

A-Z of

STRING PLAYERS

— by David Milsom



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David Milsom
Sheffield, 2013

CD TRACK LISTS

* Denotes a newly restored track by Paul Bailly.

CD 1

- * **Willi Boskovsky** violin
- [1] Schubert: Piano Quintet in A major, D. 667 'Die Forelle': III. Scherzo – Presto 4:10
Members of the Vienna Octet (Willi Boskovsky, violin; Günther Breitenbach, viola; Nikolaus Hübner, cello; Johann Krump, double-bass) · Clifford Curzon, piano
Decca SXL 2110; Matrix ZAL 3836
- Pablo Casals** cello
- [2] J.S. Bach: Solo Cello Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009: VI. Gigue 3:00
Naxos Historical 8.110915–16
- * **Gaspar Cassadó** cello
- [3] Schubert (arr. Cassadó): Cello Concerto in A minor 'Arpeggione': II. Adagio 4:31
Bamberg Symphony Orchestra · Jonel Perlea
Vox PL.10,210; Matrix UPV 10211
- Gérard Caussé** viola
- [4] R. Fumet: Diptyque Baroque: II. Fuguette 2:25
Gabriel Fumet, flute
Marco Polo 8.223890
- Roger Chase** viola
- [5] Shore: Scherzo 2:31
Michiko Otaki, piano
Naxos 8.572293

CD TRACK LISTS

- * **Rebecca Clarke** viola
- [6] Mozart: Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Piano in E flat major, K. 498 'Kegelstatt': III. Rondeaux: Allegretto 3:59
Frederick Thurston, clarinet · Kathleen Long, piano
The National Gramophonic Society 162; Matrix 5793
- * **Jelly d'Arányi** violin
- [7] Brahms/Joachim: Hungarian Dance No. 8 in A minor 2:21
Coenraad V. Bos, piano
Columbia 5681; Matrix 145620
- Gioconda de Vito** violin
- [8] Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K. 216: III. Rondeau: Allegro 6:47
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra · Thomas Beecham
Naxos Historical 8.111349
- Roberto Díaz** viola
- [9] Beethoven (arr. Primrose): Notturmo in D major, Op. 42: III. Allegretto alla polacca 3:06
Robert Koenig, piano
Naxos 8.557391
- Samuel Dushkin** violin
- [10] Gershwin: Short Story 2:54
Max Pirani, piano
Naxos Nostalgia 8.120664
- Mischa Elman** violin
- [11] Drdla: Souvenir 3:30
Philip Gordon, piano
Naxos Nostalgia 8.120569

A-Z of **STRING PLAYERS**

- * **Toshiya Eto** violin
 [12] Vivaldi: Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 2 No. 2, RV31: I. Preludio a capriccio 1:31
 Vladimir Sokoloff, piano
 Decca DL 710014; Matrix 7-6806
- Maxim Fedotov** violin
 [13] Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26: III. Finale: Allegro energico 7:23
 Russian Philharmonic Orchestra · Dmitry Yablonsky
 Naxos 8.557689
- Emanuel Feuermann** cello
 [14] Haydn: Cello Concerto No. 2 in D major, Hob. VIIb/2: III. Rondo: Allegro 5:14
 London Philharmonic Orchestra · Malcolm Sargent
 Naxos Historical 8.110908
- Joseph Fuchs** violin
 [15] Beethoven: Violin Sonata No. 7 in C minor, Op. 30 No. 2: III. Scherzo: Allegro 2:55
 Artur Balsam, piano
 Naxos Historical 8.111252
- * **Lillian Fuchs** viola
 [16] Martinů: 3 Madrigals for Violin and Viola: I. Poco allegro 3:59
 Joseph Fuchs, violin
 Decca DL 8510; Matrix MG 1832
- * **Maurice Gendron** cello
 [17] Boccherini: Cello Concerto No. 9 in B flat major, G. 482: III. Rondo (Allegro) 6:52
 Orchestre des Lamoureux · Pablo Casals
 Philips ABL.3355 / A02067 L; Matrix 02067 2L [?]

CD TRACK LISTS

- Ilya Grubert** violin
 [18] Miaskovsky: Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 44: III. Allegro molto 8:30
 Russian Philharmonic Orchestra · Dmitry Yablonsky
 Naxos 8.557194

Total playing time: 76:40

CD 2

- * **Arthur Grumiaux** violin
 [1] J.S. Bach: Double Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043: I. Vivace 4:03
 Jean Pougnet, violin II · Philharmonia String Orchestra · Boris Ord, Harpsichord · Walter Süsskind
 Columbia DX.1276-7; Matrix CAX 9503
- Augustin Hadelich** violin
 [2] Telemann: Fantasy No. 2 in G major, TWV 40:15 6:02
 Naxos 8.570563
- Chloë Hanslip** violin
 [3] Bazzini: La Ronde des lutins, Op. 25 4:54
 Caspar Frantz, piano
 Naxos 8.570800
- Jascha Heifetz** violin
 [4] Franck: Violin Sonata in A major: I. Allegretto ben moderato 5:25
 Arthur Rubinstein, piano
 Naxos Historical 8.110990
- Bronisław Huberman** violin
 [5] Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61: III. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo 8:23
 Berlin Staatskapelle · William Steinberg
 Naxos Historical 8.110903

AZ of **STRING PLAYERS**

6	Tim Hugh cello Britten: Cello Suite No. 2, Op. 80: I. Declamato: Largo Naxos 8.553663	2:43
7	Ilya Kaler violin Paganini: 24 Caprices, Op. 1: No. 16 in G minor 'Presto' Naxos 8.550717	1:34
8	Dong-Suk Kang violin Fauré: Violin Sonata No. 2 in E minor, Op. 108: III. Finale: Allegro non troppo Pascal Devoyon, piano Naxos 8.550906	6:01
9	Louis Kaufman violin Vivaldi: Violin Concerto in C major, Op. 8 No. 6 RV180 'Il piacere': III. Allegro Winterthur Symphony Orchestra · Clemens Dahinden Naxos Historical 8.110297-98	2:55
10	Maria Kliegel cello Brahms: Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99: IV. Allegro molto Kristin Merscher, piano Naxos 8.550656	4:35
11	* Serge Koussevitzky double-bass Koussevitzky: Valse Miniature, Op. 1 No. 2 Pierre Luboshutz, piano Victrola 1476-A; Matrix BE-46178	2:38
12	Henning Kraggerud violin Sinding: Three Elegiac Pieces, Op. 106: I. 'Elegy' Christian Ihle Hadland, piano Naxos 8.572254	2:46

