect execution as any bowings found in music for the other stringed instruments during this period. The two instances of staccato bowing found in this movement, one of which is illustrated in Figure 4, are definitely not in keeping with the style of the work and presumably are in the one edition of this work as an attempt at variety.

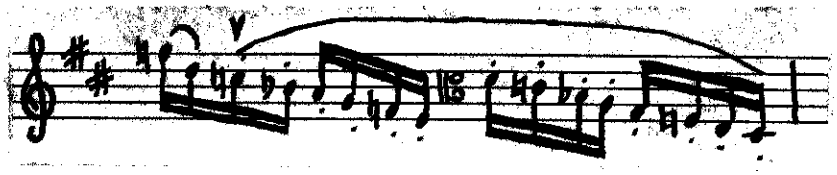

Figure 4

Handel, Concerto, First Movement, Measure 29

The third movement contains only three passages ascending beyond the third position, each of these being in the fifth position and reaching the b". The only bowing problem of any magnitude is the style of the detached notes. The practice of Handel's day was to play most passages such as the one in Figure 5 with the martelé stroke, but, in view of the tempo marking of this movement (Allegro Molto), the playing of these notes at the frog of the bow with a rather broad staccato stroke is much more satisfying musically.

Figure 5

Handel, Concerto, Third Movement, Measures 1-4

The Sixth Brandenburg Concerto of Bach represents the limits of viola technique in the orchestra and in chamber music during the Baroque period. One aspect of the technical considerations of this work is the use of the third position as the limit of all shifting for the two viola da braccia parts. From this so consistent limitation only one possible conclusion can be drawn, this being that the upper bouts of most of the violas of the period were of too large a size to permit any activity beyond the edge of the instrument; at least this must have been the belief at the time. Bach's violin parts extended at various times to the fifth, sixth, and even seventh positions, and no limitation other than that of size could have prevented him from writing viola parts in the fourth or fifth positions, especially in a composition in which practically all the important passages are in the two viola da braccia parts.

An interesting example of the extended use of the viola "A" string is found in the duet for the two violas da braccia in the second movement of this concerto. Bach evidently had no qualms about the so-called "nasal" sound of this string. The effect produced by these instruments when played on the upper string is equally as pleasing, if not more so, than any produced on the corresponding string of the violin.

The foregoing considerations of the important viola music of the Baroque period reveal the following conclusions:

1. The third position was the upper limit of left-hand technique on the viola.
2. In general, viola left-hand technique was much simpler than that of the violin.
3. The bow technique of the two instruments (violin and viola) was much the same, insofar as technical demands are concerned.

The Classical Period

Very few advances in viola technique were made during the Classical period. The unique tone quality of the viola was recognized by Mozart, who exploited the lower strings in many compositions. The viola acquired a standard range (from c to g'') in orchestral and chamber music and a definite style, usually a filling-in one, which plagued the instrument until the time of Wagner. In much of the music of the Classical period, especially that of Mozart and Beethoven, can be seen the desire, on the part of these composers, to use the possibilities of the viola much more than they were able to do. Thus, with a few exceptions, it remained in the state described earlier by Flackton throughout the period.

The Sinfonia Concertante of Mozart for violin and viola most certainly held a unique position in the music of the eighteenth century. It was Mozart's final word in

the string concerto field, and one of his most beautiful works for orchestra. The viola part was written for a virtuoso player and, considering the usually simple viola parts of the day, Mozart must not have heard a very satisfactory performance of this work.

Although extending to any positions beyond the third only once, the symphony contains every shifting and bowing difficulty found in the violin concertos. The viola is given equal prominence with the violin in solo passages, and the parts of the two instruments are combined not as a solo instrument and its accompanist, but as two instruments sounding as one.

The work in its original form involved the use of "scordatura." Mozart's manuscript shows the viola part written in D major, one-half tone below the key of the violin part and the key of the orchestra. The generally accepted explanation of this peculiarity is that Mozart desired a matching tone color of the violin and viola; consequently he wrote the viola part one-half tone lower, causing the violist to tune his instrument one-half tone higher. This procedure would naturally produce a somewhat brighter sound. However, an equally logical explanation is that Mozart foresaw the possibility of his violist struggling with shifts and finger patterns in E♭ major, a none too complimentary key for the violin and viola, and simplified matters greatly

by giving him access to harmonics, open strings, and a much easier left-hand problem.

The high A 's found in many places in this work were thus lowered to G's, all comfortably located in the third position. The opening passage, a problem in the key of E♭ because of the fingering produced by the octave and the notes following it, becomes an entirely different matter in the key of D (Figure 6).

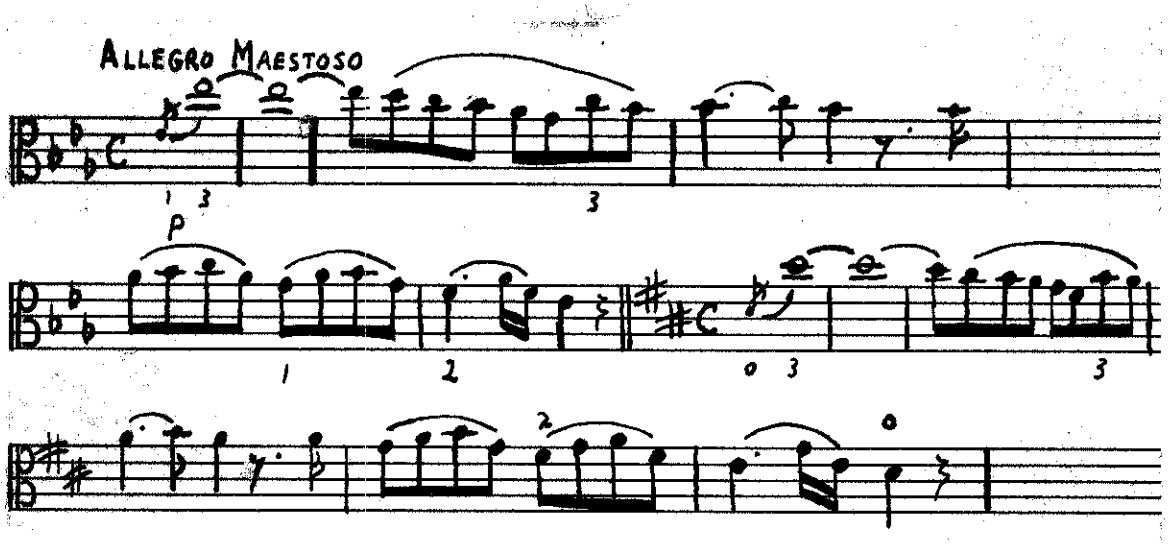

Figure 6

Mozart, Sinfonia Concertante,
First Movement, Measures 72-77

Similarly, the long ascending passage concluding the solo viola part in the third movement doubtless would present a much more familiar and comfortable set of fingerings in the fourth and fifth positions in the key of D then in the key of E♭, thus:

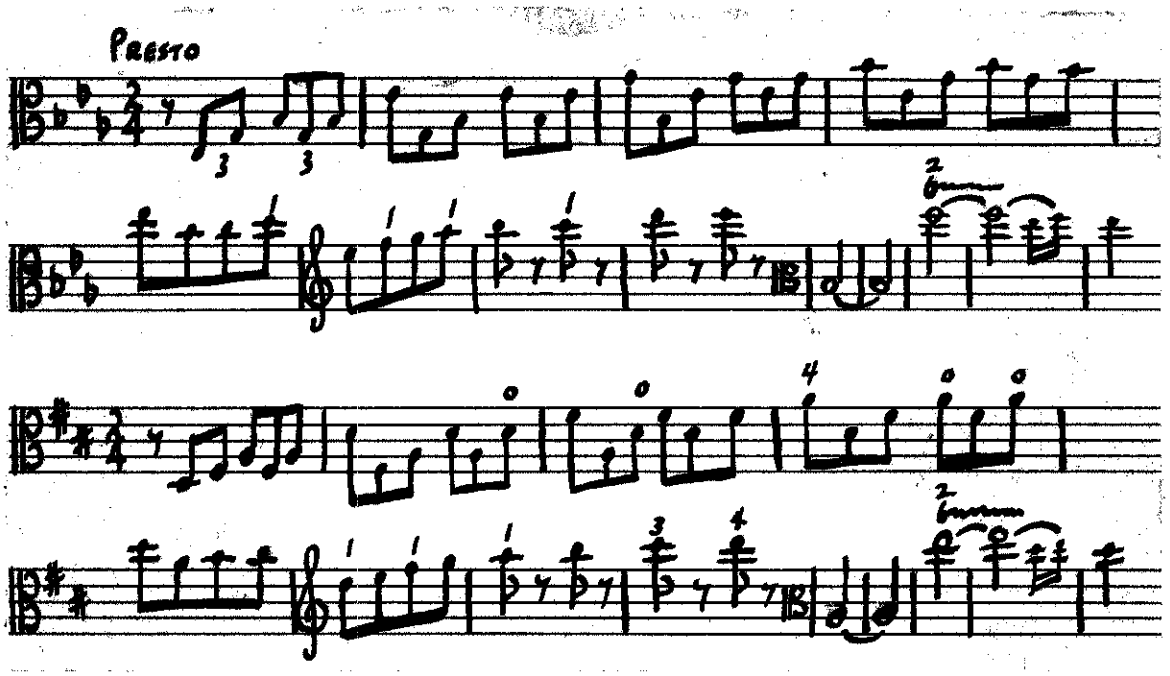

Figure 7

Mozart, Sinfonia Concertante,
Third Movement, Measures 423-435

From the differences in technical difficulty arising from the use of the two keys shown in the preceding examples, and in numerous other passages in this work, the most logical explanation of Mozart's use of "scordatura" is the fact that the key of D presented fewer problems of execution to the violist of Mozart's time than did the key of E♭.

