

# *Music*



Violin Poems

by

Larry J. Eriksson

*Third Edition*

Selected publications by Larry J. Eriksson

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*Moonlight* (2010)

*Moments* (2011)

*Mysteries* (2011)

*Music* (2011; 2nd ed. rev., 2014; 3rd ed., 2016)

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*A Violin's Life*

Made almost one hundred years ago,  
the old man's violin, rarely played,  
sat in silence on a closet shelf,  
an abandoned musical relic.

Unseen and unheard in its black case,  
the strings of the aging violin  
began breaking one by one until  
the bridge fell over in the tangle.

After the old man died, his wife gave  
the broken instrument to their son,  
an heirloom too valued to discard  
and too damaged to use or display.

Thinking of playing the violin,  
the son took it to a music shop  
where they told him, to his great surprise,  
that it could be easily repaired.

With new strings, resetting the bridge,  
repairing an open body seam,  
installing a new peg and tailgut,  
the violin was as good as new.

Violins are built to be repaired  
and can survive for hundreds of years,  
no one really owns a violin,  
it is just on loan from the future.

(inspired by my father's violin;  
published in *Moments*)

*The Student Violinist*

With bow moving  
across the strings,  
the music starts,  
sounds from the past,  
an old violin  
returns to life.

Bow moves faster,  
fingers searching,  
tapping, punching,  
stepping along,  
an urgent march  
across the staff.

Tempo increases,  
fingers flying,  
hopping, skipping,  
too little time,  
too many notes,  
too much music.

Pinkie struggles  
to reach its notes,  
shorter than most,  
not yet as strong,  
it keeps trying –  
no time to rest.

(published in *Moments*)

## *Violin Fingering*

With only four fingers,  
why is it difficult  
to decide which to use?

Open strings are easy,  
but mean that the player  
must forego vibrato.

Placement of your fingers  
requires finding a note  
on a neck with no frets.

Some fingers should be held  
to guide finger placement  
for playing the next note.

Fourth fingers are not strong  
and harder to vibrate,  
but they avoid shifting.

Extended fingers or  
higher positions can  
minimize string crossings.

Go to a position  
that prepares you to play  
the next sequence of notes.

The sounds of open strings  
provide a reference  
for your intonation.

Consider tone color  
in making decisions  
on strings and positions.

Many alternatives,  
each with advantages –  
like solving a puzzle.

Some music is awkward,  
no matter what you try  
no approach seems to work.

It does make you wonder –  
did the composer know  
much about the violin?

(published in *MoodSwings*)

*Music from the Bow*

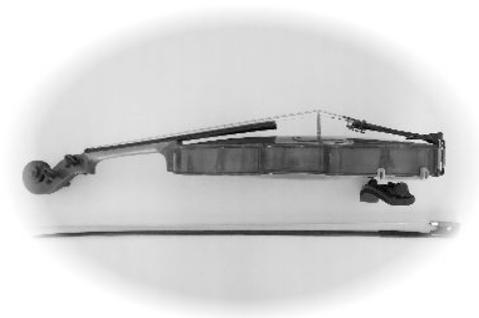
The violin gets applause,  
but the bow controls the sound.  
The left hand selects the notes;  
the right hand makes the music.

Through the movement of the bow  
play music you want to hear.  
Use big strokes to play forté;  
small strokes to play piano.

Create a clear stream of notes  
through continual movement.  
Keep string crossings smooth without  
hesitation or delay.

Make long down bows reach the tip  
and long up bows find the frog.  
Manage the bow to create  
your own musical painting.

(published in *Moments*)



## *Golf and Music*

Golf and making music,  
alike in many ways  
with physical and mental  
challenges that require  
endless hours of practice.

One big difference –  
golfers focus on failure,  
musicians on success.

Golfers cringe at bogies,  
mistakes stand out and  
encourage golfers  
to ask “if only” questions –  
golf is a numbers game  
and the score is the thing.

Musicians know mistakes  
are unavoidable;  
they look at the positive,  
finding satisfaction  
short of perfection –  
making music is an art  
and the process is king.

(published in *Magic*)

## *Marching Strings*

In my dream, a string orchestra  
suddenly appeared down the street,  
no rifles or martial outfits,  
just black and white formal attire.

Led by leaping dancers spinning  
and twirling colorful banners,  
surrounded by a vibrant group  
of banjos and ukuleles.

Followed by rows of instruments –  
a host of petite violins,  
their synchronized bows producing  
waves of angelic music.

Escorted by endless lines  
of muscular violas,  
slightly larger alto voices  
adding elegant harmonies.

Then ranks of sensual cellos,  
with graceful curvaceous bodies  
supported by long shoulder straps  
and radiating deep, rich tones.

Finally, massed rows of basses  
gliding on rubber casters and  
providing a rhythmic footing  
for the musical brilliance.

Not a band, marching for war,  
but just strings, marching for peace,  
leaving behind smiles and sunshine,  
birds and flowers, love and kindness.

(published in *Marching*)

*String Theory*

a dark quiet night  
the violin is silent  
patiently waiting

the bow awakens  
slowly moving back and forth  
the music begins

soon moving faster  
the bow crosses string to string  
in clouds of rosin

a blue glow appears  
as ions accumulate  
and the music builds

now sparks are flying  
rivers of color and light  
a cascade of stars

the night disappears  
lightning arcs across the sky  
filling the ether

energy from strings  
creating light from darkness  
as the bow moves on

sound and light spring forth  
pushing the edge of the void  
expanding the world

(published in *Broken Strings, Missing Notes*,  
the chapbook *Moonlight*, and the Peninsula Pulse, Sept.  
5-18, 2008; “string theory” is also a branch of physics  
that uses vibrating strings to describe the nature of matter)

*Light Music*

A treble clef statue  
of polished green glass,  
infused by sunshine  
from a clear blue sky

makes the room sparkle with  
the music of light,  
shimmering notes  
performed pizzicato,

accompanied by  
the spectral colors  
of small rainbows formed  
by its prismatic base.

(published in *Moving*)



## *About the author*

Larry J. Eriksson is a Wisconsin poet active in the Dickinson Poetry Series at the UU Fellowship of Door County and a member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. He sees the world as filled with the music of poetry – a cosmic mystery driven by rhythms, rhymes, and riddles. His poems preserve memories, clarify thoughts, explore feelings, or simply have fun with language. They have appeared in numerous publications and are available at [www.quartersectionpress.com](http://www.quartersectionpress.com).

For 25 years, he was vice-president of research at Nelson Industries where he co-founded Digisonix and specialized in acoustics, signal processing, and active noise control. He received his B.S.E.E. from Northwestern University, his M.S.E.E. from the University of Minnesota, his Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is a Fellow of the Acoustical Society of America and the Society of Automotive Engineers.



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