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## Ennio Bolognini

Jeffrey Solow

*This is our first online edition. We encourage you to download the free [Acrobat Reader](#) to allow you to enlarge the pictures. Click on each picture to enlarge and then click the enlarged picture to hide.*

If anyone can be described as a Renaissance Man, it is Ennio Bolognini. The term could have been coined for him: conductor, composer, music entrepreneur, medical student, pioneering aviator, stunt pilot and flight instructor, championship boxer, bicycle racer, racing car driver, equestrian, guitarist, gourmet cook, marksman, caricaturist, gambler, practical joker, ladies' man, raconteur, linguist (fluent in Spanish, Italian, French, German, English, and conversant in Hebrew, Greek, Japanese, Hungarian, Russian, and 15 Italian dialects), an all-around sportsman who swam, sailed, played polo, soccer, rugby, tennis, golf and billiards, and of course, was a uniquely gifted cellist.



*Photo montage of sports and activities in Argentina (caricaturist, bicycling, diving, his racehorse "Prince", his biplane, sculling, yachtsman, "Captain Ennio" gardening, golfing, boxing)*





Ennio and Astorre

Bolognini was born into a musical family on November 7, 1893, in Buenos Aires. His mother, Argia (née Piccinini), was a well-known singer and opera coach at the Teatro Colón and his father, Egidio, was an Italian correspondent for *Le Figaro* of Paris, an accomplished cellist, and a close friend of conductor Arturo Toscanini (Toscanini had made

his conducting debut in Buenos Aires in 1886 and subsequently spent four months in the city. Ennio's exceptional talent led Toscanini, who became Ennio's godfather, to nickname him *Genio*—Genius). Ennio's younger brother Remo played violin (was a member of the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, later joining the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, NBC Symphony, and ultimately assistant concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony) and Astorre (sometimes Astor), oldest of the siblings, became a violist with the Houston Symphony.

Under the tutelage of his father, his first cello teacher, Ennio progressed rapidly and soon was enrolled in the St. Cecilia Conservatory in Buenos Aires where he studied with José García, Casals' cello teacher at the Municipal School in Barcelona who had retired to Buenos Aires in 1897 (the conservatory was founded in 1894 by cellist Luigi Farino. When Casals visited Buenos Aires in 1903 and saw how many music conservatories there were, he dubbed it a 'conservatropolis'). Ennio made his public debut at Prince George's Hall in Buenos Aires when he was 12 years old and at 13, he performed the Saint-Saëns Concerto under the composer's baton. Bolognini's 'official' biographies state that upon winning first prize in the Ibero-American International Cello Competition at age 15, he was presented with a cello by Luigi Rovatti that he used for the rest of his life (some sources say the cello he won was made in 1910, however the instrument on which he played throughout his career dates from 1915; but given that Ennio was 15 in 1908, none of these dates match up. Bolognini's wife, Dorothy, did believe he won the cello, but was uncertain about the date. Perhaps

he won a Rovatti cello in 1908 and subsequently exchanged it for a different one directly from the maker—in any event, more on his cello later). Over the next decade or so, Ennio played in local orchestras in Buenos Aires, including that of the Teatro Colón, and in 1918 was performing with pianist, and later tango bandleader, Angel D'Agostino. He also pursued his many interests and even considered being a doctor, studying medicine for a time, but ultimately he went all-in for music, and after being awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Buenos Aires in 1921, Ennio spent two years performing and conducting in Chile. It is difficult to pin down his life and activities in South America with any specificity, but it has been reported that Bolognini shared his Buenos Aires apartment with Andres Segovia and Arthur Rubinstein at some point during the late teens.



young Ennio playing in thumb position

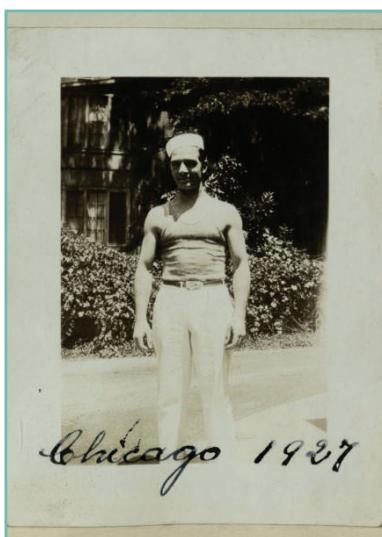


man about town (1918)

Bolognini family in Buenos Aires  
(from left to right: Argia, Egidio, Remo, Ennio, Astorre)

Bolognini had a life-long passion for flying and even briefly put his skills, and his biplane, to professional use for stunt flying. In 1919, he helped pilot Virgilio Carlos Mira build and served as godfather for *La Golondrina* ('The Swallow'), one the first airplanes built in Argentina—a priest blessed it during the ceremony and Ennio christened it with a bottle of champagne. In addition to flying, Bolognini rode and raced horses, automobiles, and bicycles, was the single-scull champion of Argentina, and became the amateur welterweight boxing champion of South America.

Surprisingly, it was boxing that brought Bolognini to the United States at age 30 when he served as a trainer and sparring partner for his cousin Luis Firpo in preparation for the 'Wild Bull of the Pampas's' famous match against Jack Dempsey on Sept. 14, 1923. Bolognini bet everything he had on Firpo (who lost) but found that he loved it in the US and stayed. After a performance at the Pan-American Building in Washington DC with President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge in attendance, he expressed to the president his fervent hope to become an American citizen.



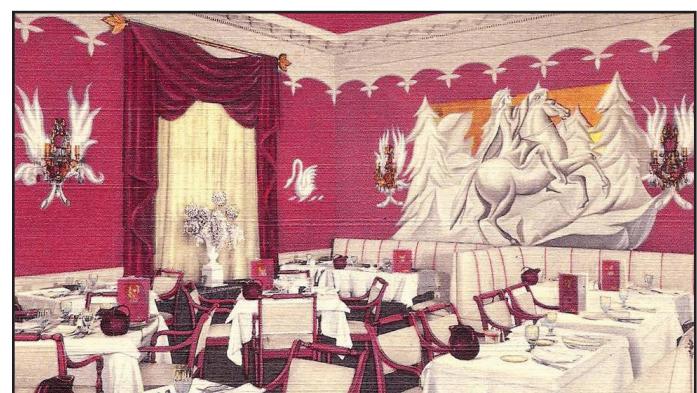
in Chicago 1927

1927 found him in Chicago where his weekly performances on the Seiberling Radio Hour, plus numerous short recitals (live radio often programmed time slots in 15-minute increments), attracted popular and critical notice. At Toscanini's invitation, he joined the New York Philharmonic in 1928, and upon Alfred Wallenstein's departure from the first chair of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's (CSO) cello section, conductor Frederick Stock invited Bolognini to replace him. (Bolognini brought his dog to all the symphony rehearsals, foreshadowing Rostropovich and his 'Pooks'.)

