



Ivan Galamian (1903-1981)

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<http://beststudentviolins.com/Galamian.html>

The following article (please see, below) is obviously very important to string players and violinists, in particular. The article was written by Judith Karp "who writes frequently about music, spent a summer studying violin at Meadowmount."

I was at Manhattan School of Music in 1969, I think it was, and my friend from Tulsa, Maryanne Griffin, who was studying at Juilliard with Mr. Galamian, brought him to the MSM concert and introduced him to me at the break. So I had the pleasure of having met him socially, but not studying with him, unfortunately.

Below is my best effort to transcribe this article. If you would like to add photographs or other links to this page, please [contact me](#).



Schneider with Ivan Galamian (center) and Joseph Gingold (right), all famous violinists and teachers. (Photo taken at Meadowmount, 1966 by T. Suárez)

Galamian - A Great Violin Teacher

by JUDITH KARP

The world's violin-playing family lost one of its greatest teachers earlier this month with the death of Ivan Galamian. It was not entirely unexpected; at 78, the legendary Armenian pedagogue had been in less than perfect health for some time. But there was always a burning force in Mr. Galamian that almost made one believe he could defy nature's rules; it was the force of his own wry conviction that "I cannot die as long as there are students around who want to learn to play the violin."

Mr. G., as he was called by his students, headed the violin departments of both New York's Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he had taught since the mid 1940's. To the day he died, students were making their way to his modest West Side apartment, one after the other, from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., every day of the week.

"He was maybe the greatest violin teacher in history," says Robert Mann, founder and first violinist of the Juilliard Quartet. "I am one of the few violinists around who didn't study with him, but every once in a while I would go also, to play for him and show him what I was doing."

Ivan Galamian came to this country from Paris in the late 1930's. In five years, almost anyone who wanted to be a violinist knew there was time to be spent under his tutelage in order to [learn how to play violin](#). Parents would fly to New York with their would-be prodigies, and teachers from all over the world sent him their most gifted students. Sometimes the teachers themselves would arrive, to sit in on his lessons and try to glean the essence of his method. But more often than not they came away bewildered. It wasn't so much what Mr. Galamian said but how he said it, and when.

Yet Ivan Galamian did have a method, an approach to the violin that changed the entire feeling of playing it, replacing awkward motions with smooth ones, uneven sound with full sound. "Did you ever have a lesson with a tennis teacher who analyzed every part of the stroke?" explained Itzhak Perlman, who first played for Mr. G at 13. "That's what his lessons were like. You know how the ball has to hit the soft spot in the center of the racket to connect? Well, Mr. Galamian found the same point of contact for the bow with the string, to get the maximum quality and sound."

There is a saying among his colleagues that "Mr. G could take a table and teach it to play the violin." And in fact he prided himself on being able to spot talent behind a partially developed or disjointed technique.

His lessons were always intense work, with no time for small talk. You played your scales in the "warm-up room," a small sitting room whose walls were covered with photographs, etchings and

prints of all the famous violinists in history. At exactly the time of your lesson the door would open. Escape for your predecessor, the moment of truth for you.

Ivan Galamian believed that the ideal way to train violinists would be to spirit them off to an isolated place in the country with fresh air and without distractions, make them get up early and practice till lunchtime, feed them a big meal, practice a few hours more, feed them a light supper and let them listen to each other in the evening, playing chamber music or concertos.

In 1944 he created his ideal world at a rambling clapboard farmhouse in rural New York State. It was called Meadowmount Music School and it operated every summer since. Just about every successful violinist today has paid at least one summer's dues in its confines.

* * *

"It was slave labor. It was terrible!" exclaims Arnold Steinhardt, first violinist of the Guarneri Quartet. "You had to get up and practice all day long, and he demanded an almost monk-like existence. We all moaned and groaned and vowed we'd never go back, but somewhere we all loved it."

"I loved every minute," declares Mr. Perlman, who spent eight summers in Meadowmount. "The atmosphere was such that you were totally moved into achieving. Everybody around you was practicing and showing off. And those concerts! Probably the most devastating of my life, because you were playing for your teachers and your peers. This was the Inquisition!"

"Some people say that Galamian's students all sound alike," muses Pinchas Zukerman. "But I heard eight different 'Rondo Capricciosos' [by Saint-Saëns] in a weekend in Meadowmount and they were totally different performances." Yet there is no doubt that Mr. Galamian initially imposed the same interpretation of any given piece of music on all of his students. He had spent many years editing much of the violin repertory, from exercises to concertos, for New York's International Music Company, and students were required to work with these editions. The key was that those students who pushed to try their own ideas were eventually given their freedom. "You had to bring something of your own to him," observes Isaac Stern. "The stronger your own personality, the more you could gain from him."

