Creating an idiomatic transcription for the viola in collaboration with the composer

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“.......VIOLA, there's a mighty sound!

Behold Prometheus unbound!
Reject that 'head-cold' simile...
A Primrose brings no allergy.
Eat out thy heart, O Cello proud,
And Violin, go don thy shroud.
Pray Saint Cecilia's mercy mild
Forgive thy up- and downbows wild,

For she in sacred restitution,
Bless'd VIOLA'S contribution,
Paying IT the compliment
Of genius' favoured instrument.

Mozart, Schubert, Dvorak, Britten,
All for orchestras have written.
Hear, O Man, and earth rejoice...

VIOLA played they all - BY CHOICE!

Ralph Aldrich
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Thank you to my Creator, from whom all this comes, and to whom everything returns. You are the Air that I breathe, the Water that I swim in, the lovely Silence between notes, the Canvas that I paint my sound-pictures on. May the words written here also go out and bless the world.

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return to it without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it...”

(Isaiah 55:10 and 11, NIV)
Abstract

After researching and collecting South African viola repertoire, the limited amount of South African compositions available to violists became evident. Reasons for this are varied. The number of viola players in the country is still relatively small, compared to violinists and cellists. The viola is often still not regarded as a ‘solo instrument’ by many in the music world or the general public. Add to this the small number of South African composers and the scarcity of funds to commission new works for the viola, and the reasons for relatively few South African compositions for the viola becomes self-evident.

A limited repertoire for any instrument has negative influences on the learning, teaching and performing environment of that instrument. A larger repertoire has the potential to develop the technical and artistic aspects of students, performers and composers alike. A rich repertoire contributes to the exploration and unlocking of new sound worlds, technical challenges, discoveries and possibilities, philosophies and cultures. The transcription of existing works is one of the avenues to explore in order to generate new repertoire for an instrument. An attempt was made in this research to define the essential concepts of ‘transcription’, ‘arrangement’ and ‘idiomatic’ and to determine aspects that contribute to the creation of successful transcriptions. These aspects of transcription for the viola were identified through extensive literature study, interviews and questionnaires and are presented as the framework employed to facilitate the transcription process in this research and to guide future creation of successful transcriptions that are idiomatic for the viola.

In order to enlarge the existing South African viola repertoire, I examined the involvement of the composer during the transcription process. Two existing compositions of the South African composer Hans Huyssen were identified and transcribed. The collaboration between the author and the composer was documented. The final viola transcriptions of Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe (1996) and Ugubhu (rising and falling... and rising) für Cello Solo (1996) are presented.
Opsomming

Na ’n versamelingsproses en onderzoek na die stand van Suid-Afrikaanse altvioolrepertorium, het die omvang van die beperkte opsies van Suid-Afrikaanse altvioolkomposisies duidelik geword. Redes hiervoor is uiteenlopend. Die aantal altvioliste in die land is steeds relatief klein, in vergelyking met violiste en tjelliste. Die meer onbekende altviool word nog steeds nie as ’n “solo instrument” deur baie mense in die musiekwêreld of deur die algemene publiek beskou nie. As die klein aantal Suid-Afrikaanse komponiste by hierdie voorafgaande scenario gevoeg word, tesame met die beperkte finansiering vir die aanvra van nuwe werke vir die altviool, is die redes vir dié stand van sake voor die hand liggend.

’n Beperkte repertoriumbron het negatiewe invloede op die leer-, onderrig- en uitvoerende omgewing van daardie instrument. ’n Omvangryker repertoriumbron het die potensiaal om die tegniese en artistieke aspekte van studente, uitvoerende kunstenaars en komponiste te ontwikkel. Dit dra ook by tot die verkenning en die ontsluiting van nuwe klankwêrelde, tegniese uitdagings, ontdekkings, moontlikhede, filosofieë en kulture. Die transkripsie van bestaande werke is een van die opsies om te verken ten einde nuwe repertorium vir ’n instrument te genereer.

In hierdie studie onderzoek en dokumenteer ek die betrokkenheid van die komponis tydens ’n transkripsie proses. Die definieëring en gebruik van die noodsaaklike begrippe van transkripsie (transcription), verwerking (arrangement) en idiomaties (idiomatic) word uitgelig in die voorbereiding tot die transkripsie. Aspekte wat kan bydra tot die skepping van ’n suksesvolle transkripsie word verder ook bepaal deur omvangryke literatuurstudie, vraelyste, onderhoude en die dokumentering van die transkripsieproses in samewerking met die komponis. Hierdie proses, in kombinasie met die ander aspekte rakende transkripsies, kan dan as ’n raamwerk aangewend word om die skepping van toekomstige suksesvolle en idiomatiese altviooltranskripsie te faciliteer.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The repertoire of South African compositions for viola is limited. The South African composer Arnold van Wyk is quoted by Smith (1987: 26) as saying that his *Duo Concertante* for viola and piano is one of the works that form part of the “skraal oesie altvioolwerke deur Suid-Afrikaanse komponiste” (the meagre harvest of viola works by South African composers). The limited number of viola works is a problem facing not only South African performers wanting to perform South African compositions. Kim
Kashkashian, world renowned violist, said in an interview: “We all are, in a sense, missionaries for new music, and most of us are also thieves, because we have to and want to take repertoire from other instruments” (Anon., 2007). Her view is similar to that of Helen Callus, a performer, educator and viola advocate. In her experience a substantial part of the viola repertoire consists of transcriptions, an aspect of the professional lives of violists that they embrace as “part of our existence.” (Scott, 2007) However, as is shown below, the international repertoire, in contrast with the South African repertoire, is already quite large.

When deciding upon transcription as a means to enlarge the available repertoire for the viola, the question then arises of how a transcription for viola can be made of a composition for another instrument, where the end result will be a composition that is both idiomatic for the viola and at the same time true to the intentions of the composer.

1.1.1. Background
The research done by this author to compile a catalogue of South African viola compositions, recorded a total number of 127 compositions for the instrument. The catalogue contains compositions written from 1903 to 2009, and includes works for viola as solo instrument, viola with piano, viola as solo instrument with orchestra and viola in ensembles up to string quartet size. See Addendum 1.

The motivation to compile the catalogue, based on the famous Zeyringer Catalogue of viola compositions, was to determine the size of the existing repertoire of South African viola compositions. The monumental work of Franz Zeyringer, Literatur für Viola (second edition, Austria, Schonwetter, 1985), aims to collect and document the whole repertoire written for viola. Compositions for viola from the sixteenth century to the twentieth are organized in different categories that range from the viola as solo instrument, to the viola in all possible combinations with other instruments. In the most recent edition of this catalogue published in 1985, up to 14 000 viola compositions were

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1 In this dissertation the term violist is used as the preferred synonym for the term ‘viola player’.

2 See Catalogue in Appendix 1.
documented. However, none of the South African compositions have been accounted for in the Zeyringer catalogue. Currently, an electronic version of the acquisitions of the Primrose International Viola Archive (PIVA) since the last Zeyringer catalogue publication in 1985, is available at http://music.lib.byu.edu/piva/ZeyringerNP2.htm.

The information used to compile the South African Viola Catalogue was obtained by searching the Web at www.sacomposers.co.za (newly updated as www.africancomposers.co.za), the 2007 and 2009 catalogues that were obtained from the South African Music Rights Association (SAMRO), the Suid-Afrikaanse Musikensiklopedie and by personally contacting composers who are not listed in any of the above-mentioned sources.

In a lecture titled *An Introduction to the Viola Compositions of South Africa* presented by this author at the International Viola Congress in Stellenbosch in July 2009, the summary of the available compositions for viola was given as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works for viola solo</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works for viola and piano</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works for viola in ensemble³</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works for viola and orchestra</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of works</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the fifteen works for viola solo, eight works are of a larger scale and technically more demanding. Of the 37 works for viola and piano, only twelve are larger works, like a Sonata or a two-movement work. The remainders are easier works, educational works or short one-movement works. In the Viola Ensemble category, there are many string quartets. There are also interesting combinations, such as Peter Klatzow’s *The World of*

³ Up to string quartet size
Paul Klee for mezzo soprano, flute, viola and harp, Peter Louis van Dijk’s Duo Leaving Africa (Ways of Parting) for viola and cello, and Hendrik Hofmeyr’s The Death of Cleopatra for soprano, clarinet, viola and piano. Works for viola and orchestra include six concertos and two other works.

Reasons for the limited repertoire are varied. The number of violists in our country is still relatively small, compared to the number of violinists and cellists. The viola is also often still not regarded as a solo instrument by many in the music world, as well as by the general public. This is particularly true in South Africa still, although the viola has grown considerably in stature as a fully-fledged solo exponent of the string family elsewhere in the world. This growth in stature is due to the trailblazing work done for the viola by people such as William Primrose, Lionel Tertis and the many violists of exceptional technical and musical abilities that have followed in their footsteps, namely Kim Kashkashian, Yury Bashmet, Nobuku Imai, Brett Deubner, Lawrence Power, Michael Kugel, Antoine Tamestit, Maxim Vengerov, Scott Slapin, Tanya Solomon, Patricia McCarty, Jutta Puchhammer-Sedilot and David Carpenter – to name only a few.

But this explosion of capable players internationally has not yet inspired South African composers to write for the viola. The predicament of the small number of South African composers that write instrumental concert music as such, combined with the scarcity of funds to commission new works for the viola, make the reasons for the relatively few South African viola compositions self-evident.

1.1.2 Motivation for this study
One of the problems with a limited repertoire for any instrument is that it can become demotivating and uninspiring to play, teach and hear the same compositions all the time. The need for performance material is a recognised reason for the creation of transcriptions as referred to by Kroll (2003: 23), concerning the guitar:

In the 20th Century, the great Guitarist Andres Segovia virtually invented a repertoire for his instrument with his countless transcriptions of works by Bach,
Scarlatti, and other composers. With them, he was able to single-handedly establish the guitar as a viable solo concert instrument.

Transcribed works for the viola can similarly provide a learning and emotive experience for the viola player as well as for his or her audience.

A larger repertoire has the potential to develop the technical aspects of performers and composers alike, and it can contribute to the exploration and unlocking of new sound worlds, technical challenges, discoveries and possibilities, philosophies and cultures. Transcriptions used in teaching can be traced as least as far back as Bach, who made keyboard transcriptions of the Vivaldi violin concerti at the request of Prince Johann Ernst, who was fascinated by the Italian music of that time. The Bach transcriptions brought the Italian music closer to home, and enlarged the repertoire for keyboard instruments.

This study investigates the making of transcriptions as a way to enlarge the repertoire – and specifically the South African repertoire – of the viola. This is one of three avenues for enlarging the viola’s repertoire, the other possibilities being the commissioning of new works from composers who are not violists, and the composing of new works by composers who are also violists. The first two avenues have been fruitfully explored in the twentieth century, at first with Lionel Tertis and William Primrose and currently with Yuri Bashmet, Kim Kashkashian, Nobuko Imai, Lawrence Power, Brett Deubner and many other performers. Examples of well-known artists, who were both violists and composers, would be Paul Hindemith, Benjamin Britten, Josef Smetana, Lillian Fuchs, Rebecca Clarke and Ödön Pártos. Examples of living performer-composers would include Atar Arad, Scott Slapin, Michael Kimber, and Michael Kugel.

The making of transcriptions was chosen because it is simpler, faster, cheaper and less uncertain to follow. When a performer makes a transcription he/she can choose from the existing repertoires of other instruments works that are effective and proven, or unique and interesting in different ways. In this way a performer’s interests and even the interests of pupils and audiences can be incorporated. For the composer the benefit lies in
the possibility of more performances of a particular composition, albeit in a new guise. (Kroll, 2003:21).

The jury, however, is still deliberating in certain circles about the desirability of including transcriptions in recital programs. Violist Paul Doktor feels strongly that there are enough original works for the viola to fill many programs. His concern is that, by using too many transcriptions, “we may not have genuine viola art” (Applebaum, 1972: 222). He feels that the viola is first and foremost an expressive instrument, and that it is undesirable to imitate the virtuoso style of the violin.

However, contemporary violists do include transcriptions in their programs. Compact discs by players like Marcello Defant, Roberto Diaz, Luigi Bianchi, Kim Kashkashian, Yuri Bashmet and many more, contain programs built around transcriptions. The William Primrose transcriptions are even compulsory repertoire during the Primrose Viola Competition. Kroll (2003:26) suggests that there will always be a few performers and scholars who “sniff contemptuously at transcriptions, considering them somehow less worthy than the original composition.” He thinks that they are missing the point, as well as opportunities for rich musical experiences.

However, the transcription of music is not as simple a matter as one might assume. Problems can result from the tensions that exist between the style and intentions of the composer (as perceived by the transcriber) and the need to make an idiomatically successful transcription for the viola. This tension can be illustrated in the history of the Notturno, Op. 42 by Ludwig van Beethoven as discussed by Hess (1952:375). In its original form, this work was published in 1797 by Artaria of Vienna as the String Trio Opus 8. The transcription for viola and piano was most probably made by Ferdinand Ries without Beethoven’s knowledge and was advertised by Hoffmeister of Leipzig, but only after Beethoven wrote in September 1803 to Hoffmeister: “The transcriptions were not made by me, though I did something to improve them. I cannot therefore allow you to say
that I made the arrangements, for that would be a falsehood. I should, for that matter, never have had the time or patience to do it.” (Hess, 1952:375.)