One story stands out from this time. Alexander Glazunov, who had left the Soviet Union in 1928, embarked on a rather unsuccessful tour of the United States that included a guest conducting engagement with the CSO, during the rehearsals for which Bolognini acted as his interpreter. Overcome with stage fright at the concert, instead of mounting the podium Glazunov came over to speak to Ennio who managed to calm him down and talked him into proceeding with the concert. Sadly, Bolognini's appointment lasted only through the 1929-30 season: when he was accused of being a stage-hog, he angrily resigned from the orchestra.

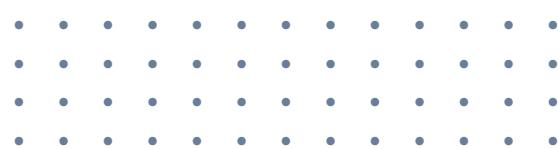


in front of YAR poster



interior of YAR

After leaving the symphony, Bolognini conducted, toured throughout the mid-west as a soloist, became a national fixture on NBC and ABC radio, and enjoyed a successful career in Chicago's night club scene. He led his own *Ennio Bolognini Orchestra* as well as *Ennio Bolognini's Concert*



Gypsy Orchestra that played regularly at the YAR restaurant. Established by an expat Russian prince, YAR was frequented by musicians who came to hear Bolognini perform. He treasured a 'Bravo!' shouted out by Feuermann after he (reportedly) played the first four measures of The Swan in a single bow.

Bolognini also founded and conducted the Waukegan Philharmonic, and the hugely popular outdoor concerts he conducted in Chicago's Grant Park for ten years attracted large audiences, sometimes numbering as many as 60,000; a crowd exceeded only by Lily Pons and Heifetz. In addition, Bolognini joined the *Russian Trio* with pianist Nina Mesirov-Minchin and violinist Michael Wilkomirski, which later morphed into the *Pro Musica Trio* with violinist Fritz Siegal, and he toured with Chicago Civic Opera soprano Lucille Meusel.



Russian Trio

Although he was the season opening soloist for the CSO in 1929 (with the Lalo Concerto), after Bolognini left the orchestra his solo engagements were with smaller mid-western orchestras. Judging by his preserved concert programmes and newspaper archives, his orchestral repertoire comprised very few works: the Saint-Saëns and Lalo concertos, Boëllmann's *Symphonic Variations*, and—very rarely—the Haydn D Major concerto, *Kol Nidrei* by Bruch, and Popper's *Hungarian Rhapsody*.

Throughout his life Bolognini's recital repertoire, with occasional exceptions, consisted of the Boëllmann, the first Bach Suite, short 'character pieces' that he recycled over and over (by Purcell, Sgambati, Sibelius, Moszkowski, Haydn, Debussy, Kreisler, Bach, Bruch, Fauré, Albeniz, Wagner, Liszt, Schumann, Corelli, Dupont, Becker, Granados, and himself), and



after performing

his own flamenco guitar-inspired unaccompanied cello pieces featuring his astonishing pizzicato technique. Only on an occasional concert, such as his New York recital debut in Town Hall in 1950 and a joint recital with harpist Marcel Grandjany at the University of Illinois, did he programme a major sonata, the Strauss,

which he had performed with the composer in Buenos Aires in 1910.

Bolognini's New York recital and several subsequent concerts under the auspices of Allied Arts Corporation and Community Concerts (for whom he had also toured in the 1940s) show that in the early 1950s he was looking to establish a more traditional concert career, but his idiosyncratic and imaginative musical personality could not help asserting itself. His University of Illinois programme states that 'the music of Bach and Strauss has been revised and transcribed by Mr. Bolognini' and the programme from a 1979 recital has this disclaimer: 'All Music in the style of Ennio Bolognini.'

Bolognini became a naturalised American citizen on April 10, 1940 (proud of his heritage, however, he carried a small Argentinian flag in his pocket for the rest of his life). When America entered the Second World War the following year, he wanted to serve his adopted country as a fighter pilot, but at 48, he was too old. Undeterred, he performed and conducted for the United Services Organizations (USO)—including writing a few patriotic compositions—and, most notably, helped found the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the civilian auxiliary of the military air corps, and served as a cadet flight instructor. He proudly wore his CAP uniform throughout the war and received an Air Force Commendation Medal for his service.

As a pioneering aviator, Bolognini was inducted into the *Ancient and Secret Order of Quiet Birdmen*, an invitation-only secret society originally founded in 1921 for and by American aviators who flew in World War One. Membership in the QB, which still exists, "is limited to male aircraft pilots...who soloed prior to 1919, or who have a minimum of 250 certified solo hours and who are over 21 years of age." Among its early members were Charles



conducting for Remo in Waukegan



playing for Kreisler

Lindberg, General John Doolittle, Wiley Post (first pilot to circumnavigate the globe), and Clyde Pangborn (first to solo across the Pacific). Bolognini continued to fly private planes until he was 75.

Early in 1953, Bolognini relocated to the west coast. He would eventually settle in Las Vegas in 1958, but initially he lived and worked in Los Angeles, as well as commuting to Vegas to play in the casino orchestras, which were an attractive prospect for musicians since the pay was higher than even the leading symphony orchestras and the employment was year-round. A 1956 program of the Glendale Symphony (a suburb of Los Angeles) shows Bolognini as principal cellist (a seat I occupied in the early '70s!) as well as soloist in the Saint-Saëns Concerto; he also played in Hollywood studio orchestras and participated in 'sweetening' and back-up recording sessions. The Internet Movie Database lists him only for the scores of 'Around the World in 80 Days' in 1955—a score that my mother, a violinist, played in, too!—and in 1956's 'Land of the Pharaohs', but he played for many films. Bolognini has label credit for his cello solos on trumpet player/bandleader Ralph Marterie's 45 RPM single of '[Street Scene](#)', which was recorded in Chicago just before he moved out west. They had probably got to know each other when Marterie

played in the ABC orchestra, and upon being signed by Mercury Records in 1951, he happily made use of Ennio's artistry.