In 1952 Mr. Galamian invited a colleague from Juilliard, Leonard Rose, the cellist, to bring his students to Meadowmount for the summer and coach chamber music. "It was extraordinary," Mr. Rose says of that first visit. "I sat spellbound, hearing all of these kids get up and play so amazingly well. 'How is it possible?' I asked him. 'What do you do?' When he showed me his basic principles of the right and left hand, I realized I could transfer much of it to the cello. It opened a whole new vista for me as a teacher."

Mr. Rose spent 11 summers in Meadowmount, and when the work load became too heavy he brought his friend Josef Gingold, then concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra, who became the chamber music coach and one of Mr. Galamian's closest friends. "We talked shop," recalls Mr. Gingold, who now teaches at Indiana University.

Many of Mr. Galamian's students at that time, including Mr. Perlman, also worked with his assistant, Dorothy DeLay, who went on to become a renowned teacher in her own right. "His two greatest qualities," she says, "were his ability to organize his materials and total dedication to his work. It was after knowing him that I began working all the hours I do now. And he had a great ability to listen to what people say, which is rare."

Mr. Galamian rarely showed emotion, least of all in front of his students. "His exterior was sometimes forbidding, because he never said very much," says Mr. Gingold with awe. "But I always used to sit with him at concerts, and before one of his students would start to play Mr. G. always held my hand and it was trembling! He was feeling for this boy as if he were concertizing himself."

At one time Ivan Galamian did give concerts, in Russia where he studied and later in Paris, where he lived until World War II as a disciple and teaching assistant of the famous French violinist Lucien Capet. "He told me that he had all the ambitions to be a great concert artist," explains Mr. Rose, "but his nerves would bother him so much he would have backaches for weeks after concerts. So he said the hell with it."

Mr. G. was a teacher whose ego was entirely bound up in the accomplishments of his students, whose mission in life was to give them the means to express themselves. And when he had given them all he could he would "kick them out of the nest," as he put it. "Come back for help when you need it, and let me know who your girlfriends are." His students and colleagues around the world must agree with his friend Josef Gingold: "Someone will replace him, but no one can ever take his place."

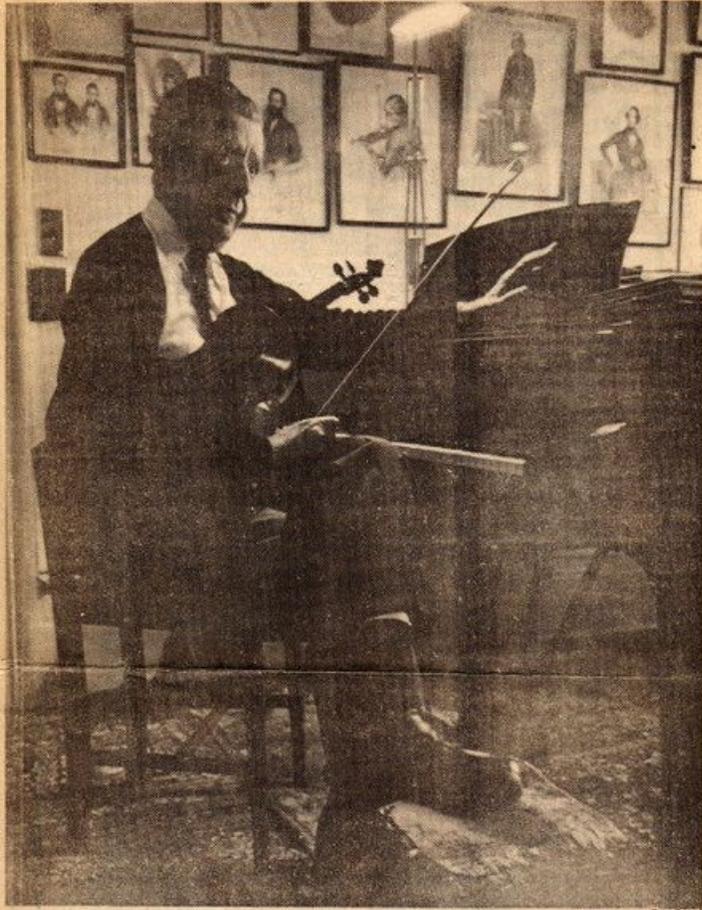
Galamian--A Great Violin Teacher

By JUDITH KARP

New York Times (1923-Current file); Apr 26, 1981;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. D19



The late Ivan Galamian—"He could take a table and teach it to play the violin."

