

# Composers of the Violin and Viola:

Selected Essays and Creative Projects  
by the 2014-2015  
Okesson Violin and Viola Studio



Edited and Compiled by  
Katherine Okesson

**Okesson**  
Violin and Viola Studio

# **Composers of the Violin and Viola:**

Selected Essays and Creative Projects  
by the 2014-2015 Okesson Violin and Viola Studio

*Preface by Dr. David Littrell*

SAMPLE

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**Published by Katherine Okesson**

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Ver. 1.0

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This book is dedicated, with love, to our families.

Without you, our musical journeys would not be possible.

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## Contents

<i>Copyright Information</i> .....	ii
<i>Dedication</i> .....	iii
<i>Preface, by Dr. David Littrell</i> .....	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	x
<i>Introduction</i> .....	xi
<i>Print Resources</i> .....	xiii
<i>Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), by Luke Mugler</i> .....	1
Biography .....	2
Bach Sheet Music Holder .....	4
Bach's Compositions .....	5
Sources .....	6
<i>Béla Bartók (1881-1945), by Younjin Song</i> .....	7
Biography .....	8
Decorated Shoes .....	9
Bartók's Compositions .....	10
Sources .....	11
<i>Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), by Hali Peterson</i> .....	12
Biography .....	13
Drawing of Beethoven .....	14
Beethoven's Compositions .....	15
Sources .....	16
<i>Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), by Emma Brase</i> .....	17
Biography .....	18
<i>F-A-E Sonata</i> .....	19
Brahms's Compositions .....	21
Sources .....	22
<i>Max Bruch (1838-1920), by Julianne Stone</i> .....	23
Biography .....	24
Drawing of Max Bruch .....	25
Bruch's Compositions .....	26
Sources .....	27
<i>Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), by Carter Nelson</i> .....	28
Biography .....	29
Multiple Choice Quiz about Corelli .....	30
Corelli's Compositions .....	33
Sources .....	34

<i>Charles (Jean Baptiste) Dancla (1817-1907), by Ava Chae</i> .....	35
Biography.....	36
Dancla Timeline.....	37
Dancla's Compositions .....	38
Sources .....	40
<i>Antonín Leopold Dvořák (1841-1904), by Tony Liu</i> .....	41
Biography.....	42
Drawings of Important Events in Dvořák's Life .....	43
Dvořák's Compositions .....	45
Sources .....	46
<i>George Frederick Handel (1685-1759), by AnnaGrace Katzenmeier</i> .....	47
Biography.....	48
Wood Mobile .....	49
Handel's Compositions .....	51
Sources .....	52
<i>Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), by Alice Le</i> .....	53
Biography.....	54
Poster of Haydn's Compositions .....	56
Haydn's Compositions.....	57
Sources .....	58
<i>Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) by Leah Selman</i> .....	59
Biography.....	60
Limerick.....	61
Hindemith's Compositions .....	63
Sources .....	64
<i>Dmitri Kabalevsky (1904-1987), by Allen Zhang</i> .....	65
Biography.....	66
Original Composition in the Style of Kabalevsky .....	67
Kabalevsky's Compositions .....	68
Sources .....	70
<i>Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764), by Claire Huber</i> .....	71
Biography.....	72
Decorated Composer Bust .....	74
Leclair's Compositions .....	75
Sources .....	76

<i>Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), by Jana Kellogg</i> .....	77
Biography.....	78
Mendelssohn German Black Forest Cake.....	80
Mendelssohn’s Compositions.....	83
Sources.....	84
<i>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), by Angie Chae</i> .....	85
Biography.....	86
Drawing of Mozart.....	87
Mozart’s Compositions.....	88
Sources.....	89
<i>Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840), by Hope Peterson</i> .....	90
Biography.....	91
Antonio Stradivari, Guarneri del Gesù, and Niccolò Paganini’s Role in the 92 Popularity of Their Violins.....	92
Paganini’s Compositions.....	95
Sources.....	96
<i>Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), by Andrew Suh</i> .....	98
Biography.....	99
Baguette Recipe.....	100
Saint-Saëns’ Compositions.....	102
Sources.....	103
<i>Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908), by Lauren Cassou</i> .....	104
Biography.....	105
Eastman System of Counting.....	106
Sarasate’s Compositions.....	107
Sources.....	109
<i>Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), by Lauren Fischer</i> .....	110
Biography.....	111
Sheet Music Plaque.....	112
Schoenberg’s Compositions.....	113
Sources.....	114
<i>Robert Schumann (1810-1856), by Hiba Rasheed</i> .....	115
Biography.....	116
Schumann Poster.....	117
Schumann’s Compositions.....	118
Sources.....	119

