



EUROPEAN
STRING
TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

arco



Trying to Play

A Luddite View?

Ensemble Viola Parts

Kató Havas: 1920 - 2018

The Portuguese Perspective

**Viola
Special**

*DeBellis
N.Y.*

Editorial

Welcome to our spring 2019 issue of Arco: As I write this the sun is shining, the evenings are noticeably lighter and Spring does appear to have arrived! I am reminded of these lines of William Wordsworth;

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Our sad thoughts at this time are with the passing of Kató Havas, one of the great figures in string teaching, who died on 31st December aged 98. Her amazing career is described for us by Gloria Bakhshayesh.

Elsewhere, for the most part, this is a deliberately viola-centric issue, covering everything from viola parts in ensembles, to starting the viola as an adult. Hazel Veitch has written an inspiring article about the many and varied viola events that have happened recently in Portugal, and we have some humorous viola items as well.....though only those putting the viola in a good light of course! There is a moratorium on viola jokes here, but

it did - in my mind at least - beg the question as to why viola jokes seem to be always so short. Ponder that if you will...Whilst you ponder do remember that in this issue we also have some upper strings basics to absorb, a low-tech view of teaching from Dale Chambers and lots of interesting reviews from our excellent review team.

And don't forget that bookings for the 2019 ESTA (UK) Summer School are now open on the website: I hope to see some of you there, where, amongst other things, I'll be giving a recital with pianist Murray McLachlan, in part to celebrate the partnering of ESTA (UK) with EPTA - the European Piano Teachers Association - of which he is Chair.

These are exciting times for us, thanks to the tireless work of the members of our Executive Committee, some of whom even play the viola!

...and those short viola jokes: Of course it's so that the violinists can understand them

Best wishes,
Steve



CONTRIBUTORS



Gloria Bakhshayesh has worked closely with Kató Havas since 1977 and acted as her Personal Representative for many years. Specialising in the prevention and release of tension and anxiety in string playing, she is President of KHANA (The Kató Havas Association for the New Approach). Cellist **Ian Bewley**, co-author of the article about Kató, studied with Vilmos Palotai and Kató Havas and taught at the RNCM for 20 years. He died in July 2007.



Brenda Stewart trained at Manchester University and the Royal Academy of Music, Brenda Stewart is violist of the Bingham String Quartet. Her teaching contexts have included professor at Junior RAM and Head of Strings at Radley College. She works regularly with adult amateurs at the NLMS summer school and at Benslow Music.



Dale Chambers is Head of Strings at The Royal Grammar School, Guildford and works as both a performer and teacher. He is perhaps best known for his pioneering work with the RGS String Scheme, now in its eighth year. Primary pupils are taught for free with all of the funding having been raised by external sponsorship.



Jeremy Harmer is an internationally recognised writer, teacher and lecturer in the field of English language teaching who has worked in Mexico, the UK and the US. In his other life he is a singer-songwriter, amateur violist and a performer of words - including international tours with violinist Steve Bingham.



Matthew Lee teaches in Norwich, Cambridge, and at home. He is also Education Officer for the BVS and writes Blogs for ESTA UK. He plays viola for the Academy of St Thomas, the East Anglian Chamber Orchestra, Opera de Bauge, and freelances across the East Anglia region.



Hazel Veitch is a Mancunian viola player living and working in Portugal. She is a member of the Porto Symphony Orchestra Casa da Música and teaches viola at the Porto Music Conservatory. She's totally committed to living life to the fullest.



Being part of a Viola Revolution

by Hazel Veitch

When considering what might interest you about my life, I looked back over my career and realised that actually, I have been a part of a Viola Revolution and I have reason to be extremely proud of what we have accomplished

As a British woman working in Portugal I stumbled into this life without any serious planning through a series of chance happenings. I have ended up with a successful orchestral career and maybe more significantly, have been part of starting, nurturing and building up a generation of viola players who are now being internationally recognised.

I'm aware that that is a grand statement so let me give you some background and you can judge for yourself.

I started studying the violin at the age of 5. I was always very clear about the instrument I wanted to play and that it was my future. It's always felt so natural to me to have my instrument in my hands, and I still enjoy the physical pleasure of playing today. Even at the age of 5 though I hated the sound of the open E string and strove quickly to master the use of my 4th finger so that I could avoid it at all costs. It didn't occur to anyone that maybe I was a viola player masquerading as a violinist, least of all me. I didn't know what a viola was because none of my youth orchestras had any.

The final blow for me as a violinist was when, around the age of 11 or 12, I had to start shifting

out of first position and trying to play lyrically on the E string. This was when I stopped practicing and turned into a sulky teenager!

Sitting at the back of the 2nd violins aged 14 and playing 'real' music instead of school arrangements was a real eye opener for me. Playing Stravinsky's Rite of Spring was like nothing I had ever heard and by the end of the week I was hooked. But the real life changer was Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet overture. In a string sectional I heard the viola section play the theme and I was completely hooked. THAT was the sound I wanted! THAT was my instrument! I had to wait a while to get my parents on board but after that I never looked back.

