

Driving for Music

The orchestral memoirs of a bus-driving violist

by Peter van Drimmelen

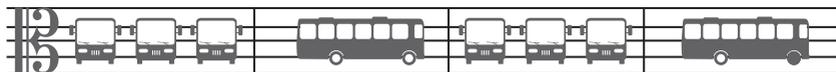
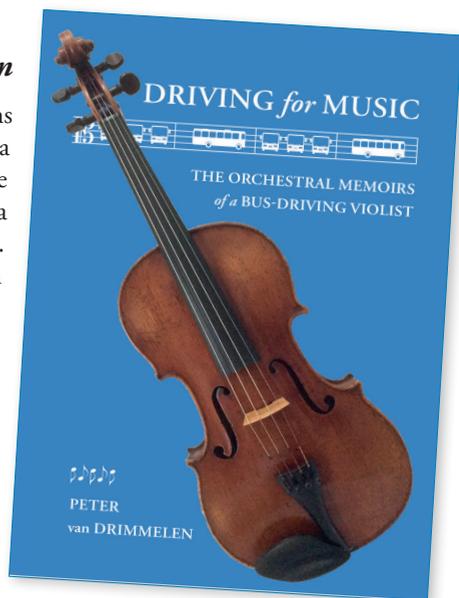
Orchestral life viewed from the viola section

Peter van Drimmelen's orchestral career spans thirty-five years; with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and the Auckland String Quartet in the early 1980s, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra from 1987 to 2014, and many regional orchestras. Over those years, Peter has played the Beethoven symphonies 750 times. During the lean years he drove buses to make ends meet.

His memoir records the funny and unexpected aspects of orchestral life: the concert where the conductor dislocated his shoulder and a choral conductor in the audience stepped in to sight-read and conduct a difficult score; the solo violinist who broke a string in a critical passage; turning pages during a performance to be surprised to find photos of topless women.

It also records the tedium: the piece where the violas 'rest' for 175 bars, *don't go to sleep*; being stranded at snowbound airports; and recording music for the final 'Hobbit' film (reading material is essential).

Peter was born in the Netherlands in 1946 and educated at Rudolf Steiner schools in Rotterdam and Den Haag. He was interested in classical music from a very early age and began playing the violin when he was eleven. From age seventeen until twenty-one he studied at the Rotterdam Conservatorium, followed by four years at the Utrecht Conservatorium where, on the advice of his teacher, he changed to the viola. Peter immigrated to New Zealand in 1975, and is married to violinist Glenda Craven. They have three children; Elize Rosa, Christopher Pieter, and David Jamie.



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