CD TRACK LISTS

13	Miriam Kramer violin Bloch: Suite hébraïque: II. 'Processional' Simon Over, piano Naxos 8.554460	2:10
14	Fritz Kreisler violin J.S. Bach (arr. Wilhelmj): Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068: II. Air 'on a G-string' Unknown pianist Naxos Historical 8.112053	2:33
15	Jan Kubelík violin J.S. Bach / Gounod: Ave Maria Nellie Melba, soprano · Gabriel Lapierre, piano Naxos Historical 8.110336	4:28
16	Cho-Liang Lin violin Chin: Formosa Seasons: IV. 'Spring' Kansas City Symphony · Michael Stern Naxos 8.570221	3:06
17	Julian Lloyd Webber cello Ireland (arr. Lloyd Webber): Sea Fever John Lenehan, piano Naxos 8.572902	3:06
18	Mark Lubostsky violin Schnittke: Fuga for Solo Violin Naxos 8.554728	4:35

Total playing time: 72:57

CD 3

- Lorraine McAslan** violin
- 1 Hofmann: Violin Concerto in B flat major, Badley Bb1: III. Vivace 5:12
Northern Chamber Orchestra · Nicholas Ward
Naxos 8.554233
- Yehudi Menuhin** violin
- 2 Enescu: Violin Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 25: III. Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso 7:22
Hephzibah Menuhin, piano
Naxos Historical 8.111127
- Frank Miller** cello
- 3 Villa-Lobos: Bachianas brasileiras No. 5 for Soprano and Cello Ensemble: I. Aria: Cantilena 7:10
Licia Albanese, soprano · studio orchestra · Leopold Stokowski
Naxos Historical 8.111030–31
- Nathan Milstein** violin
- 4 Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108: III. Un poco presto e con sentimento 2:56
Vladimir Horowitz, piano
Naxos Historical 8.111051
- Zara Nelsova** cello
- 5 Barber: Cello Concerto, Op. 22: II. Andante sostenuto 6:47
New Symphony Orchestra of London · Samuel Barber
Naxos Historical 8.111358
- Paul Neubauer** viola
- 6 Biscardi: The Viola Had Suddenly Become a Voice 4:30
James Goldsworthy, piano
Naxos 8.559639

- Takako Nishizaki** violin
- 7 Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 1 in B flat major, K. 207: III. Presto 7:36
Capella Istropolitana · Johannes Wildner
Naxos 8.550414
- David Oistrakh** violin
- 8 J.S. Bach: Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042: III. Allegro assai 2:47
Philadelphia Orchestra · Eugene Ormandy
Naxos Historical 8.111246
- * **Theo Olof** violin
- 9 Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219: III. Rondo – Tempo di Minuetto 8:40
Classics Club Symphony Orchestra · Walter Goehr
The Classics Club 67B; Matrix [not present]
- * **Aldo Parisot** cello
- 10 Vivaldi (arr. Dallapiccola): Cello Concerto (Sonata) in E minor, Op. 14 No. 5, RV40: I. Largo 2:34
Baltimore Conservatory Orchestra · Reginald Stewart
Saga XID 5258; Matrix [not present]
- György Pauk** violin
- 11 Bartók: Rhapsody No. 1, Sz86: I. Prima parte 'lassu': Moderato 4:38
Jenő Jandó, piano
Naxos 8.550886
- Gregor Piatigorsky** cello
- 12 Beethoven: Cello Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5 No. 2: I. Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo 5:32
Artur Schnabel, piano
Naxos Historical 8.110640

- Maud Powell** violin
 [13] Elgar: Salut d'amour, Op. 12 2:58
 George Falkenstein, piano
 Naxos Historical 8.110961
- William Primrose** viola
 [14] Paganini (arr. Primrose): 24 Caprices, Op. 1: No. 5 in A minor 'Agitato' 1:34
 Naxos Historical 8.111383
- Philippe Quint** violin
 [15] Paganini (arr. Kreisler): Violin Concerto No. 2 in B minor, Op. 7: III. Rondo 'La campanella' 5:51
 Dmitriy Cogan, piano
 Naxos 8.570703

Total playing time: 76:55

CD 4

- * **Frederick Riddle** viola
 [1] Delius: Hassan Suite: Serenade 2:12
 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra · Thomas Beecham
 Philips GL.5691 / G 03635 L; Matrix 03635 1L
- Alexander Rudin** cello
 [2] Glazunov: Two Pieces for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 20: II. 'Sérénade espagnole': Allegretto 2:59
 Moscow Symphony Orchestra · Igor Golovschin
 Naxos 8.553932
- Albert Sammons** violin
 [3] Elgar: Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82: I. Allegro 7:15
 William Murdoch, piano
 Naxos Historical 8.110957

- * **Wolfgang Schneiderhan** violin
 [4] Beethoven: String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 'Serioso': I. Allegro con brio 4:20
 Schneiderhan Quartet (Wolfgang Schneiderhan, violin I; Otto Strasser, violin II; Ernst Moravetz, viola; Richard Krotschak, cello)
 Columbia LX. 8727; Matrix CHAX 464
- Albert Spalding** violin
 [5] Handel: Trio Sonata in E major, Op. 2 No. 9, HWV 394: I. Adagio 4:34
 William Primrose, viola · André Benoist, piano
 Naxos Historical 8.111383
- * **William Henry Squire** cello
 [6] Wagner (arr. unknown): 'O Star of Eve' from *Tannhäuser* 2:51
 Hamilton Harty, piano
 Columbia D 1415; Matrix 69735
- János Starker** cello
 [7] Hovhanness: Cello Concerto, Op. 17: II. Allegro 3:22
 Seattle Symphony Orchestra · Dennis Russell Davies
 Naxos 8.559158
- * **Isaac Stern** violin
 [8] Vivaldi: Concerto for Two Violins in G minor, RV517: II. Andante 2:12
 David Oistrakh, violin II · William R. Smith, harpsichord · Philadelphia Orchestra · Eugene Ormandy
 Fontana CFL.1070 / 699 061 CL; Matrix AA 699 061 2L [?]
- * **Guilhermina Suggia** cello
 [9] Haydn: Cello Concerto No. 2 in D major, Hob. VIIb/2: II. Adagio 4:55
 unidentified orchestra · John Barbirolli
 HMV D1519; Matrix 3-07863

