

# Vadim Borisovsky and His Viola Arrangements: Recent Discoveries in Russian Archives and Libraries, Part II

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Forty-two years after Vadim Borisovsky's death, the recent re-publication of some of his arrangements and recordings has generated further interest in the violist. The appeal of his works attests to the depth and significance of his legacy for violists in the twenty-first century. The first part of this article focused on previously unknown but important biographical facts about Borisovsky's formation and establishment as a viola soloist and his extensive poetic legacy that have only recently come to light. The second part of this article provides an analysis of Borisovsky's style of playing based on his recordings, concert collaborations, and transcription choices and reveals Borisovsky's special approach to the enhancement and enrichment of the viola's instrumental and timbral possibilities in his performing editions, in which he closely followed the historical and stylistic background of the composers' manuscripts. These specifics will be studied/observed in his editions of Bach and Schumann and thoroughly examined in Borisovsky's major reconstruction work: Glinka's viola sonata.

## Discography

We are fortunate that a few of Borisovsky's solo recordings have survived. They provide us with a unique opportunity to hear and learn from the master.<sup>1</sup> His playing was characterized by a sound that was both rich and intense, and yet mellow. Clarity was a signature element, with timbre qualities that provided a full spectrum of colours and dynamics. His tone, with its refined control of vibrato, had a special airy or *flautando* quality, particularly in *piano* episodes, which also became an unmistakable element of Yuri Bashmet's style. Borisovsky's elegant and graceful phrasing, and the use of

*rubato* balanced with an immaculate sense for rhythm, were never at the expense of the coherence of music he performed, regardless of its period, as his recordings eloquently attest.

The discography of Borisovsky as a member of the Beethoven String Quartet is far more extensive, with more than 150 works on audio recordings. It comprises music by Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Ravel, Chausson, Berg, Hindemith, and other composers of the twentieth century, with a strong emphasis on Russian heritage from Glinka and Rachmaninov to Miaskovsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich. This repertoire was undoubtedly influential for Borisovsky in his own selection of transcription choices for the viola.

## Performing Collaborations

As a soloist, Borisovsky performed with many distinguished musicians, including pianists Lev Oborin, Konstantin Igumnov, Maria Iudina, Elena Bekman-Shcherbina, Aleksandr Gol'denveizer, Maria Nemenova-Lunts and Boris Zhilinskii; the harpist Vera Dulova; double-bass players Vladimir Khomenko and Leopold Andreev; violists Mikhail Terian and Fedor Druzhinin; the mezzo-soprano Nina Aleksandriiskaia; conductors Nikolai Golovanov, Aleksandr Gauk, Mikhail Terian, and Fritz Stiedry; not to mention the members of the renowned Borodin and Beethoven string quartets. Some of these names may be little known or completely unfamiliar to a reader outside Russia today. The unfortunate restrictions on concert tours abroad imposed by the Soviet authorities, which were discussed in the first instalment of this article, and the Iron Curtain limited the scope of international recognition of these

performers. However, this does not diminish their musical fineness and legacy for the present generation. Their collaboration with Borisovsky attracted the attention of audiences to the viola as a solo instrument and contributed to the enlargement of its repertoire and to Borisovsky's own interest in making transcriptions, of which more is below. These colleagues of Borisovsky were esteemed professors either at the Moscow Conservatoire or the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music (the former Gnessin Institute), in which now their former students continue their line of succession, teaching a new generation of musicians.

### Baroque Inclinations

Throughout his long life as a performer and arranger, Borisovsky approached almost all styles and periods of music history that were known in his lifetime. In the 1920s, right from the start of his career, Borisovsky was very interested in early music and music of the Baroque period. After 1927, he collaborated closely with the harpist Vera Dulova, and his four arrangements for harp after lute composers marked this important period of his artistic growth and recognition. Borisovsky became fascinated by the viola d'amore so much that he started to play and introduce this virtually unknown instrument to Russian concert audiences. It was a unique initiative of its kind in Moscow that was soon banned, as it clashed with the state decree of 1932.<sup>2</sup> The instruments and music of the Baroque and pre-Baroque were associated with aristocratic and bourgeois circles, which were declared extraneous to the proletarian culture. It was only in the 1950s when Borisovsky publicly re-approached the viola