Being a larger-than-life figure, Bolognini attracted the attention of Hollywood producers and he was featured on several television shows: '[You Bet Your Life](#)' with Groucho Marx, '[The Liberace Show](#)' (the only extended film of him playing the cello), and Jack Webb's 'Dragnet'. Previously in Chicago, he had made a television appearance on a local variety show called 'Oh Kay', and he also had some solos in a gypsy number on violinist Florian ZaBach's show. (ZaBach was a prodigy from Chicago who, at 12, had played the Mendelssohn Concerto with the CSO in 1930, just around the time Bolognini was principal.)



"gypsy Ennio"

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Bolognini played primarily in the orchestra at Caesar's Palace hotel for entertainers such as Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Harry Belafonte, Tony Bennett, and Johnny Mathis. His Las Vegas concert programmes from the 1960s and 1970s also document many free recitals, participation in free multi-performer chamber music concerts, and performances in church services for which he certainly donated his artistry.

LA studio musicians who knew him told me that Bolognini, an inveterate gambler, had run up large debts to the mafia-run casinos who 'made him an offer he couldn't refuse': that he take up residence in the city and pay them off over time—a sort of private Chapter 11 arrangement. After finally settling down in Las Vegas in 1958, Bolognini married pianist Dorothy Barber in 1961. In 1963, Ennio



Ennio playing at Caesar's Palace

and Dorothy founded the Las Vegas Philharmonic and at its inaugural concert on March 3, Bolognini not only conducted, but also played a group of his hallmark unaccompanied pieces. The orchestra, which lasted for five years, counted among its members both professionals and Las Vegas student musicians, continuing Bolognini's long-standing interest in music education and support for school and youth orchestras. For these endeavours he was awarded the Las Vegas Music Teachers Association award in 1976, and the Association continues to offer an annual scholarship competition in his honour. In 1978, the Nevada Council of the Arts presented him with their first Decade Award for his contributions to the arts throughout the state.

Ennio Bolognini died peacefully in his sleep on July 31, 1979. The biographical details from his last full recital on January 13, 1979 in Downey, California conclude with these words: 'His life of 85 years exemplifies a determination to master whatever challenges arise and to express the beauty of life through music.'

**Bolognini's cello:** Luigi Rovatti (1861-1921) studied with Joseph and Enrico Rocca and emigrated to Argentina in 1885, where he produced about 1,000 violins, viola, cellos, and guitars. Dorothy Bolognini donated Ennio's cello to the [Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC](#). "Although the Rovatti cello is a finely-made instrument in its own right, its particular interest lies literally in its top, which contains over 50 autographs (most apparently written with ball-point pen, which has indented the soft spruce) of famous musicians and entertainers whom Bolognini worked with or admired, making it a

'who's who' of classical music and entertainment of the mid-twentieth century. Among the most easily legible are: Remo Bolognini, Fritz Kreisler, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Andrés Segovia, Joseph Szigeti, José Ferrer, Bruno Walter, Richard Crooks, G[iovanni] Martinelli, János Starker, Eugene Ormandy, Richard Tucker, Stephen Kates (the last person to sign it), Victor Borge, Miklós Rózsa, Ferruccio Tagliavini, Raya Garboussova, Wilhelm Steinberg, Frank Miller, Ennio Bolognini (himself), Johnny Lujack (1947 Heisman Trophy winner), Rudolph Kolisch, Joe E. Brown, Ezio Pinza, Ed Sullivan, Pierre Monteux, Michael Rabin, Zubin Mehta, Zino Francescatti, Gregor Piatigorsky, Ferde Grofé, Ernest Bloch, John Barbirolli, Arthur Rubinstein, Arturo Toscanini, Pablo Casals, Jascha Heifetz, Rudolf Friml, Isaac Stern, Diran Alexanian, Jack Dempsey, Lily Pons, John Corigliano, Emanuel Feuermann, Leonard Rose, and Nathan Milstein.



Casals signing Ennio's cello

### Three concert reviews:

Saint-Saëns Concerto – Chicago Tribune (1940)

'Business Men Give Bolognini Back to Stage'  
by Cecil Smith

*The Business Men's orchestra neatly scooped other Chicago musical organizations by providing the opportunity for Ennio Bolognini's return to the stage. After a long period of devotion to less exacting musical chores, this remarkable cellist, long admired in Chicago by those who have known his work, has determined to resume his concert career with a series of engagements of which last night's appearance was the first.*

*For his reentry Mr. Bolognini chose the very standard Saint-Saëns concerto, a work somewhat dulled and blunted by much playing. It was worth the audience's while last night, however. In addition to an enchanting tone, Mr. Bolognini's playing possesses an enticing and refreshing waywardness. This is not the waywardness of a musician determined to express himself at all costs, but rather the free approach of one who, as Arthur*

Schnabel puts it, "walks freely on firm ground."

Mr. Bolognini's interpretation of the concerto never lacked taste and discretion, but the turn of a phrase or the stylization of a rhythmic figure continually added piquancy to the performance. In the passage work of the first and last movements he did not always pay attention to scrupulous clarity as he sought to drive the musical idea thru to its completion. Yet it was obvious that his technical resources would have permitted a faultlessly clean performance if that had been what he wanted, for he played even more difficult spots with miraculous control and arresting virtuosity. In other words, he takes the cello so much for granted as a means of immediate personal musical expression that he cannot always interest himself in technical problems he could easily solve if he bothered to notice them.

Kol Nidrei – Chicago Tribune (1949)

'Bolognini's Cello Turns the Virtuoso Tide for the Last of the Orchestra's "Pop" Concerts'  
by Claudia Cassidy

Mediocrity seemed about to put its grey stamp on the last of the Chicago Symphony orchestra's 'Pop' concerts Saturday night when Ennio Bolognini stepped on the stage of Orchestra Hall and put an end to such nonsense. Mr. Bolognini is the picturesque gentleman from the Argentine who was that same orchestra's first cellist under Frederick Stock at the time his brother, Remo Bolognini, was its concertmaster. It must be a great comfort to the virtuosi of his tribe that for reasons best known to himself he appears so infrequently.