Ivan Galamian

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Mr. Galamian rarely showed emotion, least of all in front of his students. "His exterior was sometimes forbidding, because he never said 'vermooch,'" says Mr. Gingold with a grin. "But I always used to sit with him at concerts, and before one of his students would start to play Mr. G. always held my hand and it was trembling! He was trembling for this boy as if he were concealing himself."

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Michael Rabin, Ivan Galamian and Joseph Szigeti

Biography

[Wikipedia article](#)

Ivan Alexander Galamian [January 23, 1903 to April 14, 1981] was an influential Armenian violin teacher of the twentieth century.

He was born in Tabriz, Iran, but his family soon emigrated to Moscow, Russia. Galamian studied violin at the School of the Philharmonic Society there with Konstantin Mostras (a student of Leopold Auer) until his graduation in 1919. He moved to Paris, France, during the Bolshevik Revolution and studied under Lucien Capet in 1922 and 1923. In 1924 he debuted in Paris. Due to a combination of nerves,

health, and a fondness for teaching, Galamian eventually gave up the stage in order to teach full-time. He became a faculty member of the Russian Conservatory in Paris, where he taught from 1925 until 1929. His earliest pupils in Paris include Vida Reynolds, the first woman in the Philadelphia Orchestra's first violin section, and Paul Makanowitzky.

In 1937 Galamian moved permanently to the United States of America. In 1941 he married Judith Johnson in New York City. He taught violin at the Curtis Institute of Music beginning in 1944, and became the head of the violin department at the Juilliard School in 1946. He wrote two violin method books, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (1962) and *Contemporary Violin Technique* (1962). Galamian incorporated aspects of both the Russian and French schools of violin technique in his approach. Galamian founded the summer program Meadowmount School of Music in Westport, New York.

His most notable teaching assistants - later distinguished teachers in their own right - were Margaret Pardee, Dorothy DeLay, Sally Thomas, Pauline Scott, Robert Lipsett, Lewis Kaplan, David Cerone, and Elaine Richey.

Galamian held honorary degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music, Oberlin College, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. He also was an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Books by or referencing Ivan Galamian

1. Ivan Galamian: [*Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*](#)
 2. Frederick Neumann and Ivan Galamian: [*Contemporary Violin Technique, Volume 1: Scale and Arpeggio Exercises with Bowing and Rhythm Patterns*](#)
 3. Frederick Neumann and Ivan Galamian: [*Contemporary Violin Technique, Volume 2: Double and Multiple Stops in Scale and Arpeggio Exercises*](#)
 4. Edited by Karen Olson: [*The Galamian Scale System For Viola \(Volume 1\)*](#)
 5. Edited by Hans Jorgen Jensen: [*The Galamian Scale System For Violoncello \(Volume 1\)*](#)
 6. Edited by Hans Jorgen Jensen: [*The Galamian Scale System For Violoncello \(Volume 2\)*](#)
 7. Barbara Lourie Sand: [*Teaching Genius: Dorothy DeLay and the Making of a Musician*](#)
 8. Roy Malan and Efrem Zimbalist: [*Efrem Zimbalist: A Life*](#)
 9. Anthony Feinstein: [*Michael Rabin: America's Virtuoso Violinist*](#)
 10. Arnold Steinhardt: [*Indivisible by Four: A String Quartet in Pursuit of Harmony*](#)
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Editions edited by Ivan Galamian

1. J.S. Bach: *Concerto No. 1 in A minor, BWV 1041*
 2. J.S. Bach: *Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043*
 3. J.S. Bach: *Concerto No. 2 in E major, BWV 1042*
 4. J.S. Bach: *Six Sonatas and Partitas, S. 1001-1006 (for Violin Solo)*
 5. Brahms: *Three Sonatas, Op. 78, 100, 108*
 6. Bruch: *Scottish Fantasy, Op. 46*
 7. Conus: *Concerto in E minor. Kindle ed.*
 8. Dont: *24 Studies, Op. 37*
 9. Dont: *Etudes and Caprices, Op. 35*
 10. Dvorák, Concerto in A minor, Op. 53. New York: International Music Company, 1975.
 11. Fiorillo: *36 Etudes or Caprices*
 12. Gaviniés: *24 Studies*
 13. Kreutzer: *42 Studies*
 14. Mazas: *Etudes Speciales, Op. 36 No. 1*
 15. Mazas: *Etudes Brillantes, Op. 36 No. 2*
 16. Mozart: *Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219 (with Cadenzas by Joseph Joachim)*
 17. Paganini: *24 Caprices, Op. 1*
 18. Rode: *24 Caprices*
 19. Saint-Saëns, Caprice, Op. 52, No. 6. New York: International Music Company.
 20. Sinding: *Suite in A minor, Op. 10*
 21. Tchaikovsky: *Souvenir D'un Lieu Cher, Op. 42 (Three Pieces: Meditation; Scherzo; Melody)*
 22. Vieuxtemps: *Concerto No. 5 in A minor, Op. 37*
 23. Vivaldi: *Concerto in A minor, RV 356 (Op. 3, No. 6)*
 24. Vivaldi: *Concerto in D minor, RV 565*
 25. Vivaldi: *Concerto in G minor, RV 317 (Op. 12, No. 1)*
 26. Wieniawski : *Concerto No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 14*
 27. Wieniawski : *Polonaise Brillante in A major, Op. 21*
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Gallery



