



# The Menuhin Foundation

Newsletter  
Spring 2020



## We're still learning online

Welcome to our Spring 2020 edition. We hope everyone is adjusting to our collective new lifestyle. Given present circumstances, much of this issue will be about online musical learning, with advice on getting the most out of lessons and finding resources on the web for musical education and inspiration. We also thought you might enjoy reading about the online experience of fellow students and parents, some of whom have written to us. This is a great way to stay in touch, as it might be a while until we can meet again around the Saturday tuck shop...oh we miss those brownies! We also have an interesting article on the viola, written by our own Jonathan Kightley.

### Toeing the *online*

Those of us more accustomed to 350-year-old technology have certainly had to study up on more modern means, and the Menuhin teachers have risen to the challenge. From our perspective, online lessons have been very effective and enjoyable. It's a pleasure to see our students and to feel we are bringing consistency and inspiration to their lives. It's also wonderful to see parents who otherwise couldn't be present at lessons being more involved in their children's learning—a happy result of everyone being at home. We've learned a few things along the way which we are passing on in this newsletter.

### It's a setup

We all have different technologies. We've had lessons with students using laptops, workstations, iPads and smartphones. We've learned that it's helpful to position devices in such a way that the student keeps it not too far from eye level. For violin/violists, it helps the teacher to be able to see a side view so we can check instrument positioning and bowing. The student will be helped by having their music set up so they can maintain that position and see the notes easily. If you don't yet have a music stand, we recommend getting one as soon as possible, as it really helps. In the meantime, we've seen music on bookshelves, propped up on chairs and stuck to the fridge with magnets...there has been no shortage of creativity! It's also helpful not to be too close to the device microphone, to avoid saturating it and distorting the sound.

*See how some of our students are conquering online learning on Page 2*

## Sound advice for smooth zooming

Zoom is a great platform for our remote lessons. Here are some setup suggestions:

### For Mac

- click on **zoom.us** in the Mac toolbar
- open preferences
- go to audio preferences
- click "advanced" at bottom right
- click the "Show in-meeting option to enable Original Sound"
- exit preferences
- click "turn on Original Sound" in top left corner

### For PC

- go to the bottom left and click the upwards arrow beside the microphone
- click audio settings
- click "advanced" at bottom right
- click the "Show in-meeting option to enable Original Sound"
- exit preferences
- click "turn on Original Sound" in top left corner

Wearing earbuds or headphones greatly improves the sound quality. Choose "audio settings" "advanced" and disable persistent and intermittent background noise. A quiet background is best. If possible, limit the number of devices being used during the lesson to cut down on bandwidth use and maintain a more stable connection.

## From the frontlines

# Virtual lessons are a big hit

*Some of our students and parents tell us how their online studies are going*

### Tessa Kearns, cello

“I really enjoyed the Menuhin Foundation classes online. Not only was it easy to tune my instrument with clear instructions, but it felt just like my regular classes in the music room. During the pandemic I encourage you to play or learn an instrument online with Menuhin. It’s fun, and it really saved me from boredom!”



### Lilah Riker, violin

“ABMRS exams have been cancelled and I cannot take my Grade 3 exam. Instead I am now working towards Grade 4 by learning new pieces and scales over the computer. I do think it is helpful to have a parent in the room because they can help tune my violin and take notes. Ms. Haslam is also teaching theory on Zoom and it is going well. She has a whiteboard to draw theory notes.”

### Bella Correia, violin

*Bella's dad Walter writes:*

“When Menuhin announced that teachers would continue the lessons via virtual meeting, we were wondering how it would work out for the kids. We have never done this before and didn’t really know what to expect. There was a learning curve. The first lesson was like preparing for a production: there were things that had to be adjusted, such as proper lighting, distance of the device’s microphone from the student, positioning of the student at a certain angle so the teacher could see the violin’s fingerboard and the bow.

Bella would sometimes forget to always be in front of the camera; she’d disappear and we had to pull her back in! But once everything was in place, it all went smoothly.