A totally different situation exists regarding the Cello Sonata opus 40 by Dmitri Shostakovich. Composed in 1934 for Shostakovich’s friend, the cellist Viktor Kubatsky, this Sonata was transcribed by Kubatsky himself, with Shostakovich’s approval, for the viola. A second transcription of this Sonata was made by Yevgeny Strakhov, a respected viola teacher in the 1960s and 1970s. The work was performed in the Soviet Union with Shostakovich’s knowledge and approval. Annette Bartholdy, who transcribed, published and recorded the work again in 2003, consulted both the first two transcriptions to produce her final version of it.

Thus, with Beethoven’s Notturno and with Shostakovich’s Cello Sonata we have the composers’ (opposing) voices as arbitrators over different versions of the transcriptions. With the Franck A Major Sonata (originally for violin) we are less fortunate. César Franck himself never saw or heard the first transcription of this work which can nowadays be heard in versions for viola, cello, and flute. Violists such as Reinier Schmidt, Joseph Vieland, Felix Schwartz, and several living performers made either their own transcriptions of this composition or prepared performance scores for their own personal use which deviates from existing transcriptions. We have several transcriptions, but no indication of the composer’s preferences and ideas on these transcriptions, resulting in the problems and tensions already referred to above.

A transcriber of works by a living (South African) composer has the possibility to explore this tension between the style and intentions of the composer and the need to make a successful transcription that is written idiomatically for the viola. In this way the transcriber can learn from the composer and the result can be as close as possible to the 

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5 The well-known Viola Sonata, opus 147, was only composed in 1975.
original. This study will therefore explore ways of integrating the composer’s input into
the process of transcribing and the final product.

1.1.3. Significance of this study
Once the existing database of compositions is verified as complete to date, this
information can be incorporated into the abovementioned Zeyringer catalogue. It will be
beneficial to all scholars, professionals, students and amateurs of the viola to send as
many of the manuscripts of the South African compositions to the Primrose International
Viola Archives (PIVA), residing at the Brigham Young University in Utah.

By creating awareness for the viola as valid solo voice in the musical landscape, the
South African repertoire for the viola can be enlarged. Composers will be made aware of
the need to compose for the viola, and violists will be informed of existing compositions
and be encouraged to incorporate and perform South African compositions in their
programs. When this repertoire is expanded and the works are accepted in the musical
world, successful and useable transcriptions of South African compositions for other
instruments can also benefit.

The works transcribed for this study will enlarge the repertoire of South African viola
compositions. The work done for this dissertation may inspire other South African
violists to undertake similar projects, and composers to compose for the viola.
Furthermore, the present author aims to transcribe more compositions for the viola in
future, building upon the experience gathered during this project.

1.2 Research questions
The main research question is:

How can an existing composition be transcribed in collaboration with the composer?

The secondary questions are as follows:
1. Which aspects of compositions and of idiomatic writing for the viola should be taken into consideration during the transcription process?

2. Which aspects of the specific compositions are identified through analysis and during transcription as relevant for the transcription?

3. Which aspects of the compositions that were not identified by the transcriber, were identified as important by the composer?

4. How does the composers’ input influence specific aspects of the transcription of his own composition by another musician?

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this study was to explore ways of transcribing an existing work in collaboration with the composer.

The secondary aims were as follows:

1. To undertake a study of the literature and conduct interviews with viola players and composers, in order to determine the aspects of compositions and of idiomatic writing for the viola that should be taken into consideration when a work is transcribed for the viola.

2. To analyse\(^6\) and transcribe existing works by a South African composer in order to determine the aspects of the composition that are relevant for the transcription.

3. To conduct interviews with the composer during the transcription in order to identify the aspects of the composition, relevant to the transcription, that were not identified by the transcriber.

4. To incorporate the composer’s input into the making of the transcription.

\(^6\) Results from analysis will not be presented separately. Where certain choices regarding the transcriptions originated from analysis, this will be mentioned.
1.4 Thesis statement
Collaboration between a professional violist with knowledge of successful transcriptions and the composer of a chosen composition for transcription enhances the possibility of an end result that is both idiomatic for the viola and true to the intentions of the composer.

1.5 Research Method

(1) A study of the literature and interviews with viola players and composers were undertaken in order to determine the aspects that should be taken into consideration when a work is transcribed for the viola. Questionnaires were sent out and the data collected.

(2) Two existing works by a South African composer were analysed and transcribed in order to determine the aspects of the compositions that are relevant for the transcription. These works are *Ugubhu (rising and falling... and rising) für Cello Solo* (1996), and *Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe* (1996) by Hans Huyssen.7

(3) Interviews were conducted with the composer during the transcription process, in order to identify the aspects of the compositions, relevant to the transcription, that were not anticipated by the transcriber.

(4) The composer’s input was incorporated into the making of the transcriptions.

1.6 Definition of terms and concepts
During the course of music history, the terms ‘arranging’ and ‘transcribing’ have been used interchangeably, and there still seems to be no agreement regarding the difference between them (Kroll, 2003:22).

**Arranging:**

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7 We chose Huyssen since he is a cellist and a composer with a keen interest in historical and cultural performance practice. Because of his string technique expertise we assume that he is sensitive and knowledgeable concerning idiomatic writing. He also had more than one work suitable for transcription, and that we considered as possible contributions to the South African viola repertoire.
1. “The adaptation of a composition for a medium different from that for which it was originally written, so made that the musical substance remains essentially unchanged.” (Apel, 1983:56.)

2. “The selection and adaptation of a composition or parts of a composition to instruments for which it was not originally designed or for some other use for which it was not at first written.” (Cole: 2009)

**Transcription:**

1. In the Harvard Dictionary, ‘transcription’ cross-references back to ‘arrangement’. The two terms are thus seen as synonyms and are used in an interchangeable fashion.

2. “A written composition that contains some deviation from the original written composition. Usually a transcription is a copy of the composition into a different key or arranged for different instrumentation.” (Cole: 2009)

The well-known arranger Evlyn Howard-Jones summarized the difference between ‘arrangement’ and ‘transcription’, as he saw it: “Arrangements I would call a playing of the notes in another medium, transcriptions a recreation or making-over with regard to their imaginative and creative content. The first is as though one should play the Bach flute sonatas on the violin or the Grieg violin sonatas on the viola, making the necessary adjustments for the change in medium; the second is exemplified by the Liszt Tristan Liebestod, a definite re-making of the orchestral and vocal material into a new piece.” (Howard-Jones, 1935:305)

The term ‘transcription’ will be used throughout this study.

**Idiomatic writing, idiomatic style:**

“A style appropriate for the instrument for which particular music is written.” (Apel, 1983:401.) When writing for instruments, composers must take the technical and sonorous peculiarities, limitations as well as strong aspects of each instrument in account, and exploit that in order to fit music and instrument together for the best outcome.
1.7 Overview of this research report

In the second chapter the results of the literature study and of the interviews and questionnaires are presented. In the third chapter the compositions chosen for transcription are analysed and transcribed and the transcription process and results are presented. In chapter four conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented. The bibliography is presented as the final chapter after which the addenda will follow.
Chapter 2: Idiomatic Transcriptions

In the literature on transcriptions one often reads about ‘idiomatic writing’ or ‘idiomatic transcriptions’, as if the full meanings of these phrases were self-evident. However, a clearer analysis of these concepts for the purposes of this study will be beneficial. The aim of this chapter is therefore to discuss the concept of idiomatic transcriptions as it is explored in the literature and in discussions of existing transcriptions. This literature study constitutes the first part of this chapter. The second part of this chapter discusses the concept of idiomatic transcriptions as evidenced in the interviews and questionnaires that formed part of the empirical research for this study.

2.1 Literature study

Different types of sources were consulted for the literature study. Concerning the first main type – compositions – the viola repertoire by South African composers was collected and categorized in order to establish as a first step the amount of works available for the viola and to form an idea of how South African composers write for the viola. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, it became clear that the viola could benefit from additional repertoire for performance and teaching. It was therefore decided to explore transcriptions as a way of enlargeing the repertoire of the instrument.

In order to identify suitable compositions for transcription, the repertoire for other instruments by South African composers was studied as a second step in the literature study. The two compositions by Hans Huyssen that were chosen, fall into two categories of compositions that have been exploited successfully in the past as sources of transcribed repertoire for the viola, namely compositions for violin and compositions for cello.

The two compositions are *Ugubhu (rising and falling.....and rising) für Cello Solo* (1996), and *Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe* (1996).
"Ugubhu (rising and falling…..and rising) für Cello Solo" (1996) was chosen because a very large number of existing viola transcriptions has been taken from the repertoire originally intended for the cello. The cello and the viola resemble each other in the like-named open strings, albeit an octave apart, as well as all the techniques that are part of the string family’s palette of expression. Both instruments are instruments of choice in the modern idiom, on which compositions originally intended for earlier instruments like the viola da gamba and the arpeggione, are executed. Thus they also share repertoire in this way.

As a third step, compositions that had been successfully transcribed and are being performed regularly were studied in order to determine aspects that were taken into consideration by previous transcribers to make a transcription idiomatically successful and executable on the destined instrument.

In order to transcribe "Ugubhu" (for solo cello) two different viola transcriptions of the Ysaÿe Sonata for solo Cello Opus 28 were studied. The first transcription is by highly respected cellist and scholar, Christian Bellisario. The second transcription is by Scott Michael Schilling, presented in a thesis as part of a Doctorate in the Arts at the University of Cincinnati in 2009. Both transcriptions were made for the viola. Furthermore, the Six Suites for solo Cello by J.S. Bach as transcribed for the viola – well-known works which are performed regularly on the concert stage – were also studied. The Suites are also prescribed works locally and internationally for board examinations, university and conservatoire auditions and viola competitions of the likes of the William Primrose, Yuri Bashmet and Lionel Tertis competitions, to name a few. Several different viola transcriptions of the Six Suites for solo Cello were consulted in order to determine which aspects of transcription were taken into account by the different transcribers.

The second composition of Hans Huyssen that was chosen, is Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe (1996). To inform the transcription process, the viola transcriptions of the Solo Sonatas and Partitas for violin by J S Bach, as well as the Paganini 24 Caprices for solo violin were studied.
The second category of literature sources that was consulted follows a more theoretical approach: instrumentation treatises were studied in order to compare descriptions of the technical and sound characteristics of the instruments involved in the transcription process, because the characteristics of the original of source instrument must still be taken into account when transcribing for the target instrument. Certain decisions must be made, for instance concerning the octave placement of melodies and phrases, or the decision to transcribe a composition a fifth down instead of keeping the original key, as is often the case when works originally intended for the violin are transcribed for the viola.

A third category of literature that was deemed valuable in this study is the opinions and experiences of violists, transcribers and composers (dead and alive). Some players have been documented on this topic in books, and the opinions of others were collected with the help of questionnaires. These interviews will be discussed in section 2.2 of this report.

2.1.1 Sources on transcription

This section of the report takes important questions concerning transcriptions as points of departure in order to structure the discussions on idiomatic transcriptions.

*What is an idiomatic transcription?*

Huron and Berec (2009:103) introduce idiomaticism in music in their study by going back to the Greek root of the word *idiom*. According to them it suggests “something personal, unique or peculiar.” In music, they associate *idiomatic* with “the use of distinctive instrumental resources”. They also point out that the level of performance difficulty of a work is not necessarily directly related to the level of idiomaticism. They define *idiomatic* in the following way (Huron and Berec, 2009:115): “By *idiomatic*, we mean that, of all the ways a given musical goal or effect may be achieved, the method employed by the composer/musician is one of the least difficult. That is, the effect is produced with *comparative* or *relative* ease.”

An idiomatic transcription is a transcription that takes into account all the technical specifications and peculiarities, the acoustic characteristics and the strengths and weaknesses of the instrument for which the transcription is made. According to Apel
writing in idiomatic style can be seen as creating “a style appropriate for the instrument for which particular music is written. To write idiomatically is a matter of prime concern for modern composers, particularly in orchestral scoring, since the quality of the score is judged largely by the degree to which the various parts exploit the technical and sonorous resources of the instruments without exceeding them.”

In order to be able to do this, the transcriber must undertake a thorough study of both the instrument for which the composition was originally written, as well as the instrument for which the composition is transcribed. It is also advisable to study the scores of successful transcriptions that have similar instrumentation of origin and destination. Furthermore, consultation with skilled and respected players of the instruments will ensure a technically and acoustically well-informed and performable end-product. Kosmala (2010:59) feels that one basic principle of a successful transcription is that the end result must sound like the original. This should be taken into account when having to decide, for instance, to reassign part of the melody line to another octave or not, in order to stay within the instrument’s range.

Huron and Berec (2009:104) emphasize the fact that idiomatic properties in music can be regarded as both opportunities and limitations. This can clearly be seen in the fact that composers learn the range of each instrument and the colours and timbres of the different registers in their initial orchestration studies, for instance. These individual ranges and colours unlock a world of compositional possibilities for each instrument and voice, but also clearly exclude that instrument from certain music.

Following this line of deductive reasoning is Kosmalas’ voice again. In his article he states the shortcomings and pitfalls that should be avoided when transcribing for the viola. He also summarizes the recommendations for an effective viola transcription (Kosmala, 2010:61).

