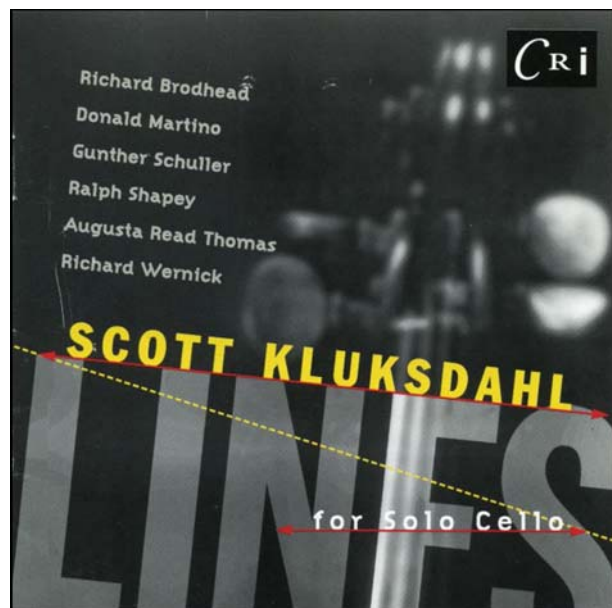


NWCR762

# Scott Kluksdahl

## Lines for Solo Cello



Richard Wernick	
1. <i>Cadenzas and Variations III</i> (1972) .....	(11:58)
Augusta Read Thomas	
2. <i>Spring Song</i> (1995) .....	(6:04)
Ralph Shapey	
3. <i>Krosnick Soli</i> (1983) .....	(9:58)
Richard Brodhead	
4. <i>Lament</i> (1993) .....	(11:15)
Gunther Schuller	
5. <i>Fantasia</i> (1960) .....	(8:38)
Donald Martino	
<i>Parisonatina Al'Dodecafonía</i> (1964) .....	(10:40)
6. I .....	(1:06)
7. II .....	(4:16)
8. III .....	(3:09)
9. IV .....	(2:09)
Scott Kluksdahl, cello	

Total playing time: 58:55

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## Notes

There is always a special drama when we hear a solo instrumentalist: one person, who alone carries the responsibility to project the composer's intention, to fill up the empty space of the hall with sound so compelling that we listeners forget the incredible risk he is taking. Chamber music, no matter how rich in nuance, is an act of collaboration, and that collaboration creates a sort of built-in safety net, in that one player can cue and reorient another if something goes wrong. Orchestra playing involves a sort of submersion of the individual player in the collective. But in the solo repertoire, there is no net, there is no intermediary; the performer faces the listener in the starkest, most intimate musical relationship of all.

The keyboard literature of the past three centuries is what most associate first with solo repertoire. The piano in particular has been a great boon to composers over the past two centuries, allowing them to mimic the effect of a full orchestra through its enormous range of colors; the solo percussion literature has come to fulfill a related role in this century, matching the age's fascination with new and exotic timbres. The literature for solo winds and brass is a little more problematic. This era has seen an explosion in its literature, but it is almost impossible to base an entire program on just the sound of a monophonic instrument (which plays only one note at a time). Despite the advances in extended techniques that allow players to create "multiphonics" (i.e., two notes played at once), real polyphony is almost impossible to create, even as an illusion.

And then there are the strings. Here we move to a very special realm that encompasses both expansiveness and intimacy. The string instruments have enormous range, greater than that of

any other instrument except the piano. From one portion of their range to another (known as registers), their timbral character changes markedly. They can accommodate double-stops (two notes at once), which allow for chordal textures and the creation of genuine polyphony. The cello adds another special characteristic to this mix: it is almost human in scale, like a being whose voice ranges from deep bass tones to beautifully piercing high notes, speaking with a voice that seems to blend and transcend gender, to be a model of humane utterance. Through it, one feels as though one enters into the soul of the speaker, the most intimate regions of the composer's psyche where the delicate and the passionate exist in a dynamically balanced tension.