<i>Friedrich Seitz (1848-1918), by Abram Mugler</i> .....	120
Biography.....	121
Clay Composer Tablet .....	122
Seitz’s Compositions .....	123
Sources .....	124
<i>Louis Spohr (1784-1859), by Matthew Ball</i> .....	125
Biography.....	126
Louis Spohr and the Development of the Chinrest.....	127
Spohr’s Compositions.....	132
Sources .....	133
<i>Russell Steinberg, by Christopher Remple</i> .....	134
Biography.....	135
Interview with Russell Steinberg (conducted through email, March 2015) .....	136
Steinberg’s Compositions .....	139
Sources .....	141
<i>Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), by Clara Mayfield</i> .....	142
Biography.....	143
Collage Ballet Dancer .....	144
Tchaikovsky’s Compositions.....	145
Sources .....	146
<i>Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), by Youna Song</i> .....	147
Biography.....	148
Decorated Bags .....	149
Telemann’s Compositions .....	152
Sources .....	153
<i>Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), by Nate Beard</i> .....	154
Biography.....	155
Concert Flyer .....	156
Vivaldi’s Compositions .....	157
Sources .....	158
<i>List of Contributors</i> .....	160
<i>Other Members of the 2014-2015 Okesson Violin and Viola Studio</i> .....	169
<i>Additional Contributors</i> .....	170
<i>Katherine Anne Okesson</i> .....	171

## Preface

Exploring music history, knowing composers' biographies, and placing compositions within a composer's career and within a societal and historical context add depth to one's understanding of the repertoire. Normally this takes many years of study and begins in earnest during the college years. Achieving a synthesis of all this knowledge, that is, how all the topics mentioned above come together in one's understanding, takes place over a lifetime.

Recently I devised a genealogical flowchart for my cello students. I am obviously their teacher, but I had several teachers, and each of my teachers had cello teachers, and so on back through history. My students are fascinated to learn that the Concertino in C that they are learning was written, cellistically speaking, by their great-great-great grandfather, Julius Klengel. Klengel, a great German cellist and teacher, taught a man who eventually taught my teacher. Through another line, my students can trace their cello lineage directly back to Martin Berteau in the early 1700s, and who wrote a piece they all learn later in their training. All these rivers of information and influence flow together to you, today's student, a recipient of several centuries of knowledge and experience.

Katherine Okesson's students had the privilege of being assigned research for the contents of this book, a worthy endeavor. Students learn numerous pieces during the many years of study needed to play an instrument well. Students and teachers alike will rarely know much about the lesser-known composers such as Seitz, Spohr, Accolay (pseudonym), and Fiocco, but their compositions continue as a mainstay of the student repertoire. It's enjoyable to know these composers and performers were flesh and blood and not just a name at the top of the music. Many of them were great pedagogues whose students spread their ideas down through the ages to us.

No one lives in a vacuum untouched by outside influences. Society influences composers in their temperament, their choice of subject matter in some of their compositions, and in their financial security and employment opportunities. When Beethoven composed his Third Symphony, he inscribed "Eroica" (Heroic) on the title page to laud Napoleon and his republican ideals. When Napoleon crowned himself Emperor and became a tyrant shortly after his rise to power, Beethoven tore the title page in half in horror and dismay. Mozart's compositions were often tied to his employment opportunities from the church (masses and other religious pieces) or the theater (operas). Many virtuoso performers needed more concertos and sonatas for their programs and livelihoods, so they wrote their own compositions.

Spohr developed the chinrest so that the violin and viola could be held securely, especially necessary for the difficult technique required after 1800. Servais developed the endpin for the cello (not used before c. 1850) because he became too obese to hold the cello with his legs alone, but that endpin allowed cello technique to reach dizzying heights in much the same way that the chinrest did. The springy pernambuco wood discovered by Tourte revolutionized bow making and bow technique (use of spiccato, for starters) compared to the Baroque and Classic bows used before 1780.