Regardless of technical considerations, violists are ever grateful for the pioneering genius of Mozart, who dared to write a composition which stood alone for one hundred and fifty years as an example of the possibilities of the viola as a solo instrument.

In the orchestral and chamber music of the Classical period is found one important development regarding viola playing, this being the recognition by composers of the unique viola tone quality. Mozart employed two viola parts in the Symphony No. Forty, the Sinfonia Concertante discussed above, and in five string quintets. Each of these works is marked by a richness of tone made possible only by the extra viola employed. In the quintets he exploited the extra instrument at every opportunity, especially so in the G-minor quintet, in which the first and even second viola are given distinctive solo parts at various times.

Beethoven, in his last quartets, wrote for the viola as a definite voice rather than as a mere fill-in part. The viola part becomes a line in itself, a counterpoint in many cases, as opposed to the strictly harmonic style it possessed for so long. True, the parts are still confined to the first three positions, but the sound, the distinctive resonance of the tone, is finally used to full advantage, even in technically difficult passages. Thus, in the Quartet, Opus 59, No. 3, we find the viola stating the subject of the fugue in its first entrance in the fourth movement.

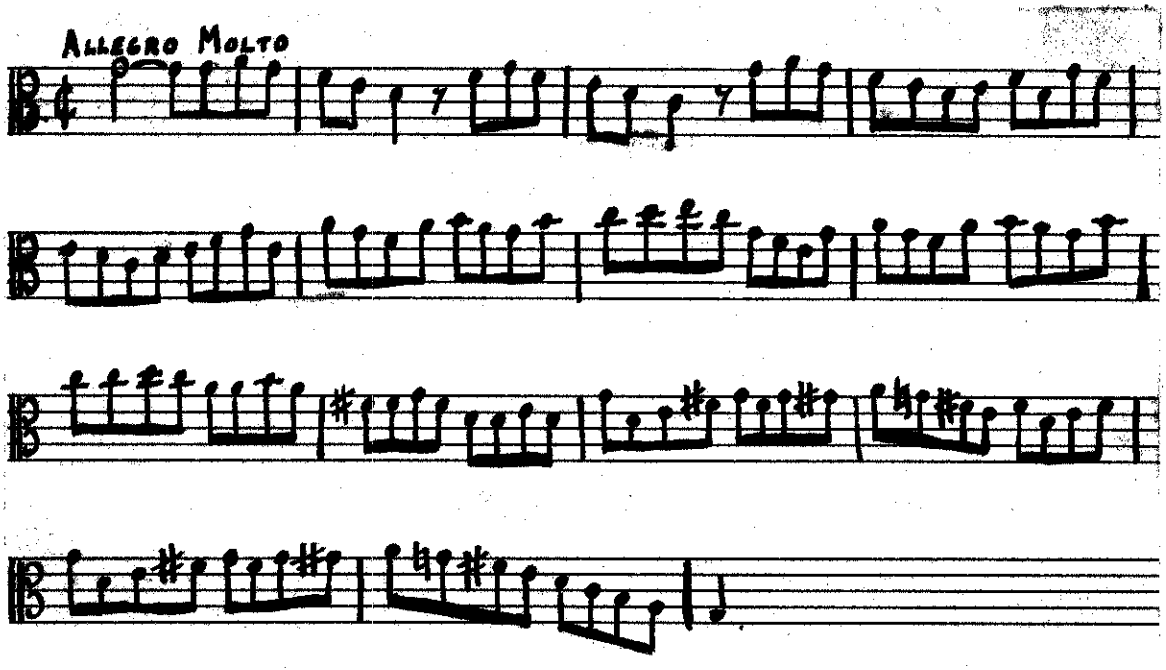

Figure 8

Beethoven, Quartet, Opus 59, No. 3,
Fourth Movement, Measures 1-14

This is a very difficult part, especially so in the absence of any accompanying instruments, but Beethoven evidently felt that he needed the viola and made no attempt to disguise the part or to write a contersubject to help the viola player; the part is glaringly exposed and must be played with the utmost precision and control.

In his symphonies, Beethoven was far less inclined to give the violas an independent voice. When writing a melody for them, he usually doubled the part with either violins or

'cellos. This practice was due, no doubt, to the presence of only one or two good viola players in the section. This dearth of competent performers provided little incentive for exposed "soli" passages involving six or eight players, regardless of the composer's inclinations. In the second section of the theme of the third movement of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven scored the theme for violas and second violins.

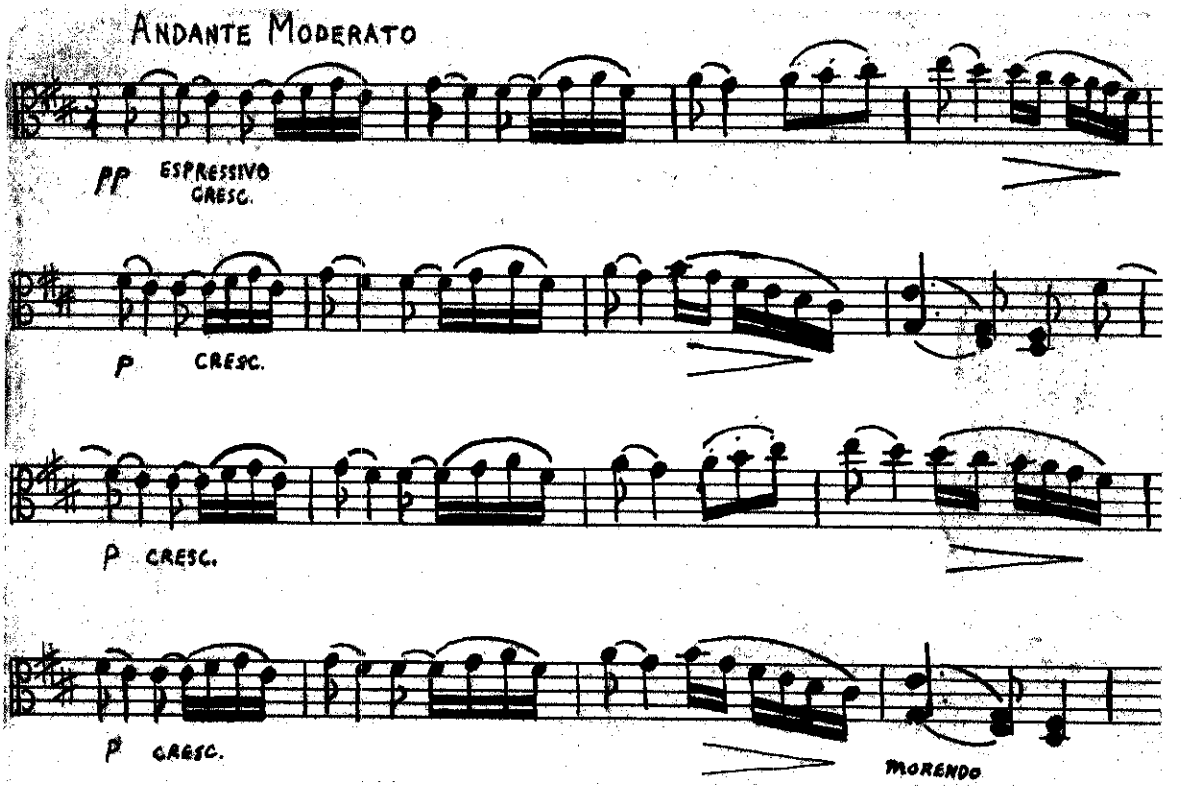

Figure 9
Beethoven, Ninth Symphony, Third Movement, Measures 24-40

The viola sound predominates, and the second violins have nothing else in the movement as important as this section; possibly Beethoven desired the violas playing "soli" but,

having no section capable of rendering a decent performance, bolstered the violas with the second violins.

Thus, by 1825, the viola had grown in stature to a full-fledged member of the string family, at least in respect to tone; it was given parts generally equal in difficulty, both in left and right hand, to the violin and 'cello with one exception, this being that these parts were still bound to the third position and lower; finally, some good viola players did exist during the Classical period (although very few), as otherwise the viola could not have gained the very small portion of prominence which it held. It must be noted that the viola was much more important in chamber music than in the orchestra, due to the fact that a chamber music group required but one or two violists, whereas the orchestra required from six to ten.

The Romantic Period

The one medium of instrumental expression in which the effective employment of the viola had been retarded for so long--the orchestra--finally provided the necessary impetus for the long needed upward extension of compass and a definite system of fingering and articulation. During the Romantic period composers such as Berlioz, Brahms, Tschaikowsky, Wagner, and Strauss made increasing technical demands upon the viola section of the symphony orchestra. Berlioz gave voice to the hitherto unspoken opinions of many composers,

thus:

> Of all the instruments in the orchestra, the one whose excellent qualities have been longest misunderstood is the viola. It is no less agile than the violin, the sound of its low strings is peculiarly telling, its upper notes are distinguished by their mournfully passionate accent, and its quality of tone altogether, profoundly melancholy, differs from that of other instruments played with the bow. It has, nevertheless, been long neglected, or put to a use as unimportant as ineffectual,--that of merely doubling the bass part an octave above. . . . Moreover, it was unfortunately impossible, at that time [referring to the eighteenth century], to write anything for the violas of a prominent character, requiring even ordinary skill in execution. Viola-players were always taken from among the refuse of violinists. When a musician found himself incapable of creditably filling the place of violinist, he took refuge among the violas. Hence it arose that the viola performers knew neither how to play the violin nor the viola. It must even be admitted that, at the present time, this prejudice against the viola part is not altogether destroyed; and that there are still, in the best orchestras, many viola-players who are not more proficient on that instrument than on the violin. But the mischief resulting from forbearance towards them is daily becoming more felt; and, little by little, the viola will, like other instruments, be confided only to clever hands. . . .[2]

In his symphony for viola and orchestra, Harold in Italy, Berlioz wrote the first work of virtuoso type since the Sinfonia Concertante of Mozart. This work was not intended as a concerto, but as a symphony containing a prominent viola solo part. However, passages in octaves, broken octaves, and thirds, brilliant scale work, and difficult bowing passages mark it as a work demanding virtuosic command of the instrument. The fine resonant tones of the viola are displayed

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[2]Hector Berlioz, A Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration, p. 25.

fully in the first, third, and fourth movements. The use of the "ponticello" arpeggios in the second movement is a device used for the first time in the history of the viola, as is the use of the A string for sustained melodic passages in the last movement. This work doubtless gave other composers the confidence in the instrument that was necessary for free, unrestrained usage in the orchestra.