For it is no secret to anyone who knows his playing that Mr. Bolognini is a magnificent cellist. No more beautiful tone is being drawn from that instrument today unless it is by the obdurate Casals, whose Spanish sense of honor keeps one of the world's supreme gifts in exile. It is a tone so alive in magnetism, so rich in color, so pure in intonation, and so patrician in line that like any other tone so remarkable, it is always heard with a fresh shock of pleasure. Put such a singing sound in the hands of a musician who has both deeply lyrical feeling and a sense of mischief, and admit that if he put his mind to it he could give Gregor Piatigorsky his first formidable competition since the death of Emanuel Feuermann.

The very first note of 'Kol Nidrei' pricked an inert concert from its lethargy and made the audience sit up and take notice. This was playing of the highest caliber, powerful yet restrained, compassionate, even gentle, yet charged with the classic dignity of lamentation. It made me want to hear Mr.

Bolognini play his way through the cello repertory -- especially Strauss' 'Don Quixote' -- but the clamoring audience had to settle for one encore, his own wittily brilliant arrangement of Basque folk songs, tossed off with the flair you can't fake, for it is rooted in just one premise, inborn virtuosity.

Recital – NY Times (1950)

'Bolognini, 'cellist, makes debut here'  
by Harold Schonberg

Ennio Bolognini, a 'cellist from Chicago who made his Town Hall debut last night, is in some respects a throwback to an older group of 'cellists who exploited a beautiful tone in harmless encore pieces by Popper, or arrangements of the "Prize Song" and other such tidbits.

Mr. Bolognini has just that kind of tone, and he did exploit it in the 'Prize Song'. Also in transcriptions from Bach, encore pieces by Moszkowski, Sgambati, Haydn, Pugnani and himself. His most ambitious attempt at programming was the inclusion of Richard Strauss' Cello Sonata. Louis M. Kohnop was the assisting pianist.

As might be expected from the musical philosophy displayed by the nature of the program, the 'cellist's performance of the Strauss work was not entirely successful. He approached it as a glorified salon piece, toying restlessly with transition and development passages, not knowing exactly what to do with them, and reserving himself for the primary melodic statements. He knew what to do with those.

Throughout the recital Mr. Bolognini put on display a big, thick, syrupy tone, occasionally used with too much of a portamento. Otherwise he is a very smooth and facile 'cellist, and the complete master of a good number of technical tricks, including some astonishing pizzicato effects. His intonation was good (though not infallible). As a composer, he is the exponent of a type of salon composition of the Moszkowski-Popper type, if his "My Prayer," "Poem" or "Serenata Andaluza" are indicative of his output as a whole.

#### **Nuggets about the cellist, performer, and 'character':**

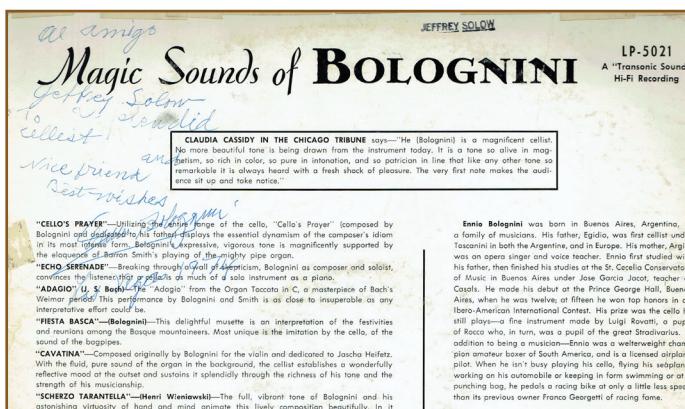
Stephen Kates visited Bolognini in La Vegas (and was invited to sign Ennio's cello), noting that he 'could play anything at will, and with a fantastic tone' and that he had 'the purest sound I have ever heard on the cello from anyone'. Later, Steve was in Puerto Rico and visited Casals (who had signed

the famous cello when Ennio visited him). When he conveyed Bolognini's greetings, Casals exclaimed, 'Bolognini! The greatest cello talent I ever heard in my life.' Piatigorsky and Feuermann reportedly made similar comments.

Nathaniel (Nick) Rosen wanted to become a cellist through listening—so many times that he wore it out—to Ennio's 1958 LP recording, *Magic Sounds of Bolognini* (I was interested to discover that Ennio's tie in the cover photo was a present from Liberace!). His *Cello's Prayer* is the first track on the album, which also includes some of his spectacular flamenco-inspired solo pieces, including the *Serenata del Gaucho* and *Fiesta Basca*.



*Magic Sounds of Bolognini* (1958)



*Magic Sounds of Bolognini*, signed verso

Nick Rosen recalls: 'My first memory of attending a cello recital was, you guessed it, Bolognini—at a church on Wilshire Blvd. in Westwood. I was five and Ennio was 60. I started with Eleonore

Schoenfeld a couple years later. I remember only how magisterial he looked and how awesome it all was, but it has stayed with me.' He also described an encounter from about a dozen years later: 'I bumped into him at the old Weisshaar shop on Sunset Blvd. He demonstrated his fingering for the broken-octave passage in the last movement of the Haydn D: in the first set on the lower strings, he declined to use the thumb and instead stretched the octave between first finger and pinkie, somehow getting his third finger to play the C# in the first bar and corresponding notes in the following sequences. His hands were big and flexible. Quite an athlete, no? As a child I was regaled with anecdotes about Bolognini from the studio professionals with whom my father played quartets and the consensus was that he was a near-genius but lacking in discipline.' And a final comment: 'I was interested to learn that he was in a trio with my Pittsburgh concertmaster Fritz Siegal, with whom I also had a trio!'

Christine Walevska (close friend and protégé of Ennio's from the 1950s until his death) said that Bolognini 'told me exactly how many vibrations per second for the perfect bel canto vibrato and he had the most precise directions on bowing technique.'

