THE 20TH CENTURY VIOLIST

WAYNE CROUSE, viola
and
MARY NORRIS, piano

8 p.m. in Hamman Hall
Wednesday, September 24, 1980
Tuesday, January 13, 1981
Wednesday, April 8, 1981

RICE UNIVERSITY

the Shepherd School of Music
Wednesday, April 8

Viola and Piano Music by American Composers

PROGRAM


Suite (1969)
   Poco andante
   Allegro moderato
   Allegretto
   Allegro moderato

Pastoral (1945)  Elliot Carter  (b. 1908)

Intermission

Sonata No. 2
   Andante teneramente
   Permutations
   Largo
   Allegro con moto

*Kant For Viola and Piano  Ross Lee Finney  (b. 1906)

*World Premiere  Paul Cooper  (b. 1926)
Tuesday, January 13

PROGRAM

Sonata No. 1 (1946)
Entree
Francaise
Air
Finale

Sonata for Viola Solo, Op. 25, No. 1 (1923)
Breit
Sehr frisch und straff
Sehr langsam
Rasendes Zeitmass
Langsam, mit viel Ausdruck

Intermission

Moderato
Allegretto
Adagio

Darius Milhaud
(1892-1974)

Paul Hindemith
(1895-1963)

Dimitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
PROGRAM

Sonata (1923) 25'28"
Molto Moderato
Allegro energico, ma non troppo presto
Molto lento

Lachrymae (1951) 14'36"
(Reflections on a song of Dowland)

Intermission

Suite (1919) 30'45"
Lento; Allegro
Allegro Ironico
Lento
Molto Vivo

Arnold Bax
(1883-1953)

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Ernest Bloch
(1880-1959)

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited. We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performance. Paging arrangements may be made with ushers.
Arnold Bax was one of the composers of the approximate generation of Vaughan Williams, that is, those composers who fulfilled the happy task of redeeming England musically. Like others of our century he wrote much music for instruments and instrumental combinations that were neglected or that were considered odd previously. The present sonata displays, as does much of this composer's music, the rather rich harmonies of many post-romantic composers; at the same time there is a great deal of counterpoint, and often with quite harsh harmonic results. The cyclic aspects of the sonata go further than the mere literal return at its end to a few bars of the introduction. Many of the themes are related, though transformed from one movement to the next. Although the first movement contains some fast passages the classical scheme of the sonata is reversed to slow--fast--slow. The work is dedicated to a violist friend of the composer who is credited with having revised the viola part. That the instrument was properly considered and not treated merely as a violin that can play a little lower is evident from the first page on.

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959), like many composers of the first half of the twentieth century, retains numerous conservative features within a modern idiom. Most of his compositions are in traditional forms for traditional ensembles, and his works maintain a tonal basis. The harmonic vocabulary, however, is expanded to make liberal use of dissonance and allow for free juxtaposition of harmonies for coloristic purposes.

The Suite for Viola and Piano is one of a sizeable group of chamber works, but differs from the others in emphasizing the dance rather than sonata structure. The first movement begins with a slow introduction which gradually moves from vague fragmentary ideas to more expansive melodic phrases, eventually accelerating and merging with the main body of the movement, marked Allegro. With the Allegro we enter a more concrete world, characterized by a sharply articulated dance tune in folk style with clearly defined, though constantly changing, metrical groups. The simplicity of
the opening phrase of the dance belies the complexity of expansion and
development which ensues as one phrase after another unfolds, some traded
off between piano and viola and others woven into a polyphonic fabric
through canonic imitation. The frenetic pace dissipates only at the end
where a slowing of the tempo offers the leisure for a reminiscence of
one of the main phrases of the original tune.

The second movement, Allegro ironico, is a kind of humorous scherzo in
which open fourths and fifths, already suggested by the dance tune of the
first movement, now emerge into greater prominence. The "ironic" effect
is enhanced by short fragments rapidly thrown from one register of the
viola to another. Three scherzo sections, all using the same basic
material, alternate with two trios. The first trio combines harmonies
based on the fourth and fifth with triads. In the second, a harmonic
color also based on fourths and fifths serves as background for a melody
reminiscent of the first phrase of the dance tune from the preceding
Allegro.

The slow movement establishes a special atmosphere through dissonant
chords in the piano, either rolled, arpeggiated or repeated, sometimes
in the bass, sometimes in the treble. Against this sustained harmonic
atmosphere, fragments of the first-movement folk dance appear among
seemingly vague musings in the viola. These quotations gradually
become more explicit until, at the end of the movement, the piano quotes the
very first phrase of the tune in its simple, original form.

The finale is the fastest movement of all and presents a clearly defined
dance tune like the first. But this time the fourths and fifths of those
earlier movements are carried to the extreme of the pentatonic scale,
giving the movement a decidedly Oriental flavor. The dance tune of the
first movement appears even here, but significantly altered by the new
harmonic context. By the end of the movement, practically every impor-
tant phrase from the first movement has returned in a new guise. The
entire Suite is thus cyclic with all movements tied together by the same
material and common harmonic bonds. It is not surprising that a re-
examination of the opening slow introduction also yields not-quite-fully-
formed fragments of the all-pervasive dance melody.