Thus, it should not be surprising that this century's composers have turned with ever-increasing frequency to the solo cello. J. S. Bach has provided the great reference model in his unaccompanied Cello Suites, but beyond that, the field is wide open for composers to explore and indulge their fancy. And performers such as Scott Kluksdahl provide an added impetus: curious, questing, eager to expand their repertoire and collaborate with living creators, they excite composers with their combination of virtuosity and openness. Two of the works on this program (Thomas and Brodhead) were written for Kluksdahl; the Shapey was written for one of his teachers, Joel Krosnick; and all the interpretations on this disc have been developed through close collaboration with the composers. These composers show remarkable stylistic and technical continuity, despite that fact that they range generationally over a span of four decades. All have gained inspiration from the tradition called "modernism" or "expressionism." All believe that the revolutions at the start of

this century have fundamentally changed concert music, with no turning back. All have a passionate commitment to intensity of expression. Three of these composers (Martino, Schuller, and Wernick) have won the Pulitzer Prize. Two (Schuller and Shapely) have received so-called “genius” grants from the MacArthur Foundation. All have taught throughout their careers at some this country’s most prestigious conservatories and universities. In short, they are leading exponents of a tradition that is neither conservative nor radical, but rather *progressive*. All are deeply engaged with contemporary Romanticism—not the recreation of nineteenth-century sounds, but rather the *renewal* of them in a language directly related to what they see as the spirit of the age. And all are blessed with enlivening and insightful performances by Scott Kluksdahl.

**Richard Wernick** (b 1934) has taught at the University of Pennsylvania since 1968, preceded by a varied career of teaching and composition for film, theater, and dance. An accomplished conductor, he has directed the Penn Contemporary Players, and from this ensemble cultivated close collaborative relationships with many of its players that have resulted in some of his most important solo and chamber works. *Cadenzas and Variations III* (1972) is a work that revels in the grand, bravura gesture. It is a piece constructed out of high contrasts from section to section, alternating between intense expressionistic outbursts and refined, lyrical song. Wernick shows his understanding of the instrument through such idiomatic devices as: *pizzicato* arpeggios accompanying a melodic line, like a guitar; harmonics; *col legno* (playing with the wood of the bow); and double-stops. The resultant range of colors, registers, and textures gives the work a sonic breadth that matches its formal ambition.

**Augusta Read Thomas** (b 1964) studied at Northwestern, Yale, and the Royal Academy of Music; she currently teaches at the Eastman School of Music. Her works have been performed by an impressive range of artists and ensembles, including Mstislav Rostropovich (who conducted the premiere of her opera *Ligeia*), and the New York Philharmonic. *Spring Song* resulted from a previous collaboration with Kluksdahl, who presented west coast premiere performances her cello concerto *Vigil*. The performance so inspired her that she asked him if she could write a solo work, and he eagerly accepted. The work is like the gradual descent of a bird from the heights of flight to gravity-bound earth, starting in the cello’s upper register and gradually covering the entire range of the instrument. It moves from a pure monophonic line to denser textures with double-stops, at the same time incorporating progressively more tonal gestures (including a series of triumphant sounding major sixth double-stops that first appear about two minutes in, and return near the conclusion).

**Ralph Shapey** (1921–2002) has created a career as both composer and conductor, in the latter role serving as one of the major specialists in the most challenging new music of the past four decades. In New York he studied with Stefan Wolpe, afterwards moving to Chicago where he founded one of the pioneering ensembles of the period, the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. Like Wernick, Shapey creates music composed of contrasting blocks organized in a strict, often cyclical succession that suggests some mysterious ritual. *Krosnick Soli* (1983) was written for Joel Krosnick of the Juilliard String Quartet, and stands as a companion to the composer’s *Kroslish Sonata* written for the cellist and his long-term musical collaborator, pianist Gilbert Kalish. Its opening contrasts slashing arpeggios with a dark, basso profundo line; over time both elements are repeated and

varied in a kind of formal dance between rondo and variation forms. The piece is given a very special sound by one of Shapey’s pet techniques, *scorditura*, the tuning down of strings to pitches lower than the usual tuning. In this case, it is his decade-long tradition of lowering the cellos’ C string to a dangerously low A. The resultant darkness of the piece imbues it with exceptional somberness and gravitas.

**Richard Brodhead** (b1947) studied with Richard Wernick and George Crumb, and has lived most of his professional life in the Philadelphia area. He currently teaches at the New School Institute at Temple University Esther Boyer College of Music. His *Lament* (1993) stands apart from the other pieces in this collection in that it is willing to be soft, spare, and slow (though no less passionate). Brodhead uses such devices as harmonics (including the so-called seagull effect beloved of his teacher Crumb), and exposed pizzicati against drones, to create a stark and plaintive sound-world that draws the listener into its own, more languid flow of time. It is a still-point for the recital, an extended moment of intense contemplation, where meditative calm and emotional anguish merge.

