

## Primrose Says It With A Viola

WHATEVER it is, this is not an article about the flower garden in January, how to chase drone bees off your property, run ragwort to earth, or other agricultural pursuits; it is about a toothbrush-mustached gentleman from Glasgow called William Primrose, generally considered the finest viola-player in the world.

Handel's *Concerto in B Minor for Viola and Orchestra* is to be presented from 2YN Nelson at 8 p.m. on Monday, January 22. William Primrose is the soloist, with a chamber orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr.

To a large number of people the viola is practically unknown. Do you play it with the mouth, do you rest it on the floor, do you hold it across your knee? Do you twang it, splutter through it, bang



WILLIAM PRIMROSE

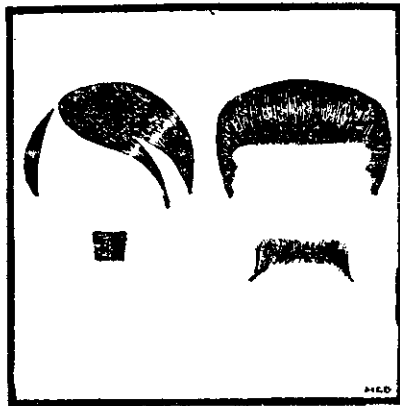
... the world's best likes boxing

it, or stroke it? Here is what *Time* has to say of the ubiquitous instrument:

"The viola is in nature an undersized pansy. In art it is an oversized violin with a tubby, whisky-contralto voice. Except for low-moaning the inner voices of symphonies and string quartets, it is not good for much. Most of the time it merely plays pah to the 'cello's oom. Most of the people who pull horsehair bows over its goatgut strings are ex-violinists who failed to make the grade."

### Number One

The athletic Mr. Primrose is no second-grader. Lately he has been playing principal viola under Arturo Toscanini with the American NBC Symphony. Also recently he has been playing with the far-famed Budapest String Quartet (they were in New Zealand in July-August of 1937), in quintets for the Manhattan New Friends of Music. His own Primrose Quartet has just eased into the front rank of United States



"Marianne," Paris  
"Here's the whole difference"

chamber music groups. Especially for the athletic musician, six of the world's foremost composers (including Paul Hindemith, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax, William Walton) have been writing viola sonatas and concertos.

Thirty years ago, in Glasgow, the young Primrose discovered a penchant for sawing away at an old viola that was lying about in his father's house. A viola-playing father objected, and set his William to studying the more versatile violin. But Primrose the younger never forgot happy hours with the viola, and some years later, in Brussels, his teacher, the late Eugène Ysaye, told him he had special aptitude for the instrument: he switched to it, for life.

### Primrose Blooms

How he came to play with the NBC Orchestra is, in itself, rather romantic. When, in 1937, NBC officials were selecting players for the orchestra, they heard a record of Primrose playing a Paganini caprice. Listening spell-bound to the brilliance of the playing, they had doubts as to its authenticity, were tempted to think Heifetz, or some other super-brilliant violinist had made the record under an assumed name. They sent a wire to Primrose, at the time on tour with the London String Quartet, and offered him the post of chief viola-player under Toscanini. Primrose said, Yes, thank you.

One wonders whether Clifford Odets, when he wrote his famous play *Golden Boy* (now cinematised) was not thinking perhaps of Primrose. For Primrose was once a first-class boxer; and still is a connoisseur in the matter of jabs, hooks, and upper-cuts. Though, for fear of hurting his hands, he no longer dares get into the ring, he spends his evenings at no musical tea parties but among the Madison Square Garden fans, getting a thrill with the toughest of them.

Once Primrose played one-night stands. He trudged through sleet and slush in many a Canadian and Mid-western town from dirty hotel to draughty theatre. Now it is good-bye to all that. These days he is heard by more people at one concert than in fifteen years before. Used to hardship on the "way up," now he has no more discomfort than is involved in stepping from a big car into a nice, warm broadcasting studio.

"It makes you feel like an orchid," says William Primrose.

## Confucius Said...

Wartime reorientates personal values. People may forget to accept situations philosophically.

Here is what Confucius, the Chinese sage who lived about 551-478 B.C., had to say about some problems:—

*Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.*

*Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life? The master said, Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.*

*True goodness springs from a man's own heart. All men are born good.*

*When you see a good man, think of emulating him; when you see a bad man, examine your own heart.*

### JIG

A jigger is running at speed along a railway line. On the same line, an express is travelling towards it, in the opposite direction. They meet. Miraculously, the jigger stays on the lines and is pushed backwards. When the jigger hit the train, did it stop for a split second before moving backwards? Surely it would have to stop? But if it did stop, the express must have stopped, too? But the express weighed many tons, and the jigger scarcely one ton. What really would happen?

(This is no puzzle: only a request for information.)

*What the superior man seeks is in himself: what the small man seeks is in others.*

*Study the past, if you would divine the future.*

*The commander of the forces of a large State may be carried off, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him.*



"Inquirer," Philadelphia  
"But you should've seen the one that got away!"

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