Brahms was particularly fond of the viola and at times wrote entire movements without the aid of violins (the first movement of the German Requiem and the Minuetto of the D Major Serenade for orchestra). He exploited the viola sound, particularly the C string, to the fullest extent in his symphonies. In fact, his scoring has often been criticized as being overly dark and "muddy" because of this love of the lower toned stringed instruments. Passages such as the following (Figure 10) are typical of many of Brahms' viola parts.

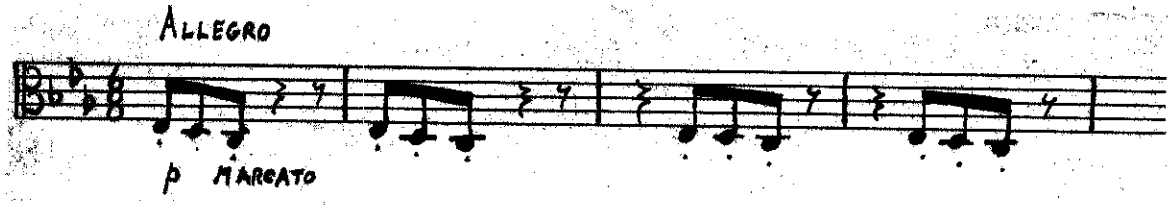

Figure 10

Brahms, Symphony No. 1, First Movement, Measures 430-434

Wagner, in his tremendous enlargement of the technical scope of all orchestral instruments, revolutionized the

conception of orchestral viola playing. His writing demands, for perfect execution, a viola section of virtuoso players. The outstanding innovation to be found in his viola scoring is the unprecedented mobility of the spiccato and light detaché passages; in every Wagnerian viola part can be found spiccato passages of long duration and extreme difficulty. The chromatic passages, whether slurred or detached, are actually the first demonstrations of the need of a definite system of fingerings and finger-action (because of the large size of the strings and the slow response of the viola) for viola players. The use of the half-position is imperative in many cases, especially on the C and G strings. The playing of chromatic scales by means of a combination of slides and separate finger action, so easy on the violin, gives poor results on the viola, and passages of prolonged chromatic scales, such as the excerpt shown in Figure 11, must be fingered in such a manner as to give maximum finger percussion.

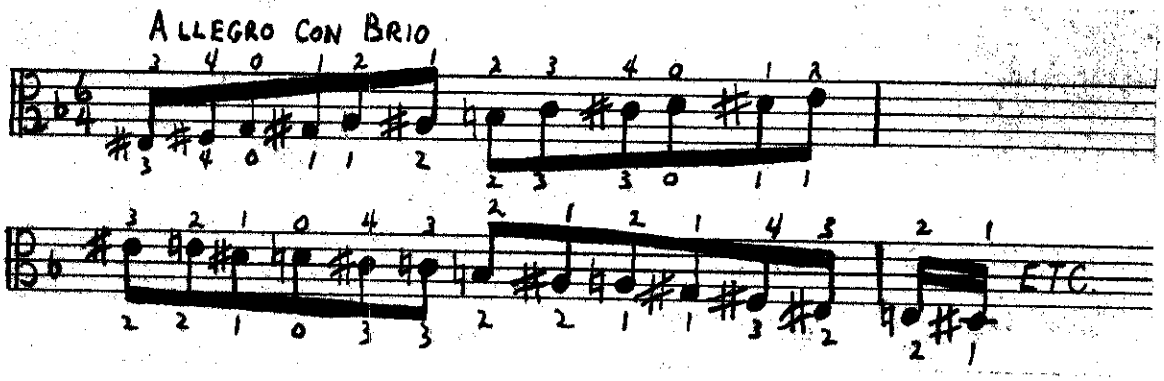

Figure 11-Wagner, Flying Dutchman, Overture

Thus, the upper fingering shown is much preferred to the lower one, as it allows for an actual percussion for each note, instead of the slide for one note and percussion for another which occurs frequently in the lower fingering.

Perhaps the most important innovation made by Wagner in respect to viola technique was the number of difficult "soli" passages often given to the violas; before Wagner's time most passages resembling solos for the viola section were written as smoothly and with as little technical action as possible. Not so Wagner's parts, as witness the following excerpts from Tannhauser And Tristan und Isolde:

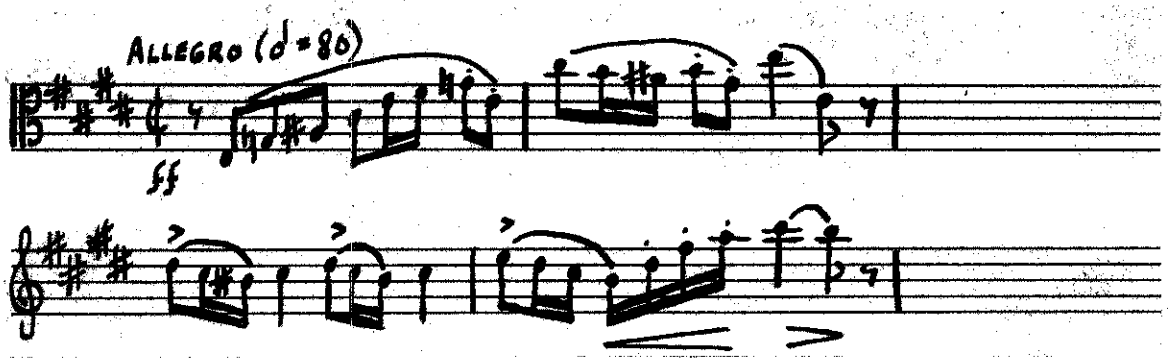

Figure 12

Wagner, Tannhauser, Overture, Measures 289-292

Figure 13

Wagner, Tristan und Isolde, Prelude

From passages such as the above can be seen the fact that, regardless of the attitudes of viola players toward such writing, the time had come when players of that instrument could no longer be cast-off violin players or senile wind players, but must master the technical problems of the viola in their entirety in order to become good orchestral and solo players.

Richard Strauss merely extended the few technical possibilities left uncovered by Wagner, and created viola parts (as well as parts for every other instrument of the orchestra) which still stand in many respects as the zenith of all viola and orchestral technique. The passage shown in Figure 14 and others like it call for the near-impossible on the viola:

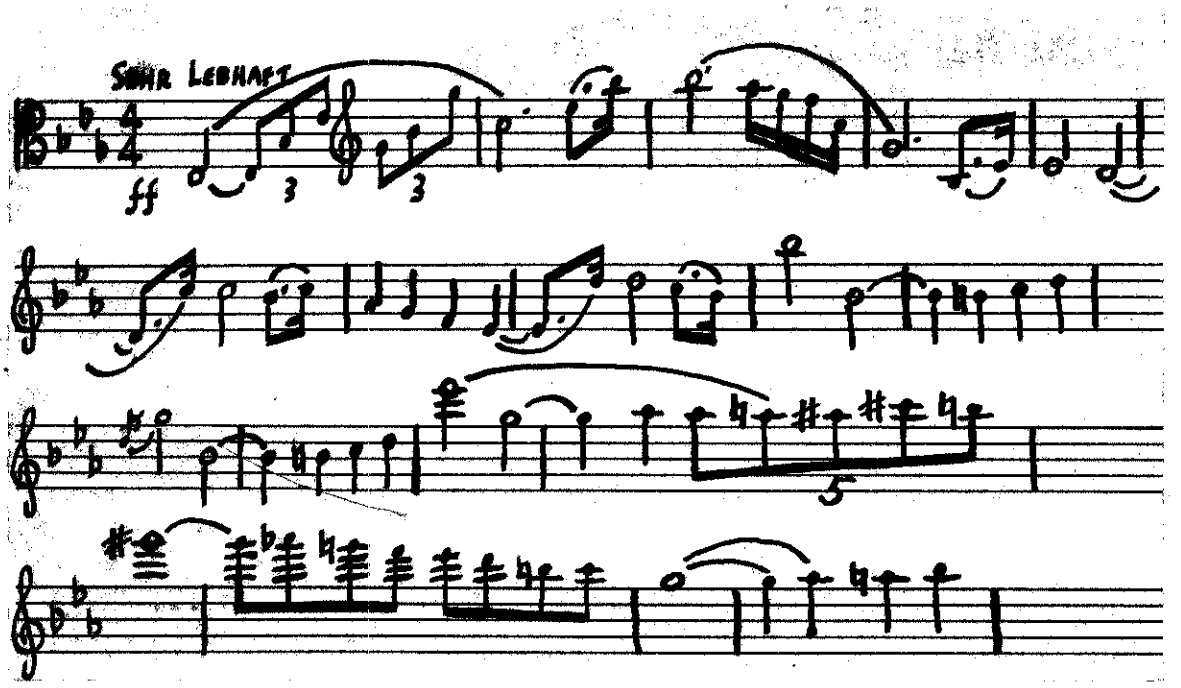

Figure 14

Strauss, Ein Heldenleben, Nos. 77-79

In a discussion of the above passage Forsyth remarks, ". . . .one would not like to be asked to name the orchestra whose violas could play these bars neatly with only a light 'pizzicato' accompaniment."[3] This statement bears out the fact that viola technique had ascended to undreamed-of heights in the hands of masters such as Wagner and Strauss.