I would add that in the *film* of the Liszt Concerto with Liberace, one can see that in 4th position he uses a purely wrist vibrato like a violinist. His hands were so big, he just reaches up to notes past 5th position without even moving his arm!

Besides his legendary single LP release from 1958, the Discography of American Historical Recordings shows that Bolognini made test recordings for Victor records in 1926 (Camden, NJ), 1928 (NYC), and 1939 (Chicago), none of which were released and almost certainly were destroyed—too bad!

I have not been able to verify this story, but it smells true to me (assuming it did happen, the orchestra would likely have been the CSO whose concertmaster in 1929-30, Jacques Gordon, *did* own a Stradivarius.). As I heard it, Ennio wanted to play a trick on a concertmaster who owned a Strad. So he had a luthier revarnish a cheap fiddle to look like the violin in question and waited for his victim to leave his Strad on the chair during a rehearsal break so he could surreptitiously switch them. That done, Ennio feigned a raucous Italian argument with an accomplice and plopped down heavily on the concertmaster's chair—plus violin, of course—appropriately freaking out the orchestra members, most especially the Strad's owner.

Probably the most famous story about Bolognini

involves his cello playing, his temper, his skill as a pilot, and his formidable strength: A few years after he quit the CSO, Bolognini was hired to play in a concert at the Ravinia Festival, the outdoor summer venue of the symphony. During the rehearsal he had an argument with the conductor, who fired him. In retaliation, Bolognini flew very low above Ravinia and buzzed the concert over and over. The police 'met' him when he landed in the parking lot and it took 12 officers to hold him down and arrest him!

He put his cello skills to other uses, as well. In several news stories from the early 1930s, the Chicago Tribune rather gleefully reported on a scandalous affair involving a wealthy young woman, Ruth Callerman Kruse, who was married to cellist Paul A. Kruse. When Paul filed for divorce in 1933, the Tribune quoted her as telling her husband that when he played his cello, 'she was unmoved, but when Bolognini drew his bow, not only his cello but the strings of her heart vibrated', and that Bolognini 'effervesced with romance and affected her as did a cocktail'. But ultimately, Ruth took up with an art student from a wealthy Oklahoma family, Preston Hubert Lowery. A subsequent story headlined 'MUSICIAN SEEKS \$25,000 FOR LOVE THEFT' accuses both of them of stealing her affection.

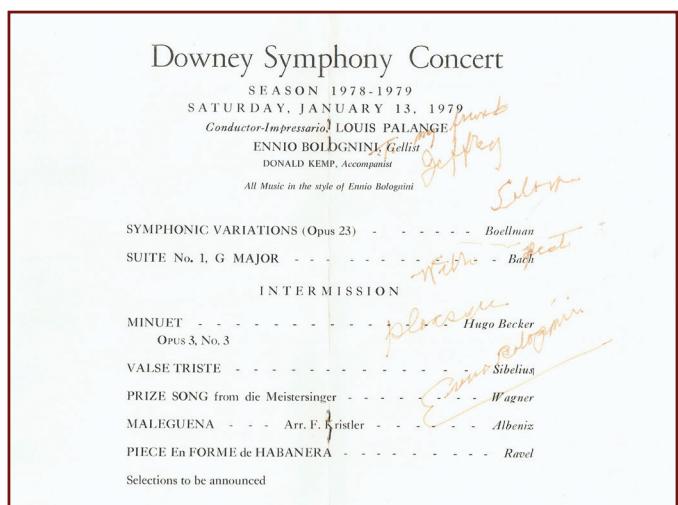
One time when Zara Nelsova and I were both visiting the shop of the famous luthier Hans Weisshaar in Hollywood, Zara told me that she had almost dated Bolognini—he never showed and stood her up!

Raphael 'Ray' Kramer, a leading Hollywood studio cellist (a former student of Feuermann and also a private pilot), was Ennio's stand partner for several concerts at the Hollywood Bowl. He told me that every night Ennio would stand by the side of the Bowl's iconic shell and check out the arriving audience members, searching for attractive unescorted women who might be potential 'dates'. One night, Ray watched Ennio approach a young lady who listened for a few seconds then promptly hauled off and smacked him across the face. Nonplussed, Ennio returned to his seat in the section, whereupon Ray asked, 'What was that about?' and Ennio graphically outlined what he had promised would await her if she joined him after the concert. After he picked his jaw up off the floor, Ray exclaimed, 'How could you say that?!' Ennio shrugged, 'You never know...' After the concert, Ray recalled, she was waiting for Ennio backstage.

LA cellist Ryan Selberg (former principal of the

Utah Symphony and, growing up, my slightly older colleague in several youth orchestras) related: 'I was fortunate to meet and play side by side with him for two weeks in Las Vegas back in the early '70s. It was a two-week run of the Tony Bennett show, two shows a night. Tony would call upon Ennio at each show to do one of his famous flamenco guitar pieces on the cello, and I had a front row (actually to the side) seat for it all. He would also entertain anyone who would listen between shows, playing virtuoso violin pieces at pitch. It was a memorable two weeks.'

I attended the last two performances Bolognini gave outside of Las Vegas, both in Downey, a beach city near Los Angeles. In 1978, he played the Lalo Concerto with Louis Palange conducting the Downey Symphony—and inserted a cadenza into the 3rd movement(!) that struck me as likely to have been improvised. For an encore he played his *Echo Serenade*. In one spot he shifted up to a G in 4th position but did not quite get there, whereupon he threw his head back and sang out, 'Flat!'.



autographed programme  
(he slightly changed the pieces in the recital)

I heard him again the following year in what turned out to be his last full recital, also presented by the Downey Symphony. I had found a copy of the score to his *Cello's Prayer* at Globe Music, an extraordinary used music store in Hollywood, which someone had copied down from his recording. When I asked him to autograph it after the recital he exclaimed, 'Where did you find this? I must have it!' and, of course, I couldn't deny him, so I no longer have the music. A few weeks later I sent him an LP recording of short pieces I had made, and he



phoned to tell me how much he liked it, saying: 'This is the most beautiful cello playing I have ever heard—and I know good cello playing, I was born with a cello in my hand!' He obviously went in for hyperbole.