AZ of **STRING PLAYERS**

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 10 | <p>Josef Suk III viola
 G.A. Benda: Viola Concerto in F major: III. Rondeau
 Suk Chamber Orchestra · Christian Benda
 Naxos 8.553994</p> | 4:36 |
| 11 | <p>Joseph Szigeti violin
 Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64: III. Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace
 London Philharmonic Orchestra · Thomas Beecham
 Naxos Historical 8.110948</p> | 6:24 |
| 12 | <p>* Lionel Tertis viola
 Tertis: Sunset
 Ethel Hobday, piano
 Vocalion X-9696; Matrix 03001X</p> | 2:39 |
| 13 | <p>Jacques Thibaud violin
 Brahms: Double Concerto for Violin and Cello in A minor, Op. 102: II. Andante
 Pablo Casals, cello · Pablo Casals Orchestra of Barcelona · Alfred Cortot
 Naxos Historical 8.110930</p> | 6:56 |
| 14 | <p>Lars Anders Tomter viola
 Mozart: Divertimento in E flat major, K. 563: III. Menuetto: Allegro – Trio
 Henning Kraggerud, violin · Christoph Richter, cello
 Naxos 8.572258</p> | 5:04 |
| 15 | <p>Lucy van Dael violin
 J.S. Bach: Sonata No. 6 in G major for Violin and Harpsichord, BWV 1019: II. Largo
 Bob van Asperen, harpsichord
 Naxos 8.554783</p> | 1:41 |

CD TRACK LISTS

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 16 | <p>Raphael Wallfisch cello
 Rubbra: Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 60: II. Vivace flessibile
 John York, piano
 Marco Polo 8.223718</p> | 3:05 |
| 17 | <p>Tianwa Yang violin
 Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25: V. Moderato – Animato
 Navarre Symphony Orchestra · Ernest Martinez Izquierdo
 Naxos 8.572216</p> | 2:42 |
| 18 | <p>* Efrem Zimbalist violin
 Brahms / Joachim: Hungarian Dance No. 20 in D minor
 Samuel Chotzinoff, piano
 Victor D.B.462; Matrix 3-07908</p> | 2:24 |

Total playing time: 71:18

For details of the restored tracks, please see the credits page.



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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to give an overview of solo string players on record, chosen because of their prominence or importance, or because they have recorded prolifically. Here the reader will find some of today's household names – cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** or violinist **Joshua Bell**, for example – as well as lesser-known figures such as the one-time Philharmonia Orchestra leader **Hugh Bean** and seminal players of the more distant past like cellist **Guilhermina Suggia** or violist **Maurice Vieux**. There are, of course, many more artists who could have been included if space permitted.

I have not attempted here to deliver a full and coherent history of solo string-playing: that would require a more in-depth and conceptual study. What is offered is a wide selection of players from different places and times, each studied from biographical, pedagogic and stylistic points of view. Readers can discover for themselves various fascinating links of pedagogy and, indeed, come to their own judgements as to whether there are clearly-defined 'schools' of playing illustrated by the traditional (but often far from straightforward) relationship of teacher and pupil. Sometimes the individualism of an artist stands out, making such considerations less significant; in other cases the influence of a particular institution or teacher is readily apparent. Some very clear and powerful phenomena are evident, such as the extraordinary outpouring of violinists – mostly of Jewish descent – who were trained initially by Pyotr Stolyarsky in Odessa (surely making Stolyarsky one of the most prolific producers of world-class twentieth-century violinists); or the sudden emergence of the USA, via The Juilliard School and Curtis Institute, as a pedagogic centre, with string players trained by Ivan Galamian and his one-time assistant and successor Dorothy DeLay, as well as **Leonard Rose** and **Felix Salmond**. (Stolyarsky, Galamian and DeLay were all primarily teachers, did not record, and thus are not included in this A–Z). But even such apparently clear distinctions of 'school' can be both elusive and complex when further scrutinised. Galamian was a pupil of a pupil of the Hungarian violinist **Leopold Auer**, who had founded the so-called 'Russian School' with his activities in St Petersburg from 1868 to 1917. Auer, whose own recordings are included in this book, is best known today as teacher to such luminaries as **Efrem Zimbalist**, **Mischa Elman** and **Jascha Heifetz**, all of whom settled in the USA, as indeed did Auer himself following the Russian Revolution. Auer had been a pupil of **Joseph Joachim** in the 1860s, and thus we find

the violin-playing centres of Germany, Hungary, Russia and the USA brought together in complex genealogical ties. The legacy of **Shin'ichi Suzuki** and his famous Suzuki Method in string-playing of the Far East is similar: Suzuki's teaching (and, as seen in this book, his own playing) was heavily influenced by his formative training in Berlin under Karl Klingler who was himself another Joachim pupil, known for his faithful adherence to Joachim's example. The Suzuki Method, of course, has extended its influence around the globe. Numerous other examples exist to show the fascinating complexity of this concept of 'schools'. Where relevant in discussion of recordings I have tried to throw light on some of these matters, but ultimately the book will prompt readers themselves to examine the extent to which such links can be heard in recorded performances.

Although the nationality of musicians can be a misleading area of study (with emigration and re-nationalisation being commonplace), it is readily apparent within the selection here that certain birth-countries emerge as particularly significant: states associated with the Russian empire or Soviet federation account for a significant 16% (Russia alone producing some 7% of our artists), whilst the USA claims 13% and Britain 12%. With the notable exception of **Suzuki** (1898–1998) the Far East is unrepresented in the pre-World War II years. Amongst artists born after 1925 (and thus completing their training years around the end of World War II), however, we suddenly see a creditable 9% originating from Japan, Taiwan, China and Korea.

Many readers will notice immediately that male artists (82%) overwhelmingly outnumber female ones in this volume, which reflects something approximating reality both on the concert stage and in the recording studio across the period covered. There are no doubt numerous factors that dictate or influence the dominance of men in the history of Western art-music and I shall not attempt to explore this complex subject here. What is apparent, though, is the marked increase in female artists born from 1960 onwards in this selection (30%, rather than the 14–20% born between 1880 and 1959, or – even worse – the 8% born before 1880). It should be noted that these figures swing more in favour of female representation if one eliminates the double-bass (no women artists), cello (only 9% women) and viola (14%), resulting in a 23% female proportion across our selective history of violin-players on record. One reason for this might be the now-outmoded perception that the larger instruments were unsuitable or unseemly for women to play – an issue famously circumvented by the cellist **Guilhermina Suggia** (1888–1950) by the wearing of voluminous and extremely glamorous gowns.