1. Make sure the transcription is written idiomatically for the viola and feels good to play on the instrument.

2. Do not necessarily avoid the higher tessitura.
3. Try to keep octave displacement to a minimum.

4. Avoid sudden jumps in register.

5. If you have to modify the original line, do it convincingly and in the style of the composer.

6. If a particular piece won’t work on the viola, abandon it.

7. Always bear the piano part in mind: if you have to transpose it, will the new register create balance problems?

8. Avoid transcribing pieces strongly associated with another instrument.

What are the purposes of transcriptions?

To transcribe works from one medium to another has been a technique utilized by composers, performers and amateur musicians from as early as the fourteenth century to this day (Apel, 1983:56). The reasons for making transcriptions are varied.

By reassigning instrumentation, composers can turn earlier works and material into new compositions. Composers use their own earlier material, as well as compositions of other composers. This practice can be seen quite clearly in the sixteen works for harpsichord as well as the three works for organ, dating from J. S. Bach’s Weimar period. All these works are free transcriptions of violin concertos by Vivaldi, Marcello, Telemann, Prince Johann Ernst and unknown composers (Kroll, 2003: 23). Paul (1953:306) quoted Tovey as saying that “Bach wrote on the principle, not that music is written for instruments but that instruments (including the human voice) are made for music”. Huron and Berec (2009:104) make an interesting supporting contribution explaining how a passage can be playable on a variety of musical instruments, thereby identifying a wider notion of instrumental idiom. However, these idiomatic similarities are not always obvious. If we reconsider the organ transcriptions that Bach made of the Vivaldi violin Concertos, certain idiomatic affinities only becomes obvious at closer scrutiny. The long melodic lines in the violin version are equally effective when played on the organ, while the alternating figures between two strings (bariolage), can be imitated well using two organ
manuals. Bach is seen by Tovey as “the master that achieved the most astonishing translations from one medium to another, transcribing concerto movements into great choruses, and conversely turning arias into slow movements of concertos” (Paul, 1953:306). But borrowing from earlier works at the time was not confined to J. S. Bach only. Bach’s own sons borrowed from their father, and Handel was a prolific borrower of works as well (Hyatt King, 1942:41).

Economic reasons can be a motivation for making transcriptions, as the same composition can in this way be reused in more publications. (Hyatt King, 1942:41, Kroll 2003:22, Huron & Berec, 2009:119.) More versions of a work also ensure more opportunities for performance and exposure for the composer (Kroll 2003:21).

Another very practical reason for the need to transcribe works for different instrument combinations is the availability of instruments and instrumentalists to perform the works. J. S. Bach for instance, wrote works for viola d’amore, but for the second performance, no viola d’amore was available. The same practice can be seen today in music for ‘flexi-ensemble’ in the educational sector. Different instruments can substitute each other for parts, depending on the availability of instruments. There are even scores by mainstream composers that suggest a substitute instrument when the instrument that the part was intended for might not be available. An example would be the Karl Jenkins Stabat Mater that substitutes the traditional Arab Urdu with a cor anglais as an alternative option. The similarity of sound quality and instrument character were the main factors taken into consideration concerning the choice of substitute instrument.

Composers function in a social structure that has cultural needs and developments unique to the time, for instance the spread of the modern piano as popular household instrument (Howard-Jones, 1935: 307). This sparked the transcription of famous instrumental, operatic and orchestral works for performance on the piano. Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt and Mozart are but a few of the composers that domesticated and popularized their compositions by transcribing for piano four hands, for instance (Howard-Jones, 1935:308). Strictly speaking these can be seen as ‘piano reductions’ of orchestral and chamber works, but the fact remains that a transfer to a new medium took place, and thus
these new works can be considered as transcriptions. In this way, music was made more accessible to the person on the street for practical domestic entertainment (Brent-Smith, 1922:169; Hyatt King, 1942:42; Kroll, 2003:25). Warrack (1944:361) labels these transcriptions ‘utility arrangements’. In this way, transcriptions were another way to generate income for composers.

A strong educational motivation for transcription also existed, and still exists. Composers like Mozart, Haydn and Schumann wrote out compositions of their predecessors in a form different from the original, as part of their training in composition (Hyatt King, 1942: 41, 42; Kroll, 2003: 23). On a more instrument-focused educational level, viola soloist and pedagogue Patricia McCarty argues the necessity of expanding viola students’ scope and talent for musical expression beyond the technical skill level (McCarty, 2001:992). She promotes the use of transcriptions of world music for the viola (amongst other works), for this purpose. She also mentions the accepted practice of teachers adapting folk, fiddle and jazz music for their students because young students enjoy learning their instrument by playing music that is familiar to them.

Performers, on the other hand, decide to transcribe for their instrument for other reasons. The main driving force is often a desire to be able to play their favourite music on the instrument of their choice, as so unambiguously stated by the violist William Primrose.

Concerning my own transcriptions, there were those which were fashioned out of envy, so to speak. I envied the cellist his spinning of song in the Nocturne from the Borodin String Quartet No. 2. I envied Miss Bidú Sayão in that wondrous long line of melody with which she astonished us all at the time in the Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 (quoted in Dalton 1988: 184).

A desire to please the audience by including well-known works in the programme can also be a consideration. In the case of instruments with a smaller repertoire, the creation of new repertoire can be a third legitimate and noble motivation (Kroll 2003: 23). In his book My Viola and I, (1974:161-162) pioneer violist Lionel Tertis expresses himself as follows on this topic:
[Once] you become a viola player one of your most important duties is to strive to enlarge the library of solo viola music, by fair means or foul. Cajole your composer friends to write for it, raid the repertory of the violin, cello or any other instrument, and arrange and transcribe works from their literature suitable for your viola. The Pecksniffian attitude that it is sacrilege to transpose works from the original to another medium is fast disappearing. I have never had a qualm about making arrangements myself, providing of course that they sound well on the viola…. My urge to add to the library of viola music has always been strengthened by the fact that the great masters themselves rearranged no end of their works, for all sorts of instruments and combinations.

A very prominent exponent of the viola in Russia, Vadim Borisovsky, arranged, transcribed and edited more than 250 compositions for viola and viola d’amore.

Kosmala (2010:59) also re-emphasizes the fact that “the violin’s larger relative has at last achieved recognition as solo instrument”. The many transcriptions for the viola that have seen the light has been a contributing factor as well as a testimony to this fact. The accepted and respected place of transcriptions in the viola repertoire oeuvre is emphasized by the deliberate inclusion of several different transcription categories in the Table of Contents of the Literatur für Viola, 1985 of Franz Zeyringer. This catalogue is also available in electronic format.  

Performers may also have the need to show their familiarity with and expertise on their instrument. In cases like this, the performer will deviate from a straightforward note-for-note transposition of a work. Virtuoso passages and material like double stops, impressive bow techniques and other embellishments, as well as advanced techniques that are idiomatic to the instrument, will be incorporated to entertain and delight the listener. Melodies can be reassigned to registers on the instrument that gives new colour and meaning to the music. The many transcriptions for piano by Liszt and Busoni spring

http://music.lib.byu.edu/piva/ZeyringerNP2.htm
to mind. For the viola, the William Primrose transcription of the Weber *Andante* and *Rondo Ungarese* is an example.
Which compositions can be transcribed and why?

According to Schilling (2009:16) a transcriber should be able to answer important questions when deciding to make a transcription for a particular instrument. Schilling’s questions can be paraphrased as follows.

Is the music chosen for the instrument to be transcribed for, an appropriate choice? Even though the performer might be convinced that the work to be transcribed will not lose any compositional credibility during the process, he/she must still consider whether the selected piece suits the sonority, role and character of the new instrument. If the answers are affirmative, the next questions will concern the kind of contribution the new transcription will bring to the existing repertoire of the instrument.

Does it expand the existing repertoire? Does it fill a need for more works for a specific historical period or does it make a cultural contribution? Is the transcription going to be solid enough to be utilized in concert programmes? Can this new work be used as a pedagogical tool?

Concerning the transcriptions chosen for this study, the answers to all these questions are affirmative.

Kosmala (2010:59) feels that it is not advisable to transcribe works that has a very strong association with the instrument it was originally intended for, for example the *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* by Edgar Elgar, or the *Concerto no.3 in G major for Violin and Orchestra* by W A Mozart. Although both have been transcribed for the viola, the transcriptions have been received with mixed feelings due to the strong tradition of the source instrument that is associated with these works.

2.1.2 Existing transcriptions

A few existing transcriptions for the viola were studied in order to further discuss the concept of idiomatic transcriptions. Transcriptions for the viola are sourced from the repertoire of various other instruments. Music for instruments as closely related as the violin or the cello are transcribed, but also music originally written for wind instruments (especially repertoire originally intended for the clarinet and the horn), music originally
intended for voice (for example the very recently released CD “Asturiana” by Kim Kashkashian of Spanish and Argentinian folk songs), as well as music intended for the keyboard. A few examples of transcriptions from the different categories are given in table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Transcriptions for viola taken from the repertoire of other instruments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violin Solo</th>
<th>Violin and Piano</th>
<th>Violin Concerto</th>
<th>Cello Solo</th>
<th>Cello and Piano</th>
<th>Cello Concerto</th>
<th>Keyboard</th>
<th>Other (Arpeggione, Bassoon, Horn, Clarinet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H Biber, Passacaglia</td>
<td>T A Vitali, Chaconne</td>
<td>J S Bach, Concerto in a minor</td>
<td>E Ysaye, Sonata op. 28</td>
<td>G Fauré, Elegy op. 24, Sicilienne op. 78</td>
<td>A Dvořák, Concerto op 104</td>
<td>R Schumann, Adagio and Allegro op.70 (horn)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Paganini, 24 Caprices op.1</td>
<td>H Wieniawski, 2 Caprices</td>
<td>J S Bach, Concerto in E flat</td>
<td>D Shostakovich, Sonata op.40</td>
<td>E Elgar, Concerto</td>
<td>F David, Concertino op 12 (bassoon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Wieniawski, Studies and Caprices op.10, op 18</td>
<td>N Paganini, La Campanella, Moto Perpetuo</td>
<td>C P E Bach, Concerto in a minor</td>
<td>L v Beethoven, Sonata in G op.5 no.2</td>
<td>J Haydn, Concerto in D</td>
<td>C M v Weber, Andante and Hungarian Rondo op.33 (bassoon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G P Telemann, 12 Fantasias</td>
<td>F Delius, Sonata no 2, Sonata no 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J Brahms, Sonata in f minor, Sonata in E-flat major, op.120 (originally for clarinet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of this study, however, only works that will enhance our understanding of the idiomatic transcriptions of works originally for violin and for cello were studied.
Transcribing from cello to viola

The cello repertoire is a very good source of potential transcriptions for the viola, as the violoncello and the viola are the instruments closest to each other in the modern string instrument family, in that they share the same tuning for the open strings (cello an octave lower), as well as all the idiomatic similarities in technique that playing a stringed instrument entails. The differences lie primarily in the fingering of passages, bowing adaptations, and some changes in register for melodies. Music from the Baroque era transcribed from cello to viola also utilizes a four-finger fingering system, but the spacing between the fingers differs considerably due to the difference in size between the instruments, and the spacing difference as result. As thumb position playing is a later development in cello playing, it is a technique that has to be taken in account in music in the later periods, if the transcription is taken from that period. Thumb position gives the cello an ‘extra’ finger, and this can make possible the playing of chords that might have to be adapted in the transcription to the viola.

Kosmala (2010:59) is of the opinion that cello repertoire seems to be the most favourable source of compositions to be adapted to performance on the viola. According to him, the advantage originates from the fact that the original key of the composition does not have to be altered. The solo line only needs to be adapted by deciding on the register in which the melody should be played. Lee (2005:11) also agrees with this. He adds that this close relationship has the added advantage that cello works can be performed on the viola without displaying balance problems with accompaniment, and often very little of the original work needs to change in the transcription. Although neither of the two works being transcribed by the author for this thesis has accompaniment, it is worthy to note that Barrett (1978:3) emphasizes the importance of “the degree of transparency of the accompaniment”. He aptly states that “regardless of how idiomatic the writing may be, the performer should not be required to fight for his life on the concert stage” (Barrett, 1978:3). This last statement was made concerning solo instrument with accompaniment, but it is equally true for transcriptions of compositions for solo instrument. Works that are written with an awareness of technical limitations and comfort, are easier to perform,
and also has a better chance of becoming part of the mainstream performance repertoire. The study by Huron and Berec (2009) takes the conceptual distinction between difficulty and idiomaticism as a foundation for their model developed to characterize idiomatic organization in music.

The Six Suites for Cello solo by J S Bach were the first compositions that were consulted, as they are so strongly entrenched in the repertoire of viola students and performing violists. Barrett (1978:126) accounts for nine different transcriptions in print. However, many more transcriptions by other violists have since seen the light. Of these, the scholarly publications by Christine Rutledge and Stéphane Wiener were consulted together with the editions transcribed and edited by Milton Katims and Simon Rowland-Jones. The Wiener edition contains a facsimile of the Anna Magdalena Bach manuscript as well as the manuscript of Westphal. The viola transcriptions were compared to the versions for violoncello solo, edited by Richard Sturzenegger, and by Pierre Fournier.