When I play a piece and especially when I conduct, I constantly hear connections between composers, for example, the influence of Wagner and Richard Strauss had on Humperdinck in his opera, *Hansel and Gretel*. This adds to my enjoyment and understanding of the piece, and I like to share that with students.

My sincere hope is that the students who wrote articles for this volume will continue their study of the composers and pieces. Studying music and learning to play an instrument are so difficult, but oh the rewards!

David Littrell  
University Distinguished Professor of Music  
Kansas State University  
K-State Orchestra and Gold Orchestra conductor

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## Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the dedicated help of a number of individuals. The entire Okesson Studio would like to acknowledge the following people:

To David Littrell, for writing the preface. Your words of encouragement mean more than you realize.

To Alex Brase, for creating the lovely covers. We owe an enormous amount to your creative vision and technological knowledge.

To Kevin Okesson, for offering advice on a multitude of construction questions (including input on sandpaper, nails, screws, paint, levels, measuring tapes, the properties of varnish, and for all of your trips to the hardware store).

To the parents and family members of the Okesson Violin and Viola Studio for the following:

Your patience in fielding massive quantities of emails and paperwork.  
Your willingness to purchase supplies and materials.  
The countless hours spent in libraries, traveling to stores, and helping your children with their individual projects.

To the Manhattan, KS Public Library and Kansas State University's Hale Library, deep gratitude for all of the help you offered to the students and their families.

All of you are the unsung heroes behind this book and the children and I offer our deepest thanks and love.

-Katherine Okesson

## Introduction

At the beginning of the school year, I asked one of my students, “Do you know who Haydn was?” After thinking for a minute, my student replied, “She played the violin, right?”

I spent the rest of the week asking my other students what they knew about music history. I discovered that many of them had never heard of Telemann, Paganini, Corelli, or Bruch. Most had no idea who these composers were, let alone when or why their compositions were written. The studio’s general feeling seemed to be, “Who cares anyway? It’s not like knowing this is going to help me play any better!”

The difficulty is that musicians can’t succeed without a basic grasp of all elements of music. A single-minded obsession with technical and physical components can result in cold, impartial performances. Artistry requires much more than physical mastery. It lies in understanding what a composer intended and being able to share that with other people. After all, without a basic grasp of the historical context, how can any musician adequately share a composer’s ideas with an audience?

For this reason, I wanted to make sure my students received a well-rounded education, with basic historical knowledge. My idea was to require them to submit material that could be presented in a book, with the hope that the final product might inspire curiosity about the lives and compositions of some of the most influential violin and viola composers. This yearbook is a direct culmination of my original goals. It contains historical research and creative projects made by the students in my 2014-2015 studio.

To begin with, each student wrote a biography on the composer of their choice. No restrictions were placed on who they were allowed to choose, except that each composer must have written repertoire for the violin and/or the viola. The composers in this yearbook span the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, twentieth century, and modern eras. One composer included is living, while the rest are deceased.

Second, each student was asked to design a unique project exploring some aspect of their composer’s life or music. These projects were required to take more than one school night to create. I helped each student select projects that showcased their artistic strengths, interests, and individual personalities. Submissions included poems, photographs, drawings, recipes, collages, clay structures, mobiles, interviews, original compositions, posters, quizzes, and more. The students seemed to get the most enjoyment from this section and many of them learned historical information out of project-driven curiosity.

Third, my students were asked to provide a list of compositions written by their composer. These lists were not meant to be comprehensive, only broadly informative. Each list was divided into three categories: violin works, viola works, and chamber music. Compositions listed under ‘violin works’ included (but were not limited to) works for solo violin, violin and piano, and

violin and orchestra. Compositions listed under ‘viola works’ included (but were not limited to) works for solo viola, viola and piano, and viola and orchestra. Both of these categories may also have included transcriptions and arrangements. The chamber music category included small ensemble repertoire for violin and/or viola. Students whose composers had limited solo repertoire may have been asked to present a large ensemble composition category.

Finally, students were asked to provide source material for their history projects. Each project had to include a minimum of two books, two recordings (VHS, DVD, CD, or records), two websites, and two YouTube videos. While the websites and YouTube videos listed in this book may no longer be available by the time of publication, they were required for educational reasons. My goal was to ensure that each child gained a broad overview of the research materials available to musicians.

It is important to note that students of all ages participated in this project. Resource materials for very young students may have included picture books, cartoons, recordings, and videos meant for children. If it was not possible for the very youngest students, lists of compositions and source materials may have been collected by me. Regardless, even the youngest child in the studio went to the library and participated extensively in creating their own projects.

