

## MIRIAM FRIED

Dr David C. F. Wright

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Miriam Fried is a fine violinist. Like Neveu, she has great concentration and appears to be oblivious to the audience. She excels at the serious repertoire such as Beethoven, Brahms and Sibelius and is equally at home with Bach. Again, like Neveu, she is not a show-off and does not relish the display pieces which, after all, may be high on pyrotechnics, but low on quality musical content.



Her tone is not mawkish and her intonation is flawless.

She was born in Satu-Mare Romania on 9 Septemebr 1946 and her family moved to Israel two years later. Her mother was a piano teacher and tried to encourage Miriam to take up the piano at the age of five but it was the violinist that won the young girl's heart. At the age of eight she took violin lessons from Alice Fenyves at the Tel Aviv Academy and her talent was obvious almost immediately. She became the star of the Academy and was always asked to play for celebrities that visited the area.

One such visitor was the American violinist Isaac Stern who recommended that she studied abroad. She spent a year at the Conservatory at Geneva with Lorand Fenyves, the brother of Alice. From there she progressed to Indiana University learning violin from Josef Gingold who was born in Russia in 1909 and went to New York in 1930 to study with Vladmir Graffman, a student of Leopold Auer.

With Gingold, Miriam became attracted by his love of the violin and he opened up for her the desire to find colour in sound. So many young people learn to play the violin without loving the instrument and today there are violinist of great repute who are mere technicians and not lovers of their instrument or its music.

From Gingold, Miriam went on to Ivan Galamian who was born in 1903 in Persia of Armenian parents. He studied the violin at the Moscow Conservatory from 1916 to 1922 under Konstantin Mostras who had also been a pupil of Auer. Galamian went to live in Paris for several years before moving to New York in 1937 and it was in his studio on West 73rd Street and at the Julliard School that Miriam had her lessons. His main method was for the player to know the work 100 per cent and inside out. Nothing else would do.

Under his tutelage, Miriam won her first competition. This was the Paganini Contest in Genoa in 1968. At the time she was under contract with the Jeunesses Musicale, an international concern rather like an European Youth Orchestra but it was a somewhat modest outfit.

Her first major breakthrough was at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels in 1971 winning the grand prix, the first woman to do so. Within days, she had received 65 engagements. She had become a star.

It was while she was at Indiana University that she met her future husband Paul Biss who is also a violinist. She attends to her playing, motherhood and concert tours.

In 1985 she gave recitals of the complete Bach solo sonatas and partitas in New York and recorded them in France and they were released on the Lyrinx label in 1999.

Since 1986 she has served on the faculty of Bloomington's School of Music at Indiana University as professor of violin. She has been a member of the Mendlessohn String Quartet.

Since 1993 she has been chair of the faculty at The Steans Institute for young artistes at the Ravina Festival

She has played with every major orchestra in America and Europe. With the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra she premiered the Violin Concerto By Donald Erb which was especially written for her. She has had works written for her by Ned Rorem and Alexander Boskovich.

Like Neveu, she has specialized in the Sibelius concerto. Her maturity is shown in her refusal to repeat programmes to avoid staleness.

I saw her play once and it was a concerto to which I was not particularly epoused. Such was her performance that I was converted to the piece and this proves that music is at the mercy of performers and only a great player who submits their own self to the music can make that music live.

The world's finest cellist, Janos Starker, describes Fried as the most outstanding violinist of her generation. Isaac Stern praised her highly and said that her performances were intelligent and outstanding

In recent years she has worked with her son, the young pianist Jonathan Biss. She plays a 1718 Stradivarius probably owned by the composer Louis Spohr and gives master classes all over the world.

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