During the first analysis of the Suites, it is evident that the transcription of the first five suites to the viola, presented very few obstacles. It was not necessary to change any keys, as the works were basically just repositioned an octave higher. Fingering differs between the publications for viola, but this involves mainly editorial suggestions. Milton Katims (1982: Editor’s note to Six Cello Suites, IMC) mentions that the fingering he chooses is merely suggestions concerning that which suits his hands and his instrument. William Primrose (1976:178), however, feels very strongly in his transcriptions that the fingering suggested by him, must be followed to the letter: “…I find it disconcerting when my unorthodoxies are erased by other teachers, and a more respectable fingering substituted without thought having been given to the reason behind the unorthodoxies.”

He re-emphasizes this point of view in an interview with David Dalton (Dalton 1988:122). “I exhort the student nevertheless, if he would care, to persist in the fingerings suggested. The result will please him with the clarity that such deftness procures.” However, later on in the same publication and discussion, he admits that, due to anatomical differences between players’ left hands, sometimes deviations from his fingering will be necessary. But he is adamant that the viola should not be approached as
“an overgrown fiddle, tuned a fifth lower than the conventional one.” (Dalton 1988: 114)

This approach to applying effective and idiomatic fingering to music on the viola is also valuable to transcriptions for the viola from the violin repertoire. It will be kept into consideration when discussing that group of transcriptions as well.

Christine Rutledge published three different volumes of the Six Suites. In Volume 1, she provides an interpretation of the markings in the Anna Magdalena Bach manuscript copy. Decisions on bowings and fingering in Volume 1 were made using a Baroque viola and bow. She aims at providing alternate bowings that will also work on the modern viola, played with a modern bow, “but at the same time maintain a close connection to period style” (Rutledge, 2007: Preface to the Suites). She too feels that the fingering provided, was taken with a well-informed academic approach. Volume Two is a facsimile of the Anna Magdalena manuscript, and Volume Three is an unmarked copy that can be used by the performer to provide their own markings, if they so wish.

In the Rutledge edition as well as the Wiener edition, for Suite Five the original scordatura tuning of the strings is suggested, (C-G-D-G) while Katims uses the conventional tuning of C-G-D-A. Rutledge prefers the scordatura in order to play the chords and passage works as Bach intended. She feels that this tuning “makes for wonderful colours and effects.” (Rutledge, 2007: Preface to the Suites.) The Baroque composers were influenced in their choice for a specific tuning by mainly key and sonority. If the tuning of the instrument were changed, chords, unisons and notes that were normally not possible, became possible. In this way scordatura could also be utilized as a powerful rhetorical tool in the music. Bach wrote his Fifth Cello Suite in handgrip notation. By tuning the top string down from A to G, the two G strings reinforced each other in resonance. This tuning for cello was commonly used for solo repertoire in those times (Tarling 2000:197). It will thus be important to consider this when the Fifth Suite is transcribed and performed on the viola.

The Sixth Suite was originally written for piccolo cello with five strings, which makes the work very difficult to play on modern instruments. Rutledge transposes the Sixth Suite from the original D major to G major, in order to retain the bariolage bowing
effects that were possible on the five-string instrument. Katims retains the original key of D major. Sections of the work fall in the very high tessitura as a result of this – a register that does not always display the unique sonority of the viola favourably. This last treatment of the Sixth Suite was not approved of by Primrose. He is of the opinion that the higher tessitura of the viola does not represent the best sound register of the viola, and that the listener will not experience a pleasant sound when the violist “stay up in the ionosphere and stay there for a considerable length of time” (Dalton 1988:187).

To transcribe the Sixth Suite down the interval of a fifth and thus change the key from D major to G major – as is done in publications such as the one published by Ricordi and edited by violist Guiranna (1962), and the Linnett Press edition by Rutledge (2007) – seems to solve this problem.

Sometimes the change of the key of a composition is met with resistance from players and listeners that possess absolute pitch. For this reason, Primrose transcribed only the first five suites and left the sixth suite out of his publication. This argument would not have held water in the earlier music history, however, as a fixed pitch did not exist in the 18th Century. Key was chosen by composers for certain affects, and if the key changed, the affect of the music also changed with it (Tarling 2000: 6, 7). Composers like Bach did change keys when they transcribed music from one instrument to another.

Another example of a cello work transcribed for the viola, is the Ysaïe Sonata for Solo Cello, Opus 28. Two transcriptions were studied. In the first transcription by cellist Christian Bellisario (2005), it is proposed that various indications suggest that the work was related to the viola from the beginning stages, even though the work was eventually published for the violoncello. According to him, the fingering that remained in the manuscript, excludes the use of the thumb position, even in high position passages and in passages where it would have been the quickest and easiest solution on the cello. (Bellisario, 2005:4). Difficult passages have fingerings that use mainly four fingers, including some extensions. It seems that Ysaïe used the viola to assist him in the composition process of this work. The musical text in the beginning of the third movement In modo di Recitativo, is much more suitable on the viola when realized in a
lighter sound register. And in the fourth movement *Finale con brio*, the polyphonic passages are much more comfortable on the viola than on the cello. Bellisario (2005:4) describes the viola as “the evident midpoint between the violin and the cello”, with its peculiar characteristics, the tuning (an octave higher than the cello) and the ‘manoeuvrability’ identical to that of the violin. By pointing out the close proximity of the cello and the viola in this work, we can deduct that a transcription of cello repertoire for the viola can be a feasible exercise with positive outcomes. Schilling (2009) describes step by step how he transcribed this same sonata from cello to viola. These steps will be discussed later, as they are compared to the present writers’ own.

**Transcribing from violin to viola**

The process of transcribing violin repertoire to the viola seems to be more problematic, as becomes evident in the words of György Ligeti in the Preface to his *Sonata for Viola solo* (Schott, 1994).

> The viola is seemingly just a big violin but tuned a fifth lower. In reality the two instruments are worlds apart. They both have three strings in common, the A, D and G string. The high E-string lends the violin a powerful luminosity and metallic penetrating tone which is missing in the viola. The violin leads, the viola remains in the shade. In return, the low C-string gives the viola a unique acerbity, compact, somewhat hoarse, with the aftertaste of wood, earth and tannic acid.

Primrose (Dalton, 1988:186) emphasizes the difference in sound production between the violin and the viola as being a direct result of the notable difference in size, the thickness in strings on the viola, and, according to him, the ‘recalcitrance’ of the instrument. Palumbo (1984) also gives prominence to these differences between the violin and the viola, and comes to the same conclusion that ‘the viola is not just a big violin’. Viola technique can thus not be approached or taught as such.

The main issues that must be addressed in adapting works from violin to viola are fingering and bowing. Firstly, fingering on the viola can be different than fingering on the violin due to physically bigger stretches on the fingerboard. Harmonics can be utilized on
the viola because of longer string length, with the result of good resonance. The use of open strings on the viola is also more acceptable, due to a more subdued sound quality. There is also the added difficulty of playing the interval of a perfect fifth on two adjacent strings with the same finger, especially in the higher positions due to the wider distance between strings. This becomes important in chordal writing. Intervals larger than an octave must be examined carefully for playability due to the larger size of the instrument.

Bowing technique that must be adapted in certain instances is the next.

Barrett (1997, 107) stresses that a viola that is played with the bow in the same way as a violin, would produce a ‘shallow, flautato tone that is unpleasant and unsatisfying’. He concludes with a beautiful summary of the viola as seen from three different perspectives, when the instrument is thoroughly understood, mastered and played with respect.

Once all obstacles are dealt with, the viola becomes in the composer’s words “an ideal medium for the expression of life’s innermost feelings” – in the audience’s response, “unmatched richness and beauty of tone”; and in the violist’s reaction, “a perfect instrument for tapping the reservoir of man’s culminating artistic achievement.”

**Sonatas and Partitas for violin**

It is interesting to note that there is a gradual change in approach towards the desirability of performing the Bach *Sonatas and Partitas* for violin on the viola. Studying the opinions of players again, Primrose (1904 – 1982) feels very strongly against performing the Bach *Sonatas and Partitas*, as have already been mentioned (Dalton 1988:185). However, viola players like Lillian Fuchs (1902 – 1995) and Lionel Tertis (1876 -1975) that were contemporaries of Primrose, did perform – and even recorded – the *Sonatas and Partitas*, or parts thereof, with great success.

Furthermore, the present-day viola performer-composer Scott Slapin recently became the first violist in history to record the complete set of *Sonatas and Partitas* on the viola. He has already issued two different recording sets – one in 1998, and the most recent in 2006. Slapin (2006) feels that the *Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin* “are
well suited to the deeper, more introspective nature of the viola.” He, in contrast with Kosmala, Lee and Barrett, is of the opinion that the viola is technically closer to the violin than to the cello, and thus he prefers the Sonatas and Partitas to the transcribed Cello Suites as the more desirable solo Bach works to be studied and performed on the viola.

But the strongest proof of the universal acceptability of the transcribed Sonatas and Partitas is probably the fact that these works are part of the prescribed repertoire to be performed in the Lionel Tertis, William Primrose and the Yuri Bashmet International Viola Competitions.

Three manuscripts were consulted to make comparisons between the transcriptions. The Bärenreiter Urtext edition (2001) was used for the violin Sonatas and Partitas. For the viola transcriptions two editions were compared to the violin version – the Ricordi edition (1990), edited by E. Polo, and the International Music Company edition (1951), edited by Meyer-Vieland. In both the viola editions all the Sonatas and Partitas are adapted by transposing the complete works down the interval of a fifth. The keys are therefore a fifth lower. Technically, the works lie ‘under the hand’ on the viola, just as they do on the violin. This approach of adapting the entire composition down the interval of a fifth was also followed in transcribing the Responsorium for solo violin to the viola. The end result is also a work that is technically comfortable on the viola.

**Paganini Caprices**

Three editions were used to compare the original violin Caprices to the viola transcriptions. The 24 Paganini Caprices for Solo Violin, published by Edition Peters (1988) was edited by Klaus Hertel. Extensive editorial notes are available in the back of the book to assist the player in the interpretation and technical execution of the Caprices. The transcription for viola published by International Music Company New York, transcribed by L. Raby, was used to compare the transcription to the original. Another edition that was consulted was the six Caprices (numbers 9, 13, 14, 16 and 18) that were transcribed by Renzo Ferraguzzi and published by Editio Ricordi (1984).
Firstly, I again compared the key signatures and found that all the Caprices are just adapted to a key signature a fifth lower, like the *Bach Sonatas and Partitas*. This practice of lowering the key signature of the original violin composition a perfect fifth, and thus physically ‘transplanting’ a work as complete entity from the violin to the viola, is seen in many instances of transcribing violin works to the viola. It is especially common practice in educational material as well as in etudes and other technical exercise material that was initially intended for study on the violin. This started happening because more and more students actually start out on the viola as their primary instrument, mainly because of the present availability of fractional size student violas with a resonant sound of good quality. Whereas in the past, violists had their initial studies start on the violin, and then later transferred to the viola, this is not necessarily the case anymore. The important etudes of Mazas, Kreutzer, Dont, Sevcik and Rode spring to mind.

Secondly, different opinions of various players about the transcribed *Caprices* were consulted. There are, as with the topic of transcriptions of the Bach *Cello Suites*, a whole range of opinions on the transcribed Paganini *Caprices*. It seems that, the more competent and technically able the violist, the more positive the view taken on these virtuoso works. The opinions also come out progressively more in favour of the transcribed *Caprices*, as one follows the progression of opinion further into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The reasons for this can be varied. There are many more viola players that fall into the virtuoso category than before, as many more string players choose the viola as solo instrument. The standard of tuition is also rising all the time, with the result that many more viola players of a high technical standard are produced. The performing of transcriptions as part of programs is more acceptable than before. All three of these reasons can be supported by the high amount of recordings available by very able violists, as well as performing solo violists that has very prolific and extensive concert careers all over the world.
William Primrose was of the opinion that: “If you have the technique to play them, go ahead and do it” (Primrose 1976:185). Fingering of the Caprices played on the viola, should be adapted, according to him. He uses ample harmonics in the 5th caprice. Primrose feels strongly about using the open strings on the viola, and thus activating and exploiting the richness of the overtones of the viola.

Since the violist Paul Doctor has a very cautionary approach towards transcriptions for the viola, it will come as no surprise that he views the transcriptions of the Paganini Caprices also with reservation. He concedes that the works have value as technique builders and that the Caprices are excellent ‘show-off pieces’, but his main concern is that the genuine sound quality and inherent character of the viola is not taken into consideration in these transcribed works and that ‘true viola art’ will be compromised in playing these works (Applebaum 1972: 222).

However, recently the young virtuoso violist Scott Slapin became the second violist after Emanuel Vardi (Slapin’s teacher) to record the complete set of 24 Caprices on the viola, according to the recordings list of the New York Viola Society. Being fully aware of the controversy that this recording could bring about, he posted two very opposing reviews of the recording on his website. The first review by violist Julian Fischer raves about the boldness of Slapin recording these works. Fischer feels very strongly about the educational value of this set. He recommends that these recordings should be in every violist’s library, as “there are many violists who impose limits on what they can and cannot do”. In the second review posted on this website, double-bassist Mike D. Brownell however, makes no secret of the fact that he found this transcription and performance “painful to listen to”.