I don't blame my violin teachers for not picking up on my aversion to the higher register of my instrument. I'm sure I didn't articulate my feelings clearly as I didn't understand them myself, but I do wonder how many frustrated little viola players there are out there learning the wrong instrument just because the viola is considered a secondary option. It's certainly not only in the UK I've found, this is the system all over the world to a greater or lesser degree. Violin first then maybe viola later if you're not quite good enough on the violin or your hands are very big.

This is what I have had the profound pleasure of helping to change, at least in my adopted Portugal.

I have lived and worked in Porto, Portugal for the last 27 years. I initially arrived to play in the orchestra. At the time there were no Portuguese viola players at all, at least in the north so the entire section was made up off foreigners.

François Broos, a Belgium viola player had arrived in Portugal after the 2nd World War and had built up an admirable class of viola players in Lisbon, some of whom are still active today. However, his legacy didn't have the same impact in the rest of the country.

As I settled in I found I missed the teaching that I had started doing in the UK and reached out to the local schools to see if I could find a

job. For the first time I found myself being offered a job as a viola teacher instead of a viola playing violin teacher. None of the schools had any viola students at the time, and they never questioned the idea that the viola wasn't a different instrument to the violin. It was simply an instrument that didn't exist and that situation should be rectified if there were to be viola sections in their orchestras. It sounds so simple doesn't it?!

In 1993 I started teaching at a state funded Conservatório. A specialist music school in a city called Aveiro. I was given 10 students who had wanted to play other instruments but hadn't been able to get places, children who yearned to play the saxophone or clarinet. Obviously, I didn't manage to convince all those students of the merits of the viola, but I'm proud to say that of that first intake one of my students has a very



Aveiro 2003

Bottom row (left to right): Marina Pikoul, Francisco Moreira, Emilia Alves, Theo Ellegiers, Hazel Veitch, Dário Alves, David Wyn Lloyd, Jean-Loup Lecomte, Luis Norberto Silva.

At least 7 of the pupils in this photograph are now professional Viola players, working in 4 different countries.

successful career as a viola player and teacher in Australia and another still has very strong ties to the instrument.

Around the same time some of my colleagues in the orchestra also started classes in three other state run Conservatórios in the north of the country. Our student numbers were small and consequently each group was quite insular so in 2001 we decided to organise an event that brought them all together for a day. The idea was to do what viola players know best and that is to have fun, exchange ideas and give them an opportunity to open their horizons and get to know other likeminded people.



APVdA 2009

(left to right): Jean-Loup Lecomte, Jorge Alves, Hugo Diogo, Hazel Veitch, Carina Rocha, Teresa Correia, Emilia Alves, Rute Azevedo, Ana Luisa Miranda, Luis Norberto Silva, Susana Cordeiro.



Paços de Brandão 2009
5th Encontro de Viola d'arco

That year we brought together 35 students aged 6-18 at our first "Encontro" (Meeting). The next year we did it again and this time amongst the other activities, decided to organise a play along. Setting out parts for all abilities we put together our first mass viola orchestra of 66.

Realising the benefits of this activity we did it again and again. By now our own classes were stabilising and the next generation were starting classes of their own in the numerous private/partially funded music schools popping up nationwide. By the 4th Encontro we were welcoming into our fold students from more schools than just the 4 state Conservatórios.



Guinness Certificate



Kim Kashkashian having a heart to heart with a 6 year old student



Porto, Casa da Musica 2011
6th Encontro de Viola d'arco. Kim Kashkashian question and answer session.

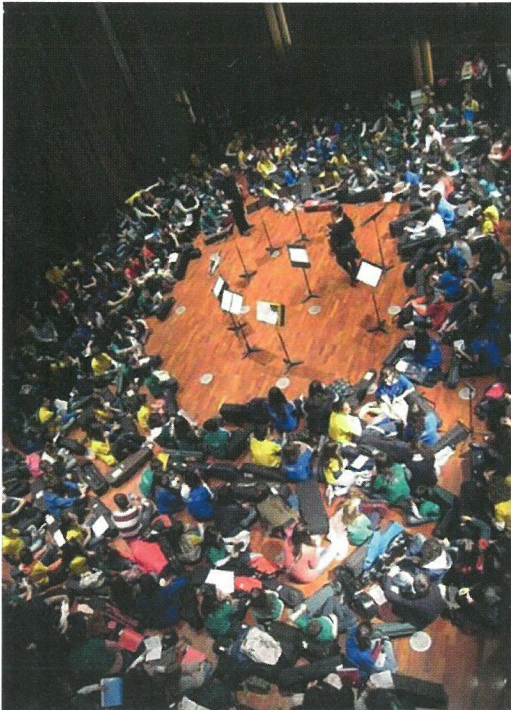


6th Encontro de Viola d'arco

We publicly committed to the creation of an Association responsible for the promotion of the Viola in Portugal.