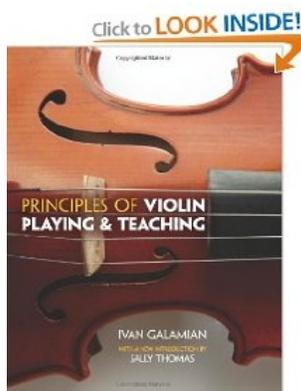
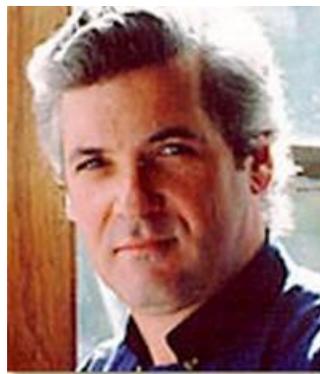
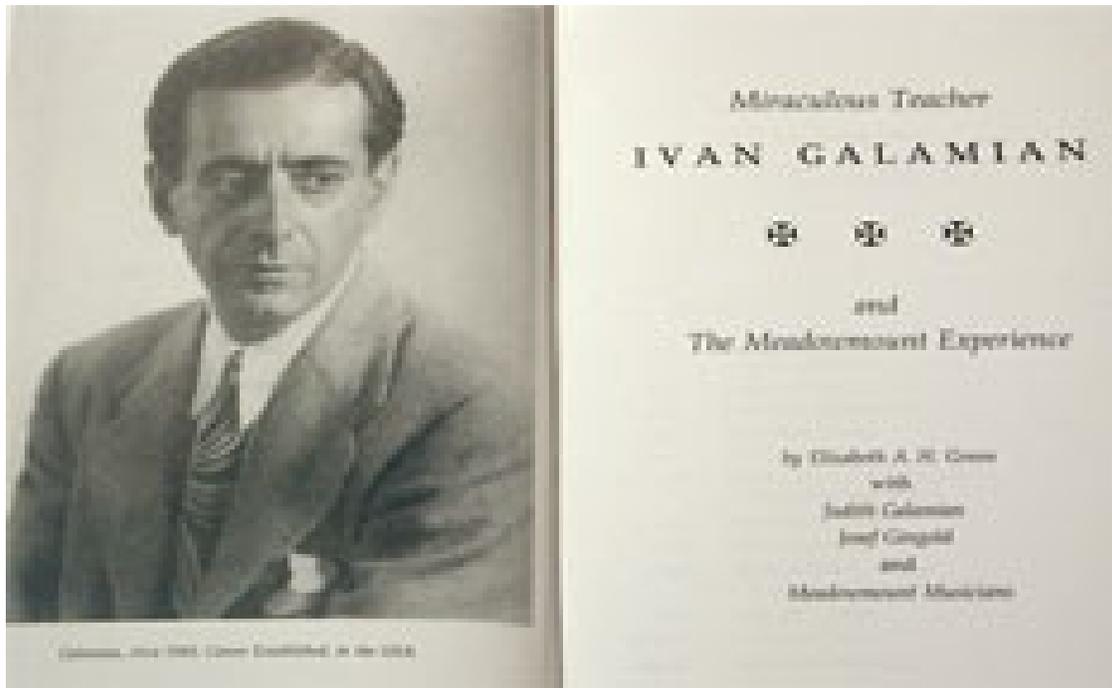
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Michael Avsharian
Dorothy Delay



Ivan Galamian



586-22 Ivan Galamian, 1977 photo © Peter Schaaf



New ed., Introduction by Sally Thomas. Paperback. Publication Date: March 21, 2013. A celebrated instructor presents his philosophy of teaching and practice methods, including the appropriate combination of technique and interpretation. The longtime Juilliard professor incorporates aspects of both the Russian and French schools in a system both ingenious and logical. Topics include posture, vibrato, intonation, bowing, double stops, and many other subjects.

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