Slapin’s own opinion about playing the Caprices on the viola is an informed and level-headed one. He divides the Caprices in three groups: the first group (numbers 5, 10, 13,______________________

9 http://www.nyvs.org/recordings/composers/composerindexp.htm

10 Scott Slapin, “ Paganini’s 24 Caprices,” Scott Slapin’s Official Website; available from http://www.scottslapin.com/; Internet; accessed 11 October 2010
1, 20 and 24) are the “great concert pieces, with musical appeal”, according to him. The second group is the middle group, represented by numbers 11, 19, 17 and 23. They are technically even more difficult than the first group, but still works on the viola. Number 19 even showcases the characteristic C-string sound of the viola. The third group is what Slapin labels “drifting into enemy territory”. The remaining Caprices like numbers 8 and 12 are very difficult, use very unresponsive registers of the viola (according to Slapin himself), and some are simply too awkward on the viola. Slapin is well aware that not all the Caprices are well-suited to the viola. He concedes that different players with different strengths will come to conclusions different from his. Scott Slapin feels that the Caprices are a valuable source of technical studies to all violists, apart from the fact that some of them can be applied as great concert pieces.

2.1.3 Instrumentation and orchestration treatises
The string group as one of the four instrument choirs of the orchestra, is hailed as a “dominant element of the symphony orchestra” (Piston, 1982:3), and according to Adler (1989:8), was the first group to be fully exploited. One of the reasons for this is the great number of special properties they have in common (Adler, 1989:8). For the sake of this study it is important to note the similarities between these chordophones. Not only will we find that there are certain techniques that are similarly executed, but the construction of the string instruments are also identical. This results in a homogeneous tone colour throughout the family. The tone colour variations in the different registers are far more subtle than in the winds or brass sections (Adler, 1989:9), a factor that strengthens the desirability of intergroup transcribing.

2.1.3.1 The relationship between cello and viola

a) Similarities

The strings are tuned the interval of a fifth apart, albeit with the viola tuned an octave higher than the cello.

The names of the open strings of the viola and the cello are the same, albeit an octave apart.
The basic bowing technique and effects are the same on the two instruments.

b) Differences

Fingering differs greatly between the two instruments, due to the difference in instrument size and the resulting difference in string length.

The playing position of the two instruments is different. The cello rests on a peg on the floor, vertically supported between the players’ knees, whereas the viola player supports his instrument on the shoulder and under the chin, like a violinist.

The lowest strings on the cello are located to the right, whereas on the viola the lower strings are located to the left. This will affect bowing direction.

The considerable longer string length, as well as the considerably thicker strings on the cello than on the viola, has a marked influence on resonance and sound character that must be taken into account in the transcription of works from the cello to the viola. This will be seen later in the transcription of *Ugubhu.*

Due to greater string length and the position of the instrument, the cello has the added fingering possibility of thumb position. This ‘extra finger’ gives other possibilities in chordal writing on the cello, which must be taken into account.

2.1.3.2 The relationship between violin and viola

a)Similarities

The strings are tuned the interval of a fifth apart, albeit with the viola tuned a fifth lower than the violin.

The left hand technique and possibilities are basically the same on the viola as on the violin.

Bowing action, playing technique and effects are basically the same.

The viola resembles the violin in playing technique, with a few differences.
The playing position and technique of the two instruments are the same (Adler 1989:69).

b) Differences

The viola can differ considerably in size from the violin, which influences physical factors for the player.

The left hand of the violist has to stretch more to get intervals in tune.

Tension in the left hand is also greater, especially in the higher positions.

It is more difficult to play in the high positions of the viola than on the violin, due to the longer and broader dimensions of the instrument.

The sound quality of the viola is darker and more sombre than that of the violin.

2.1.4 Summary

In this section of the dissertation similarities in opinion and information between the different sources are highlighted.

*What is an idiomatic transcription?*

By studying the literature, other successful transcriptions, instrument treatises and the discussions of other existing transcriptions, the clearest description of the idiomaticism of a transcription is by Huron and Berec (2009:115): “By *idiomatic*, we mean that, of all the ways a given musical goal or effect may be achieved, the method employed by the composer/musician is one of the least difficult. That is, the effect is produced with *comparative* or *relative* ease.” Added to this is the viewpoint of Kosmala that the end result should sound like the original, it should feel good on the instrument and use all the registers of the viola. By studying the technical possibilities, fingering practices, excerpts and examples of how music is notated and used in viola repertoire in the orchestration and instrument treatises, informed choices can be made in the transcription process.
What are the purposes of transcriptions?

New compositions are created by changing the instrumentation of the existing compositions. Transcriptions can be economically beneficial for the composer. By creating more instrument versions of a work, more performance opportunities for the work arises. This also results in more exposure for the composer. Transcriptions are necessary in the practical situation that arises when an instrument is not available for a performance or group and has to be replaced by another instrument. Cultural needs and developments make the transcription of works necessary – the so-called ‘utility arrangements’.

Educational needs are a very strong motivation for transcriptions, especially the earlier technical schools and etudes initially written for violin. These works are transcribed for viola and are widely in use. The need of performers to play certain works stimulates the making of transcriptions. There are also many compositions where a composer-performer would choose a popular existing work or melody and expand it into a transcription with virtuosic display and creativity. Liszt, Wieniawski, Kreisler and Primrose are good examples.

Which compositions can be transcribed and why?

The Schilling list of questions is a good point of departure to determine if a work is a good candidate for transcription. Firstly, the chosen work must suit the character of the instrument transcribed for. Secondly, the transcription must make a contribution to one of, or several, of the following fields; historic, cultural, educational and performance or recital repertoire.

Kosmala feels that the choice of works to transcribe must be influenced by whether a work has a strong association with a given instrument. A transcription has a smaller chance to be accepted if the original work has a strong initial instrument origin.

By studying existing transcriptions and also taking note of the categories from which transcriptions for the viola is mostly made, it can be seen that works chosen is from instrument repertoire that idiometrically and technically resemble the viola (the string
family, and mostly cello and violin repertoire). The other group of works from which transcriptions are made very often, resembles the viola in sound character and timbre (clarinet, horn and voice repertoire).

2.2 Interviews and Questionnaires

During the research process about transcriptions for the viola, the author conducted several interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted in person, and others via electronic mail. Four different sets of questionnaires were completed according to the professional groups of people that will most likely be involved with transcriptions or the transcription process. The questionnaires can be viewed in Appendix 3.

Two terms that were used in the questionnaires that need explanation, are ‘International composer’ and ‘South African composer’. Since the reason for the dissertation germinated in the desire to determine the state of viola compositions available in South Africa written by South African composers, a ‘South African composer’ would thus be a composer either resident in South Africa, naturalized to the country or of South African birth but living in a country other than South Africa. That includes living composers, as well as deceased composers. ‘International composer’ would thus be a composer, living or dead, that falls outside the definition of ‘South African composer’.

In South Africa, the violists themselves where interviewed. Questionnaires were also sent to composers and arrangers. The international players that were not contacted via electronic mail were interviewed at the 2009 International Viola Congress held in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

A summary of the questions and responses follows.
2.2.1 Questions to composers in South Africa

1. Basic information

1a. Have you already transcribed some of your own works from one instrument or medium to another?

Of the five respondents, three composers had transcribed their own works from one instrument to another.

1b. What is the names of the works and which instruments are involved?

Three of the composers were very sure of titles of works that were transcribed and instruments involved. One respondent, who composes for and arranges in the more commercial field, replied that the amount of works that have been adapted to different instruments were too many to mention.

1c. Are there any other works?

Not all transcribed works mentioned were viola-specific.

2. Factors

2a. If Yes to 1(b), which factors do you keep in mind, or see as important while doing the transcription.

During the interviews, the range of the instrument was mentioned as first factor or aspect to be taken into consideration. Two of the respondents that had transcribed their own works form cello to viola, offered interesting information. Respondent 1 stressed that the transcriptions from cello to viola were more problematic than transcriptions from violin to viola. He suggested rearranging chords to be more playable on the viola, octave changes to place the transcription in the most favourable registers of the viola and the changing of harmonics when required. He had no objections against changing the key of the piece. Respondent 2 added that if the original was a work for cello and piano, and the transcription was intended for viola and piano, registers chosen on both instruments would have to be adapted in order to optimize the transparency of the music. Clashes
where both instruments have melody in the same register should be handled with sensitivity.

2b. Can you give specific examples of passages in the works, techniques you use, or problems you have encountered during the transcription process?

All the respondents except two were vague in answering this question. The techniques that they used in order to optimize their transcriptions for viola were already reported under question 2a.

3. Reasons for transcriptions

3a. What are your reasons for making these transcriptions?

Two of the respondents replied that they were requested by performers to make the transcriptions. One respondent added that he used transcription to make music accessible.

3b. Do you think transcriptions contribute to the enlargement of the repertoire of the instruments/groups being transcribed for?

All respondents thought that transcriptions make a positive contribution by enlarging repertoire. One respondent had reservations about the quality of transcriptions. According to her, the transcription process should ideally be a process in which the performer and the composer are interacting, to ensure an outcome of the highest quality.

4. Models of transcriptions of other works

4a. Have you studied existing transcriptions of works by other composers (which you have not transcribed)?

Three of the respondents studied transcriptions by other people. The Tertis transcription of the Elgar Cello Concerto was highly recommended, as well as the different viola transcriptions of the Bach Suites for Solo Cello.
4b. If Yes to 4a, what did you learn from that?

One respondent said that by studying other people’s transcriptions, one can see a person’s understanding of the instrument being transcribed for. Other remarks mentioned octave transposition, the melody line being adapted to another register during transcription, and the factors that were mentioned under 2a.

5. Transcriptions of own works by other people.

5a. Are there any of your own compositions that have been transcribed by other people? Give examples.

Only one respondent could specifically name a work that was transcribed by someone else. She also felt strongly that permission for a transcription should be obtained and then also a final approval. The other respondents either didn’t have any transcriptions of their works by other people, or they were unsure.

5b. If Yes to 5a, what are your impressions of the transcription (s).

No answers were offered to this question.

2.2.2 Questions to arrangers in South Africa

1. Basic information

1. Do you make transcriptions of compositions from one medium /instrument to another?

Both respondents made transcriptions. They were required to do it very often, but not necessarily viola-specific transcriptions. The one arranger was also a viola performer, which made her contribution and knowledge especially relevant.

1b. What are the names of the works and which instruments are involved?

No specific titles were given.

1c. Are there any other works?

The works that were mentioned were orchestrations of existing music.
2. Factors

2a. Which factors do you keep in mind during the transcription process, to ensure a successful transcription?

To quote respondent 1: “The final product must always sound as if it was originally written for the instrument transcribed for.” This reply was given in many forms by players, composers and arrangers alike. Respondent 2, being a violist, emphasized the importance of voicing to maximize the violas’ tonal range, allowing for ample contrasts in range, articulation and techniques. She also approached her transcriptions from a practical point of view: “Since I play the viola myself, I obviously also write specifically for technical comfort and practicality for violists. I literally imagine my fingers playing as I write arrangements for viola.”

2b. Can you give specific examples of passages in works where you encountered problems and techniques that you used to solve this.

Answers were vague concerning specific passages, but general tendencies and techniques were mentioned. Respondent 1 explained how she would adapt a passage if the melodic line falls outside the range of an instrument, to the point of altering the melodic line slightly. Respondent 2 was very aware of keeping the melodic line in the same register. This awareness avoided the unsatisfying breaking up of the melodic line between octaves.

3. Reasons for transcriptions

3a. What are your reasons for doing these transcriptions?

Respondent 1 was required to make transcriptions in different scenarios. In some works singers required a change of key and the instrumentation had to be adapted accordingly. In cases like this, changes to voicing in the instrumental accompaniment had to be incorporated. Then there were existing works that were given a new transcription, for another instrument or combination of instruments.
The purposes for transcription for respondent 2 were recordings and performances in the commercial sector and educational solos and ensembles.

4. Models of transcriptions of other works

4a. Have you studied existing transcriptions of works by other composers (which you have not transcribed)?

Both respondents had not actively studied transcriptions by other people before doing their own, although they had assimilated the practical outcome of transcriptions by playing many transcribed works themselves.

4b. If Yes to 4a, what did you learn from that?

Not applicable. See 4a.

2.2.3 Questions to players in South Africa

1. Viola repertoire by South African Composers

1a. Which works for solo viola by South African composers have you performed?

Respondent 1 as a full-time violist and had performed a program consisting of only South African viola music. She however mentioned that, for that program, she could find only four South African viola compositions for viola and piano. Respondent 2 had not played viola compositions by South African composers at the time.

1b. Have you studied any other works for solo viola by a South African composer?

Neither respondent had studied any other works.

1c. Do you know of other works by South African composers that you have not performed?

Both respondents were aware of other works for viola by South African composers.
2. Viola repertoire by international composers

2a. Do you have an interest in the repertoire for solo viola by international composers?

Both respondents were enthusiastic about repertoire for solo viola by international composers.

2b. Have you systematically explored the existing repertoire for solo viola?

Respondent 1 was very aware of all viola repertoire, whereas respondent 2, who is not a full-time violist, was less informed about viola repertoire.

3. Do you think there are enough compositions available for solo viola by South African composers?

Both respondents felt that more viola compositions by South African composers would be beneficial.

