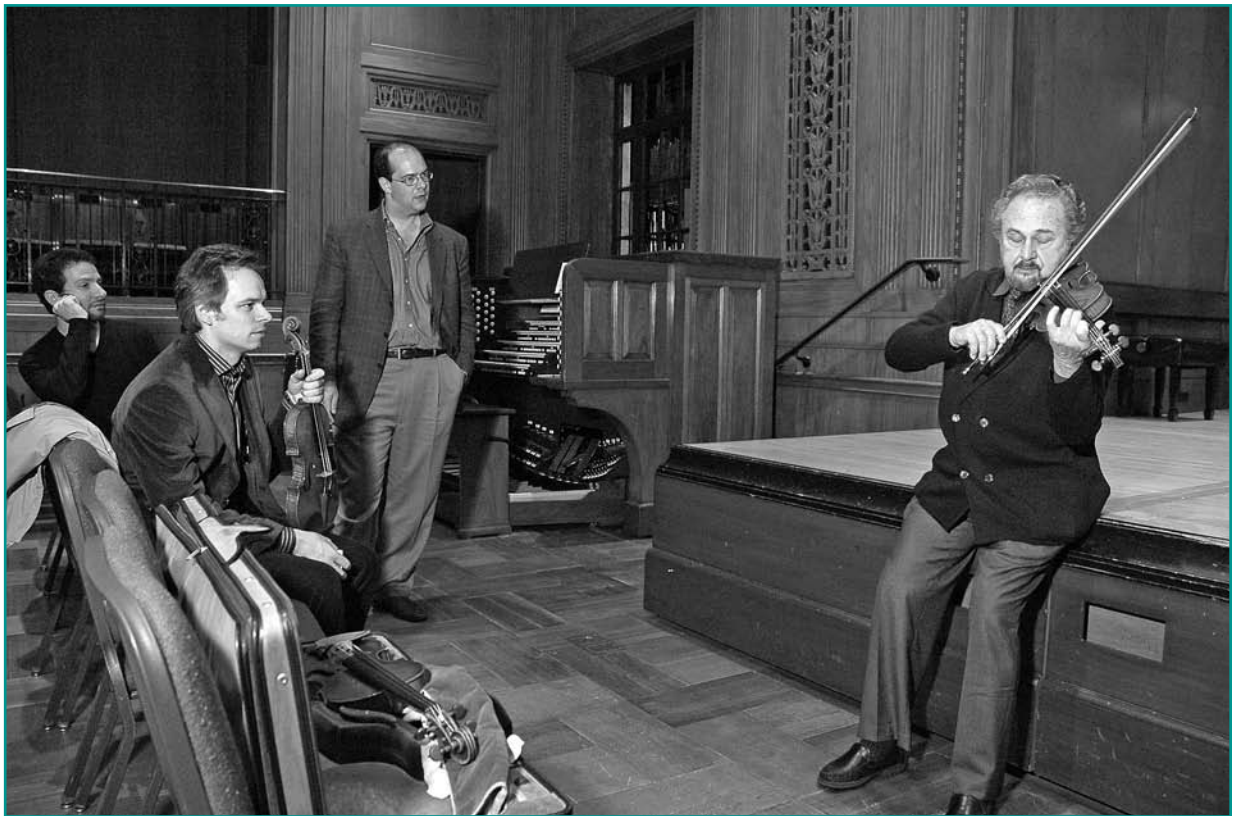


At Eighty Years Old,
Aaron Rosand
Continues to Charm



Comparing violins with
(from left) Steve Copes,
Benjamin Schmid, and
Alexander H. Kerr

~ PHOTO: JEAN E. BRUBAKER

Alumni recall lessons in repertoire, dedication, and style



THE TEACHER AND HIS FORMER STUDENTS played “musical instruments.” Aaron Rosand, Benjamin Schmid, Alexander H. Kerr, and Steven Copes passed around their violins, eagerly testing the sounds (“a great fiddle,” “gorgeous”). Out came a cell-phone camera to capture the interactions in Field Concert Hall on Saturday afternoon, March 31.

The swap was the beginning of a reunion prompted by Mr. Rosand’s eightieth birthday. It preceded a tribute concert in which all four violinists, plus Elissa Lee Koljonen (’94) and

students Stephanie Jeong and Anna Tifu, would play along with Hugh Sung (Piano ’90) and Robert Koenig (Accompanying ’90, ’91). Their performances of works by Brahms, Ysaÿe, Prokofiev, and Sarasate would musically depict the elegance and charm that characterize Mr. Rosand.