Music scholars, performers and listeners of the twenty-first century find themselves in a fascinating landscape of recorded sound. The invention of recording technology meant that, for the first time in human history, performances were no longer tied solely to specific times and circumstances, but could be replicated, reflected upon and examined in minute detail. As Timothy Day outlines in *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (Yale University Press, 2000), it took a considerable period of time after the invention of the phonograph in the late nineteenth century for recordings to exert a powerful cultural influence. Early recordings were expensive, aurally limited and seen by many as an entertainment novelty unlikely to have far-reaching artistic consequences. Indeed, Igor Stravinsky famously considered the piano roll to be the best way of rendering his performances 'correctly' and predicted, inaccurately, that the future lay in the advancement of that technology. Yet sound recordings did develop rapidly in influence. The number of important artists making recordings by the old acoustic process grew, including figures of such eminence and august seriousness as **Joseph Joachim**, heir to the classical German tradition of Brahms, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Spohr, whose artistic credentials were formulated in Leipzig in the 1840s via his contact with Mendelssohn and the first truly prolific editor of violin music, Ferdinand David. Invention of the electric microphone and its rapid adoption after 1925 made recordings much more revealing sonically and by this time the recordings industry was already a major part of the musical world, moulding and shaping careers. As Mark Katz has observed in *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (University of California Press, 2004 and 2010) there is even some evidence to suggest that the recording process directly altered some aspects of performance throughout the twentieth century (something he termed 'the Phonograph Effect').

What we hear in over a hundred years of string recordings are substantial changes in style and attitude. The earliest documents by players such as cellist **Julius Klengel**, violist **Oskar Nedbal** and violinist **Joseph Joachim** shed light on pre-twentieth-century approaches to performance. Two immediately conspicuous differences compared with modern times are the prolific use of portamento (expressive slides between notes) and modest, selective employment of vibrato. By and large the evidence of recordings shows how the portamento slide became progressively less common (the conductor Adrian Boult recollected that it seemed simply to disappear over time) whilst vibrato became more common, frequent, and aurally dominating. By the 1930s almost all string players used vibrato most of the time – even if in a style rather different from that of more

recent years – and by the 1950s portamenti had become extremely rare even in Romantic music. This book and the recordings of players discussed in it illuminate such gradual but persistent trends. They also reveal stylistic variations in performance ideas between individuals and, indeed, different centres of pedagogy. There is a powerful suggestion, for example, that string players trained in the linked institutions of Paris and Brussels (the Franco-Belgian 'school') at the start of the recordings era used vibrato rather more than their German and Austro-Hungarian counterparts trained in, say, Leipzig, Berlin or Budapest or, in the case of cellists, taught by associates of the so-called 'Dresden school'. Charting a chronology of recordings will reveal these changes to us at our twenty-first-century vantage-point, but the extent to which the recordings industry actually impelled such changes needs to be considered as well. Mark Katz's assertion that the increasing popularity of vibrato had something to do with the peculiarly scratchy sound created by early electric microphones is somewhat undermined by the fact that, in violin playing at least, vibrato was in the ascendancy before recordings, being noted in the playing of influential violinist Henryk Wieniawski, for example. It is certainly likely, though, that the commercial success of players associated with this new aesthetic (such as **Fritz Kreisler** and **Lionel Tertis**, two early household names of the era of recorded sound and radio) meant that such a style caught on, and players who maintained elements of the older style of playing (see in particular **Gaspar Cassadó**, **Rebecca Clarke**, **Josef Gingold**, **Mari Iwamoto**, **Erica Morini**, **Gérard Poulet** or **Tibor Varga**) began to sound anachronistic in comparison.

The closing decades of the twentieth century were characterised by a partitioning of style between mainstream performance and what used to be called authentic performance, usually on replica or original instruments set up according to the period of music in question. Whilst the idea of historically-informed performance (HIP) can trace its genesis back to pioneers of the late nineteenth century such as Arnold Dolmetsch, it is not until the period after World War II that we encounter a consistent and widespread manifestation of this idea. Often this has been linked to concentration on particular repertoires (such as **Reinhardt Goebel's** extensive Biber recordings) and involves the rediscovery of historic instruments (such as the violoncello da spalla performances of **Sigiswald Kuijken** or **Vadim Borisovsky's** use of the viola d'amore) or specific period approaches on modern instruments (such as **Nigel Kennedy** or **Willy Boskovsky** directing performances from the violin). Overlapping with all of this there is an interest in reviving forgotten or neglected works, such as Vivaldi's twelve Op. 8 Violin Concertos (including the now ubiquitous *Four Seasons*) which were

recorded complete and in their original form for the very first time by **Louis Kaufman** between 1947 and 1950, or the violin concerti of Louis Spohr, maintained doggedly in concert by **Erica Morini** throughout her career. The twenty-first century is already seeing some integration of HIP and mainstream performance ideas. Indeed, the vogue for historically-informed performing practices – and the scholarship that provides such information – has risen to such a height since the post-war period that it is nowadays quite rare to hear a new recording of eighteenth-century or earlier repertoire that does not, in some measure, evoke elements of style that we associate with the period. This said, an area of performing practice notable for its extremely scarce representation in recorded string-playing of recent decades is the playing of nineteenth-century repertoire in an historically-appropriate manner. Although research findings are nowadays becoming widely published on the subject, their influence has yet to filter down into the recordings industry or concert hall at large. Violist **Hartmut Lindemann** is a noteworthy exception here. Sonorities and interpretative ideas in the nineteenth century were often vastly different to the modern international sound that prevails today; but with an ever-increasing number of historic recordings being restored and digitised, the gradual transition between the Romantic approach and more modern schools of playing can be charted relatively easily. Perhaps this area of performance presents itself as a future challenge for string players?

Another interesting facet of string-playing in the last century is the emergence of the viola and double-bass as solo instruments. At the dawn of the recording era it was the violin that was the dominant solo instrument and the preferred one for recording, perhaps because of its eminently suitable frequency-range. The acoustic recording process simply could not pick up the frequencies of the double-bass (although some extraordinary experiments with giant recording horns were tried by the Edison company!) and in any case domestic gramophones could not reproduce such low sounds. Thus, in terms of recordings the double-bass is absent from our chronology before the advent of electric microphones in the mid-1920s. Its scant pre-modern repertoire suggests that it was not really considered a solo instrument before then either. There were, of course, notable early exceptions: the bassist Domenico Dragonetti (1763–1846), for example, became an international celebrity, was one of the highest-paid musicians in the Philharmonic Society orchestra and persuaded orchestral composers of the virtue of scoring a bass line independent of the cellos. The double-bass as soloist remains somewhat rarefied, with a reliance upon transcriptions to pad out its repertoire, although, as