Ennio playing at Chris Strangio's house

### Christopher E. Strangio

'My father was a friend of Bolognini from the late 1950's through Bolognini's death in 1979. He made [this recording](#) in 1958 at our home in Michigan City, Indiana when I was 9 years old. The tape was miraculously well preserved and permitted an almost flawless transcription into a digital file. We lived at that time in Michigan City, Indiana, about an hour's drive from Chicago. My father, a physician by training, played the violin and cello and frequently attended performances of the Chicago Symphony where Ennio was a member. As far as I know, Ennio was performing as a soloist during one of these concerts and my father, being very impressed with the performance, went backstage afterward and introduced himself. They became friends. I remember him as a really unusual character with a foreign accent and a warm and friendly demeanor, and the many words of praise heaped on Ennio from my parents.

I remember once as a nine-year-old playing a child's version of Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C# minor when Ennio was visiting our house. When I was finished, he gave me a big, juicy kiss on the cheek he was so impressed! This is something a child would remember! Another memory I have is Ennio taking one of my dad's violins and holding it like a cello on his chair, and playing it that way. I thought that was pretty amazing.

They continued their friendship until Ennio passed away, and then [my father] corresponded periodically with Ennio's widow.'

*Special thanks to Nathaniel Rosen, Terry King, Chris Strangio, Melody Bunting, Stacey Krim (Assistant Professor & Curator of Manuscripts at the [University of North Carolina, Greensboro](#)), and the Bolognini collection for photos, programmes, and biographical details.*

### Youtube and hyperlinks:

1. "Street Scene" Bolognini with Ralph Marterie & His Orchestra (1952)

<https://youtu.be/PhAY14YasCw>

2. "You Bet Your Life" (1957)

<https://youtu.be/P21YQSUyAQU>

3. "The Liberace Show" - 2nd movement of Liszt's Piano Concerto #2 in A

<https://youtu.be/5YLqtdw7tGk>

4. Cello's Prayer

<https://youtu.be/Ax1SPJoYkNM>

5. Serenata del Gaucho

<https://youtu.be/ph5Ql2A0RRo>

6. Fiesta Basca

<https://youtu.be/yXXlaxESjQ0>

7. Echo Serenade

<https://youtu.be/KwZsXi2DtY0>

8. Sound effects sketch by Ennio Bolognini on the cello with Chris and Mark Strangio, recorded in Michigan City, IN circa 1958

[https://www.cableeye.com/Bolognini\\_Sketch.html](https://www.cableeye.com/Bolognini_Sketch.html)

Untangling the Lore of Ennio Bolognini by Stacey Krim & William "Mac" Nelson

[https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/W\\_Nelson\\_Untangling\\_2019.pdf](https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/W_Nelson_Untangling_2019.pdf)

Ennio Bolognini Cello Music Collection, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro:

<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/search/collection/Greenhouse!Schiffman!Cone!ttt!UrbanDevGSO!GSOCityDir!GSOPatriot!GoodMed!Hansen!HENP!-Wish!RAS!PEPamp!Carolinian!MSS!ui!WVHP!WWI-Pamp/searchterm/bolognini>

# Of Special Interest

A Mania for Waltzes • Julian Jacobson



I don't know what first put the idea of composing schmaltzy waltzes into my head. Certainly I can't dance a waltz: my few attempts to learn ballroom dancing in my younger years always ended in humiliation and an agreement that formal dancing wasn't my thing, though I'm perfectly happy to bop till I drop if I don't have to adhere to any fixed steps!

But it was in 1982 that my first waltz took shape: I was on tour with that great cellist Zara Nelsova and at the rehearsal before our recital in Gothenburg one day she was giving me a hard time with the Rachmaninov Sonata, wanting a particularly difficult piano solo in the Scherzo faster and more brilliant (that was her way!). I locked myself in the concert hall till midnight, took myself off for a beer in a late night bar, and suddenly the opening of a waltz took shape in my head. It was only years later that I realised my waltz started with the same notes, D - E flat, as Rachmaninov's mighty sonata, but my piece then proceeds in a quite different direction and style.

So began a series of waltzes which continues to this day, though most were composed in the 1980s and '90s. Zara's waltz is titled *Gothenburg Waltz* and I like to think it has something of that fine city in its character. I'm not sure that Zara ever played it but

she received the dedication graciously. Among the other published ones are another one for cello, *Valse mélancolique*, two for violin (plus a tango), three for flute and a new one for piano duet, *Palm Court Waltz*, in memory of Richard Rodney Bennett, that master of light music (among many other things). They were usually written for specific players I was performing with, and with their sound and personality in mind. The *Valse mélancolique* was written for Katja Denzler, the cellist of the German Werethina Quartet. *Lydian Waltz* was written for the splendid violinist Lydia Mordkovich and uses the Lydian mode: the piece is in C major so all the F's are F sharps. *Eva's Waltz* was for Eva-Maria Tomasi, a violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic and now on the Board of Trustees.

Of the three flute waltzes, one, *Waltz for Judy* (Judith Hall) is a jazz waltz—I've always felt that the flute is great in jazz. *Vers La Valse*, for Ileana Ruhemann, Principal Flute of the BBC Concert Orchestra, was commissioned for her Wigmore Hall debut: it is by far the the longest, most complex and modernistic, and it also uses alto flute as well as the normal flute. I've also orchestrated it as a mini flute concerto, and Ileana has performed this in St James's Church Piccadilly. The title is a direct homage to Ravel's great

*La Valse*, with a nod to Scriabin's late piano piece *Vers la Flamme*, and there are even a couple of short quotes from the Ravel.

The common influence behind all these is Fritz Kreisler—one of my favourite musicians of all time. I've enjoyed playing his famous *Liebesleid* and *Liebesfreud* with many violinists and a few cellists, as well as the wonderful *Caprice Viennois*—also a waltz. Those captivating harmonies and the inimitable grace of Kreisler's melodies have somehow seeped into my subconscious and proved a fertile soil for my own efforts. Other influences are Fauré, Ravel and Gershwin.

As a rest from waltzes, I also wrote a bourrée for cello and piano - *Hip hip Bourrée*—with apologies for the appalling pun. This was a commission from Steven Isserlis for his album *Unbeaten Tracks* (Faber), a volume of new pieces of roughly grades 4 to 6 ABRSM standard. To my surprise and gratification the piece has been quite a success and many cellists I meet tell me they have taught it. It replaced an earlier piece, *Sinister Footsteps*, which was judged unsuitable for the volume—perhaps too scary! I might publish it separately one day.