d'amore and included it again in his concert programs. His list of arrangements for this instrument consists of at least twelve compositions. Borisovsky recorded and performed some rare pieces written by Louis-Toussaint Milandre, Giordani, and Louis de Caix d'Hervelois and *The Rose's Song*, attributed to a thirteenth-century king of Navarre, Thibaut IV, also known as Theobald I of Navarre, or the Trouvère/Troubadour. Perhaps, like his poetry, this innocent world of stylized dances and tender melodies was Borisovsky's attempt to escape from the realities of everyday life. Borisovsky's approach to this music also attests to his inquisitive mind, his most exquisite taste with a romantic inspiration, and the many intriguing facets of his interests that furthered his search for the unknown.

### Explorations of Organ Music

Borisovsky's interest in the organ, which he taught himself to play in Italy from 1912 to 1914, was reflected many years later in his viola arrangements of Bach. One of them is Borisovsky's transcription for viola solo of the little-known *Pedal Study* for organ.<sup>3</sup> Borisovsky explored many varieties of bowing and fingering, often using combinations of legato and *detaché* in high positions with uneasy stretches, in order to fully demonstrate the broad range of sound and timbral qualities of the organ. These difficulties do not become technical obscurities but add elegance and clarity to the musical articulation. The viola is not in competition with the organ; rather, it illustrates the diversity of technical possibilities with string crossings, leaps from the low to the high register, and the expressive capabilities of the instrument. Borisovsky

[Allegro vivo]

Illus. 1. Bach arr. Borisovsky, *Pedal Study* for organ.

Adagio, con molto espressione

*Illus. 2. Schumann's Adagio and Allegro, opening measures of the viola part.*

preserved the focus on the polyphonic language of Bach with the importance of pedal points that give a long-standing harmony to a short melodic line or phrase above. This study is a fine introduction to Bach's solo writing for a stringed instrument and is a valuable encounter before exploring cello suites on the viola (see Illustration 1).

### Transcription Choices for the Viola

The list of composers whose works Borisovsky performed, arranged, and edited for the viola is striking. It consists of some one hundred names starting from Lully, Vivaldi, Bach, Haydn, Handel, Rolla, Benda, Dittersdorf, Beethoven, and the Stamitz family up to Borisovsky's contemporaries, including Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Kara Karaev, Balys Dvarionas, Joaquín Turina, and Bartók.

Borisovsky also paid a special tribute to composers of the Romantic period, including Schumann, Schubert, Liszt, Brahms, Chopin, and Grieg. One arrangement that stands out is that of the *Adagio and Allegro* by Schumann.<sup>4</sup> Both instruments, the viola and piano, are equal partners in the musical dialogue, but the viola is often given a greater expressive range of melodies, intimate eloquence, and agility of phrasing than in the traditional instrumentation. It rightfully occupies a special place in the viola repertoire at Russian conservatories. (See Illustration 2.)

However, the most significant part of Borisovsky's arrangements was devoted to Russian and Soviet music. One may say that these arrangements served two initially opposing purposes, which at this point efficiently complemented each other: the official Soviet policy that obliged the promotion of Russian national music and the music of Soviet Republics, and, at the same time, the enhancement of the viola solo repertoire and the art of viola playing that was undervalued by officials. The viola was gradually brought to prominence in the USSR largely due to Borisovsky's contributions. His pioneering role in the development of the viola is comparable to that of Lionel Tertis.

Borisovsky's reading and comprehension of a musical score dictated a particular instrumental application that united a composer's musical ideas with his own interpretation. One might argue that most interpretations could be defined in this way; however, Borisovsky's thorough historical insight into a composer's autograph along with his special attention to the timbral qualities of the viola are especially distinct in his performing editions, particularly in his reconstruction of the Glinka's viola sonata.

### The Lost and Found Sonata by Glinka

Among all Borisovsky's editions, the *Unfinished Sonata for Viola (or Violin) and Piano* by Mikhail Glinka is

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perhaps the most valuable for violists today, because it is the earliest truly remarkable Russian composition for viola and piano. Glinka is regarded as the father of Russian national music and opera for his formation of a distinctive style that inspired all Russian nationalist composers of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Western European music certainly influenced Glinka's works as well, especially of the early period, to which his viola sonata belongs. Taking into account the significance of Glinka, the role of Borisovsky in completing this unfinished work that was forgotten and left unperformed for almost a century is very valuable.

