

Paul Biss

Professor of Strings

Some people are raised in an environment that seems to foreordain their calling in life: Tiger Woods, Peyton Manning, Al Unser, Jr., to name a few. Such was the childhood of Paul Biss, whose mother, Raya Garbousova, was among the world's greatest cellists of the twentieth century. Raised in DeKalb, Illinois, Paul was in constant company of the leading artists of the day and the greatest music making of the time. He started piano at age 5, violin at 7, and by 9 was traveling 60 miles away to Chicago for lessons on the violin, an instrument whose sound and lore became one of the great passions of his life. It was this love that brought him to Bloomington as a freshman in 1962 to study with the legendary Josef Gingold. During his student days at IU, Paul also found his future wife, Miriam Fried. Miriam had come from Israel to study with Josef Gingold, and Paul went to the airport to bring her to Bloomington. He was among the first people she met. After graduation, Paul enrolled at Juilliard for his M.S. degree, which he completed in 1968. During this time he studied with another pedagogical legend, Ivan Galamian. After several years of concertizing and conducting, he returned to IU in 1979 as a faculty member, and member of the Berkshire Quartet.

His tenure at the Jacobs School of Music has been marked by a love of and devotion to teaching the violin, and conducting in the orchestral program. After 29 years of service on the faculty, he has former students all over the globe performing in orchestras and string quartets, as soloists, public school string specialists, and virtually in any venue that requires violinists. He has conducted many orchestra concerts on campus (and off) over the years and has established a great following in the community. Outside of the school, his compassionate nature turned him to Middle Way House and Big Brothers and Big Sisters, where he served as a volunteer.

Retirement is a word that hardly applies to Paul. He will still actively perform, teach, and conduct in the New England area, which he now calls home. As he will tell anyone, his two sons, Daniel and Jonathan, are the real joy of his life, and he intends to savor every moment with them. Daniel, who is a math professor at the University of Chicago, has entered politics and is running for the state legislature of Illinois. He and his wife, Karin, are also expecting a child in June, which will give Paul and Miriam another reason to be joyous (and doting!) grandparents. Jonathan has a meteoric career as a concert pianist, and, at 27, is among the busiest and most sought-after artists of that instrument.

We know that Paul will flourish in his new milieu and timeframe. His humaneness, love of music, and devotion to artistic expression will fill all his days with meaning and purpose. We wish him the greatest happiness.

Lawrence Hurst