Setting up the stage to rehearse, Mr. Kerr asked Mr. Rosand if he needed a music stand. “No. If I don’t know the music by now ...,” he said, leaving the obvious in the air.

Called “one of the great living exponents of Romantic violin music” by the *New York*

Times, Mr. Rosand carries on the tradition of Leopold Auer and Eugène Ysaÿe; he studied with their disciples Leon Sametini at the Chicago Musical College and Efreim Zimbalist at Curtis. He joined the faculty of The Curtis Institute of Music in 1981 and holds the Dorothy Richard Starling Chair in Violin Studies.

Prior to the recital, *Overtones* met with Mr. Schmid ('91), a Viennese violinist with a highly active performing and recording career; Mr. Kerr ('92), professor of violin at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and principal guest concertmaster of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra; and Mr. Copes ('94), concertmaster of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and a frequent soloist. The lively conversation addressed what it means to have studied with Mr. Rosand at Curtis.

SCHMID: To study with him gave one, I think, a feeling of getting connected to a grand tradition of the Franco-Belgian violin school, dating back to masters Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, and Ysaÿe. Ysaÿe at the foremost, almost as a direct line. We really connected over one or two generations to an extremely grand era of violin-playing when violinists weren't only soloists but they were also composers. He was definitely a bridge member to that kind of era.

And he is one of the true masters of the last century. I got so much input and learned so much in terms of a soloist's repertoire and also what it means to make a sound project in a big hall as a soloist. For me it was just a wonderful journey to have this access for two years in my life.

Now it's almost twenty years ago that all of this started, and it's been inspiring throughout the years, to look back and digest what he told us. I think that's a main feature of a great pedagogue, that you learn so much still when you are not with him anymore, but [he left] a great imprint on your whole



Elissa Lee Koljonen (left) and Benjamin Schmid in the tribute recital ~ PHOTO: L. C. KELLEY

thinking of music for the violin.

KERR: I wholeheartedly agree.

For me, [Mr. Rosand] did three things. One, he set the standard for what was possible on the instrument. Every lesson I would come in, play for him, and he would show me the true limits, or the lack thereof, of what the violin could do, and that was one of the most important things I could ever witness.

The second thing, which was also wonderful—if you'll notice when you hear us play, there are three people who all studied with him at the exact same period in our lives, yet the three of us play completely differently. For a teacher to be able to lead you on your first critical period in music and still for you to retain your individual personality, that says something about him as a teacher. That's not somebody who's imposing his will on you, but somebody who will lead you on your own path.

Also, after I studied with him, as Benjamin said, you keep learning. When I'm teaching my own students, things just come out of my mouth verbatim from Rosand. I hadn't even thought about these things in years but suddenly they just fly out of my mouth: "Charm." [All laugh.] Rosand's favorite word, for all of us: "Chaaarm."

COPES: "Elegance and charm."

KERR: "Romanticism."

SCHMID: "Grand style."

KERR: Also, every time I needed him

throughout my career for the last twenty years, he was there for me. Every time I had a big decision to make in my life. Prime example of that would be my accepting my position in Amsterdam [as concertmaster with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra]. I was very afraid of moving across the ocean, after just being married. I had a very nice job in Cincinnati, I had a wonderful position as concertmaster. And the first phone call I made was to Mr. Rosand, and I said, "What should I do?"

He told me, "If you don't take the position, you're an idiot." Needless to say, I took the position, and everything has worked out beautifully since then.

He's like a grandfather to me, somebody who's always there for me, who I could count on if I ever needed him. Just for advice.



COPES: For me, I feel really lucky to have had three very different major teachers. The one thing that Mr. Rosand has in spades is real dedication to his students. He gave hour-and-a-half lessons, which was very different from everybody else, and if I were to take on a teaching position, that's what I ideally would like, because that's the only amount of time you can really get something done in.

He also showed you how much you needed to work and didn't let you come in unprepared—and if you were, he would throw you out. As far as I can remember, you had to have something new ready almost every week.

The dedication extended outside of school, as well. He and Monica, his wife, put me up in their flat in London for a week when I was preparing for an important competition, and he gave me a three- or four-hour lesson every morning and made me practice six, seven hours the rest of the day for six days in a row, until his wife screamed at him to let me out of the house. [Laughter.] She was probably sick of us practicing.