Corrado Canonici or **Gary Karr** demonstrate, the open boundaries of post-war composition have admitted the instrument as a soloist with some very effective results. Johann Joachim Quantz in his flute treatise of 1752 suggested that 'The viola is generally considered to be of lesser importance by the music world... often played by people who are either beginners in music or are not talented enough to apply themselves to the violin. Since the instrument does not bring its player any special privileges, skilful musicians are not keen to play it.' The viola, nonetheless, has fared rather better than the bass in becoming a fully-fledged solo instrument, initially through the activities of prolific performers, arrangers and advocates of the instrument such as **Lionel Tertis** or, later, **Watson Forbes**, and aided by an increasingly rich twentieth- and twenty-first-century repertoire, all of which helped it escape its typecast character as the harbinger of death or doom in orchestral writing! 'True' violists (that is, those trained only on that instrument rather than switching from violin) are, however, surprisingly rare. If one includes works for viola da gamba (bass viol) in the repertoire of the cello (in the same way that early keyboard music is adopted into the canon of works for piano) then its history as a major solo instrument parallels that of the violin. It is perhaps odd, then, that its presence both on the concert stage and in the recordings industry has always lagged behind that of its smaller cousin – simply a curious phenomenon, maybe, or a result of market forces. It is also interesting to note a parity between the instruments of the modern string family and solo singers through the ages, with sopranos receiving the most decorative, lyrical and florid arias and being the most widely recorded, closely followed by tenors (a smaller number of whom have achieved household name status), but with contraltos and basses relegated somewhat to the second ranks of celebrity.

It is often said that the history of recording reveals a shift from heterogeneity of style with the early pioneers and stars to increasing homogeneity, with all the connotations of stylistic atrophy that this implies. The recordings highlighted in this volume rather qualify this view. Whilst for a period of several decades it seemed unlikely that such unique voices – all instantly recognisable – as are found in recordings of the first third of the twentieth century would ever emerge again, the influence of historical performing practice has, in the last few years, provoked a much wider spectrum of both repertoire and performance style than had latterly been the case. As with all histories it is impossible to tell which future directions will be taken from this position, but the documentation of some 300 figures in this book provides us with a window onto various artistic personalities and approaches, changing tastes and practices, and – hopefully – the possibilities for string-playing in future years.

A-Z of STRING PLAYERS

In terms of selling their artistry in a world market, parameters have shifted enormously for recording performers over the last century. In the early days it was novelty enough to lay down one's art for posterity; a celebrity culture very soon emerged, however, in which choice of repertoire (and perhaps even the manner of its performance) was dictated more by the record companies and a few influential impresarios who could make or break a player's career. Since the advent of the LP, then the CD, and more latterly the digital age, performers and record companies have increasingly had to find eye-catching and innovative ways of pushing new recordings in a flooded market. This, rather refreshingly, can result in some genuinely interesting performance ideas (such as **Salvatore Accardo's** disc of Paganini works played on the composer's own Guarneri del Gesù violin, or **James Ehnes's** 'Homage' album which compares the sound-qualities of various antique instruments), and concept programming (such as Bach coupled with modern works – see **Thomas Demenga** and **Midori** – or **Irvine Arditti's** pairing of Biber and Berio). Furthermore, historic reissues (including those on the pioneering and prolific Naxos Historical label) may have begun as a specialist sideline but have now moved firmly onto the recording industry's centre stage.

Each performer's entry provides the reader with salient biographical information, prefaced by a brief timeline of their career, and a commentary upon a small sample of their recorded repertoire selected on the basis of importance and artistic effectiveness; as appropriate the selections display the performer's approach either to a variety of material or to a specialised repertory. Of course, all aesthetic viewpoints on both compositions and recordings are inevitably subjective; my remarks are not meant to be necessarily pejorative, but rather offer an honest opinion on what I hear. I have tried, however, to highlight some of the more noteworthy features of the performances, whether or not they agree with my own taste, as a stylistic commentary to guide the reader.

Factual material here is as accurate as is possible. Every effort has been made to reference dates, places, record labels and other details definitively, but at times this has proved challenging or even impossible. As a consequence unimpeachable accuracy is unattainable in this book as much as anywhere else. Its contents, however, will provide the reader with a wide-ranging and well-informed view of solo string players on record. Researching this volume has been enormously rewarding, revealing and at times intriguing; it is to be hoped that something of this is communicated to its readers and listeners.

A-Z of STRING PLAYERS BIOGRAPHIES

SALVATORE ACCARDO Violin

b. 1941, Turin, Italy

Career

1954 Debut recital (including Paganini's Capricci)
 1956 Graduates from Naples Conservatory; wins Geneva International Competition
 1958 Wins first Paganini Competition
 1968 Founds Orchestra da Camera Italiana
 1971 Founds Cremona String Festival and Settimane Musicali Internazionali, Naples
 1980 Debut USA recital
 1982 Plays at Paganini Bicentenary celebrations
 1986 Co-founds Walter Stauffer Academy
 1987 Debut as opera conductor; publishes *L'arte del violino*
 1989 Records soundtrack for film *Kinski Paganini*
 1992 Founds Accardo Quartet
 1996 Re-launches Orchestra da Camera Italiana

**Selected Recordings**

J.S. Bach: Double Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043 (with Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin) — English Chamber Orchestra (HMV)
 Bruch: Romance for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 42 — Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Kurt Masur (Philips)
 Elgar: *La Capricieuse*, Op. 17 (with Laura Manzini, piano) (Dynamic)
 Paganini: Six Violin Concertos — Orchestra da Camera Milano / Salvatore Accardo (EMI)
 Piazzolla: *Oblivion* for soloist and string orchestra — Orchestra da Camera Italiana (Fonè Records)
 Vivaldi: Sonata in C minor for Violin and Continuo, Op. 2 No. 7 / RV8 (with Rohan de Saram, cello, and Bruno Canino, harpsichord) (Philips)

Salvatore Accardo began violin lessons at six and studied with Luigi d'Ambrosio at the Naples Conservatory, working to a strict regime of scales and Ševčík exercises. He undertook additional studies at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena, with Yvonne Astruc (a pupil of Enescu), where he was able to play with the likes of Pablo Casals and Alfred Cortot. He later became a teacher there himself but bemoaned the dearth of chamber music, considering this fundamental to a musician's experience and development. Throughout his career he has been instrumental in setting up various festivals, academies, master-classes and ensembles designed to encourage the highest levels of achievement amongst string players, and his re-launching of the Orchestra da Camera Italiana in 1996 provided an ensemble specifically for the best graduates from the Walter Stauffer Academy. Accardo and the OCI have made some significant recordings including, in 1999, the complete violin works of Astor Piazzolla (Fonè) and the complete Paganini violin concertos (EMI Classics).

Winning the first Paganini Competition in 1958 shot Accardo to stardom and he became known immediately as a Paganini specialist. This reputation was cemented by a complete recording of all six concertos attributed to the violinist-composer (No. 6 is considered spurious) with the London Philharmonic, and Accardo has always disputed the popular view that Paganini was simply a violinistic wizard. Despite this early specialism, his repertoire spans all centuries of violin writing.