Strauss employed a solo viola--in the orchestra--in his Don Quixote variations for 'cello and orchestra. The viola

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[3]Cecil Forsyth, Orchestration, p. 384.

C string is tuned down to B in one instance in order to obtain the C major scale starting on the leading tone in the lowest register of the viola. This example of "scordatura" is used only twice, and then rather briefly, in Variation III. Strauss evidently understood the impracticality of using a lower-tuned C string to any great extent as, in addition to the effect produced upon the tone by this tuning, the violist's fingering system would be greatly complicated by an extensive employment of "scordatura" on one string only.

A work that must be included in this paper, because of its merit as a concert piece and its position as the sole composition of importance for viola and piano of the Romantic period, is the Märchenbilder, or Scenes from Fairyland, by Robert Schumann. It is written very effectively for the viola and contains a movement marked "Rasch" (Lively), written in triplet sixteenth notes and extremely difficult of execution. This movement must be practiced very slowly until the intonation is good and the fingers and bow are coordinated perfectly; otherwise, the passage will not be made to "speak" and will give only a vague, insecure impression.

The foregoing discussion has shown that during the Romantic period the viola came into its own, primarily as an orchestral instrument. Because of the demands made on

orchestral viola players, the number of good players gradually increased until there became necessary the production by composers of many works for the solo repertoire. Thus, about 1900, the Modern period, which could be termed the "golden age" of viola playing, began.

CHAPTER III

TECHNIQUE: 1900-1949

The Modern Period

In this chapter will be discussed some representative works of the various schools of viola music which have come into existence since 1900, and their influence upon viola playing in general. The works of Paul Hindemith will be discussed under a separate heading because of their importance to violists, their number, and their musical value. The divisions of the chapter are not meant to show definite national styles, except when so designated, but are made in order to simplify the organization of the material.

The French School.--The younger composers of the French school have led the world in compositions for the less "popular" solo instruments such as the saxophone, bassoon, oboe, and viola. They have written great amounts of acceptable concert music for these instruments, and the viola has received no small share of this music. The typically French urge for innovation and exotic effects is very evident in many of these viola compositions, which usually include the use of the mute, the use of the bow over the fingerboard, use of ponticello, and the greatest possible range and

variety of dynamics. These varied requirements make French viola music valuable material for the development of refinement and delicacy of performance. Due to the large quantity of material and the limited space available, only three representative works will be discussed.

The Sonate pour Piano et Alto of Charles Koechlin, written in 1923, contains practically every device known to modern viola players. It is definitely a virtuoso work, and demands a player of great ability and refinement.

The first movement makes use of "scordatura," the composer instructing: "Descendre DO à SI♭". This tuning lowers the C string one whole tone, thus creating a problem of transposition for the violist. Therefore, the notes written, ordinarily played in the first or second position, must be fingered as if they were written one whole tone higher, thus:

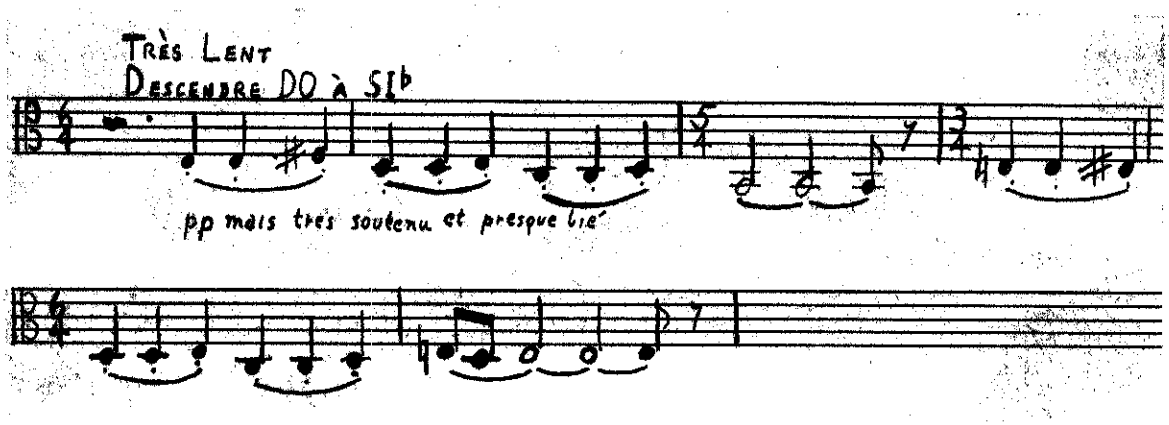

Figure 15

Koechlin, Sonata, First Movement, Measures 1-6.

In other words, the relationship between each stopped note and the open string varies by one whole tone.

The second movement, a scherzo in polyrhythm, poses two main problems, one of bowing, the other of fingering in several very high passages on the A string. The bowing problem is one of articulation, arising from the many changes from groups of three spiccato notes to groups of two. These changes must be played with the utmost precision, so as to convey to the listener a clear impression of the difference between the groups of three and the groups of two.

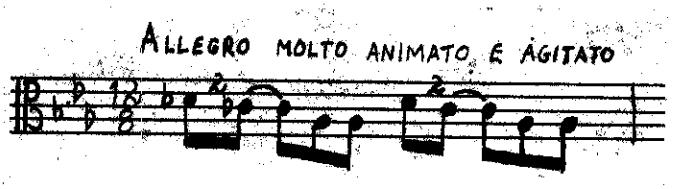

Figure 16

Koechlin, Sonata, Second Movement, Measure 42

In general the doublets should be played slightly more "marcato" than the triplets. The fingering problem of passages such as the one shown in Figure 17 is almost exclusively one of intonation.

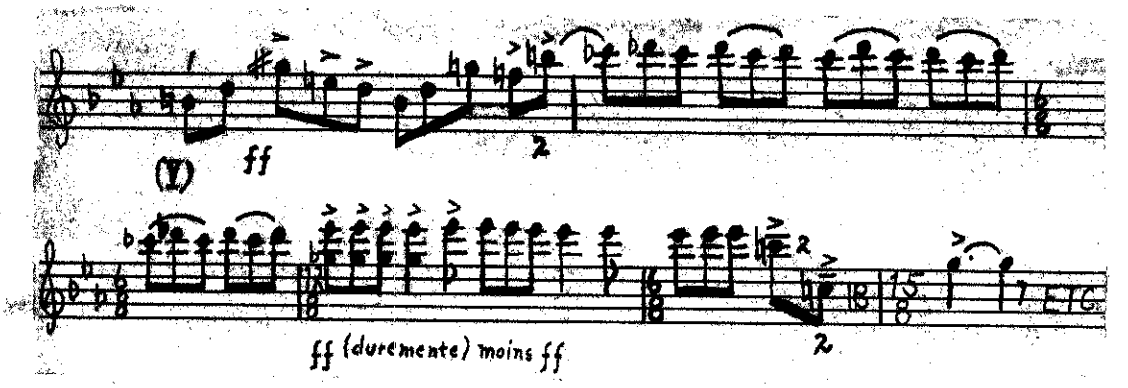

Figure 17

Koechlin, Sonata, Second Movement, Measures 48-52

As the violist usually has less mastery of the high positions than does the violinist, passages of this sort should be practiced very slowly, so that the player will become accustomed to the high positions, and will also hear the tonal patterns and inharmonic changes. A possible fingering is given.

The third, or slow, movement requires great surety of intonation and impeccable control of the bow, as any weaknesses in either of these two factors will be very evident in the long, sustained lines, most of which are played in the higher positions of all the strings.

The last movement is marked by much unorthodox scale and arpeggio work, and because of the fluidity of the tonal patterns, a set fingering should be adopted and strictly adhered to. In a passage such as:

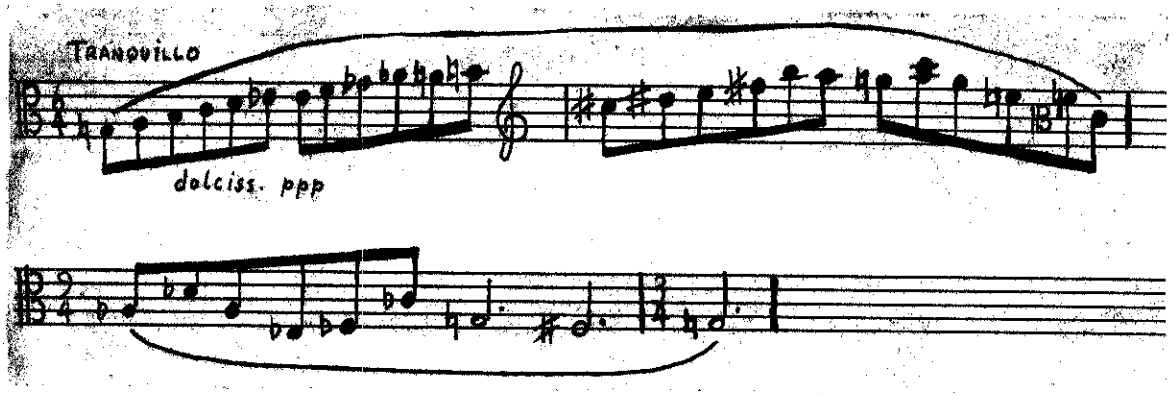

Figure 18

Koechlin, Sonata, Fourth Movement, Measures 63-66

any number of fingerings could be used; consequently the violist should seek the one most favorable to his particular style and physique, and bring it completely within his control by slow, concentrated practice.