'I had an almost naïve rush to play the violin.
And he showed us it's worth spending a lifetime on the violin.'

That was a memorable experience. Who does that? He never charged me for anything. SCHMID: It was this kind of 200 percent dedication to the pupils that set the standard also for our work.

A very different feeling also describes the personality of Mr. Rosand. He's such a noble man, such a wonderfully educated gentleman. When I met him today, and I think I had not seen him for maybe fifteen years, he looked fresh as ever to me, and one of the very first things he mentioned was, "That's a nice jacket you wear, Benjamin." There's so much a matter of style and good qualities.

COPES: Other parts of life ...

SCHMID: ... to do with quality.

KERR: Talking about us all having our own personalities, I remember there was one time I was playing the Second Sonata of Ysaÿe for him. This was a rare occasion where I had played something more than one week for him. He had butchered me the week before. I left with my tail between my legs. I came back and I memorized his recording of it—every accent, every little thing.

I played it *exactly* the way he performed it on his CD. His only words to me were, "Alex, I'd appreciate not hearing regurgitated me." [Laughter.]

I will not forget that as long as I live. I looked at him and I just laughed. He said, "You know, you have to play your own self, your *own* interpretation of this." He was just pressing me.

The next week I came in and played it, and he looked at me, and it was the first time I was proud of myself in a very long time. He said, "First class." For me, that was the biggest compliment I could ever *hope* to achieve from the man.

SCHMID: When you hear that from him, that's something.

COPES: Also, about letting you go your own way, I became interested in contemporary pieces when I started studying here, pieces he wasn't particularly interested in and didn't want to play, but he still was excited, I think, about learning the Berg concerto or Bartók concerto. He would still encourage you. Teachers can give you a real confidence to go out and do your thing.

And cigars. How can we forget the cigars?



KERR: You know what was amazing? There was a point, at the very end of my studies, I would want to challenge him. Because he would know every piece of music you would bring by heart. Everything. Except maybe the contemporary works. I'd bring in these obscure short pieces that, I thought, "There's no way he's played this." And I brought in two things: *Sea Shell* by Carl Engel—[in a gruffish voice] "Ah, *Sea Shell* by Carl Engel"—and he starts playing it by heart. "*Zephyr* by Hubay."

COPES: Oh, that's a cool piece.

KERR: Exactly. Who knows this piece?

And he says, "Oh. *Zephyr* by Hubay."

COPES: Well, he does know the concerto, so he probably knows *Zephyr* by Hubay.

SCHMID: His repertoire is vast and legendary. He plays and has in his repertoire about eighty violin concertos, and he was not shy to play for us big parts of it.

I had an almost naïve *rush* to play the violin. And he showed us it's worth spending a lifetime on the violin. It was so obvious. Such a passion behind each note, and filling a whole life giving the utmost example to young people.

COPES: Like Josef Gingold a little bit.

Just how he loved to take out the violin.

SCHMID: And Mr. Rosand still does. Today, when he came in, he wouldn't stop playing.

COPES: And he likes to show off for us, too. He can do it. ☺



Aaron Rosand and Hugh Sung ~ PHOTO: L. C. KELLEY

AARON ROSAND, VIOLINIST

The son of a Russian mother and Polish father, Aaron Rosand gave his recital debut at age nine and his orchestral debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra a year later. He made his New York recital debut in 1948 and his New York Philharmonic debut with Leonard Bernstein in 1960.

He has appeared with the orchestras of New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Houston, London, Paris, Munich, Tokyo, Rome, Vienna, and Brussels, as well as the National Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, among others, and frequently combines master classes with concert engagements. On November 5 he will play the Brahms Violin Concerto with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in Verizon Hall (see www.curtis.edu for details).

Mr. Rosand has recorded more than thirty CDs and DVDs on various labels in the United States and Europe. Most recently Musical Concepts released a two-CD set featuring Mr. Rosand and Hugh Sung, pianist and fellow Curtis faculty member, performing works by Brahms.

Mr. Rosand holds the Dorothy Richard Starling Chair in Violin Studies. By giving Curtis a significant interest in his violin, the valuable "Kochanski" Guarneri del Gesù violin of 1741, he has endowed a faculty chair himself. The Aaron Rosand Chair in Violin Studies is now held by Joseph Silverstein, who joined the faculty in 2000.