4. Do you think that transcribing existing South African compositions, initially composed for other instruments, can increase the number of works for the viola?

Both respondents had reservations. Respondent 1 felt that a composer composes for a specific instrument when he conceives a composition, taking the articulation, voicing and character of the instrument in account. Respondent 2 was more positive towards transcription as a way to enlarge the South African viola repertoire, but said the work chosen to be transcribed, must be considered carefully.

5. Do you include works that are transcriptions of works from the repertoire of other instruments, in your recital programs?

Respondent 1 has not included transcriptions in her viola programs. Respondent 2 has included transcriptions in his programs.
6. If you play transcriptions, which factors do you regard as important to make a transcription successful for the viola?

Respondent 1 mentioned that she would avoid technical display pieces such as the Paganini Caprices simply because she “doesn’t see the point in competing with the violin.” For viola transcriptions she concentrated on the sonorous sound of the viola. She chose pieces that display the violas’ ability to contribute to haunting, melodious and majestic music. She emphasized the gorgeous lower range in emotive and melancholy voicing opportunities.

Respondent 2 leaned towards the more elusive ‘idiomatic’ response, mentioning that the transcription had to “work” on the viola with passages comfortable to play, fingering logical and string crossings and bowings easy to execute. According to him, the timbre of an instrument plays an important part in a composition as a factor in portraying the character of the composition. If the particular timbre of an instrument was the reason it was initially “casted” to carry a composition, it becomes very risky to choose that specific composition to transcribe. A performer should keep that in mind when a transcription is performed. Otherwise, this respondent felt more positive about a transcription if he knew that the composer had been either involved first-hand in the transcription process, or had at least approved of the final transcription. He would not perform a transcription if he knew that a composer was negative about the transcription.

2.2.4 Questions to international players

1. Basic information

1a. Do you have an interest in the repertoire for solo viola by international composers?

All three respondents were interested in and informed about viola repertoire by international composers.
1b. Are you aware of the existing repertoire for solo viola, by having systematically explored it?

Being viola performers, viola composer-performers and arranger-performers the respondents have explored the viola repertoire and were aware of existing repertoire for solo viola.

2. Transcriptions as part of the repertoire

2a. Do you include works that are transcribed for the viola from the repertoire of other instruments or mediums, in your recital programs?

Respondent 1 tried to avoid transcriptions in his programs, as he felt that there were enough original viola compositions available to choose from.

Respondent 2 included transcriptions in her programs and had recorded some of the transcriptions that she had made for the viola.

Respondent 3 also included transcriptions for viola in his programs.

2b. Which factors would you consider as important in making a transcription successful or less successful?

Respondent 1 found transcriptions of violin repertoire for the viola more problematic. He kept the key the same in his transcription. The key, according to him, signified a mood. A transcription moving the key a fifth down would have given the work a more sombre and dark mood. The piano part should usually be kept the same. Some octave adaptations were made in the viola part. The transcription was done with the composer’s input and the final product was approved. This respondent was of the opinion that transcriptions of cello repertoire to the viola are more successful.

Respondent 2 concentrated on the final product only and replied: “It should sound like the transcription is not transcription”. This opinion was also encountered in previous replies.
Respondent 3 was not interested in making or playing transcriptions that sound like “bad imitations of violin pieces.” He was not interested in virtuosity for virtuosity’s sake and felt that the tremendous palette of the viola opens up many more options in transcription than just merely playing a violin piece down a fifth on the viola.

2c. Do you think transcriptions from other instruments’ repertoire are necessary to provide repertoire for the viola?

Respondent 1 did not think that transcriptions were needed to supplement the repertoire for viola. He was of the opinion that the viola repertoire was sufficient, but people were just ignorant of the fact. If the existing repertoire could be made known on a wider scale, viola recital programs could be filled with original material.

Respondent 2 thought that there was a lot of unexplored viola repertoire hence transcriptions were not necessary because of lack of repertoire. She acceded that there was a smaller amount, or none, of compositions by the so-called “great” composers. There were also some periods in history with sparse repertoire of viola compositions. In such situations it made sense to transcribe works for the viola to fill in historical gaps. Having said that, she also felt that the works by lesser known composers gave a good idea of the musical taste and practices of a certain period, and were therefore also interesting and worthwhile to explore.

2.2.5 Summary

The information gathered through the interviews and questionnaires can be summarized as follows using the same questions as for the previous summary.

*What is an idiomatic transcription?*

Most of the respondents’ replies echo the findings of the literature study. The sounding range of the instrument being transcribed for was once again identified as a prime factor to be taken into account during the transcription process. In the case of transcriptions from cello to viola, the rearrangement of chords for playability on the viola, the choice of register for keeping the melody line intact in one octave and the adapting of harmonics
from the cello to the viola were given as factors to keep in mind when making the transcription idiomatic for the viola.

Sensitivity to accompaniment adaptations was also considered important. The choice of register to optimize and portray the unique sonority and timbre of the viola was considered important by violists. The resonant lower register was favoured by the players themselves. Comfort of playing and passages that are comfortably “under the fingers” on the instrument were also mentioned more than once.

*What are the purposes of transcriptions?*

The scenarios that necessitated the creation of transcriptions varied from requests by players to composers or arrangers to play a specific work, a decision to contribute to the enlargement of the viola repertoire, commercial purposes, educational purposes, to fill in gaps in the historical timeline of the viola repertoire and for recordings and own performances.

*Which compositions can be transcribed and why?*

In the interviews and questionnaires the emphasis was more on whether transcriptions were used, the knowledge of the groups about existing repertoire and their use of transcriptions. Opinions were voiced about the groups of instrument from which repertoire was taken to transcribe. Music from the cello repertoire was viewed in a favourable light. Violin repertoire is also used for transcriptions, but with more reservations.

**2.4 Conclusion**

In Chapter 2 an analysis of the term ‘idiomatic’ was done. The concept of ‘idiomatic transcriptions’ was also studied. In the first part of the chapter, a literature study was undertaken. In the second part of the chapter, the interviews and questionnaires were documented and analyzed. In this concluding section the data gathered from all these sources are synthesized.
It became clear that the practice of transcribing music from one instrumental medium to another has always been part of the music history and that the inclusion of transcriptions in performances is not a phenomenon that is limited to the viola and its repertoire. Transcriptions are an accepted part of the viola repertoire. At the same time, it became clear that transcriptions are not being overused on the stage. Performers also want to play repertoire composed originally for the viola. Works to be transcribed are chosen carefully and aspects that will make the final transcription idiomatic are taken into consideration. Transcribing is generally an informed process done with respect to the original work.

Concerning the repertoire for viola it has become clear that performers can benefit by being more informed. The average viola player does not know about the wealth of existing unknown viola repertoire available for study and performance. It became clear that South African viola repertoire needs to be expanded, both by commissioning new works, as well as transcribing other works. The studies undertaken in the existing transcriptions revealed aspects of transcription that were used in the transcriptions undertaken of *Ugubhu* and *Respensorium*. This process is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Transcriptions of Ugubhu and Responsorium

Introduction

This chapter is a report on the transcription process. The aspects that were identified through the literature study and discussed in the previous chapter, guided the transcription process of Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe (1996) and Ugubhu (rising and falling... and rising) für Cello Solo (1996) by Hans Huyssen. The aspects identified through the study of other transcribed compositions, the opinions of violists, composers and arrangers, as well as the aspects identified through the questionnaires and interviews were taken in account during the transcriptions of these two pieces by the present author.

Hans Huyssen (b.1964) is an award-winning South African composer and cellist who is also a very active musician in the field of historically informed performance practice (HIPP). The influences of Africa and his strong German cultural roots make for interesting combinations that are always present in his compositions. In the biographical notes included in the score of Ugubhu (1998) the following is written: “After ten years in Europe there is still no satisfactory solution to the conflicting possibilities of cultural identification. In a certain sense, the previous situation has been reversed, as the now distant Africa and its traditional cultures are becoming an increasingly important facet of his work.” It is exactly this African influence in his music that set the present author’s decision to transcribe Ugubhu and Responsorium. The two works are of a high virtuosic and musical standard and they can thus also be presented on the concert stage with great success. The two transcriptions therefore answer many of Schilling’s (2009:16) questions. They will fill a gap in the viola repertoire, make a unique cultural contribution, they will be suitable for the concert stage and make a pedagogical contribution. Furthermore, both works suit the viola’s character, mood and technical possibilities.
3.1 Aspects of the compositions relevant for transcription

3.1.1 Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe (1996)

Responsorial singing can be defined as “[s]inging, especially in liturgical chant, in which the soloist or group of soloists alternates with a choir; in nonliturgical contexts, [it is] synonymous with call and response” (Randel, 1986:696).

Responsorium combines two kinds of music - the ‘artificial’ or ‘composed’ music and the ‘natural’ or ‘found’ music of the birdcalls in nature. At the same time there is also the element of natural sound production through the instrumental performance, contrasted with the technological sound of the sampled birdcalls controlled by a sound engineer. The birdcalls are reproduced on request by playing and pausing the numbered tracks on a compact disk (CD) player, at specific moments during the performance. The birdcalls are reproduced on their natural pitches. Although it is possible to manipulate the recordings, the transcriber and the composer decided that it was not necessary to do this, even though the transcription on the viola is a fifth lower than the original. This matter will be discussed below.

The character of the work is compatible with the character of the viola. The viola is used often in solo compositions because of its more introspective character and timbre. At the same time the upper register of the viola is capable of a powerful volume and it can be even piercing at times. Both these characteristics are required in Responsorium. The viola is therefore a suitable instrument for this specific composition.

There are two ways to transcribe violin repertoire for the viola. Firstly, works can be adapted by transposing the whole composition a fifth down. Secondly, the transcription can be in the same key as the original work with passages either on the same pitch as the violin, or transposed an octave down if the placement of the melody falls in a less responsive register on the viola. This way of transcribing can affect the melodic contour at times, as the transcriber has to be creative in finding ways to connect the transposed section with the original pitch within the boundaries of good taste and musicality.
The decision was made to transcribe the work a fifth down as a first attempt. Because *Responsorium* is an atonal work, this transposition does not affect the key. The whole transcription lies within the range of the viola, just as the original lies within the range of the violin. Double stops and chords stay as playable on the viola as they are on the violin. The double stops in *Responsorium* that are larger than an octave use one open string, so no uncomfortable stretching of the left hand is required on the viola.

Clef changes had to be used in the transcription to facilitate the ease of reading the notes in the higher registers on the viola. The score uses both the treble clef and the alto clef, as is customary in viola music that uses the higher *tessitura* of the instrument.

### 3.1.2 *Ugubhu* (rising and falling… and rising) für Cello Solo (1996)

In the introduction to the original sheet music in *Ugubhu*, a very thorough explanation is given by the composer concerning the Ugubhu bow:

> The stringed instrument in traditional African music is the musical bow. Derived from the bow of the hunter, it occurs in various forms in almost all native cultures in Southern Africa. It is an accompanying instrument, usually played by the singers themselves and is used to render only two notes, either a whole tone or a semi-tone apart. In the Zulu tradition the instrument is called ‘ugubhu’, referring to the hollowness of the resonating body (*isigubhu* is a calabash or drum). Here the interval used is roughly that of a semitone, the effect being more or less what I tried to imitate in the opening of the cello piece. (Huyssen, 1998, preface to *Ugubhu*.)

![Example 3.1: an imitation of the ugubhu](image)

Huyssen imitates the technique employed to generate sound on the ugubhu by requesting a *saltando* at the very tip of the bow to optimize the percussive effect. The triplets in this
figure can be played somewhat irregularly. This motive returns throughout the piece but also in other articulations such as left hand pizzicato and normal bowing. This recurring motive, combined with the inner swing of the basic pulse underneath the constantly changing ternary and binary groupings gives this work an irresistible African charm. (HuysSEN, 1998: Preface to *Ugubhu*.)

The character of *Ugubhu* is compatible with the character of the viola. The use of the lower register and the resonance of the open strings will be an ideal aspect to exploit in the colour palette of the viola. The key will not be affected in the transcription, since the transfer from cello to viola requires an octave transposition. After the octave adjustment from cello to viola, the sound range of *Ugubhu* falls within the range of the viola. The section from measure 95 to measure 110 concerned me though.This section is in the treble clef and falls in the highest register of the cello. Thumb position fingering is used on the cello. This section can be potentially problematic on the viola, as the viola is less responsive and resonant in this high register than the cello. Thumb position is also not an option on the viola. Different possibilities had to be explored to solve this problem.

The double stops and chords in *Ugubhu* will have to be carefully examined after the transcription as fingering will have to be adapted. Thumb position is also a factor here. The percussive saltando bowing right at the tip of the bow, followed by natural bowing and saltando again, is more challenging bowing than what is generally required. It is, however, not impossible. Bass clef and treble clef is used in the cello part. In the transcription, the alto clef and the treble clef will be used.

3.1.3 Aspects of the composition not identified by the transcriber, but that were identified as important by the composer.