Accardo represented Italy at the Paganini Bicentenary celebrations in New York and was allowed to use Paganini's 1742 Guarneri del Gesù 'Canon' violin, choosing (perhaps recklessly, given the unpredictability of a museum-piece instrument in foreign climes!) to perform the 24 Capricci. He recorded an album of various works on this instrument in 1992. Aside from this, Accardo plays almost exclusively on the 1727 'Hart' Stradivarius, which he bought from Zino Francescatti; some consider that his sound became akin to that of Francescatti through association with this particular instrument.

Accardo's discography is broad in scope, ranging from contemporary music (a number of composers have written for him, including Piazzolla, Piston and Xenakis) to Baroque repertoire. It seems appropriate to begin with Paganini, represented here by the concertos recorded in 1998 under his own direction. All of these concerto performances show a lively and committed approach, balancing high spirits with Paganini's exhibitionist interpretation of the early Romantic violin concerto style inherited from Giovanni Battista Viotti. Accardo's tone in the Concerto No. 2 is bright and transparent (comparisons with Francescatti being thus well deserved), although there is a tendency to force the tone in high registers making the E-string sound rather metallic, and his accuracy here,

as elsewhere, is not impeccable. He uses a continuous vibrato in the modern mould and largely avoids portamenti. The opening of the finale sounds in need of more contact with the string, but his *ricochet* bowing is beautifully judged here, as it is in his lively 1995 reading of Elgar's *La Capricieuse* on Paganini's 1742 Guarnerius.

Well-balanced and more accurate are Accardo's 1978 disc of Bruch's Romance for Violin and Orchestra (Accardo has recorded all of Bruch's violin music) and the brooding and rather unsettling sound-world of Piazzolla's *Oblivion* (2002) with its idiomatic quotation of jazz-like elements, conveyed with sweetness and an appropriate degree of stylistic irony.

Accardo's Baroque repertoire is praiseworthy, although one might question the aesthetic consistency of a Baroque accompaniment (both in style and instrumentation) alongside his entirely modern sound. There is a strong reading (1982) of Bach's Double Concerto with the equally assertive Anne Sophie-Mutter. His Vivaldi C minor Sonata (1977) contains some effective ornamentation in the slow movement, although Accardo does find it impossible to resist the modern vibrato!

His playing, then, is not flawless. This said, an infectious enthusiasm imbues Accardo's performances with a distinctive and powerful voice.

PIERRE AMOYAL Violin

b. 1949, Paris, France

Career

1963 Wins Ginette Neveu Prize
 1964 Wins Paganini Competition, Genoa
 1966–1971 Studies with Heifetz
 1970 Wins Enescu Prize
 1971 Debut in Paris (Berg Concerto)
 1977–1986 Professor at Paris Conservatoire
 1978 Wigmore Hall debut
 1985 Carnegie Hall debut

1987– Teaches at Lausanne Conservatoire
 1991 Founds Lausanne Summer Music Academy

Selected Recordings

Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1 in G, Op. 78 (with Pascal Rogé, piano) (Decca)
 Chausson: Concerto for Piano, Violin and String Quartet, Op. 21 (with Pascal Rogé, piano) — Quatuor Ysaÿe (Decca)
 Fauré: Violin Sonata No. 1 in A, Op. 13 (with Pascal Rogé, piano) (Decca)
 Fauré: Violin Sonata No. 2 in E minor, Op. 108 (with Pascal Rogé, piano) (Decca)
 Prokofiev: Violin Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 80 (with Frederic Chiu, piano) (Harmonia Mundi USA)
 Spohr: Violin Concerto No. 8 in A minor, Op. 47 'In Form einer Gesangsszene' — Lausanne Chamber Orchestra / Armin Jordan (Apex)

Pierre Amoyal's playing evidences the kind of rich warmth that often characterises violinists trained in the Franco-Belgian tradition. There is a malleability of tone, rhythm and tempo that suits his predominantly Romantic repertoire, although his is not necessarily a consciously period approach. His early training was with Roland Charmy, first privately and then at the Paris Conservatoire where he won a *premier prix* aged twelve. Heifetz later invited him to America for further study, which perhaps engenders stylistic comparison with Auer's Russian school, but it is Amoyal's Frenchness that is most apparent – much more so indeed than with his contemporary Augustin Dumay (also trained by Charmy, then at the Juilliard School) who has been dubbed by *The Strad* as 'the legitimate heir to [...] Ysaÿe, Dubois and Grumiaux'.

This refreshingly idiomatic style naturally shines in certain contexts more than others. His 1991 Brahms sonata recordings (epitomised by Op. 78) are rather ponderous and lacking in energy, although beautifully voiced and thoughtfully constructed. Although his 2004 Spohr Concerto No. 8 conspicuously contradicts (as do all modern performances) Spohr's strong views upon how his music should be played – the up-bow staccati in the finale, for example, are a rather ragged modern compromise – there is a generosity to Amoyal's sound here and a soulful bearing that delivers the work with meaning. In the Prokofiev Violin Sonata Op. 80 (1999) his warmly-voiced tone is modified to account for Prokofiev's lyrical, yet at times stark and brooding, work.

Attention should certainly be paid to Amoyal's Fauré violin sonatas (1994) – both the well-known No. 1, Op. 13 and the late No. 2, Op. 108, which is comparatively and unjustly neglected. Amoyal's reading of this music is natural and idiomatic; there is some effective tempo flexibility in the opening movement of Op. 13 and flamboyance in the third movement that readily identifies Amoyal's French heritage. The virile Sonata No. 2 is performed with drama and an exciting tonal palette. Amoyal's warm tone, with significant use of quite relaxed vibrato and readiness to employ expressive portamenti, is unquestionably akin to Fauré's envisaged sound-world for these works. The Chausson Concerto with the Quatuor Ysaÿe (all Paris Conservatoire alumni) follows suit.

IRVINE ARDITTI Violin

b. 1953, London, England, UK

Career

1974 Establishes Arditti Quartet (whilst still a student)
 1976 Joins London Symphony Orchestra (co-leader 1978–1980)
 1980 Leaves LSO to concentrate on Quartet
 1982–1996 Arditti Quartet gives annual master-classes at Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music
 1999 Arditti Quartet awarded Ernst von Siemens Music Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Music
 2007 Recording of Berio's violin *Sequenza VIII* wins Deutscher Schallplattenpreis

Selected Recordings

Berg: Theme and 5 Variations in E (No. 7 from 9 Short Pieces) (with Stefan Litwin, piano) (Montaigne)
 Berio: *Sequenza VIII* (Oehms Classics)
 Ferneyhough: *Terrain* — Asko Ensemble / Jonathan Nott (Montaigne)
 Nancarrow: Toccata for Violin and Player Piano (Wergo)
 Webern: *4 Pieces*, Op. 7 (with Stefan Litwin, piano) (Montaigne)
 Xenakis: *Mikka* (Montaigne)



Arditti Quartet

Irvine Arditti's specialism in contemporary music is well known and defines his contribution to present-day violin playing. It is often said that, by commissioning such works and presenting them via attractive programming (often setting a new work alongside a Beethoven quartet, for example), his Arditti Quartet saved the string quartet as a compositional medium in the latter half of the twentieth century, it being considered outmoded by modernist composers.

