

FACULTY RECITAL

CSABA ERDÉLYI, viola

RUTH TOMFOHRDE

guest pianist

THE VIOLA IN 1919

Wednesday, November 16, 1994

8:00 p.m.

Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11 No. 4

*Paul Hindemith
(1895-1963)*

- I. Fantasie*
- II. Thema mit Variationen*
- III. Finale (mit Variationen)*

Sonata for Viola and Piano

*Rebecca Clarke
(1886-1979)*

- I. Impetuoso - Poco Agitato*
- II. Vivace*
- III. Adagio - Allegro*

INTERMISSION

Suite for Viola and Piano

*Ernest Bloch
(1880-1959)*

- I. Lento - Meno lento - Allegro*
- II. Allegro ironico*
- III. Lento*
- IV. Molto vivo*

In consideration of the performers and members of the audience, please check audible paging devices with the ushers and silence audible timepieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

1919 was a revolutionary year for the viola, producing the three masterpieces for viola and piano presented on this program. These three works open a large window to give us insight into the creative ideas of the post-war era. Composers explored new avenues of expression, evoking cross-cultural idioms such as Oriental exoticism and French impressionism. It is interesting to note the occurrence of these features coming from composers whose backgrounds were so solidly German, English or Jewish.

It was in 1919 that Paul Hindemith changed from violin to viola, and in so doing produced two sonatas for the instrument: *Op. 11 No. 4* for viola and piano, and *Op. 11 No. 5* for solo viola. Hindemith premiered these sonatas on June 2 at a concert where he played his new works for both viola and violin. *Op. 11 No. 4* opens with a dreamy fantasy followed by a folk song-like theme with variations, and a finale with more transformations of that theme. The three movements are to be performed without a break. The sonata is warm and romantic, shows a strong French influence, and refutes those critics who consider Hindemith's music to be dry and academic. Hindemith's German tradition is particularly evident in the third movement's fugato section, which can be interpreted as a prophecy to the rise of Nazism, depicting it as a lame, ugly monster moving from hiding to power.

In 1919, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge announced a competition for new compositions in chamber music. Seventy-two manuscripts were entered, and it was a great triumph for the viola that the best two chosen works were both for viola and piano. Ernest Bloch, a Swiss composer who was proud of his Jewish heritage, received the \$1,000 top prize for his suite for viola and piano. Bloch states the his inspiration for the work was the Orient, which he had actually never seen. Bloch gave picturesque titles to the four movements: *In the Jungle*, *Grotesques*, *Nocturne*, and *The Land of the Sun*. He later abandoned these titles as too restricting, rather preferring to liberate the listener's imagination. Bloch also stated that this suite is definitely not Jewish in origin and that he conceived the work for viola and orchestra, an arrangement he eventually made.

The other composition that actually tied with Bloch's suite (the tie was broken by Mrs. Coolidge) was a sonata by Anthony Trent (two of six judges actually preferred this sonata to the Bloch suite). Trent was soon to be revealed as a pseudonym for violist Rebecca Clarke, much to the shock of some of the jury members who felt such a work could not possibly have been written by a woman! Rebecca Clarke was born in England and studied viola with Lionel Tertis, the great-grandfather of modern solo viola playing whose phenomenal artistry actually inspired Bloch to compose his viola suite. Rebecca Clarke was the chamber music partner of many famous musicians such as Pablo Casals, Jacques Thibaud, Artur Rubenstein,

and Myra Hess. She toured the world as a recitalist often including her own compositions. Rubenstein called her "the glorious Rebecca Clarke." Both Bloch and Clarke emigrated to America in the same year, 1916. The Clarke sonata shows French influence (predominantly Debussy) throughout. There is also the use of the pentatonic scale glancing toward China, reminding us of the fascination that Puccini must have felt in composing *Turandot*. The third movement shows Clarke's love for her adopted country and the large vistas of American scenery. This movement masterfully blends the themes of the preceding movement. Both the Clarke sonata and the Bloch suite were premiered at the Berkshire Music Festival, September 25-27, 1919, by the famous French violist Louis Bailly who was also a jury member of the competition.

— Notes by Michael Bynog

BIOGRAPHIES

"Were he a violinist or a cellist, he would probably be talked of in the same breath as Kreisler and Casals," wrote Felix Aprahamian of *The Sunday Times*, recommending viola player CSABA ERDÉLYI to the London public after his performance of Berlioz' *Harold in Italy* with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis in the Albert Hall in the presence of 8,000 listeners.