*Ugubhu*

The one aspect that the composer highlighted was the string length of viola compared to the string length of cello and the resulting differences in the the “Ugubhu effect”.
3.2 Summary of the transcription process

The initial contact with the composer started off the transcription process. I had to obtain permission to use some of his compositions for a possible transcription. This is a common respectful courtesy. My aim to make a unique cultural contribution to the repertoire of the viola by providing compositions that contain elements from the African continent, if possible, was fulfilled when Hans Huyssen suggested *Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe* (1996) and *Ugubhu (rising and falling... and rising) für Cello Solo* (1996). *Responsorium* contains the electronically reproduced African birdcalls that form an integral part of the composition. *Ugubhu* has the unique bowing and sound motive that imitates the indigenous African ugubhu bow sound. African pulse and rhythm is present in both works, although no “complicated rhythms” are present (Huyssen, 1998: Preface to *Ugubhu*). The scores arrived together with a compact disc, containing recordings of the works. After examining the scores with the recordings, I conceded that these two works could be useful as transcriptions for the viola.

3.2.1 Transcribing *Ugubhu (rising and falling... and rising) für Cello Solo* (1996)

I planned the transcription process by identifying the main factor in each composition that will determine the first step in transcription. In *Ugubhu*, the main factor was that it is a work for solo cello that has to be transcribed for solo viola. Thus I consulted the successful existing transcriptions of the J S Bach *Suites for Cello Solo*. The overall process that was followed by Schilling (2009) to transcribe the Ysaÿe *Sonata for solo Cello Opus 2* also proved to be a valuable resource. I also obtained the score and recording for the Dmitri Shostakovich *Sonata for Cello and Piano, op 40*, re-transcribed by violist Annette Bartholdy from two previous transcriptions. These were done by cellist Viktor Kubatsky (1898 – 1970) and later another transcription was made by Russian violist Evgeny Strakhov. Annette Bartholdy recorded her transcription as a personal impression of a combination of the best choices made by the other two transcriptions, combined with her own. Kubatsky was Shostakovich’s duo partner and the dedicatee of the *Cello Sonata*. Bartholdy (2003: Preface to Sonata), states that this transcription was done with Shostakovich approval and that this work was also performed often in the
Soviet Union, as the well-known *Viola Sonata op.147* with which Shostakovich concluded his life, was only composed in 1975. The viola transcription of the *Op.40 Sonata* was merely an extra insert in the cello and piano edition.

The last work and transcription that I consulted was the J S Bach *Concerto in E-flat Major for viola and orchestra*. Although this work requires a different instrumentation than the two works I was planning to transcribe, I was interested in the process of transcription and the aspects that influenced the transcriber to make certain decisions. This work caught my attention during a meeting and interview that I had with Professor Antoinette Lohmann of Utrecht Conservatoire. She is a violinist, violist and viola d’amour-player that is a HIPP (Historically Informed Performance Practice) artist and lecturer in historical documentation. Her baroque ensemble Furor Musicus, recorded the transcription and reconstruction that she made of the J S Bach *Viola Concerto*. The recording was recently released. The choice of register of the viola was the main point of discussion between us regarding the Bach concerto. According to her:

Well, that’s indeed the problem with the viola.... it is always in the middle register. Some composers were clever, like Glinka in his viola sonata. The piano part is always around the viola part, but no notes in the same register. When the viola has rest, then he uses the whole range of the piano. But in case of the “Bach”-viola concerto, the parts existed already, but the solo part got lost. We don’t know what the original solo instrument was. I don’t think it was a viola concerto originally, but I liked the idea of having a viola concerto by Bach. It’s Bach, so I didn’t want to change too much. I also didn’t want the viola to have to sound like a violin, so I choose to use the good registers of the viola (personally, I don’t like the use of the viola in high registers) and accepted that it would be a bit difficult balance-wise. That’s also why I choose to record with an orchestra instead of one per part, which I had done before; with one per part it was more difficult to distinguish the viola solo as a solo part, whereas against groups of violins, the solo sound comes through more easily. For that matter, I choose the opening theme to be played by the viola already, and not by the first violin.
section, because I wanted to avoid putting the ear of the listener on the wrong track, I wanted to point out: this is the sound you are going to have to deal with.

(Personal communication)

After examining these works, it became clear that the first step to my transcription from cello to viola was going to be to make an octave displacement of *Ugubhu*. This was done.

Following in Schilling’s (2009) steps, the composition was transposed an octave higher for the viola. I looked for clef changes to facilitate reading in the higher registers of the viola. Viola scores uses the alto clef (or C clef), and the treble clef (or G clef) alternatively, as a common practice. Adjustments to the treble clef were necessary in measures 137 – 142 and also in the section between measures 95 and 110.

![Example 3.2 Adjustments to the treble clef to facilitate ease in reading in measures 137 to 142.](image)

Measures 95 - 104 was identified as a possible problem as it clearly moved out of a range that would benefit the violist technically. As discussed previously, the higher registers of the viola is also not the most idiomatic registers of the instrument. This concern was the first question the author had to the composer at our next meeting.
Example 3.3: The section between measures 95 – 110 that would require a possible octave adjustment

The second concern I had about measures 95 – 110 was the fingering of this passage on the viola. On the cello this passage is played using thumb position as the notes move higher and higher into the highest registers of the cello. This is not a technical possibility on the viola.

The third concern I had was if the composer would have objections to making an octave adjustment for the viola. The musical climax and melodic flow of the work could be affected by this change.

The bowing, slurs and articulations were added next. I decided to keep the viola part the same as the original as part of the initial draft. Dynamics, tempo markings and articulation were added after this. This work contains a lot of specific detail. This concluded the creation of the initial draft of the transcription.

All the above followed more or less the same sequence of steps which Schilling (2009) had planned for the transcription of the Ysaÿe Cello Sonata.
Then, I played through the work. From the outset it is clear that *Ugubhu* is a work that requires an advanced technique to perform at an acceptable level. Fingering will have to be worked out for the more difficult passages, but it is not impossible to play.

During our second meeting, I played both works to the composer. In *Ugubhu*, we decided that it will be better to drop the problematic section between measures 95 and 110 an octave to keep the sound quality in a better range for the viola. The composer suggested two places in the music where the octave drop will be prepared, and then released again to go back to the original pitch. The effect was satisfactory and musical. My three concerns were solved by this adjustment.

Example 3.4: The section between measures 95 – 110 with the adjustments to facilitate the octave transposed section.

On playing *Ugubhu* the first time to the composer, he expressed reservation at the sound quality of the *saltando* opening figures when played on the viola.
Example 3.5: The *saltando* opening figure; to be played with the very tip of the bow

As the resonating body of the viola is much smaller than the cello, and the open C string is literally half of the length of the cello open C string, the sound generated is not as voluminous as the same figure on the cello. The real African ugubhu bow also has a much longer string that can resonate when set into vibration with the staccato striking action of the reed or thin grass. We experimented with different approaches of striking with the viola bow. In the Preface to *Ugubhu* the composer suggests different options to the cello performer.

Notes marked with an * should be played *saltando* at the very tip of the bow (where the bow hair still covers the ivory plate) or, alternatively, with the stick of the bow.

I realized that I would have to do some research into the authentic sound world of the African instruments. I will have to experiment until I can make very fine distinctions to produce a sound as close as possible to the original. The speed with which I hit the string, the weight applied, and the different sounding points on the string itself will all be aspects to take into consideration to perform *Ugubhu* and to communicate this African soundprint to the listener. The opening ‘ugubhu figure’ of open C-string to semitone higher D-flat that repeats in different forms, articulations and dynamics through *Ugubhu* has an ominous, foreboding, driving character that suits the sound character of the viola like a glove. Forsyth (1948: 394) sums it up perfectly:

The bottom-string of the Viola is the most characteristic of all. In fact, to the average concert-goer the Viola is only a Viola when it is on its bottom string. Sombre, austere, sometimes even forbidding, its mere sound even in the simplest of phrases is sufficient to conjure up the image of Tragedy. Indeed, the simpler and more persistent the phrase the greater its effect when played on the Viola.
3.2.2 Transcribing *Responsorium für Solo Violine und Afrikanische Vogelrufe* (1996)

With the transcription of *Responsorium* the same modus operandi was followed as with the transcription of *Ugubhu*. The main factor identified to determine the first step of transcription, was the decision of transposing interval. I studied the J S Bach *Solo Sonatas and Partitas for violin*, the Paganini *24 Caprices for solo violin*, and I also took note of the different transcriptions and recordings available of the Cesar Franck *Sonata in A major for viola and piano* (originally for violin and piano) and the Franz Schubert *Sonata in a minor for viola and piano* (originally for Arpeggione).

When transcribing for the viola from violin repertoire, one has one of two options. Firstly the transcriber can keep the same key, even the same pitch, and then make some octave changes in the viola part if the need arises. Examples of transcriptions where this was done are the different transcriptions of the Franck *Violin Sonata in A major* and the Schubert *Sonata in a minor for Arpeggione and piano*. Secondly the transcriber can transpose the violin composition down the interval of a fifth, or up a fourth. (Lee, 2005:62). Examples of works where this was done, are the J S Bach *Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin*, transcribed for viola, the Telemann *Fantasias for solo violin*, transcribed for viola and the *24 Caprices* by Paganini.

The author studied the method followed by Hsiaopei Lee (2005) to make a transcription of the Beethoven violin Sonata op.30, no.1 for viola, as part of his Doctor of Musical Arts study at the University of Cincinnati. I also studied the article of violist Jerzy Kosmala (2010), and his transcription of Wieniawski’s *Légende for violin and piano*.

Lee’s approach corresponds with Schilling (2009). He has a stepwise structure to do the transcription. Kosmala, on the other hand, has opinions about what a transcription should be at the end, pitfalls that the transcriber must avoid to get to a positive end result, but he is not always so clear how he transcribes, and why he decides to take certain steps.

Following the same approach I had to transcribe *Ugubhu*, I decided on the interval of transposition. I transposed the work down a fifth for a first transcription attempt. As the violin version was written very idiomatically, the adaptation to the viola also was a
comfortable transplant. The opening “bird-call” motive is in the higher positions of the viola, but not excessively so.

Example 3.6 The ‘bird-call’ motive in the viola

After closer examination and analysis, I discovered that the pitches of the birdcalls on the CD seemed to play a definite role in the follow-up between violin and birdcalls. I was concerned that my transcription to a fifth lower was not going to work because of transposition. During our first meeting, the author discussed the two different possibilities for transcription of this work with the composer, and he suggested that we try the transcription of a fifth down first. He was not very happy with the idea that melody contours could be altered by octave displacements if I kept the key the same in transcription. He did seem to have more reservations about the possible positive outcome of Responsorium as a transcription. The work was not a ‘typical viola work’ in character. He found the composition ‘a bit tense’ for the viola, but he was willing to give it a chance.

After the fifth down transcription, I looked for the clef changes as in Ugubhu. There is a great deal of alternating between the treble clef and the alto clef.
Example 3.7: A high incidence of clef changing takes place

Bowing, phrasing, dynamics and articulation were added to complete the initial transcription.

Then I started playing it to test the fingering, the playability on the fingerboard and the bowing. All the double stops and chord worked as idiomatically as on the violin.

During our second meeting, I played together with the CD with birdcalls, and the combination of the deeper, sonorous sound of the viola actually contrasted beautifully with the birdcalls. The composer concluded that the change of the interval of a fifth does not disturb the composition.

As the transcription process unfolded and we worked towards an idiomatically satisfying end product, the composer commented that transcription gets born from a desire by a person to play a specific work on his or her instrument. He thought that, ultimately, the ‘crux’ of the success of the transcription would lie in the skill of the performer to perform the work at a high artistic, technical and musical level.
3.3 The final transcriptions

Ugubhu
(rising and falling ... and rising)

Hans Heysean

Viola

\[ \text{\textit{Ugubhu}} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{(rising and falling ... and rising)}} \\
\text{\textit{Hans Heysean}} \\
\text{\textit{Viola}} \\
\text{\textit{Ugubhu}} \\
\end{align*}
a tempo (3+3+3+2)

poco f

poco rall

largamente

sempre crese.

primo mosso

f leggero
Responsorium

[Notation of musical score]

[Notes for performance:]
- Ca. 116 sehr stark, fast schrill
- Ca. 88
- Kontrast: warmer Gegenklang
- Mittelstimme hervor
- J = 100
- J = 110
- Kräftig, poco accel., più mosso

[Explanation of symbols and notation:]
- ff a 2
- ff
- f
- dim
- mp
- giustiend
- (ca. 88)
- warmer, voller Gegenklang
- (ca. 190)
- frei
- (ca. 116)
- langsam, frei
- [Metronome mark]
- [Key and time signature]
Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations for further study

4.1 Summary of findings

By exploring and documenting the literature it was found that there are more compositions than initially suspected, but not enough works to use on the concert stage. More South African compositions for the viola are needed. It was also found that South African viola players are not aware of the South African viola compositions that are available and that there are many interesting works for other instruments by South African composers that could also be transcribed in the same way as Responsorium and Ugubhu to become part of South African viola repertoire.

The existing viola transcriptions revealed that transcriptions are an entrenched and accepted part of viola repertoire. At the same time, transcriptions are not exclusive to the viola’s repertoire. It is a widespread phenomenon involving most instruments, and it also occurred throughout documented history of music. The quality and tastefulness of a transcription is always a determining factor of the lifespan that a transcription will have in the performance repertoire of the instrument.

By studying the opinions of players, composers and arrangers about transcriptions it was discovered that transcriptions are an accepted part of most performers’ concert programmes.