This work, as do many of the French compositions, runs the gamut of technical demands. It is an excellent study in control and musicianship, many aspects of which must be omitted here.

The Appassionato pour Alto et Piano of Armond Bournonville contains a number of passages meriting discussion. One such passage is that found in the "Andante espressivo" section, in which the composer specifies the use of the higher positions (IV, V, VI, VII) of the C, G, and D strings. Another is the rapid scale work and the high melodic sections in the first part of the "Allegro vivo"; finally, the Presto

section concluding the work, an excerpt of which is shown in Figure 19, is of some difficulty because of the speed and the unusual finger patterns.

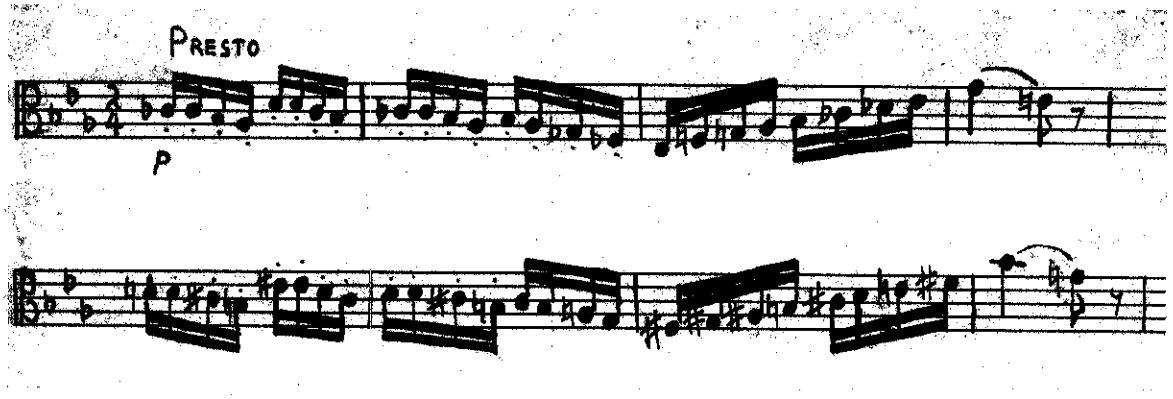

Figure 19

Bournonville, Appassionato, "Presto," Measures 1-8

Long study is necessary to bring about the complete coordination of bow and fingers in a long passage such as this one.

The famous Concertpiece of Georges Enesco, the distinguished violinist and pedagogue, was composed explicitly to reveal the viola's powers of expression and its possibilities of brilliancy. It is a brilliant, yet musically satisfying, work that is an important addition to the viola repertoire. It discredits once and for all the belief that the viola is incapable of virtuosic display, with many skillfully written passages designed to preserve the important

characteristics of the viola sound and style in the midst of considerable technical display. Passages in chromatics ascending to the seventh position, passages in double stops, all written so as to provide maximum sonority, melodic passages on all strings, and a brilliant finale ascending in groups of triplets to the ninth position coupled with a difficult bowing problem of two slurred notes and one detached note, make this piece one of the true virtuoso pieces of the repertoire. The player able to present it effectively may be said to have completely mastered his instrument. Indeed, the work is intended (for purposes of public performance) only for the virtuoso player.

The French school of writing, largely due to its employment of chromatics and impressionistic patterns and effects, has presented a challenge to all viola players, for, to master most of the French music, a violist must have complete command of his instrument and at the same time be an accomplished musician.

A French work in a considerably more modern vein than the previously mentioned compositions is the Sonata for Viola and Piano of Arthur Honegger. This is a fine work, but of the highest order, technically speaking.

The viola music of Paul Hindemith.--As one of the first musicians to campaign actively on behalf of the viola, and

as a composer of the first rank, Paul Hindemith's position among violists is unique. He has been able to produce, through his ability both as violist and composer, a number of works for the viola which reveal its great powers of musical expression when given music that is written in consideration of its peculiarities as a solo instrument.

Hindemith's music shows, primarily, great consideration for the tonal possibilities of the viola. Every piece is so designed in its entirety so as to provide the maximum and most characteristic sonority. Very few passages requiring sautillé bowing are found in his viola music. The staccato passages are usually slow enough to permit the violist to attack cleanly each note, thereby producing the best sound. In general, many passages of long, sustained legato or detaché style are found, both ideally suited to the style of the viola.

The Konzertmusik is an excellent example of this type of writing. The style is very fluid, with many notes and long phrases that must be made to "flow," so that in each phrase the notes merge into one line. Passages such as the following (Figure 20) abound in this work (as they do in most of Hindemith's music) and gain significance only when played in a pure, smooth, legato style.

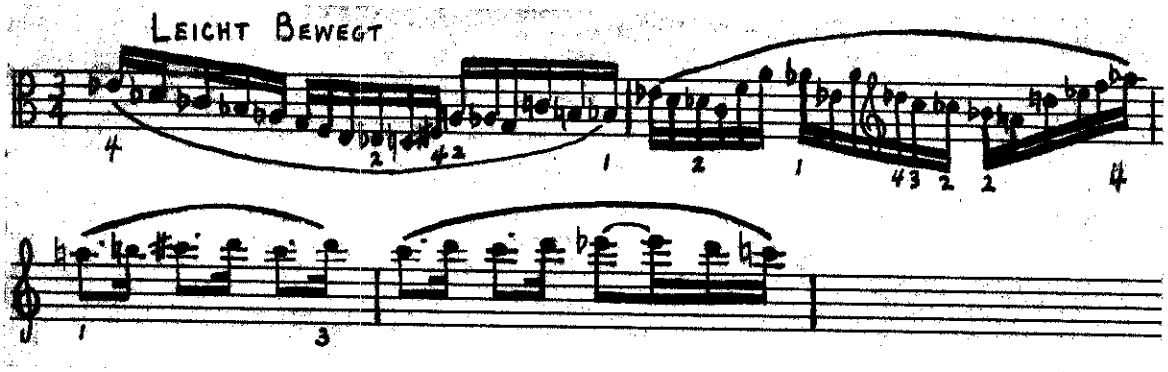

Figure 20

Hindemith, Konzertmusik, Fourth Movement, Measures 84-85

This passage presents a typical Hindemith fingering problem; the fingering given might prove a good solution.

Hindemith always arranges double and triple stops in such a manner that, regardless of their complexity, they present a good fundamental position for the hand.

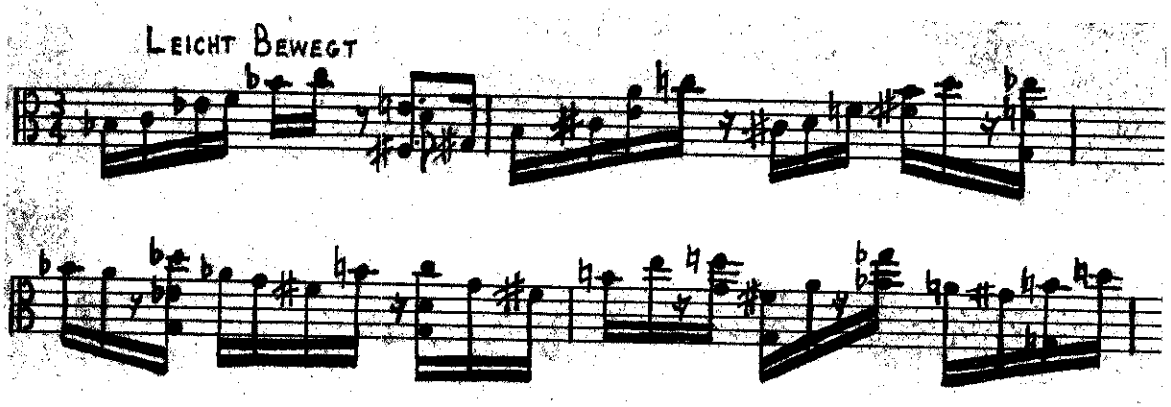

Figure 21

Hindemith, Konzertmusik, Fourth Movement, Measures 70-73

In Figure 21, this trait is shown by the absence of any simultaneous or successive action of the first or fourth fingers that might prove a great strain on the hand. Also evident is the presence of an open string in many of the chords, in this case the G string. This use of open strings in chords is another characteristic of Hindemith's writing. The following excerpt (Figure 22) is an excellent example of this frequently recurring procedure.

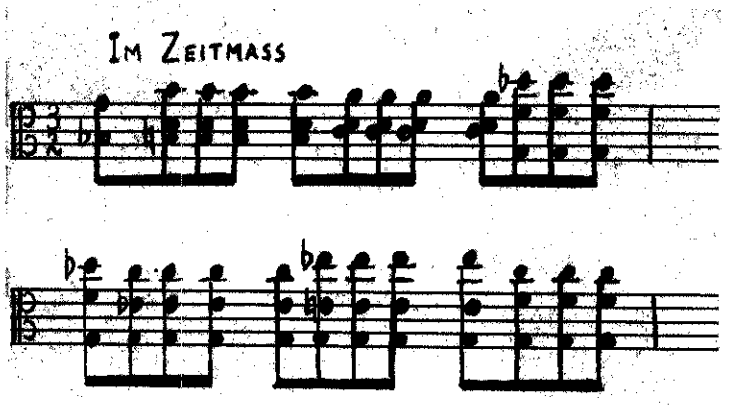

Figure 22

Hindemith, Konzertmusik,
First Movement, Measures 65-66

The two Sonatas for Viola Solo are marvelously wrought works, conceived on the same high plane of the sonatas and suites for violin and 'cello solo, respectively, of Bach. They require the highest development of technique and musicianship, and because of these requirements are too seldom heard in concert. They exploit the tonal qualities of the

viola to the fullest extent and contain, in larger measure, the flowing style and sonorous chords of the Konzertmusik. They are more complimentary to the viola than possibly any other works written for it, and should be studied and played by every serious violist.