Glinka composed the first movement of this sonata in 1825 and put this work aside until May 1828. He then quickly composed the second movement in Moscow while visiting his close friend, music critic and writer Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mel'gunov (1804–1867). As with some other early works of Glinka, he never completed this sonata, though he noted in his *Zapiski* [Notes] that he planned to write a Rondo. Written a few years before his death, these only authentic reminiscences of the composer offer a simple chronological record of Glinka's artistic activities that he described in modest style:

Around this time [1825], I wrote the first *Allegro* of the sonata in D-moll for piano with the viola. This work is better than other works... [...] *Adagio* was written later and *Rondo*, with a motif in Russian style that I can still remember, I did not even start writing down; recently, I included it [this motif] in my children's polka.

[...] I spent at Mel'gunov's only until 9 May [1928] (his angel's day)—and in these few days I wrote *Adagio* in B-dur of the D-moll Sonata. I remember that this piece had a skilful counterpoint.<sup>5</sup>

Thanks to Borisovsky, Glinka's sonata has become one of the most frequently performed works of the viola repertoire today.

### **Glinka's Manuscripts as the Main Sources of Borisovsky's Reconstruction**

The sonata was found, reconstructed, and edited, by Borisovsky, who also premiered the work with the pianist Elena Bekman-Shcherbina on May 2, 1931 in Moscow. There are three manuscripts of Glinka's that

have survived.<sup>6</sup> None of them are fully completed. They are kept in St. Petersburg, and those researchers and performers who would like to study the original scores would have to travel to Russia, as Glinka's autographs are not reprinted anywhere. A brief overview of these manuscripts with some illustrations is offered below, in order to assist future performers of the sonata in understanding its original and added features, and also to imagine the colossal, meticulous, and unique work that the young Borisovsky courageously undertook despite his busy concert and teaching career.

The first autograph of Glinka is a draft score with numerous corrections in both instrumental parts. It is possibly the earliest version of the sonata. This manuscript contains two movements: the first movement is fully completed, but the second movement breaks in measure 187. The second autograph is the complete viola score of the sonata with no piano part. The top left-hand corner of the first page of this manuscript has a title: "Sonata." This autograph considerably differs from the first, earlier manuscript, and has numerous corrections and paper inserts in the first movement. These corrections indicate that this manuscript was used by Glinka for performance purposes, which shall be detailed later in this discussion. The second movement is completed here and has 205 measures in total.

The third autograph that is based on the first two versions has a fewer number of corrections. At the same time, some obvious rhythmical mistakes and contradicting articulation and phrasing markings were left unattended by Glinka.<sup>7</sup> Musicologist Nikolai Findeizen, the first scholar to research Glinka's manuscripts, was of the opinion that this manuscript dates from the early 1850s.<sup>8</sup> At this time, a few years before Glinka's sudden death in 1857, the composer started reviewing his musical legacy, largely due to the persistent appeal from his sister Liudmila Shestakova, who understood its importance for future generations and dedicated her life to the preservation and promotion of Glinka's works. In this last autograph of the sonata, Glinka also added the violin part under the viola part. The viola part is incomplete in the second movement and has only the opening 35 measures, whereas the texts of both the violin and the piano parts break in measure 161. This manuscript has the following title: "*Sonate pour le Piano-forte avec accompagnement d'Alto-Viola ou Violon. Composee l'an 1825.*" It was very





Illus. 3: First manuscript, mm. 33–40 and its new version in the second manuscript (third line).

37 *Allegro moderato*

alto viola

Piano forte

Illus. 4(a). The opening from the first manuscript.





Illus. 4(b). The opening from the third manuscript.

likely that the last pages were simply lost as possibly were the last pages of the first manuscript.

Borisovsky used the third manuscript as the main source of his reconstruction of the first movement with only occasional elements added from the first and the second manuscripts, of which more is below. The second movement became the main focus of Borisovsky's reconstruction, because the last measures in the piano part were missing in all Glinka's scores. Borisovsky used all three manuscripts for his reconstruction of the second movement, and these additions are described in detail below. In the USSR and Russia, Borisovsky's edition was published for the first time in 1932 in a joint publication prepared by Muzgiz in Moscow and Universal Edition in Wien and Leipzig. It was then republished by Muzyka in 1947, 1949, 1958, 1977, and 2000 in Moscow.