For families with young kids like us, it meant more parental involvement, which we thought was great; in a normal lesson, we usually just watch and listen. Now we had to learn how to tune the violin and count the number of bars. In one lesson, Ms. Black taught Bella how to tune the violin herself, which we thought was excellent. We wouldn’t have learned these new things, if not for the virtual lessons.”



“Bella: The first online lesson felt very different because so many people were online that it was laggy and I could hardly hear. But the next two lessons were better and I’ve gotten used to it. I’m learning Grade 3 2019 and 2020 pieces for violin.”

## Tuning tips

Our hearts go out to parents of young students who are having a crash course in tuning little instruments. You’ve been doing really well. Here are some helpful tips:

Always make sure you are sounding the string while turning the peg or fine tuner, in order to hear the result. If you aren’t used to tuning, it’s very easy to overtighten a string to the point of breakage. Finding a new string right now isn’t easy.

If you aren’t confident in your ability to find the correct pitch, try using an online tuner. Here are two free ones that don’t require any downloading:

### [www.tunestrings.com](http://www.tunestrings.com)

This app plays the tones for each instrument’s strings, so you can match them.

### [www.tuner.ninja](http://www.tuner.ninja)

This shows what pitch you are playing by responding to a sound. You’ll need to be comfortable knowing what pitch to look for.

If in doubt, contact your teacher. We are much happier knowing a student is playing with a tuned instrument, and we’re here to help.

We also encourage students to explore the many wonderful performances available on YouTube. A really fun duo to follow is **TwoSetViolin**, who are very entertaining with just the right amount of silliness. Some ensembles have made incredible performances collectively from their own homes. One notable performance is *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copeland, by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rzZ2F18MwI&feature=youtu.be>

## Teacher's Corner

# In praise of the viola

The viola came to prominence during the early 16th Century in northern Italy. Early makers were Andrea Amati and Gasparo Da Salo. The viola was mainly used in works for ensemble, playing the inner voices; often there would be an alto viola part and a tenor viola part. The viola became somewhat standardised in dimension, although not to the extent of the violin. Today's viola makers have a variety of models to draw inspiration from, and the back length often ranges from 16–17 inches.

The viola played an inner voice part alongside the second violin in forms such as the string quartet and orchestral works. Many composers took up the viola, including Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Dvorak, Bridge and Britten. J. S. Bach's son, C. P. E. Bach remarked that his father was "the greatest expert and judge of harmony; he liked best to play the viola, with appropriate loudness and softness."

The viola has four strings tuned in descending order to A, D, G and C. It is

five notes below the violin and an octave above the cello. It plays music written in the alto clef, occasionally in the treble clef for higher passages. This middle voice is characterised as dark, rich, sonorous and melancholy. Due to its pitch viola strings are a little thicker and heavier than the violin, and it requires a slightly heavier bow. When changing from violin to the viola a player needs to make adjustments to the left arm, often bringing the elbow a little further under the instrument to reach the lower strings. The increase in length requires the player to adjust to wider spacing between the fingers and adopt a different approach to vibrato and choice of fingering.

The increase in bow weight means a different amount of weight transferred to the string. Violists often have a sense of drawing sound from the shoulder or centre of the back. They are encouraged to develop a practise of *Son Filé*, meaning sound spun. This practice encourages (rather than forces) a greater resonance and body of sound through a combination



String teacher Jonathan Kightley

of weight, bow speed and contact point as an alternative to pressing harder.

The viola came to prominence as a solo instrument in the early 20th Century, promoted by two great players—Lionel Tertis and William Primrose. They commissioned and inspired composers such as William Walton, Béla Bartok and Ralph Vaughan Williams, who wrote concerto works for the instrument. Paul Hindemith began his career as a violinist but switched to the viola, writing concerto, solo and chamber works. Today we have many fantastic violists and a vast repertoire of solo, chamber and orchestral music to explore and enjoy.

—Jonathan Kightley

## Recommended listening

Here are suggested recordings of a few of my favourite works, available to stream on Spotify or YouTube.