Hindemith has written more viola music than any other composer. Consequently, he will long be remembered as one of the foremost champions of the instrument, who played a great part in bringing it to the position it occupies in music today. A list of his works for viola is as follows:

Sonata for Viola Solo, Op. 11, No. 5

Sonata for Viola Solo, Op. 25, No. 1

Sonata in F Major, for Viola and Piano, Op. 11, No. 4

Chamber Music No. 5 (Viola Concerto), Op. 36, No. 4

Concert Music for Solo Viola and Large Chamber Orchestra, Op. 48

Der Schwanendreher, Concerto

Folk Songs for Viola and Small Orchestra

Funeral Music for Viola and String Orchestra

The English School.--The English, for many years, have been noted for the number and quality of their viola players. This abundance of good performers has given rise to perhaps the only actual "school" of viola playing and viola music. Largely because of the pioneering of Lionel Tertis, many

English composers have written numerous works of outstanding merit for the viola, many of which are dedicated to this master. An evaluation of a few representative works of the English school will be given.

The Sonata in F by Granville Bantock is a pleasing work of moderate difficulty. The viola part is well written, with the problems of size and articulation in mind. Even the most "unviolistic" movement of all, the last one, a scherzo-type finale in 6-8 time, is not out of the realm of good viola writing. The spiccato passages, of which it mainly consists, are of such a nature (rather heavy and rhythmic), that they may be made to sound effectively on the C string as well as on the other strings.

The Sonata for Viola and Piano by Arnold Bax, dedicated to Lionel Tertis, and one of the better-known English works, presents more problems than does the Bantock work; however, it is an extremely well written piece, very sonorous, and of a very "solid" style, exactly suited to the viola. Bax has written most fast-moving passages in such a manner that they may be played with a detaché bowing or with a staccato in the lower half of the bow. The only passage of near-impossible execution on a large viola occurs on page three of the viola part (Figure 23).

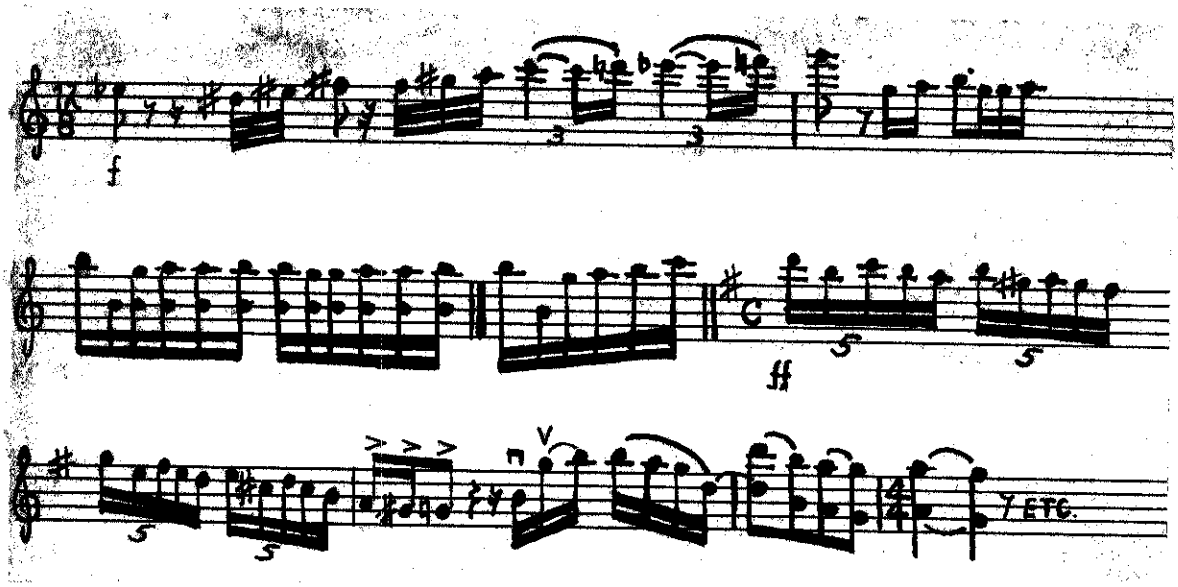

Figure 23

Bax, Sonata, First Movement,
Measures 136-137 and 139-143

This passage might not prove overly difficult on a small or medium-sized viola, but on a large instrument it practically necessitates the use of a thumb-position. The g''' is very high, and the octaves in measures 142-143 are not to be recommended as a regular practice. Forsyth states, "Any good violinist is much more at his ease between e''' and b''' than the correspondingly good Viola-player between a'' and e'''."[1] Many composers would do well to heed this advice when writing in the extremely high register of the viola. The viola in this register can never be considered

[1]Cecil Forsyth, Orchestration, p. 384.

"as merely a Violin tuned a fifth lower."[2]

Another English work for the viola is the Sonata for Viola and Pianoforte of Arthur Bliss. This sonata, dedicated to Lionel Tertis, was brought to the public for the first time by this virtuoso, and though extremely difficult, can be considered playable on a medium-sized viola. In general, it is well written, but the extremely high passages in various places are questionable viola writing. The first movement is a masterpiece of lyric style, the type of music most complimentary to the viola. The passage beginning at Number Seven (Figure 24) is an excellent example of the rather broad style of detaché to which the viola is so much more suited than to the light, ethereal style often associated with the violin.

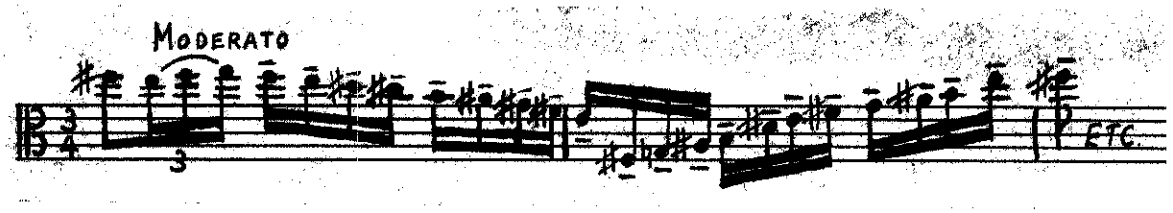

Figure 24

Bliss, Sonata, First Movement,
Measures 59-61

The double-stops and chords of this movement, although never of an easy nature, are playable for a violist of above-

[2]Ibid., p. 384.

average ability. They are calculated to be sonorous, and no impossible stretching or shifting combinations are required.

The very high parts of the first movement are usually written in scale-wise manner, making for easier execution. In the highest viola positions, large intervals require either long fingers or, in the case of shorter fingers, a type of shift between intervals taken in the same position, a practice to be avoided unless a special effect is desired. Small intervals and scale-wise writing in the seventh, eighth, and ninth positions is desirable, when at all possible.

The second movement, an "Andante," contains many passages written high on the A string. In some instances, Bliss supplies an "ossia" an octave lower, no doubt for the benefit of the player of a large viola. In the instances mentioned, the effect produced by the "ossia" is usually no less effective than the passage played in its original octave.

The third movement, a "Furiant" in fast 6-16 time (♩.=160), is a movement written to prove the virtuosity of any player of sufficient fortitude to attempt a performance. In addition to the tempo, which requires the utmost precision in both fingering and bowing, the rapid scale passages in thirty-second notes, and difficult double-stops, the three and four-note chords are ample cause for rejection of this piece for

concert use by most all violists, including some virtuoso players. Chords such as those shown in Figure 25

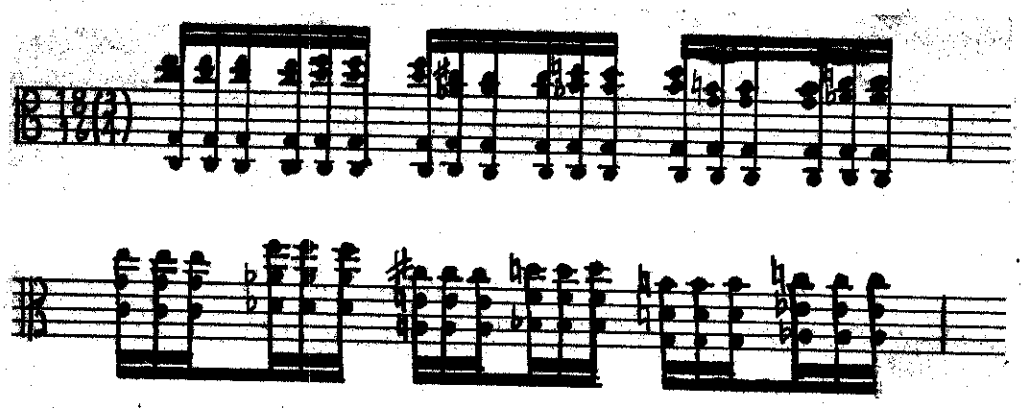

Figure 25

Bliss, Sonata, Third Movement,
Measures 230-231.

might possibly, if played roughly enough, be made to give the impression that three or four notes are sounding simultaneously. The passage containing these chords is marked "sempre *ff* e feroce," and if the violist is willing to forego any considerations of tone-quality or refinement, he might succeed in reproducing the effect called for in the music.