### The Language of the Sonata and its Alterations in the Manuscripts

The language of the sonata is very expressive and tuneful with the beauty of lyrical intimacy typical of a Russian romance of the first half of the nineteenth century. The melodic lyricism and narrative qualities correlate naturally with the technical fluency and refinement of Glinka's writing covering all registers of the viola. The display of the viola's dynamic and timbral qualities were very important for Glinka, particularly in the first movement, with the second manuscript containing additions that the composer included in a search for the best outcome in these instrumental effects. (See Illustration 3.)

The tempo indication in the first movement differs in Glinka's manuscripts: the first and second have *Allegro*



Illus. 5. Second subject, second manuscript.



Illus. 6. Second subject, first manuscript, pages 3–4.



Illus. 7: Development, second manuscript, page 1, lines 10–11.

*moderato*, but the third has only *Allegro*. Borisovsky kept the tempo indication of the third manuscript. The elegance and eloquence of the main subject of the first movement in D minor, which at first starts in the piano part, was a work in progress for the composer, as his initial version differs from his final choice. (See Illustration 4.)

The second subject in F major brings calmness and composure, but the syncopated eighth notes and passages in sixteenth notes add fine articulation and gracefulness to the melodic line. They require a soft sound but with a good projection and defined bow and vibrato control. (See Illustration 5.)

However, its initial version was very different. There were hardly any slurs, and the theme had a rather sporadic development compared to its final outcome. (See Illustration 6.)

The development section deepens the musical drama and argument set up in the exposition and leads to the final section. Thus, the structure of the first movement corresponds to a sonata form with romantic lyricism of vocal- and song-type themes. The development section in all three manuscripts is almost identical, with little additions in phrasing markings and dynamics included by Glinka in the second and third manuscripts. (See Illustration 7.)





*Illus. 8: Recapitulation, second manuscript, page 2, lines 1–3.*



*Illus. 9(a): opening measures, third manuscript/first manuscript.*

The recapitulation also had only minor alterations in the second and third manuscripts. (See Illustration 8.)

The slow second movement brought challenges to Borisovsky from the very first measures. Glinka gave different tempo indications to this movement in his autographs. In the first manuscript it is marked *Larghetto* and in the second and third *Andante*. Borisovsky transferred both of them in

his edition and marked the movement *Larghetto ma non troppo (Andante)*. Its first theme is of a simple contemplative character in B-flat major. Borisovsky combined the material from all three manuscripts of Glinka: instead of the simple repetition of the first sixteen measures written in the second and third manuscripts, Borisovsky employed the initial version from the first manuscript and then continued the material from the third manuscript. (See Illustration 9.)





*Illus. 9(b): opening measures, third manuscript/first manuscript.*

This arrangement has proved to be reasonably effective, as it gives a better development to the melodic line in the viola part and therefore avoids unnecessary repetitiveness. (See Illustration 10.)

The first theme contrasts with the passionate and impulsive second theme in B-flat minor. Its version in the first and second manuscripts only slightly differs from the third manuscript that Borisovsky followed adding occasional turn marks, where Glinka was inconsistent. The structure of this movement is unconventional. Glinka included the elements of the development section in the reprise with added counterpoint, modification, and modulation of the first theme in F major and then in G major followed by the second theme in G minor that deepens the drama of the melodic expression further. The very end breaks the emotional peak. There are 238 measures in total in Borisovsky's edition of this

movement. The last 40 measures of the piano part were completed by Borisovsky following the viola part of the second manuscript. His piano part in these measures is based on the thematic material of the *Larghetto* and on the main theme of the *Allegro* of the first movement that Borisovsky included on the pedal point in the coda, marked *Meno mosso*.