Csaba Erdélyi, born in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, opened a new chapter in the history of the viola when, in 1972, he won the prestigious City of London Carl Flesch International Violin Competition with the viola — the first, and so far, the only time. Lionel Tertis, then age 96, was present at the finals and called Erdélyi "a great ambassador for the viola and his country" and bequeathed some of his own, lifelong-used viola parts of concerto repertoire to him. The Flesch Prize launched Erdélyi's international career; in the same year he was invited by Joseph Szigeti and Rudolf Serkin to the Marlboro Festival in the U.S. where he worked with Pablo Casals.

A student of Pál Lukács and subsequently Yehudi Menuhin and Bruno Giuranna, Erdélyi has become Menuhin's partner in concertos and chamber music performances playing together in several countries. Menuhin wrote to Benjamin Britten, "Erdélyi is an invaluable link between the two great musical cultures of Eastern and Western Europe."

Csaba Erdélyi has played in concerts and recordings with Jessye Norman, George Malcolm, András Schiff, Bernard Roberts, Franco Guili, Young Uck Kim, and Yo-Yo Ma. He was the viola soloist in the film score of *Amadeus*, with Sir Neville Marriner conducting. As a soloist he has

recorded for Decca, Philips, and Nimbus Records. He has played viola concertos with the leading British orchestras, on many occasions in the Royal Festival Hall and on the BBC Promenade Concerts as well as in major international music festivals.

Mr. Erdélyi was Principal Violist of the Philharmonia Orchestra from 1974 to 1978. He was invited as Guest Principal Violist to the BBC Symphony to play with Gennady Rozhdestvensky. As a member of the Esterházy Baryton Trio, he recorded exclusively for EMI. In 1980 he became patron and jury member of the first Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition on the Isle of Man. From 1981 to 1987 he was the violist of the Chilingirian String Quartet as well as professor of viola at the Guildhall School in London. He has held master classes in Aldeburgh for the Britten-Pears School, and in Edinburgh, Oslo, Vienna, Beijing, Hong Kong, Mexico, New Zealand, Alaska, and throughout the U.S. while paying frequent visits to his native Hungary.

As a dual citizen of Hungary and Great Britain, Mr. Erdélyi came to live in the U.S. in 1987 as professor of viola and chamber music at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he was also asked by members of the faculty to organize and conduct a faculty-student orchestra for public concerts and recordings. At Indiana University he has established a new course that is the first of its kind: "The History of the Viola and Viola Players." Since 1991 Professor Erdélyi has taught at The Shepherd School of Music.

Professor Erdélyi devotes much time to creative research and publication with the utmost respect for original manuscripts. His publications include: Bach: "Suite pour la luth" (BWV 995) for viola solo; Brahms: Sonata in D, Op. 78, for viola and piano; Hummel: Fantasia for viola and orchestra (score and parts); and Mozart-Erdélyi: Sinfonia Concertante, KV 364, for string sextet. This last work received its American premiere by Shepherd School faculty members and its European premiere at the Schnackenburg Music Festival where a violist of the Berlin Philharmonic spontaneously said to the audience: "Finally we have a pure Mozart sextet to play with the works of Brahms and Dvořák."

Professor Erdélyi has researched the original manuscript of the Bartók Viola Concerto for over ten years. He played the first performance of his faithful restoration in 1992 with the Budapest Philharmonic conducted by Erich Bergel. Well-known violists who knew Bartók as well as musicologist Elliot Antokoletz praised his publication as "an invaluable service to Bartók and all violists."

Csaba Erdélyi is playing a magnificent viola made for him in 1991 by master luthier Joseph Curtin in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

RUTH TOMFOHRDE is a professor of piano at the University of Houston School of Music. She has a varied and successful career in several areas: as a solo recitalist and as soloist with orchestras; as a collaborator with singers and instrumentalists; as pianist in chamber music performances; and as a teacher whose piano students have been very successful as performers and teachers. Among the students she has taught jointly with Abbey Simon, there are several who have been winners in state, national, and international competitions.

Her early training was in Houston with Ruth Burr. Mrs. Tomfohrde received a Bachelor's degree and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School in New York City, studying piano with Ernest Hutcheson. She has also studied with Robert Casadesus at Fontainebleau, France. She has appeared as soloist with the Houston Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the Saint Louis Symphony and others. She has also played recitals in many locations and toured parts of the United States and Europe as collaborator with singers and instrumentalists.

In the past several years, she has played duo recitals with violist Lawrence Wheeler at Alice Tully Hall in New York City, at Wigmore Hall in London, and for the BBC in London. Her compact disc recording with Lawrence Wheeler of American compositions for viola and piano will be released shortly on the Albany label. Her compact disc of Slavic sonatas for cello and piano which she made with Anthony Elliott on the Koch International label was released two years ago.

Professor Tomfohrde attended Rice University for two years before receiving a Fellowship to study at the Juilliard School, and her husband, John Tomfohrde, graduated from Rice University with a degree in chemical engineering.



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