The benefit of studying the instrumentation and orchestration books lies in discovering the similarities between the instruments, rather than concentrating on the differences.

During the interviews and questionnaires the common desire to have good quality music to perform in musically satisfying circumstances, was noted. The aspects that contribute to the creating of an idiomatic transcription are known to players and composers.

The thorough preparation of a transcription by researching repertoire, the instrument being transcribed for, and by determining aspects important for transcription for this instrument in previous successful transcriptions, leads to a satisfying final transcription.
The level of idiomaticism of a transcription remains an elusive concept and is difficult to measure or determine because of variables that influence the final verdict. The technical capabilities of a player, the quality of an instrument being played on, the quality of strings and the bow and the size of the instrument (and even the shape, for contemporary instruments) could all influence the ease and effectiveness with which a transcription is played.

The most important conclusion is that the involvement of the composer in the transcription process leads to compositions that are idiomatic, that still reflect the style of the composer, that are implemented as standard repertoire for the instrument and that are respected and accepted by performers, composers, the music fraternity and audiences alike.

4.2 Significance of conclusions, contributions and suggestions for further research/study

By informing South African viola players of the viola compositions that are available in South Africa, more works would be performed. Vehicles that could be used for this information drive include:

- Through the Newsletter of the existing South African Viola Society;
- By using technology like Facebook groups and the South African Viola Society website (www.viola.org.za);
- By commissioning and including South African compositions in the music examination syllabi of UNISA and the different universities in South Africa.

By performing South African viola compositions on a more regular basis, the creation of new music by composers will be stimulated. If the composers realize that the violists perform their compositions and are interested in more repertoire, more compositions will be generated. The ‘circle of musical life’ needs teacher, student, performer, performance, composer and composed music in order to mutually benefit each other.

The scores and sheet music of South African viola compositions must be made easier to obtain by interested parties than is currently the case.
Other suggestions for further action could be to bring violists and composers in contact with each other to stimulate the commissioning of more viola compositions, and also to get existing compositions to be performed.

A next plan of action could be to identify more South African compositions for other instruments that are suitable transcribing for viola by involving the composer in a similar process, and also have them performed.

Lastly the Catalogue of South African Viola compositions in Addendum 1 could be built out into a searchable database with sound files.
Books, articles and dissertations


**Scores and CDs**


HUYSSEN, H. *Chamber music*. [CD]


Articles, reviews, dissertations, websites and other sources that were consulted but not cited in the dissertation


http://www.theviolaworkshop.com/page5.html
Addendum 1

Catalogue of South African compositions for viola

2010
## Category: Viola Concerto, viola with orchestra

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<th>Composition</th>
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<th>Instrumentation</th>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bell, William Henry (1873 – 1946)</td>
<td>Concerto for viola and orchestra, “Rosa Mystica”</td>
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<td>Grové, Stefans (1922-2014)</td>
<td>Alice in Wonderland</td>
<td>1959</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concertino for flute, viola and orchestra (Music from Africa series no. 30</td>
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<td>Van Dijk, Péter-Louis (b.1953)</td>
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<td>?? Viola Concerto</td>
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## Category: Viola and Piano

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<td>“Three pictures of an African life”</td>
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<td>On meeting miss Fairfax for the first time</td>
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<td>Sonata “On Jewish Themes”</td>
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<td>Rhapsody</td>
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<td>Rainier, Priaulx (1903 – 1986)</td>
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<td>1945</td>
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<td>Rich, James (b. 1950)</td>
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**Category: Viola in Ensemble**

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<td>1963</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>Viola, Flute, girls’ choir</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<td>“Nocturnal invocations” (second movement of “Meditations for chamber orchestra”)</td>
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<td>African flute, two horns, 2 trumpets, crotales, four bongos, Viola, cello, Double bass</td>
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Addendum 2

Questionnaires
Questionnaire 1 : Transcriptions for the Viola

Questions to Composers in South Africa

1. Basic information
   1a. Have you already transcribed some of your own works from one instrument / medium to another?

   1b. What are the names of the works and which instruments are involved?

   1c. Are there any other works?

2. Factors
   2a. If Yes to 1(b), which factors do you keep in mind, or see as important while doing the transcription.

   2b. Can you give specific examples of passages in the works, techniques you use, or problems you have encountered during the transcription process?

3. Reasons for transcriptions
   3a. What are your reasons for making these transcriptions?

   3b. Do you think transcriptions contribute to the enlargement of the repertoire of the instruments/ groups being transcribed for?

4. Models of transcriptions of other works
   4a. Have you studied existing transcriptions of works by other composers (which you have not transcribed)?

   4b. If Yes to 4a, what did you learn from that?

5. Transcriptions of own works by other people.
   5a. Are there any of your own compositions that have been transcribed by other people? Give examples.

   5b. If Yes to 5a, what are your impressions on the transcription(s).
Questionnaire 2: Transcriptions for the Viola

Questions to Arrangers in South Africa

1. Basic information

1a. Do you make transcriptions of compositions from one medium /instrument to another?

1b. What are the names of the works and which instruments are involved?

1c. Are there any other works?

2. Factors

2a. Which factors do you keep in mind during the transcription process, to ensure a successful transcription?

2b. Can you give specific examples of passages in works where you encountered problems, and techniques that you used to solve this.

3. Reasons for transcriptions

3a. What are your reasons for doing these transcriptions?

4. Models of transcriptions of other works

4a. Have you studied existing transcriptions of works by other composers (which you have not transcribed)?

4b. If Yes to 4a, what did you learn from that?
Questionnaire 3 : Transcriptions for the Viola

Questions to Viola players in South Africa

1. Viola repertoire by South African Composers
1a. Which works for solo viola by South African composers have you performed?

1b. Have you studied any other works for solo viola by a South African composer?

1c. Do you know of other works by South African composers that you have not performed?

2. Viola repertoire by international composers
2a. Do you have an interest in the repertoire for solo viola by international composers?

2b. Have you systematically explored the existing repertoire for solo viola?

3. Do you think there are enough compositions available for solo viola by South African composers?

4. Do you think that transcribing existing South African compositions, initially composed for other instruments, can increase the number of works for the viola?

5. Do you include works that are transcriptions of works from the repertoire of other instruments, in your recital programs?

6. If you play transcriptions, which factors do you regard as important to make a transcription successful for the viola?
**Questionnaire 4 : Transcriptions for the Viola**

Questions to International Viola Players

1. **Basic information**

   1a. Do you have an interest in the repertoire for solo viola by international composers?

   1b. Are you aware of the existing repertoire for solo viola, by having systematically explored it?

2. **Transcriptions as part of the repertoire**

   2a. Do you include works that are transcribed for the viola from the repertoire of other instruments or mediums, in your recital programs?

   2b. Which factors would you consider as important in making a transcription successful, or less successful?

   2c. Do you think transcriptions from other instruments’ repertoire is necessary to provide repertoire for the viola?
Addendum 3

Responsorium

für Solovioline

und

Afrikanische Vogelrufe

1996

Hans Huyssen
Responsorium

for Solo Violin and African Birdcalls

The Responsorium merges ‘artificial’ and ‘natural’ music, ‘composed’ and ‘found’ sounds and also, on a different level, ‘technological’ and ‘natural’ sound production. The birdcalls have been sampled and have thereby become controllable. They can be reproduced at specific times, in certain tempi and at determined pitches. They have not been changed or manipulated though (which of course would also have been possible). The aim was rather to use them in their naturalness, as though they were conventional musical elements - motives, melodies, ostinato figures. In these functions they then obviously obtain structural importance as opposed to merely being some colourful interjections. However, always in a very playful manner.

Credit and thanks to Len Gillard: The calls used for this piece were taken from his cassette series: "Southern African Bird Calls, Part 1".

For performance a CD with the birdcalls is available. The circled numbers refer to the track on the CD. The * indicates the end of each sample. Press ‘pause’ here and skip to the next track. Release ‘pause’ at the entry of the next track in time with the violinist.

The soloists:

Redcheated Cuckoo - Piet my vrou - Cuculus solitarius
Cape Turtle Dove - Gewone Torfduif - Streptopelia capicola
Redeyed Dove - Grootoord duif - Streptopelia semitorquata
Wood Owl - Bosuil - Strix woodfordii
Respensorium
für Solovioline und afrikanische Vogelrufe
Aninka, zum 30. 7. 96

Hans Huyssen

[ca. 116]
sehr stark, fast schrill [Vogelruf]

[ca. 88]
Kontrast: warmer Geigenklang

[ca. 88]
warmer, voller Geigenklang

[ca. 100]
frei

[ca. 116]
Mondo

1 [Piet my vrou]

2

3

4

ca. 116
knapp, poco accel.

ca. 110
piu mosso

Addendum 4

Ugubhu (rising and falling...and rising)

für Cello solo

1996

Hans Huyssen
Ugubu
(rising and falling... and rising)

The stringed instrument in traditional African music is the musical bow. Derived from the bow of the hunter, it occurs in various forms in almost all native cultures in Southern Africa. It is an accompanying instrument, usually played by the singers themselves and is used to render only two notes, either a whole tone or a semitone apart. In the Zulu tradition the instrument is called ugubu, referring to the hollowness of the resonating body (isigubu is a calabash or a drum). Here the interval used is roughly that of a semitone, the effect being more or less what I tried to imitate in the opening of the cello piece. (1)

The following picturesque description is given by Kirby: "The instrument varies in size to some extent although it is generally fairly large, the bow averaging about 4 feet in length. The bow is made from a branch of a tree from which the bark has been removed, or from a cane, well seasoned. The string is thin in proportion to its length, the bow being well curved. The calabash resonator, now sometimes replaced by a cylindrical tin of suitable size, is invariably fixed near the lower end of the bow. Brass wire is now used for the string, although formerly a string made from twisted strands of hair from a cow's tail was common, and is still occasionally met with. The instrument is held upright, the opening of the resonator being held close to the left breast, the second, third and fourth fingers of the left hand grasping the lower end of the bow in such a manner as to leave the first finger and thumb free to pinch the string, and so to raise the pitch. The string is struck near the lower end of the bow with a thin grass or reed held in the right hand, the grip being similar to that used by a side-drummer in holding his left hand drumstick. The action of striking is staccato, for good tone depends on the reed quilling the string with utmost rapidity. When so struck, the string gives forth its fundamental note, usually a deep sound with great clarity, and one hears, in addition, several of the harmonics generated by that fundamental, even, at times, up to the eighth harmonic, the result being to the ear of the performer a clear chord. As the pinching of the string serves to raise its pitch, the instrument yields two harmonic chords, and the native musician uses these chords as a definite basic accompaniment for his extemporized or memorized song." (2)

About the piece:

After the imitative and atmospheric opening all formal development is based on the principle of the so called elementary pulsation. This means that all rhythms are derived from a fairly fast basic pulse, which serves as the coherent factor, while the rhythmic figures constantly change between ternary and binary groupings — a very popular "play" in many instances of African music. When there is a change of
tempo (eg. Nos. 2, 4, 5) the elementary pulse obviously is abandoned. However, these changes still are "controlled" by specific tempo-relations, which should be closely observed, so as to guarantee logical connections. Without any fluctuation, the new pulse should immediately be established and serve as the new basis for all movement.

There are no "complicated rhythms" in this music. Even though quickly changing, through the constant relation to a basic pulse they always contribute to that certain inner swing, which, from a dancer's point of view, makes African music so irresistible.

**African Music?**

Obviously this piece is not African music. First of all, the cello is no African instrument, but more importantly, the composition's function as a concert or a competition piece contradicts all conceptions of traditional African music, which is always firmly rooted in a social context. However, by adapting typically African structural elements to such an extend, that they become primary shapers of form and expression, it cannot be regarded as belonging to any European musical tradition either, thus probably exists somewhere in between both worlds.

Since I don't believe in cultural compromises, it would be my wish, that both identities remain perceptible; that they would clarify and enhance their respective qualities and differences, which could then be treated with greater mutual understanding and respect.

Since not only the rest of the world, but also Africa, is rapidly changing, it might not be appropriate anymore to label only "traditional" music as being authentically African. Perhaps, in this respect, **Ugubu** is, after all, an African piece.

Hans Huyssen

**Legend:**

(1) Notes marked with an * should be played saltando at the very tip of the bow (where the bow hair still covers the ivory plate) or, alternatively, with the stick of the bow. The triplets of this motive (which is a transcription from a recordings of traditional ugubu-playing), may well be played somewhat irregularly — as is originally also the case.

(2) Percival R. Kirby: The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1953
Temporelationen

\[ \begin{align*}
\gamma^3 &= 100 \\
\gamma^3 &= 112 \\
\gamma^3 &= 150 \\
\gamma^3 &= 200 \\
\gamma^3 &= 225 \\
\gamma^3 &= 66 \\
\gamma^3 &= 100 \\
\gamma^3 &= 132 \\
\gamma^3 &= 200 \\
\end{align*} \]

Stringed instruments, Group I (a).

1. Chwana  
   segwana

2. Swazi  
   ligulu

3. Zulu  
   ugulu

4. Sotho (Bas.)  
   thomo

5, 6. Xhosa  
   umhadi

Photograph by W.P.Paff.
Ugibu
(rising and falling... and rising)

für Cello Solo

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