Overall, the creation of this book was an educational success for my studio. The results of the yearbook have been more far-reaching than I could have anticipated and I am struck daily by the positive repercussions.

Katherine Okesson  
Manhattan, Kansas  
March, 2015

## Print Resources

Please note that the material contained in this book was primarily created by children at the pre-college level. While every effort has been made to edit the information contained herein, there may be historical, grammatical, or factual errors. Projects may also contain vernacular language. In order to preserve the individual voice of each contributor, editorial decisions were made on a case-by-case basis and may vary from one document to another. Sources may be cited using different methods and some bibliographic entries may be missing pertinent information. Considerable effort has been made to resolve these issues, but, for historical research purposes, it is suggested that the reader consult additional source materials. Although many fine print resources may be found about individual composers and available recordings, the following materials may prove to be helpful:

*Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by Nicolas Slonimsky. New York: Schirmer, 1991.

Grout, Donald J. and Claude V. Paliska. *A History of Western Music*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001.

*Norton Introduction to Music History Series*, New York: Norton, 1978-. (multiple volumes).

Stolba, K. Marie. *The Development of Western Music: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark, 1994.

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell. London: Macmillan, 2001.

*The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Edited by Friedrich Blume, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949-1979; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1994-.

*The New Oxford History of Music*. London, New York: Oxford, 1954-90.

The Prentice Hall History of Music Series. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965-. (multiple volumes)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

“I was obliged to work hard. Whoever is equally industrious will succeed just as well.”

Johann Sebastian Bach

by

Luke Mugler

## Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach is widely regarded as the best composer who ever lived. He was born on March 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany. Bach wrote many famous compositions, such as the *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*.

Bach was born into a family of musicians and was taught to play the violin and the organ by his father, Johann Ambrosius Bach. His hometown was also the birthplace of Martin Luther, the man who began the Protestant Reformation. Bach and Luther both benefitted from the instruction of the local school, although they attended at different times. The school provided religious instruction and studies in Latin. At the age of ten, Bach became an orphan when both of his parents died.

In 1703, Bach was hired as a violinist by Duke Johann Ernst of Saxony-Weimar. Many people heard Bach play and his reputation grew. Soon after, he landed a position as an organist at a new church in Arnstadt. At the church, he provided musical instruction, although the church elders said that he did not spend enough time with his students. Bach was very independent and sometimes arrogant. His skill, however, enabled him to leave Arnstadt in 1707 for a position at St. Blasius's Church in Mühlhausen.

After playing at St. Blasius's Church for two years, Bach left to return to the ducal court. Bach's reputation grew after he composed his famous works *Herz und Mund und Tat und Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Many of his compositions had the initials I. N. J. on them, meaning "In nomine Jesu", or, "in the name of Jesus". With his students in mind, he put together a collection of educational keyboard pieces. The collection is known as *The Well-Tempered Klavier* and contains a prelude and fugue written in every key.

Eventually, Bach's infamous temper and arrogance led to a falling out with the Weimar court. He was released from the Duke's services and jailed for a short time for refusing to leave. Luckily, in 1717 he was offered and accepted a position with Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen.

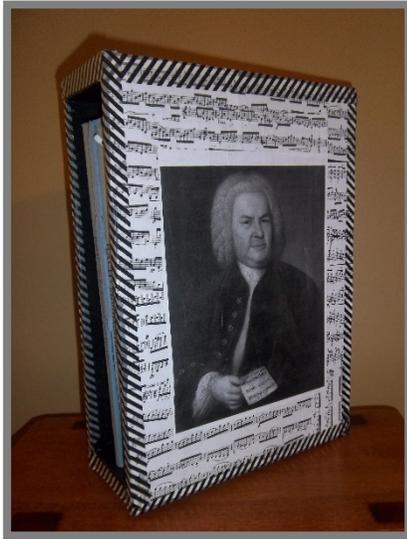
Prince Leopold had little interest in sacred music and Bach's compositions were primarily made up of dance tunes at this time. Eventually, Bach decided that he preferred composing sacred music and he accepted a position as organist and teacher at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. There, he focused on composing cantatas. He was passionate about setting the Bible to music and one of his most famous works, *The Passion According to St. Matthew*, was composed in either 1727 or 1729. Among his many Christian compositions from this time period is his famous *Mass in B minor*. The piece was never performed in his lifetime, but is one of his greatest religious works.