In 2009 our 5th Encontro was officially organised by the newly formed Portuguese Viola Society, and with ever increasing numbers of participants it was the last time that we held the event in a music school. From now on we would have to find alternative venues to house us!

Two years later we invited Kim Kashkashian to our 6th Encontro at Casa da Musica in Porto. In the run up to the event the number of people signing up hit 200 and we started to joke about it being a Guinness World Record. For a bit of fun, we got in touch with them and got the ball rolling. On the 19th March 2011 we were officially awarded the record for the largest viola ensemble in the World. This was possible with the support and dedication of approximately 40 professional viola players and teachers from



Porto 2013

7th Encontro de Viola d'arco. "The fried egg"- pupils waiting for the teachers' concert.

Porto 2013

7th Encontro de Viola d'arco Each section was attributed a different t-shirt which helped a lot with the organisation and created a fantastic splash of colour!



ESTA 2014

(left to right)- Elisabete Gomes, Nuno Arrais, António Pereira, Marta Eufrazio, Eugenia Lima, Florian Petzborn, Jorge Alves, Filipe Quaresma, Clarissa Foletto, Ana Sofia Mota, Hazel Veitch, Francisca Pessanha.

more than 40 music schools nationwide which resulted in the participation of 321 viola players of all ages.

After the Guinness World Record and the visibility that that brings, the International Viola Society got in touch with us, and when it was time for the next Encontro we were joined by representatives from the International, Spanish and German Viola Societies. The format of our event took on another dimension with a day of lectures, masterclasses and recitals before the Mass Viola orchestra Day, which this time was held in a shopping centre and started with a flash mob.

It was at this event that we agreed to host

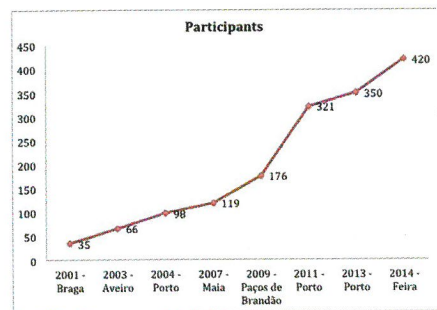


Feira 2014

Feira 2014 -8th Encontro de Viola d'arco

the next International Viola Congress to be held in 2014. And so, we did. A week of activities involving some of the finest Viola players in the World. 22 recitals and Orchestra concerts, 8 lectures and 12 masterclasses.

All wrapped up by another fun Mass Orchestra experience in which many of the visiting soloists took part. 420 viola players including visitors from 5 Continents. It was at this Congress that we launched the Portuguese Chapter of ESTA.



This is the growth of the Viola “Encontros” in Portugal. The graph spans 13 years and speaks of the viola as a proud and independent instrument finding its way in the world without hitching a ride on the back of the violins. It wasn't all down to us though, we had help from the government.

In the early 1980s the artistic education system began to experience massive changes. A process was started to widen the availability, taking it out of the national curriculum and enabling a system of specialist music schools available to the wider population. Over the next 25 years or so this resulted in a mushrooming of specialist music schools distributed over the whole country instead of only in the large metropolitan areas.

In 2006 there was an UNESCO World conference on Artistic Education in Lisbon which prompted yet more changes in favourable legislation.

By 2012, in addition to the original 5 state music Conservatórios there were 104 private, but partially government funded music schools working alongside the regular education system.

In my school there are over 1000 pupils. Some receive their regular schooling there, others arrive after hours. There are 6 orchestras that involve string players from 6-18 years old, all of them have a fully functioning complete viola section, and no 3rd violins. This works by having quotas for each instrument. At the beginning of every academic year 48 6-year olds are offered places. 4 will be chosen to play the viola. The selection process takes place alongside the violin and the question is asked “do you prefer the high or low register?” That’s all it takes, and it’s the question I was never asked.

This is I think the thing I am most proud of. The viola is not a second cousin, or an afterthought. It’s as fundamental as any other orchestral instrument.

Viola players have a unique soul, they aren’t like violinists at all. I wonder how many of you teach viola players who are masquerading as violin students because they’re not aware there’s a choice!

Since our Congress we have represented Portugal at more 2 International Viola Congresses and an ESTA Congress, we have had one more



“Encontro”, in 2017 and are working on another for this year.

The number of participants seem to have plateaued, which is maybe just as well! The Portuguese Viola Society continues to serve its members and their families and friends and continue to grow and change as needs ask of it.

There are now Portuguese Viola players working and studying in almost every country I can think of, winning competitions and gaining entry to the finest schools.

So, this is my life. One that 30 years ago I couldn’t have imagined in my wildest dreams. Together, with a group of like-minded colleagues we have created a wonderful monster which hopefully will continue to grow and flourish on its own. It’s time for me to look towards the future and I’m busy trying to help the next generation of viola teachers find their voice. I feel very privileged.

Oh, and all the Viola students and colleagues at the Porto Conservatório say hi!