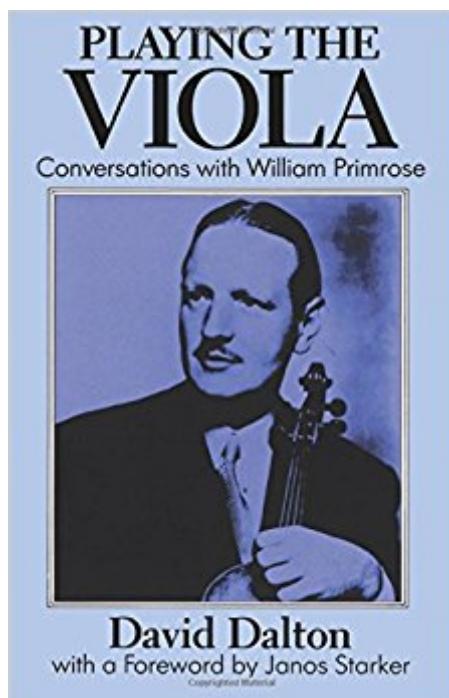


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# Playing The Viola: Conversations With William Primrose



## **Synopsis**

Before the death, in 1982, of the renowned violist William Primrose, David Dalton engaged the musician in a lively series of conversations which touched on almost all aspects of viola technique, performance, repertoire, recording, and history. This book is a transcription of this dialogue, containing illuminating advice on holding the viola, bowing, tone, fingering, and practicing, all supported by copious illustrations and musical examples, as well as insights on repertoire for the viola--"an instrument without tradition"--and on performances of the great concertos by Bartok and Walton. Punctuated with frankness and humor, this book is a tribute to one of the greatest artists of this century.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Required reading for all violists and should be found on the shelves of every library at institutions where the viola is taught."--Notes"This remarkable book is full of valuable information about performance problems on the viola and the methodology for their solutions....The book certainly should be required reading for all violists, and it is particularly indispensable to teachers and students of the instrument. All violists are indebted to David Dalton for making it possible to share the wisdom, advice, and many wonderful experiences of one of the musical giants of our time."--Maurice W. Riley, American String Teacher"An invaluable reference for the violist whether student, teacher, or performer. The combination of wit and knowledge enables the reader to enjoy thoroughly the process of reading....Recommended for all who are interested in the viola and its

greatest exponent."--Choice"This volume is an invaluable contribution to the string player's bookshelf. The clarity with which Mr. Dalton has distilled the ideas of the great William Primrose forms a wonderful basis for a technical approach on both violin and viola. As one who had the rare privilege of studying and performing with the great master, it was very much like a personal visit."--Joseph Silverstein, former Concert Master of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the Utah Symphony"In all areas of human endeavour, time and again an individual appears who, due to a multitude of personal attributes, elevates his or her field to a hitherto unknown height. Such an individual was William Primrose. His name and the viola are synonymous."--Yanos Starker, from his Foreword

David Dalton is at Brigham Young University, Utah; President of American Viola Society.

I have played violin for twenty-seven years, mostly for fun, occasionally for pay. A year ago, I picked up my viola and played some Bach on it for my fiance, a professional violinist. Boy was I surprised when he told me I sounded much better on the viola than on the violin, even though I never practiced the viola! I decided to find a teacher and learn to play correctly this instrument that touches my heart so deeply. Unfortunately, my lessons were expensive, but didn't get me anywhere. I decided to do what I have done in many other disciplines: See what I could learn on my own. So I bought this book. Music is first of all about sound production. If you can't produce a beautiful or interesting tone, nobody will want to listen to you. Mr. Primrose states very clearly what he teaches his students about sound production. It was amazing! I finally figured out what I needed to do to get the sound I wanted! I tried it out, and right away my fiancee said that now I had a true viola sound: rich and warm and full. And it was much easier than what I had been doing before! I have never before been so surprised in my life: that a mere book could teach me so quickly what I had been struggling to achieve for so long! There is much other useful information as well: Mr. Primrose gives excellent exercises on how to strengthen the fingers in your right hand so that you have easy and precise control of your bow. He writes out exercises for smooth string crossings, one of which comes from his teacher, Ysaye. His explanation of how to achieve seamless string crossings in the same bow stroke has helped me immensely. And his discussion on the difference between a violinist's vibrato and a violist's vibrato has shown me what to listen for in my own practicing. There is a lot more, too: information on how to hold the instrument to reduce the possibility of pain and personal injury, Mr. Primrose's thoughts on repertoire and performance practices, as well as other topics. And quite a bit of subtle humor! I am learning so much from Mr.

Primrose. If he were still alive, I would send him a thank you letter for creating this book together with Mr. Dalton (one of his former students). I will learn as much as I can from Mr. Primrose, and then take up lessons again with another teacher. After all, I want a live violist's feedback and advice on what I am doing! I recommend the book to anybody who loves to play viola and would like to find out what Mr. Primrose did to play so beautifully. His advice really works!

A splendid book for the serious viola student. I purchased copies for two of my former students doing advanced viola studies at their respective universities. I enjoy my copy of this book.

My daughter is planning on majoring in viola performance. While checking out colleges she saw this book at the bookstore of the New England Conservatory of Music and she spoke of it ever since. Anyone interested in the viola- either a student or long time player or teacher would enjoy this book. It is basically an interview with Primrose himself. William Primrose was the first well known solo viola player. Many of his works were recorded (you can get them on as well). When you purchase viola music many times you are asked to get the Primrose edition- well that is this man. He showcased the viola as a solo instrument, and was a very gentle and humble man at the same time. In this book he gets a chance to share with you his experience talking about performing certain pieces, bow holds, and much more. Enjoy this wonderful book.

Apparently William Primrose was himself trained in the classical European style of "if it doesn't hurt, you're not doing it right and it's not doing any good." Some of that can be found in his "Conversations", but overwhelmingly, Dalton portrays Primrose as the kind of teacher who motivates students with a carrot rather than a whip. Again and again Primrose is saying, "Look, why do things the hard way when you can accomplish just as much, or more, with less effort this way?" Primrose is a dedicated perfectionist, no question, but he is not a masochist or sadist. I was inspired by the book to re-visit patterns of viola playing that I have had for years because of his persuasive and reasonable tone.

Playing the Viola is a great book for beginners and experienced violists alike. Primrose gives his opinions about technique, repertoire, and a music career. It is much better than his autobiography which reads as one big pat on the back from himself. There is less pomposity in this book and more good ideas. I'd say this is a must read for all violists!

I spent a whole summer reading and translated this book. It was a great pleasure, it's a violist book, everyone should have or read the very interesting dialogues between the two lords of the viola.

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