In 1740, Bach's eyesight began to diminish, although he kept writing new compositions despite the problem. In 1747, Bach performed for Fredrick the Great of Prussia, writing a composition on the spot. Later, he wrote down the composition and sent it to Fredrick, calling it

“a musical offering.” In 1749, Bach began composing *The Art of Fugue*, but was unable to finish it before his death. Bach decided to have surgery to fix his eyesight, but the procedure unfortunately left him completely blind. Shortly after the surgery, Bach had a stroke and died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750.

SAMPLE

# Bach Sheet Music Holder



Side of Box



Side of Box

First, I took a few pieces of plywood and nailed them together into a box. Then, I spray painted the whole thing black. Next, I got some Bach sheet music. I also got some Mod Podge© to glue the paper onto the box. Next, I cut up all of the music and glued it to the box. I also glued a picture of Bach onto the side that I got from the library (the librarian said I could use it). After letting it dry for a few minutes, I took some decorative tape and put it on all of the corners to cover up any overlooked spots.



With Sheet Music



Inside of Box



Back of Box

## Bach's Compositions

### *Violin Works:*

Air on the G String, for solo violin, BWV 1068  
Arioso from Cantata No. 156, for solo violin (arranged)  
Concerto in D minor, for solo violin, BWV 1052  
Concerto No. 1 in A minor, for solo violin, BWV 1041  
Concerto No. 2 in E Major, for solo violin, BWV 1042  
Fugue in G minor, for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1026  
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring, for solo violin, BWV 147  
Sheep May Safely Graze, for solo violin, BWV 208  
Six Cello Suites, transcribed for solo violin, BWV 1007-1012  
Six Sonatas and Partitas, for solo violin, BWV 1001-1006  
Six Sonatas, for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1014-1019  
Sleepers Awake from Cantata, for solo violin BWV 140  
Sonata in E minor, for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1023  
Sonata in G Major, for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1021  
Sonata, for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1020  
Suite for violin and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1025

### *Viola Works:*

Arioso from Cantata BWV 156, arranged for viola and piano  
Chromatic Fantasy, transcribed for solo viola, BWV 903  
Concerto in E-Flat Major, for viola and piano  
Sheep May Safely Graze, arranged for solo viola, BWV 208  
Six Cello Suites, transcribed for solo viola, BWV 1007-1012  
Six Sonatas and Partitas, transcribed for solo viola, BWV 1001-1006  
Six Sonatas, transcribed for viola and harpsichord (or piano), BWV 1014-1019  
Three Gamba Sonatas, transcribed for viola and piano, BWV 1027-1029

### *Chamber Music:*

Art of The Fugue, arranged for string quartet, BWV 1080  
Fifteen Duets (After Two Part Inventions), BWV 772 and 786, arranged for violin and viola  
Fifteen Three Part Inventions, BWV 787 and 801, arranged for two violins and viola  
Fugue from Prelude and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537, arranged for violin, viola, and cello  
The Six Brandenburg Concertos, arranged for string quartet  
Twelve Duets from the Anna Magdalena Bach Notebook, arranged for viola and cello

## Sources

### Books:

Felix, Werner. *Johann Sebastian Bach*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985.

Gardiner, John Eliot. *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 2013.

### Websites:

“Johann Sebastian Bach.” Bio. A&E Television Networks, 2015.  
<http://www.biography.com/people/johann-sebastian-bach-9194289?page=3>  
Web.#related-video-gallery

“Johann Sebastian Bach.” The Violin Site, 2015. <http://www.theviolinsite.com/composers/bach.html>

### Recordings:

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Bach: Complete Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*. Arthur Grumiaux, violin. Phillips, 1994. CD.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *6 Brandenburg Concertos, BWV 1049-1051*. Oregon Bach Festival Chamber Orchestra. Hanssler Classic, 1994. CD.

### YouTube Videos:

Abner Coutinho channel. “Itzhak Perlman - Bach Partita N° 2, BWV 1004.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpYUaRg0aDw>

AbsoluteMonarchist channel. “Isaac Stern playing Bach’s Chaconne in D minor for solo violin Single File.” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zvRWFD\\_1\\_M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zvRWFD_1_M)



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