

FREDERICK JACOBI

Quartet no. 3

LYRIC ART QUARTET

Ballade for Violin and Piano

FREDELL LACK, *Violin*

IRENE JACOBI, *Piano*

Fantasy for Viola and Piano

LOUISE ROOD, *Viola*

IRENE JACOBI, *Piano*

THE MUSIC

“My conscious aim,” Frederick Jacobi once said, “has been to write music which is clear, definite and concise: I am an anti-obscurantist. I am a great believer in melody; a believer, too, that music should give pleasure and not try to solve philosophical problems. I believe that art and craft have much in common and that art, to be valid, must be more than the manifestation of a passing mode: in short, that there are some eternal values which transcend period and tune.”

More informally, he admonished a colleague: “Don’t think that everything which sounds complicated is necessarily profound, nor that everything which sounds pleasant is necessarily superficial.”

Jacobi’s *String Quartet No. 3*, composed in 1945, and given its first performance that same year in San Francisco, by the Budapest String Quartet, is a shining example of the emergence of the composer’s aims. The *Quartet*, a combination of the formal and the rhapsodic, is a reflection of Jacobi’s own personality. He was never confined to a stylistic strait jacket; he followed no particular school, but was an eclectic in the most positive sense of the word. Always aware of the most recent musical developments, he used only that which seemed the best and most expressive.

The *Quartet* is a combination of the strict sonata form and free lyrical expression.

A dramatic and exclamatory Allegro opening lapses immediately into a flowing and lyrical mood, which then alternates with the opening motif. Its germinal idea—continuing through the movement—recurs as the opening motif of the last movement. It is a mood of searching for and finding peace. Jacobi’s sense of humor comes into play in an unprecedented manner, by giving a sprightly cadenza to the *second* violin. The movement closes with a turbulent, climactic coda.

Romance and longing characterize the Andante—a kind of three-dimensional wistfulness. The Scherzo is fleeting, jocose and graceful—like shouting children at play in a pine forest, with footsteps muffled by the trees overhead and the carpet of pine needles below. With a bold, stabbing, bravura theme, the final Allegro re-establishes the mood of the first movement, and builds to an exciting, triumphant climax.

The *Ballade* was written for violinist Eudice Shapiro and the composer's wife, Irene Jacobi in 1942. It has been described by the *Musical Leader* as “a work of unusual beauty and color, somewhat impressionistic in treatment . . . written expertly for both violin and piano . . . (it) should be received with gratitude by the many violinists looking for new, well-written violinistic and effective music.” It encompasses a broad sweep, a large range of lyricism—both ardent and tender, yet virtuosic.

A year before writing the *Ballade*, Jacobi completed another solo work, the *Fantasy*, for viola and piano; a work first performed at Middlebury College (Bristol, Vermont) in the summer of 1941. Also a virtuoso piece, in one movement, it was written for violist Louise Rood and Mrs. Jacobi. The *Fantasy* is an introspective work, darker than the *Ballade*. There is power and turbulence here, resolving into the composer's inevitable mood of romance and lyricism. A highly compelling and engrossing work, it builds inexorably to a rich and powerful climax. Both compositions are rhapsodic but tightly unified. In each case the composer successfully reveals the qualities of each instrument.

THE COMPOSER

Frederick Jacobi was “by birth, training and faith an American composer, who intensely loved his land and was fascinated by its phenomena. But (he) was never a flag-waver or propagandist . . . widely travelled, mentally as well as circumstantially, hence a citizen of the world.” So Olin Downes wrote in the *New York Times*, in 1952, soon after the death of Jacobi.

Jacobi was born in San Francisco, May 4, 1891. As a youth his teachers included Raphael Joseffy, Rubin Goldmark, Ernest Bloch, Isidor Philipp and Paul Juon, and by the age of twenty-one he was named assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera.

He was a born teacher, whose enthusiasm for his subject was widely contagious. Jacobi taught composition for fifteen years at the Juilliard Graduate School of Music, and served as lecturer at the University of California (Berkeley), at Mills College (California), and at the Julius Hartt Musical Foundation (Hartford, Connecticut). His list of distinguished pupils includes Alexei Haieff, Leonard Ratner, Robert Starer, and Robert Ward.

Jacobi's catalogue is extensive. His works have been performed by many orchestral and chamber music groups throughout the world. Honors and awards have been equally numerous.

During the 1920's Jacobi became fascinated by the music of Indians in the Southwest; the first string quartet and several orchestral works were based on their themes. The Indian dances inspired a sense of rhythm which remained throughout his career.

In later life he drew great inspiration from the spiritual message of Judaism. Also, much of his secular music was inspired by the Bible. Jacobi's last work—once referred to as “my last will and testament”—was a Friday evening service, commissioned by the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York.

THE PERFORMERS

The Lyric Art Quartet organized in 1955, has Texas as its base. It has toured in the East and the Southwest, introducing numerous contemporary compositions. Its performance of contemporary and standard works has received critical acclaim.

“Irene Jacobi is an especially authoritative and brilliant performer of her husband's music,” Alfred Frankenstein wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. As a musician who has specialized in chamber music, Mrs. Jacobi has premiered many contemporary works. She has also played the concerti of Mozart with leading orchestras of the United States and Europe. Today, her activity as pianist is coupled with her work with Young Audiences, Inc. and her noteworthy service to other national music organizations.

Fredell Lack is a nationally known concert artist who was graduated from Juilliard, and who studied with Louis Persinger and Ivan Galamian. A winner of many national and international competitions, she has extensively toured the United States, Central America, Canada, and Europe, and has appeared on radio and television.

Louise Rood, Professor of Music at Smith College, is a distinguished teacher, author and editor as well as performer. Miss Rood has appeared with the Stradivarius and Stanley Quartets, and in recital with Irene Jacobi. George W. Stowe has written in the *Hartford Times*: “Miss Rood and Mrs. Jacobi collaborated in a performance that moved everyone with its passion of force, its unanimity of feeling and superb musicianship. It was a rare and unforgettable experience for this listener.”

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