This sonata, in its entirety, is a work for the very few virtuosos who possess a technique enabling them to take in stride the numerous passages of great difficulty, and who might also use a viola small enough to permit a secure per-

formance of these passages. The work would prove very taxing on an instrument the size of a da Salo.

The crowning achievement of all British composers and, for that matter, most modern composers of viola music is the Concerto for Viola and Orchestra of William Walton. This work is of a grand scale, full of eloquence and strength of rhythm; it is perhaps better suited to the viola than any other modern work, with exception of some of the works of Hindemith. The viola part is strong in character, with well-marked rhythms and sonorous double-stops, almost entirely sixths.

The themes of the concerto are so much in the style of the viola that they are as important to this discussion as many technical passages. The first movement begins in a beautiful, languid manner, the first theme being stated by the viola after a three measure introduction. (Figure 26).

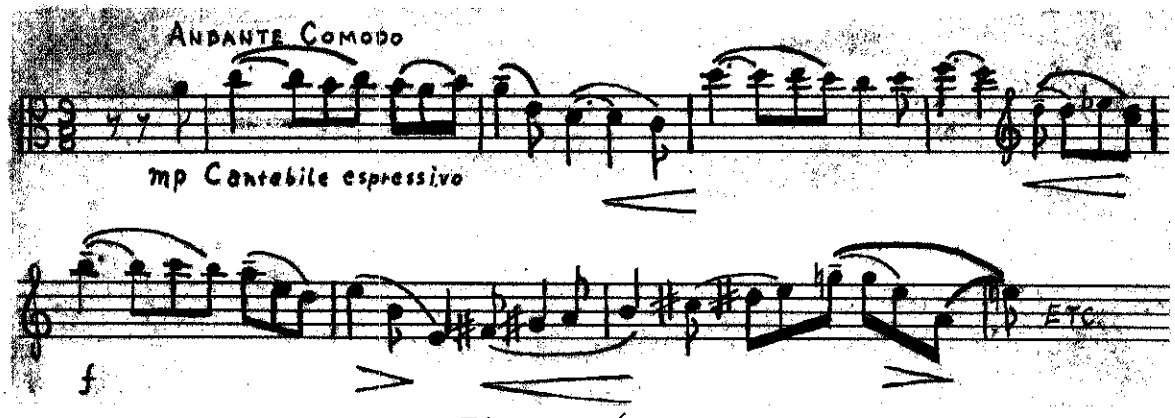

Figure 26

Walton, Concerto, First Movement, Measures 3-11

The viola introduces the second theme (Figure 27), still of the placid nature of the first, but slightly more rhythmic; this theme soon leads into the third theme (Figure 28), a theme of virile and clean-cut quality, which, after being treated sequentially, ends the exposition.

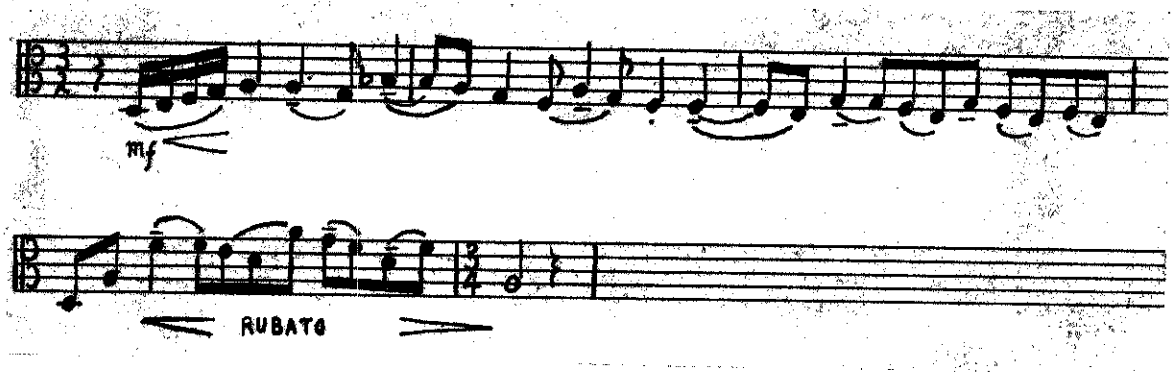

Figure 27

Walton, Concerto, First Movement, Measures 33-37.

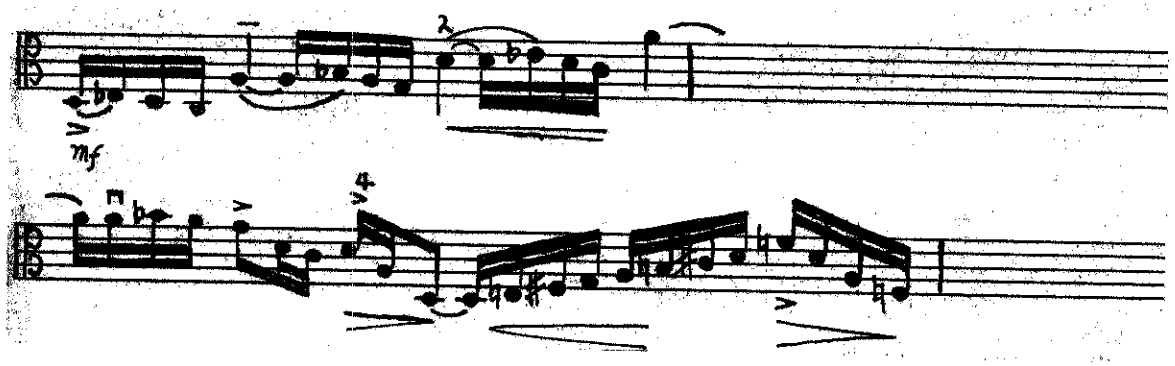

Figure 28

Walton, Concerto, First Movement, Measures 46-47

A wonderful example of writing for the viola is found at Number Seven (Figure 29).

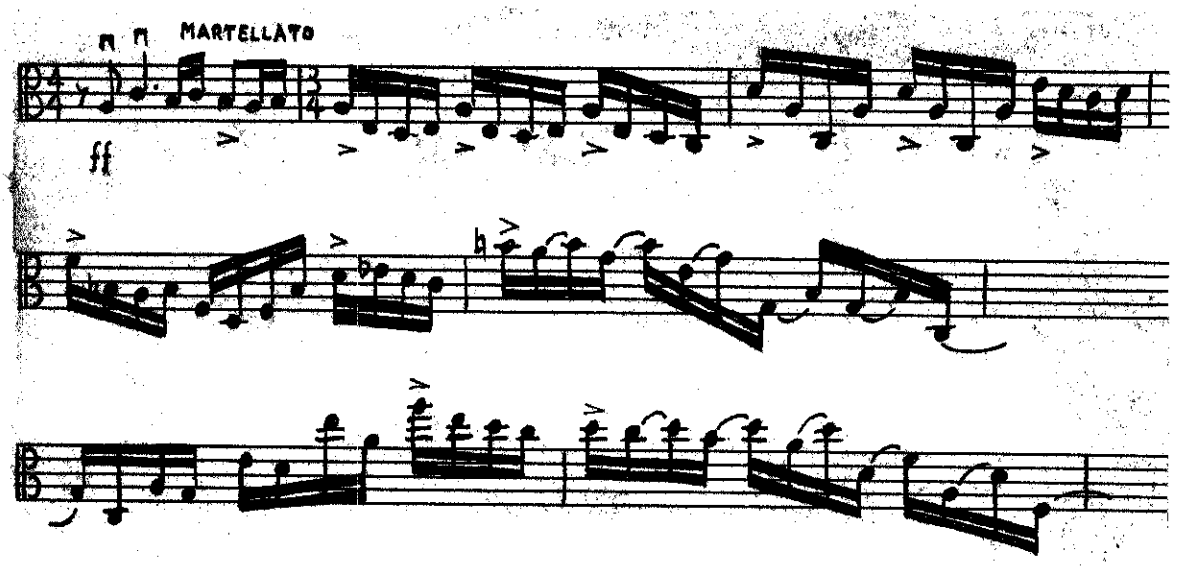

Figure 29

Walton, Concerto, First Movement, Measures 57-62

This is a development of the first theme, and the solidity and drive found here are admirably fitted to the qualities of the lower viola strings.

Some four-note chords are found in this movement, but, in contrast to those of the Bliss sonata, they are in a slower tempo and can be made to sound in a reasonable manner. The movement ends with a recapitulation of the first and second themes in the dreamy mood of the exposition.

The second movement, marked "Vivo e molto preciso," is one of great force and drive. The first theme, introduced by the viola, gives an idea of the nature of the entire movement (Figure 30).

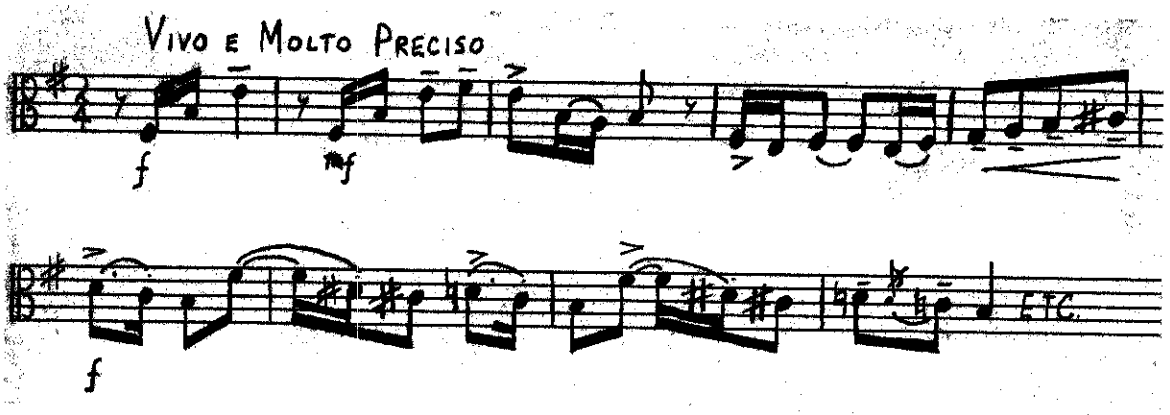

Figure 30

Walton, Concerto, Second Movement, Measures 2-10

The motive found at Number Twenty-Four (Figure 31) is an excellent example of the sonority possible on the two lower strings.