Arditti's training was at London's Royal Academy of Music and it was there that he established his Quartet. Although he would have been well acquainted with traditional repertoire as a student, Arditti's musical language has become modernist and experimental to the extent that he looks backwards to the Second Viennese School, whereas the majority of artists would approach serialism and later experimental music in the light of several hundred years of tonal composition.

Thus No. 7 from Berg's student compositions 9 Short Pieces (2003) evidences the most conventional sound-world of Arditti's solo recordings. Here he demonstrates a breadth and warmth of tone representative of the mainstream tradition of the second half of the twentieth century. A deeply-coloured sound is heavily reliant upon powerful, wide vibrato, but it is notable that Arditti does not sugar-coat his renditions otherwise. Consequently, Webern's exquisite *4 Pieces* (1994) are delivered with fine control over the myriad subtle manipulations of tone and sound demanded by the composer. The Ferneyhough and Nancarrow examples here have great energy and commitment. The Nancarrow (2007) is dependent upon the super-human piano virtuosity made possible by the player-piano, and Arditti's (human!) violin playing interweaves with utter technical confidence in an impressive display of virtuosity. The Ferneyhough is a denser and larger-scale work in all ways and here Arditti's handling of colour, texture and rhetorical declamation is notable. Xenakis's *Mikka* for solo violin (1991) is also a convincing portrayal of the composer's trademark shapes and gestures. Berio's *Sequenza VIII* (2009) is presented in an innovative programme comprising 17th-century sonatas by Biber interspersed with small works by Berio – both composers who were considered avant-garde in their own day.

Arditti's concentration upon repertory still seen as esoteric and specialised (and likely to remain so) is enough to guarantee inclusion in any list of important musicians, but the aplomb and confidence with which he delivers it also testifies to a powerful musical intelligence and a formidable technical mastery.

LEOPOLD AUER Violin

b. 1845, Veszprém, Hungary

d. 1930, Loschwitz, nr Dresden, Germany

Career

1853 Begins study at Budapest Conservatory with Ridley Kohné

1857–1858 Studies at Vienna Conservatory with Jacob Dont

1863–1864 Studies with Joseph Joachim in Hanover

1864 Makes debut at Leipzig Gewandhaus

1864–1866 Becomes orchestral leader in Düsseldorf

1868 Succeeds Wieniawski as violin professor at St Petersburg Conservatory

1917 Leaves Russia due to Revolution

1918 Arrives in New York; teaches there and at Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, until his death

1920 Makes two private recordings

**Selected Recordings**

Brahms–Joachim: *Hungarian Dance* No. 1 (private recording, 1920) (Pavilion)

Tchaikovsky–Wilhelmj: *Mélodie*, Op. 42 No. 3 (private recording, 1920) (Pavilion)

Hungarian-born Leopold Auer will always be associated with St Petersburg and the last years of the Tsarist regime in Russia (under which he worked for more than half a century), although he was equally influential upon his arrival in the USA. He is known chiefly as a pedagogue, Elman, Heifetz and Zimbalist heading a long list of eminent and celebrated pupils. His famously flexible attitude to style and the need to adapt this to each individual pupil made him a great teacher and, in this respect perhaps, the obverse of Joachim, who taught mainly by example and instilled a regime at the Berlin Hochschule in which all players and teachers were created in his own aesthetic image – a matter criticised by Carl Flesch.

In teaching, Auer was a paradox. His own views on matters of style were deeply entrenched, as many of his writings display, and incline towards established central-European attitudes very similar to the classical ideals of Spohr, David and Joachim. In his *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (1921) Auer is particularly outspoken regarding over-use of vibrato at a time when this was becoming all-pervasive. His pupils, however, came to epitomise the modern age and the new twentieth-century sound. Heifetz in particular set new standards of virtuosity and immaculate execution wedded inextricably to this new style: continuous vibrato, economical use of portamento and a general strictness in rhythm and tempo.

The explanation for this apparent conundrum appears to be that most of Auer's pupils came to him in an already finished technical state, his role being to develop their artistic sensibilities. His apparent inability to create in others a comparable aesthetic to his own was thus a sign of strength: for it is historically self-evident that many of his pupils became very successful and powerful voices in their own right, whilst many of Joachim's pupils, by contrast, either remained under his shadow (as was the case with Karl Klingler) or failed in other ways to develop into such 'household names'.

Hearing Auer play is thus tremendously significant for understanding him as a musical figure. His two recordings, made when he was seventy-six years of age, belong to a surprisingly vibrant and productive twilight period of his life. Vacating St Petersburg in emergency circumstances, Auer had left practically everything he owned in a country gripped by revolutionary fervour and to which he never returned. As a result he was forced to teach and perform copiously in old age. He put his name to a long list of editions and publications at the same time, although there is some doubt over the extent to which they reflect his own outlook.

His playing is surprisingly vivid and, given the physical impediment of his quite small and inflexible hands (which caused unfavourable comparison with Wieniawski), he proves an agile player. His performance of the Brahms–Joachim *Hungarian Dance* No. 1 is taken at a smart tempo and includes improvised rapid ascending arpeggios at the ends of phrases: it shows, as with Joachim's playing, a familiarity with this 'gypsy' material gained, perhaps, in his youth. Auer's performance of Tchaikovsky's *Mélodie* is exquisite and attests to his long experience in Russia and close association with composers such as Taneyev, Arensky and, of course, Tchaikovsky himself. In a sound-world comparable to Joachim's, with a sparing, narrow vibrato, a flexible attitude to rhythm and tempo

and a discerning but frequent employment of portamento, Auer's playing of this piece is an essay in phrasing and subtle, fastidious musicianship. No phrase is rendered the same way twice, all admitting minute differences of vibrato and of portamento speed and location. Notwithstanding the primitive acoustic sound, Auer's playing is truly superb. It is a fitting testimony to one of the most important and enduring of nineteenth-century violinists, who also enabled and encouraged so many who were to mould the course of twentieth-century string playing.