I have been lucky with my cellists. Steven Isserlis played the Gothenburg on Radio 3, though in an earlier version before I realised that the ending needed to be extended. Selma Gokcen recorded it with John Lenehan on her CD *Songs and Dances*. I played it quite frequently, usually as an encore, with the wonderful David Geringas on tours in Spain and South Africa. Johannes Goritzki and Pál Banda have both played the *Valse mélancolique*. I only regret that I never got to play the Gothenburg with its dedicatee and inspirer Zara Nelsova: my concerts with her came towards the end of her career so the opportunity never arose. Her rich tone and dazzling personality would have given a glamorous frisson to the piece and I still sometimes hear her playing it in my mind's ear!

The Waltzes are published by Bardic Edition, handled by Schott and available from their website [en.schott-music.com](http://en.schott-music.com)

LCS is delighted to offer a complimentary copy of Julian Jacobson's *Valse mélancolique* to the first member to contact newsletter editor Josh Salter on [j.saltervc@gmail.com](mailto:j.saltervc@gmail.com)

## Cello Talk

The Inside Out Musician • Ruth Philips

On Boxing Day 2020, the *New York Times* ran an article entitled: 'A Great Cultural Depression Looms for Legions of Unemployed Performers'. Without concerts or rehearsals, or indeed any reason to take up our instruments, musicians are being forced to reflect on their role in an unknown musical future. Though uncomfortable, this reflection may be long overdue.

For the past nine months, along with Italian balconies and neighbourhood streets, Zoom has been our college, our pub and our concert hall. Online platforms such as InsideOut Musician and The Exhale, initially created to meet the need of musicians to connect during this desperate time, have matured. They have torn down boundaries, creating wide open spaces. They have built communities across the globe, promoting a holistic and healthy approach to music-making, the likes of which we have never seen. In a world where performance has been caught up in greed and

consumerism, they are committed to rediscovering the importance of going inwards in order to find authentic outward expression and are leading the way toward a new vision of musical learning for all.

Having taught exclusively online for almost a year, I am convinced this way of working is a gift. It is far from inferior to live interaction and will, in my opinion, always exist as a compliment. Here are just some of the advantages I have experienced:

- With the lack of sound 'quality' and unable to perceive nuance, I have come to rely on what I see, becoming attuned more to the quality of my students' movements. The body does not lie. Whilst any sound can be convincing, a sound that flows freely and organically from the heart through the body is touching, whatever the 'quality'.
- The lack of physical touch, though initially frustrating, has forced me to interfere less and trust

my students more. Used to guiding them through hands-on work, I have instead helped them pay attention to their own somatic experience and the natural wisdom of their bodies.

- I have learned to be less of a teacher and more of a witness. Without the need to project outwards—whether to me, a colleague or audience member, in a hall, theatre or teaching studio—and comfortable in their own space, my students have slowed down and started to listen inwards. Some have found a deeper connection with their creative voice, whilst others located their deeply buried longing to make sound.

- An online platform can be truly inclusive in a way an institution or concert hall often cannot. Discussions, groups, ceilidhs, concerts and one-to-ones in 'Café Zoom' provide opportunities to find connections through music across age, level, continent and culture. Music online doesn't have a snob factor. It is an equaliser.

*"The word 'musician' is too often used to discourage people from participating in their birthright as sound-makers"* - Mark Stewart, Cellist, Guitarist, Paul Simon Band, Founder of Bang on a Can

On Boxing Day 2020, the same day as the New York Times article appeared heralding a depression, we were sharing a late lunch at our home in the South of France. It was already dark. The candles were lit, and the carol sheets spread upon the table. Suddenly, somewhere in between *In The Bleak Midwinter* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, a voice boomed out:

*Che bella cosa na jurnata 'e sole,  
n'aria serena doppo na tempesta!...*

Alexander, an opera singer from Paris would never, until this moment, have sung spontaneously for others. After nine months of near silence and isolation, however, it didn't matter how, when, where or for whom it was going to happen. This musician had to express the voice inside him. It was a powerful moment to witness.

I believe there is gold in this pause we have been forced to make. Perhaps the words 'lock down' contain within them their opposite—open up? Perhaps this period of going inwards will, if we can rise to the challenge, herald a period of great cultural expression? I hope so.

### Inside-Out Meditation

- Take a moment to sit comfortably. Close your eyes and allow the breath to enter and leave your body. Allow the muscles around the eyes to release. Let

the eyeballs sink back and down in their sockets. Let your eyes cease their looking and seeing. Invite inner listening.

- Try and feel each part of your body from the inside-out. Notice if you sense any tingling, pulsing or vibrating. Feel the life that is coursing through you.
- As you imagine taking up your instrument, notice any micro changes that occur. Is tension creeping in? What happens to your breath? In your hands? What thoughts arise?
- Gently take up your instrument. Notice what happens to your breathing in the areas where your instrument meets your body. Does it change?
- Sit (or stand) with your instrument. Scan your body once more. Take your time. Is there inner movement? If so, where is it? Hands? Belly? Throat? Feet? In the silence, is there a sound?
- If you feel a movement towards sound-making, can you follow it? How does it travel through you? Can you resist interfering? Allow it to move through your body and into sound. Even if it is one simple note, let yourself feel the wonder at the music that can flow from you into the room and beyond. Listen to it with your whole being.



Ruth Phillips teaches and runs classes on [The Breathing Bow](#) and [InsideOut Musician](#).

[Ruth Phillips describes her approach at InsideOut Musician \(video\)](#)

# From our Members

## • From Sebastian Comberti

### Two Contrasts for Unaccompanied Cello

When I moved four years ago to a small village in Sussex and found there was a composer living there, the then 92 year-old Kenneth V. Jones, I naturally beat a path to his door to introduce myself. He turned out to be a real link to the past, having studied with Dyson, Howells, Tippett, Seiber and Walton, and had been an active member of the British music scene in the second half of the twentieth century. I asked him whether he'd ever written anything for cello, but he said that sadly he hadn't. At least he didn't remember, because whilst conducting a video interview with him during lockdown in April 2020, he allowed me access to his music library, where a slim manuscript fell down from between two larger folios. It was *2 Contrasts for Unaccompanied Cello*, dedicated in 1951 to Margaret Moncrieff, then the teacher of Kenneth's son Anthony. Kenneth then vaguely recalled writing the work but didn't recall it ever being played. So I rectified that with a socially-distanced performance outside his front door (it was open!) the next day.