### **Why the viola and why Glinka?**

Glinka's instrumental choice illustrates his attraction to the viola's deep velvety timbre that effectively replicates a human voice with its conversational tone of expression and a warm intimate coloring. The piano is treated as an equal partner in this musical dialogue. Its technical virtuosity, figurative phrasing, and thinness of texture with chromatic scalar passages continue the line of succession influenced by the Irish piano virtuoso John

**Larghetto ma non troppo (Andante) [5]** sul G

[10] [15]

*Illus. 10: Borisovsky's edition, mm. 1–17.*

Field, who also inspired Chopin, Brahms, Schumann, and Liszt. Both Field and his former student, the pianist and composer Carl Mayer, taught the young Glinka in St. Petersburg and made a significant impact on his instrumental growth. This background and stylistic features of Glinka's music were important for the young Borisovsky, as he admired the epoch of Romanticism that correlated so well with his musical and poetic expression. Besides this, Borisovsky was attracted to Glinka's broad scope of musical interests, which, in a way, replicated Borisovsky's own instrumental choice that also progressed from the piano and the violin to the viola.

Glinka played the violin from his youth, but according to his memoirs, his accomplishments on the violin were modest compared to his achievements on the piano. Nevertheless, Glinka continued his violin tuition with Franz Böhm, a prominent Austrian violinist and concertmaster of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres, and performed his own music with him. Glinka's instrumental execution as a violist must have been more than merely competent, as he definitely intended his unfinished viola sonata for himself. He performed it as a pianist and as a violist in 1825, which he recorded in his memoirs: "I played this sonata with Böhm and Ligle; with the latter I played the viola."<sup>9</sup> These

performances of Glinka also explain the occasional fingering that the composer put in his viola autographs, which assisted him in his playing. This sonata turned out to be a fine compositional experiment for the young Glinka, as he was clearly attracted by the viola's sound-qualities. However, the viola was only one of many of Glinka's broad interests in music on his path to professional maturity, and later his operatic projects took all the attention of the composer. This was probably the reason why Glinka left this sonata unfinished.

### **Borisovsky's Approach and Additions in Glinka's Sonata**

Borisovsky played a crucial role in bringing this masterpiece of the viola repertoire to the concert platform. His edition reflects his approach to the technical and timbral qualities of the viola and gives special emphasis to the narrative rhetoric of Glinka's music. Borisovsky broadly explored high positions on low strings, which produce a special velvety and mellow sound. These sound qualities became characteristic elements of his own playing. The importance of color and sound palette, narrative rhetoric, and visual associations are deeply rooted in Russian culture and traditions.<sup>10</sup>



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These features had a special resonance in the language of Russian composers, writers, and artists of the nineteenth century, in particular of the Silver Age aesthetic that inspired Borisovsky's poetry. The specifics of melodic phrasing and its development, ornamentation, harmonic execution, dynamics, and tempo indications impart its own imaginative "story." This consequently guides a performer in his/her choice of a timbral palette and technical application with the intensity or restraint of available resources. Borisovsky carefully studied all three autographs of Glinka and added missing tempo indications and shortened and extended some of the original phrasing markings, which assisted with the intensity, fluency, and expressiveness of the melodies, dynamics, and sound coloring of Glinka's music. This approach undoubtedly enhanced the quality of his arrangement.

Borisovsky also included "missing" thirds and fifths to some of Glinka's harmonies in the piano part that took away from some of Glinka's finesse, while making the texture sound richer and fuller. This is probably the fate of all works that have to be completed posthumously, because it is almost impossible for an editor to step fully into the shoes of a composer and feel his style of writing as his/her own.<sup>11</sup> However, it can be argued that in these additions of Borisovsky as editor his main objective was to balance the richness of the viola expression with the elegance of the piano.

### **Borisovsky's Legacy**

Borisovsky's transcriptions became an integral part of his solo and teaching career and continue to be the most valuable portion of his legacy today. The scope of this article is limited to the discussion of only a small portion of Borisovsky's vast viola heritage, focusing primarily on his reconstruction of Glinka's sonata. His other arrangements still require further research. Borisovsky's determination, enthusiasm, and drive in promotion of the viola as a solo instrument and his relentless work on the expansion of its repertoire by making transcriptions and encouraging composers to write for the instrument challenged the status quo of the viola in Russia and beyond. Borisovsky's archive contains correspondence with notes of gratitude and appreciation for his playing and transcriptions, including those from William Primrose, Aurelio Arcidiacono, Paul

Hindemith, Gregor Piatigorsky, and Robert Pollak.