FELIX AYO Violin



b. 1933, Sestao, Spain

Career

1949–1950 Studies in Paris with René Benedetti
 1950–1951 Studies at Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena with Enescu and Principe
 1950 Follows Principe to Rome to continue studies
 1952–1968 Leader of I Musici
 1970 Forms Quartetto Beethoven di Roma
 1972 Begins teaching at Rome Conservatory
 1989 Professor of violin at Rome Conservatory

Selected Recordings

Mendelssohn: Violin Sonata in F minor, Op. 4 (with Bruno Canino, piano) (Dynamic)
 Mendelssohn: Violin Sonata in F (1838) (with Bruno Canino, piano) (Dynamic)
 Tartini: Violin Concerto in E minor, D. 56 — Symphonia Perusina / Felix Ayo (Dynamic)
 Turina: Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 82 'Spanish' (with Bruno Canino, piano) (Dynamic)
 Viotti: Violin Sonata No. 2 in A, Op. 4 G. 27 (with Corrado de Bernart, piano) (Dynamic)
 Vivaldi: *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione*, Op. 8 Nos. 1–4 'Le quattro stagione' — I Musici / Felix Ayo (Philips / Naxos Classical Archives)

Having graduated with honours at fourteen from the Bilbao Conservatory and performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto in concert, Spaniard Felix Ayo went on to study with René Benedetti, George Enescu and Rémy Principe, thus benefitting from several national string-playing traditions. Finding himself in Rome, he was ideally placed to join the new ensemble I Musici which he led for over fifteen years, making many concert tours and recordings. Equally successful has been his Quartetto Beethoven di Roma. Like several other artists of his time, Ayo likes to direct from the violin in Baroque and Classical repertoire with orchestra.

His discography shows an interesting tendency to specialise: it includes all twelve of Viotti's violin sonatas (1997), the early violin works of Mendelssohn (also 1997), all the violin concertos of Tartini (1993), and works for violin and piano by Spanish late-Romantic composer Joaquín Turina (1998–2001). Ayo's playing is mainstream in the context of his generation, defined by a prominent vibrato and the apparently deliberate pursuit of tonal beauty above all else. This is not to say that he lacks fire and direction. Turina's Violin Sonata No. 2 is compellingly played with emotive engagement, whilst the Mendelssohn F major Sonata of 1838 delivers an exhilarating finale at a blistering tempo. Mendelssohn's Op. 4 Sonata is suitably uncluttered, but some of the work's Classical phrase shapes are overlooked. The Viotti sonatas are blameless renditions, even if more in the way of early Romantic violin style could be conveyed to avoid them sounding washed-out (though this is as much the composer's responsibility as the performers!). The Tartini concertos are more varied. Those with the Orchestra Rossini di Pesaro (in D, A and E) take a rather saccharine approach, but those performed with the Symphonia Perusina are brighter and rhythmically incisive; the slow movement of D. 56 is atmospheric and reflective, though bearing little relationship to eighteenth-century performance style.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Ayo's discography is the pioneering 1955 Vivaldi *Four Seasons*, which was only the third or fourth complete issue of these concertos and furthermore marked I Musici's recording debut. Today we know their very square phrasing and heavy approach in slow movements to be anachronistic, but they are to be appreciated for their intention to promote music that has, in the half-century since, become a staple part of the repertoire.

RODION AZARKHIN Double-bass

b. 1931, Kharkiv, USSR (now Ukraine)

d. 2007, Moscow, Russia

Career

1954 Graduates from Leningrad Conservatory

1959 Joins USSR State Orchestra

1975–1989 Principal bassist of USSR State Orchestra

**Selected Recordings**

Fauré (arr. Azarkhin): *Après un Rêve*, Op. 7 No. 1 (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

Rimsky-Korsakov (arr. Azarkhin): *Flight of the Bumble Bee* (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

Rossini (arr. Azarkhin): 'Figaro's Cavatina' from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act 1 (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

Sarasate (arr. Azarkhin): *Zigeunerweisen*, Op. 20 No. 1 (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

Shostakovich (arr. Azarkhin): Romance from *The Gadfly* (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

Tchaikovsky (arr. Azarkhin): *Valse Sentimentale*, Op. 51 No. 6 (with H. Aleksandrova, piano) (Melodya)

A great believer in the artistic potential of the solo double-bass, Azarkhin had an extraordinary concert repertoire including many of his own transcriptions – no music was safe from his pen! Seeking as colourful an artistic pallet as possible, he adapted his bow with weights taped at the tip and middle, and a thumb-lever mechanism that would change the tension to produce a 'finger accent' (although he insisted no adaptation was a substitute for total mastery of technique with a standard bow).

Trained at a Leningrad music school and then the Conservatory, Azarkhin later studied at the Moscow Conservatory and worked with many Soviet ensembles including the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under Rudolf Barshai. In 1959 his first solo bass recital was so successful that it became an annual event until his retirement and was broadcast on Radio Moscow. Claiming never to repeat the same piece in these recitals, by the end of his career Azarkhin had a repertoire of over 500 works. His

recordings were made with Melodya (then government-owned) between 1959 and 1973. Some of these were released in 1975 as *The Art of Rodion Azarkhin*, which has been described as 'the single most talked-about bass recording of all time'.

The double-bass is not the most obvious of solo instruments and even Azarkhin's extraordinary virtuosity cannot always make a compelling case for it. His Sarasate *Zigeunerweisen* suffers from a rather unclear tone and some inevitably imprecise intonation, though it reveals him to be a consummate stylist. There is great humour in some of these virtuoso pieces such as Rossini's 'Figaro's Cavatina', although this includes some slightly unpleasant double-stopping with, again, a lack of clarity and a somewhat 'buzzy' tone resulting from a powerful vibrato. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumble Bee* is rendered with great poise and style with appropriate swells and decays in dynamic, whilst in more sustained melodic works Azarkhin proves to be an impassioned interpreter of great artistic cultivation. *Après un Rêve* is stirring, with impetuous changes of tempo, whilst Tchaikovsky's *Valse Sentimentale* uses the full range of the instrument well, liberating the lower end of its compass into a melodic role. The selected Shostakovich item demonstrates Azarkhin's cultural sympathy with Russian composers, and well displays his tonal aesthetic. Portamenti are controlled and relatively light, and his vibrato, in the most convincing passages in cello register, suggests parity with Rostropovich.

Shostakovich said of Azarkhin: 'Apart from high technical quality, his artistic performance is distinguished by its grand culture and great expressiveness', and he was certainly a flamboyant advocate of his instrument. Some recordings are more convincing than others, but his supreme musicianship always shines through.

This is the beginning of **The A–Z of String Players.**

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