### J. S. Bach, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6: Movement II, Adagio ma non tanto*

*Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, J. S. Bach Brandenburg Concertos*

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2zCudbJzuHnZ2xSuELjmMj?si=qmj3puUdRr2gLNt0ND0-Rg>

### W. A. Mozart, *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat Major, K. 364: Movement III, Presto*

*Maxim Vengerov, violin, Lawrence Power, viola, UBS Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra. Recorded live at the BBC Proms*

<https://youtu.be/kH9IsBhAZdl>

### J. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a: Variation VII, Grazioso*

*Wiener Philharmoniker, Sir John Barbirolli, Warner Classics*

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5hXoCx8N2apOGL03HmNJ9y?si=mmN8CmMtVOTWEPCsNUWyQ>

### P. Hindemith, *Sonata for solo viola, Op. 25 No. 1: Movement IV*

*Rasendes Zeitmass. Wild. Tonschönheit ist Nebensache.*

(As fast as possible with no regard for tone)

*Antione Tamastit, viola, hr-Sinfonieorchester, Alte Oper Frankfurt*

<https://youtu.be/NyuMgOefl7I>

### B. Bartok, *Viola Concerto, Op. post: Movement III, Allegro vivace*

*Tabea Zimmermann, viola, Bayerischer Rundfunk, David Shallon, conductor. Warner Classics*

[https://open.spotify.com/track/0d9pnFtuJckCRM2kvMIWzi?si=UEok\\_kRZQaqSHdkq-yoSPg](https://open.spotify.com/track/0d9pnFtuJckCRM2kvMIWzi?si=UEok_kRZQaqSHdkq-yoSPg)

### A. Benjamin, *Jamaican Rumba arranged for viola and piano by William Primrose*

*James Ehnes, viola, Eduard Laurel, piano, Homage, Onyx*

[https://open.spotify.com/track/1NaKYIBkPqt20im4bNFSER?si=749\\_eCjrQuKKLqTuhualWw](https://open.spotify.com/track/1NaKYIBkPqt20im4bNFSER?si=749_eCjrQuKKLqTuhualWw)

# The Menuhin Foundation

*Inspired and encouraged by world-famous violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin, the Menuhin Foundation has been at the centre of providing specialist string tuition to generations of young musicians in Bermuda for more than 40 years.*

## Things to do with the Menuhin Foundation

After learning with the popular Menuhin Foundation Schools Programme, in which our teachers give lessons at schools across the island, what can you do next?

### COME AND LEARN VIOLIN... VIOLA... OR CELLO

#### Take lessons

##### Private Tuition Programme

Private lessons are currently available online with a specialist Menuhin string teacher. Lessons cost as little as \$50 for 30 minutes.

*Once the lockdown is over*, we expect to resume teaching in Hamilton Tuesday to Friday from 3:30pm–7pm, and on Saturdays from 9am.

#### Play in an orchestra

##### Saturday Music Centre

We have three graded orchestras:

**First Orchestra:** for beginners

**Intermediate Orchestra:** Grades 1+

**Youth Orchestra:** Grades 4+

Saturday Music Centre *will resume after lockdown* each Saturday during term time at the Bermuda High School. The orchestras perform regularly across the island and music theory can also be studied.

#### Hire an instrument

##### Instrument collection

Menuhin has a small collection of violins, violas and cellos which can be hired at very competitive prices, from as little as \$40 per term. Your teacher will advise on the most suitable instrument.

#### Contact us

[www.menuhin.bm](http://www.menuhin.bm)

trustees@menuhin.bm | 441-295-4093

PO Box HM 2814, Hamilton HM LX, Bermuda

#### Last word: life before lockdown

During this year's Bermuda Festival visiting violinist Alda Dizdari gave a masterclass to two of our students, An Mei Daniels and Ava Gibson. Well done Ava and An Mei!

Also of note is the recent creation of a new Menuhin student string quartet, coached by Jonathan Kightley. The members are An Mei Daniels, Marcolliver Philip, Sam Webel and Clark Jeffrey. Playing in a string quartet is one of the highlights of being a string player, and we look forward to great things from them. We almost heard them at the Easter Concert...so close! We'll look forward to hearing them again once we get back on stage.