Along with several unrecorded chamber works, the Contrasts will appear on a CD of Kenneth V. Jones' music later in 2021. Sadly Kenneth died just a few weeks ago, but not before hearing his music on a first edit of the recording, to his immense pleasure. The Contrasts, short and very intense pieces, will be published soon.

## • From Richard Deakin

### Emma Ferrand

After a distinguished forty years of teaching, both at RNCM and elsewhere, Emma stepped down from her College position in June 2018, after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. Later that year she enjoyed a wonderful farewell concert at RNCM organised by Chris Hoyle and Ralph Kirshbaum, featuring fine performances by a number of her former students. She and her violinist husband Richard Deakin continue to live in the Lake District. Emma's husband Richard is happy to be contacted by Emma's students and friends on this email address: [rdviolin@gmail.com](mailto:rdviolin@gmail.com).

## • From Noel Moffat

### Lockdown Update from Cello Beginner-Land, or as now More Accurately Titled 'Double Stops City'

Lots to ponder while beavering away on our ever more difficult scales and set pieces; all lessons and group sessions via zoom of course. Glitterati still posting lots of mega helpful and free tuition—amazingly generous of you all. I think tutors and pupils are adapting to remote learning well including those of us lucky enough to have the odd private lesson.

Sad to see our City Lit, Mary Ward etc buildings looking like movie sets of a deserted ghost town. These venues are our learning and companionship outposts of an evening normally; they also are all zooming away for us now—much appreciated!

Personal update: Grade 5 cello passed with the usual modest pass. Still unable to clap nor count, I think this counting lark must be in the DNA. Still enjoying cello even more now if that is possible. My kids now describe me as 'cello obsessive'.

Striking thought: some big similarities between martial arts, in my case judo, and learning a string instrument. Concentration, discipline and timing just for starters. Music has the extra dimension of sound.

OK that's it for now. Stay safe and keep practising, mature intermediates (I think that is what we are now).

## • From Kathy Weston

### Marianne Gottfeldt

Oxford Cello School alumni will be saddened to hear of the death of its founder, Marianne Gottfeldt, earlier this year. Marianne started the [Oxford Cello School](#) in 1980, 'to provide a unique opportunity for cellists and bassists to focus on their instrument and receive the very best tuition in an intensive environment'. Its summer schools certainly delivered on these aims: catering to an interesting mix of highly talented youngsters, accomplished adults, and then the rest of us, a motley crew of adult beginners at various levels of competence, they were inspiring, if slightly alarming at times. Marianne was an ever-present mercurial figure: by turns encouraging, fierce, engagingly charming, blunt, funny, breathtakingly rude, but always passionately engaged in the business of teaching the instrument she loved.

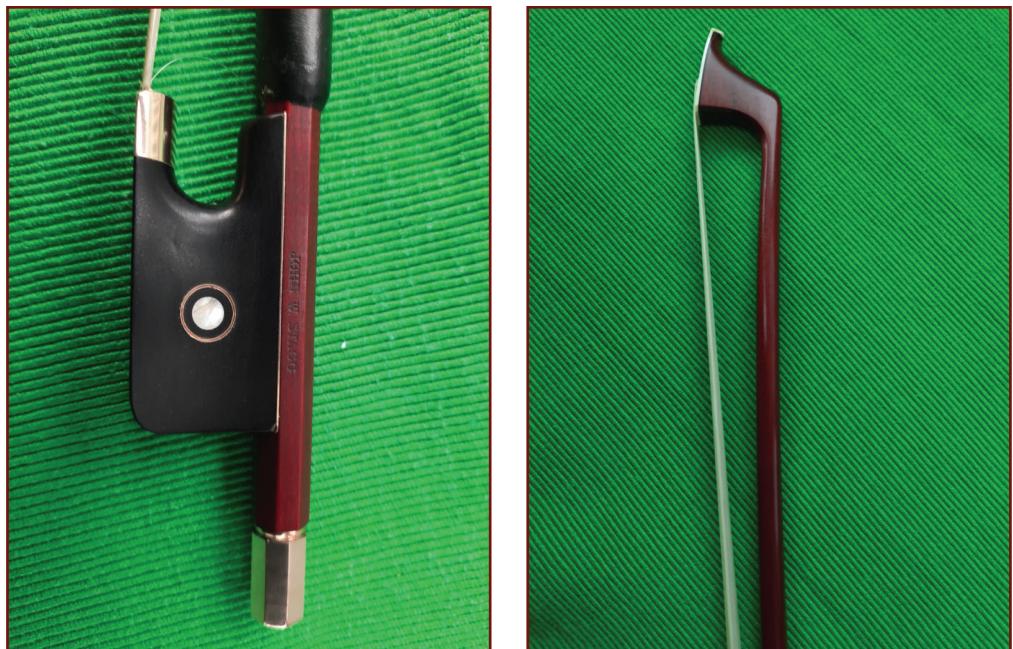
The [Alpine Cello School](#), a blissful early-summer 14

week in Châtel, in the Haute-Savoie, was an opportunity to get to know Marianne, and a series of wonderful tutors, in the more intimate setting of a luxury ski chalet, and they became a fixture of my life for several years. It was there that I first had lessons with her, and discovered a warmth and sympathy that made a huge difference to my confidence (and technique!) as a cellist. I will miss her hugely, as will many others.

• **From Felicity Wrenwood, Sussex**  
Bow for Sale

Gold Mounted Sartory Master Copy Bow made and stamped by John W Stagg. Bought direct from the maker's workshop in Christmas Steps, Bristol in 2014. Selling as retired from orchestral playing and saving up for a harp! A wonderful powerful bow super for symphonic or solo repertoire. Maintains power through the stick. Has all the authenticating paper work. £5000

[felicitycello@gmail.com](mailto:felicitycello@gmail.com)



*The LCS thanks our members Josh Salter & Kathy Weston for their expert assistance with our newsletter preparation.*

*Graphic Design • Maria Karamanou*