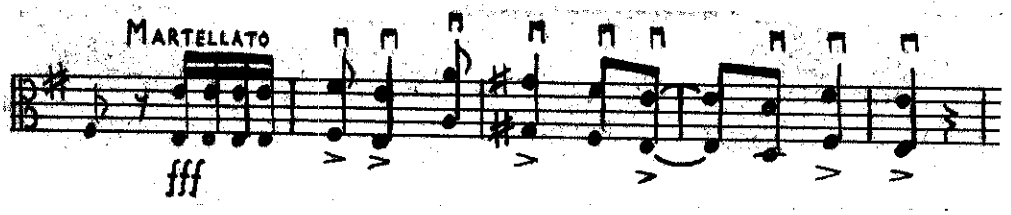

Figure 31

Walton, Concerto, Second Movement, Measures 91-95

The third movement, written in a quasi-fugal style, is of a no less complimentary nature to the viola than are

the first two movements. It is, perhaps, the most difficult movement of all, but nevertheless is well written, with the aspects of viola tone, style, and size always considered. One of the numerous passages in sixths found in this work occurs near Number Forty (Figure 32).

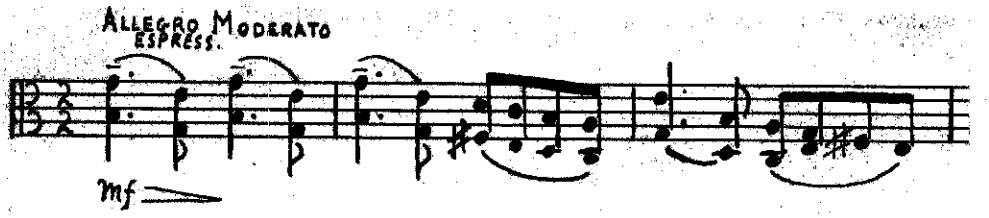

Figure 32

Walton, Concerto, Third Movement, Measures 41-43.

Passages such as this yield a most beautiful tone quality. The concerto ends with a restatement of the principle theme of the first movement (by the viola) over an orchestral ostinato derived from the principal theme of the last movement, which gradually sinks into a section of vague, dreamy double-stops. The last chord contains both C and C#, a sort of unresolved cadence characterizing, in a more intense form, the cross relation existing between the major and minor keys in the principal theme of the first movement.

Every measure of this concerto could be presented as an example of effective writing for the viola. Anyone interested in playing the viola, or in composing music for it,

should examine the score closely. Every spiccato passage is written so as to sound with sharp clarity. The use of double-stops is always effective and never of a taxing nature for the left hand. The concerto can be played securely on a large viola, although one passage ascends to high A. In addition to the well-planned, considerate demands made upon the viola player, the music is of the highest quality to be found in the modern period.

Other English works for the viola include the Suite for Viola and Piano by Ralph Vaughan Williams, the Concerto in G Minor by Cecil Forsyth, two sonatas by Bowen, a Fantasie by B. J. Dale, and a Fantasie by Bax.

American viola music.--American composers have not been so prolific in writing viola music as have French and English composers. Hindemith may be considered an American composer as can Ernest Bloch, although neither were born in America. Bloch has written a Suite for Viola and Piano, to be discussed later. Nicolai Berezowsky has written a Duo for Clarinet and Viola, which is interesting music of moderate difficulty. Quincy Porter has written a Viola Concerto of considerable difficulty which has received a few performances.

An effective work for viola and piano is the Soliloquy and Dance by Roy Harris. Harris makes frequent use of open

strings, this use being undoubtedly a reflection of his love of open harmonies; however, it adds no small amount of volume to passages in which open strings are used. The dance is a fast, rhythmic one in 6-8 time, with a rhythmic base. The middle section is lyric and of a much smoother nature than the first section. All double-stops are very effectively written, and the high notes are playable on any viola.

The most outstanding American work (American for purposes of classification) is the Suite for Viola and Piano of Ernest Bloch. The technical considerations, as compared to most of the works discussed, are few. The main problem is that of double-stops, and even these are not excessively difficult. Bloch uses the higher positions very sparingly and gives the player numerous rests. Consequently, this work is an excellent one for the player of a large viola. In general, the work is not an easy one, but because of the abundant material in the lower positions and the lack of technical passages for purposes of display, it cannot be classified as one demanding the technique of a virtuoso. It is written in the passionate, rhapsodic style so characteristic of Bloch's music, and is an excellent work for any violist, average or virtuoso.

Miscellaneous.--Because of the lack of any appreciable

amount of viola music until recent years and, because modern music cannot constitute the entire program of every concert or recital, violists have had to transcribe much of the music written for other instruments.

Two very important transcriptions (if they may be so called) are the Sonatas for Clarinet or Viola, in F Minor and E♭ Major, by Johannes Brahms. Although Brahms specified that these sonatas were meant for clarinet or viola, he left no viola parts. Consequently, various violists have made their own arrangements, as some of the passages as written for the clarinet are not suited to the viola. The sonatas are not very "violistic" and are much more playable on the clarinet. However, certain passages may be altered (such as lowering a passage an octave) so as to make them adaptable as viola music. Regardless of opinions as to their worth as viola music, the sonatas, because of their musical value and infrequent performance on either clarinet or viola, should be included in the viola repertoire.

The other works of equal importance, as transcriptions, to the Brahms sonatas, are the Six Suites for Violoncello Solo of Bach. These suites, transposed an octave higher for the viola, are not quite so effective on the viola as they are on the 'cello, but are, nevertheless, excellent concert pieces for the violist. If played on a very large

viola, they produce results almost as sonorous as those produced by a 'cello; also, they are confined usually to the fourth or fifth position on the viola and therefore make excellent material for the large viola. They are of such a grand musical conception, that no violist should miss the opportunity of playing them.

Other long transcriptions of value are The Sonata for Arpeggione of Schubert, the Sonatas for Viola da Gamba of Bach, the Concerto for Oboe of Ariosti, the Sonatas for Viola da Gamba of Marcello, and the E Minor 'Cello Sonata of Brahms.

Many transcriptions of short pieces have been made by famous virtuosos such as Lionel Tertis, William Primrose, Emmanuel Vardi, Milton Katims, and others. Favorites of all transcribers are the airs and adagios from the orchestral and organ works of Bach; also popular are numerous nocturnes and other slow pieces of Chopin. Primrose has made an effective transcription for viola and piano of the Twenty-Fourth Caprice of Paganini. Katims has transcribed the Sixth Sonata for Violoncello of Boccherini. This is a very effective piece. These transcriptions are only a small part of the large number now published.

The viola has been given extraordinary prominence in modern string quartet writing. Composers, seeing the

possibilities revealed by numerous virtuosos, have not hesitated to write viola parts of great difficulty. Readers are referred to the scores of quartets by Hindemith, Prokofieff, Ravel, and Bartok for numerous examples of these technically advanced viola parts. Bartok, in particular, has written extremely difficult parts for the viola (as well as for the other instruments of the quartet).

The most comprehensive organized accumulation of studies in left-hand technique to date is Modern Viola Technique by Robert Dolejsi. This work includes instruction for the use of the bow in the Franco-Belgian manner, and exhaustive exercises, covering every possible phase of left-hand manipulation. It also includes a list of important studies and concert music, with the names of the publishers.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion it must be said that the information in the preceding pages is by no means complete. Likewise, the music discussed, both original and transcribed, comprises only a small part of the very large viola repertoire. However, all the works discussed are important ones and, in the limited space allowed, were analysed for their inclusion of the important factors in the development of viola technique.

The discussion has shown that, of all technical problems concerning the development of viola playing, the problem of the left-hand is the greatest. The technique of the bow has proved no great handicap to development, being greatly similar physiologically to that of the violin, but the technique of the left hand has invariably governed the retardation or progression of the use of the viola.

The following remarks of Robert Dolejsi adequately describe viola playing as governed by the principles shown in the foregoing pages:

> We can best begin to describe the true art of viola-playing by emphasizing the fact that it is a vastly different art from violin-playing. There is a

> a difference in left-hand finger pressure, which must be more firm in viola performance, owning to the longer and thicker strings; passages must be played distinctly and fluently rather than lightly and rapidly. The manner of bowing, on which the characteristic viola tone depends, is decidedly individual, both as to actual pressure and as to the method of right-hand manipulation. In general, the bow must be drawn nearer the bridge; the player should seek to sound the depths of his instrument rather than to float over the surface, playing quasi-flautato effects, which constantly reflect the soprano-like quality of the violin. This last is especially objectionable and not at all in keeping with the rich, mellow tone that is ideally characteristic of the viola.[1]

The factor of viola tone is governed to a very great extent by the size of the instrument; a large instrument is much to be preferred to a small one, in respect to tone quality and volume. The problems of the left hand vary in magnitude directly as the size of the viola. Therefore, it is hoped that, in encouraging a more widespread use of large violas, composers will consider the tiring effects of music written for such instruments as if they were big violins, and write accordingly. In this manner, more music revealing the inherent tone quality and volume of a large instrument, and at the same time providing enough technical material to enliven the music, can be written.

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[1]Robert Dolejsi, Modern Viola Technique, p. 1.

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