**Gunther Schuller** (b 1925) is one of the all-time polymaths of American music. Equally renowned as composer, horn player, conductor, teacher, administrator, and jazz historian, Schuller has exercised his protean powers over the field since the 1950s. As president of the New England Conservatory and director of the Berkshire Music Center school at Tanglewood, he influenced an entire generation of young American composers in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. More than any other figure in classical music, he has been critical to the recognition of jazz as an integral (indeed, essential) part of the American musical heritage, via his comprehensive scholarship of classic jazz, his reconstructions of major repertoire, and his advocacy of a “third stream” by which African-American and European traditions might find a way to synthesize into a previously unimagined creative hybrid. His *Fantasia* (1960) is a profoundly Romantic work, embodying the very definition of the word “rhapsodic.” Most notable is a deep structural device not obvious on a first hearing. The work constantly returns to the low C of the cello (its lowest open note) in such a manner that all the music spun out above it begins to sound like ringing overtones above that pitch. Thus, the extreme gestural diversity of the work is encompassed within a single compelling formal gesture.

**Donald Martino** (1931–2005) studied with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt, and from them received a rigorous training in American serialism at the height of its flowering. Until recently, he has taught almost twenty-five years in the Boston area, at the New England Conservatory, Brandeis, and Harvard. He is one of the few composers of his generation to have taken serialism and made it into a highly personal, expressive language. *Parisonatina Al’Dodecafonia* (1964) was written for Aldo Parisot, and it covers a huge range of ideas, gestures, and moods in its ten-minute span. The piece is divided into four movements, which in turn group into two pairs. The music rushes by in an almost blinding whirl, and one must listen very closely (or better yet, multiple times) to follow the argument. But a real musical argument there is: the initial one-minute opening movement is a type of fanfare, the second a scherzo of rapidly alternating ideas, including many “extra-musical” noises on the instrument, the third a lyrical interlude of arching musical lines, and the fourth a finale that recovers the energy that opened the work. It brings this program to a close with the energy of a rocket, shooting into hyper speed, and then vanishing.

—Robert Carl

**Scott Kluksdahl** is a musician of uncommon breadth. Described by *Strings* magazine as “a simply superb cellist, playing with consummate technical ease, a beautiful sound, total conviction, authority, and dedication to the music,” his repertoire includes compositions of late French Romanticism, the Mediterranean School, standard works, and such complex languages as those of Sessions, Boulez, and Lindberg. Scott Kluksdahl is also recognized for his interpretations of the Bach Suites, most recently in performances at the Bach Festivals of Philadelphia and Oregon. He made his debut in 1980 as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and has appeared throughout the United States and in France, Germany, Belgium, Russia, Finland, and Israel. He is a founding member of the highly regarded Lions Gate Trio.

Kluksdahl’s particular affinity for the modern fringe has been influenced by Joel Krosnick, Gil Kalish, Bonnie Hampton, and Paul Zukofsky, and has associated him with American

composers Robert Helps, Carolyn Steinberg, Augusta Read Thomas, Laura Schwendinger, Richard Brodhead, Ralph Shapey, Andrew Imbrie, and Richard Wernick. Performances include those with the Philadelphia Network for New Music, Pittsburgh Music on the Edge, Tanglewood Festival of New Music, Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards, with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and at the Hed Music Center of Tel Aviv, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, and Finland’s Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival.

Scott Kluksdahl holds degrees from Harvard and Juilliard, and is recipient of grants from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship, and awards from the Naumburg and Washington International Competitions. He is professor of violoncello at the University of South Florida. In this recording he plays the “Margaret Rowell” of William Forster, dating from the late eighteenth century.

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## Production Notes

Produced and engineered by George Blood at SafeSound Archives, Philadelphia.

Recorded at Rock Hall at the Esther Boyer College of Music, Temple University.

Publishers: Brodhead, composer (ASCAP); Martino, Ione Press Inc. (BMI); Schuller, Ron Gwen Music Inc. (BMI); Shapey, Theodore Presser Inc. (ASCAP); Thomas, composer (ASCAP); Wernick, Theodore Presser Inc. (ASCAP).

CRI production manager: Allison Wolf

Executive director: Joseph R. Dalton

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