One can only imagine the scope of Borisovsky's possible achievements on an international musical scene, if only he had an opportunity. We owe much to Borisovsky for his immeasurable impact on the popularity and enhancement of the role of the viola and his everlasting influence that continues to inspire violists today.

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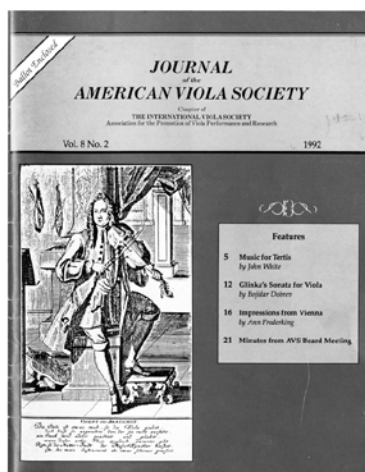
1. Re-released in *Vadim Borisovsky, Viola and Viola d'Amore*, Vista Vera Records, WCD-00076, 2005, compact disc. Also in *Great Artists in the Moscow Conservatoire, Vadim Borisovsky, Viola*, Moscow Conservatoire Records, 2006, compact disc.
2. The state decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations" marked the start of the epoch of Socialist Realism: from then on, art was thoroughly controlled by the state.
3. It was published in Moscow in 1932 and 1939 by Muzgiz and in: Lidia Gushchina and Evgeniia Stoklitskaia, eds., *Izbrannye etudy dlia al'ta [Selected Etudes for Viola]* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1981), 9–10. It was reprinted in New York by International Music in 1943 as No. 1 in the *Four Artistic Studies for Solo Viola*, ed. Vadim Borisovsky.
4. Robert Schumann, *Adagio and Allegro, svobodnaia obrabotka* [transcription], ed. Vadim Borisovsky for viola and piano (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1953).
5. Mikhail Glinka, *Zapiski [Notes]* (Moscow: Gareeva, 2004), 50 and 59. Translated by the author.
6. They are kept at the National Library of Russia (NLR) in St. Petersburg, fund 190 (Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich), ed. khr. 41, 42, 10. Note: The *edinita*

*khraneniia* [document indexes] of funds is given using the abbreviation of “ed. khr.” following the standard system of archival catalogues in Russia.

7. For example, in measure 9, the resolution of a chord in the left hand of the piano part has a half note, and the right hand has a half note with a tied eighth note; in measure 207, the viola part has staccato instead of obvious slurs on the third and fourth beats.
8. Nikolai Findeizen, “Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka,” in *Russkii biograficheskii slovar’ v. 25 tomakh*, ed. Aleksandr Polovtsev and Nikolai Chulkov (St. Petersburg-Moscow: Imperatorskoe Russkoe Istoricheskoe Obshchestvo, 1916), 5:275–90.
9. Glinka, *Zapiski*, 50. Translated by the author. Lige, a piano tutor from Vienna, in recollection by Glinka was an excellent sight-reader and accompanist.
10. Further referenced in: Cherry Gilchrist, *The Soul of Russia. Magical Traditions in an Enchanted Landscape* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2008).
11. Thus, Rimsky-Korsakov completed the unfinished opera of Mussorgsky, *Khovanshchina*, bringing it to its premiere in 1886. However, it was revised again by Shostakovich in 1959 due to Rimsky-Korsakov’s unnecessary cuts and added sections.

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30 YEARS OF JAVS



This was a commemorative issue, for the 10th anniversary of the death of William Primrose, and was a highlight from David Dalton’s tenure as editor.

At some point, Primrose asked his cousin, James G. Wilson: “What are my roots?” The article by Wilson provides this answer, tracing the family history. Tributes were provided by those who knew Primrose as orchestral violist, soloist, educator, family, friend, and family friend. Ralph Aldrich also recalled his way of reacting to the news of his illness, with Primrose saying: “If I have any unlovely aches or pains I’ll take care of them when the time comes.... This is not whistling in the dark or the graveyard, I do solemnly assure you, but an extraordinary and impersonal experience. I seem to be standing apart from some important thing that is taking place and am fascinated by it all.”