

AMERICAN HISTORIC
YIZHAK SCHOTTEN, violist
KATHERINE COLLIER, pianist

ERNEST BLOCH

SUITE FOR VIOLA AND PIANO (1919)

Lento — Allegro — Moderato

Allegro ironico

Lento

Molto vivo

ERNEST BLOCH (b. 1880, Geneva; d. 1959, Portland, Oregon) and PAUL HINDEMITH (b. 1895, Hanau, Germany; d. 1963, Frankfurt-am-Main) both moved to the USA — Bloch during World War I and Hindemith during World War II — where they became influential teachers. Bloch became head of the Cleveland Institute and teacher of many important American composers. Hindemith taught at Yale from 1940 to 1953 before returning to Europe. He was also active as a conductor and a violist.

Bloch's SUITE FOR VIOLA AND PIANO won first prize in the Berkshire Chamber Music Competition in 1919, and had its first performance at the Berkshire Festival with Louis Bailly, violist, and Harold Bauer, pianist. The following is an analysis made by Bloch at that time:

“First of all, my SUITE does not belong to my so-called 'Jewish works,' although perhaps, in spite of myself, one may perceive here and there in a few places a certain Jewish inspiration. It is rather a vision of the Far East that inspired me: Java, Sumatra, Borneo — those wonderful countries I so often dreamed of, though never was fortunate enough to visit in any other way than through my imagination. I first intended to give more explicit — or picturesque — titles to the four movements of the work, as: (1) In the Jungle; (2) Grotesques; (3) Nocturne; (4) The Land of the Sun. But those titles seemed rather incomplete and unsatisfactory to me. Therefore, I prefer to leave the imagination of the hearer completely unfettered, rather than tie it to a definite programme.

“The following, however, is what I believe that I myself saw in the music:

1) Lento — Allegro — Moderato

“The first movement, the most complicated in inspiration and in form, aims to give the impression of a very wild and primitive Nature. The introduction, Lento, begins with a kind of savage cry, like that of a fierce bird of prey, followed immediately by a deep silence, *misterioso*, and the meditation of the viola. Other motives follow, and a small embryonic theme that later assumes very great importance. All these motives will be recalled later, either in the first movement or in the following ones, with more or less transformation.

“The following Allegro brings a motive of joyful and perhaps exotic character which is answered by the viola. There is a new motive for the viola, and there are transformations of earlier material. The second part of the Allegro begins with a new idea — perhaps a little Jewish, in my sense. There is a climax worked out from the most important themes. Then follows a decrescendo that leads to the conclusion of the Allegro — again in silence and in slumbering mood. Like a sun rising out of clouds, in the mystery of primitive Nature, one of the earlier viola motives arises in a broader shape, *Largamente*, and the movement ends, as it began, with the meditation of the viola.

2) Allegro ironico

“The second movement is rather difficult to define. It is a curious mixture of grotesque and fantastic characters, of sardonic and mysterious moods. Are these men, or animals, or grinning shadows? And what kind of sorrowful and bitter parody of humanity is dancing before us — sometimes giggling, sometimes serious? I myself do not know, and cannot explain. But I find traces of this kind of humor in parts of my former works: in the Scherzo of my first *Symphony* (1902), in the Witches of my opera *Macbeth* (1904-1907), in the Scherzo of my String Quartet (1916). But here, of course, it has a different color and significance.

“The musical form follows closely the expression in its alternating moods. It is a sort of rondo-form ... The first group of motives (Allegro) is made up of short fragments. The following section is based on a quite different motive (Grave).

3) Lento

“This very simple page expresses the mystery of tropical nights. I remembered the wonderful account of a dear friend who lived once in Java — his travels during the night . . . arrival at small villages in the darkness . . . the distant sounds of curious, soft, wooden instruments with strange rhythms . . . dances, too . . . Many years have passed since my friend told me all this; but the beauty and vividness of his impressions I could never forget — they haunted me; and almost unconsciously I had to express them in music.

“There is first a dreamy melody in the solo viola, above dark chords; then a second and a third motive; and, as if from far away, reminiscences of motives from the first movement.

4) Molto vivo

“The last movement is probably the most cheerful thing I ever wrote. The form is extremely simple — an obvious A-B-A, the middle part being a more lyrical episode, built from the other movements treated in a broad and passionate mood.

“The first motives are constructed on a pentatonic scale. A later motive, more lyrical, seems to be a transformation of the first. The middle part (Moderato assai) uses subjects from the first and third movements. A Presto leads to a Largamente, where a subject from the first movement is triumphantly recalled. The solo viola remembers the motive of the meditation from the first movement. A short and cheerful Allegro vivace concludes the work.”

PAUL HINDEMITH

SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO, Op. 25, No. 4 (1922)

Sehr lebhaft. Markiert and kraftvoll

Sehr langsame Viertel

Finale. Lebhaftes Viertel

Notes provided by European American Music Distribution Corporation

Hindemith's SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO, Op. 25, No. 4, was completed in November 1922. With his colleague and patron, Emma Lübbecke-Job, Hindemith gave the work its premiere performance on January 10, 1923. Several additional performances followed in the next few years, but between the mid-1920's and the mid-1970's, it dropped from view, possibly because of some confusion with the *Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11* and/or the *Sonata for Unaccompanied Viola, Op. 15, No. 1*. It was not until it first appeared in print, in the Hindemith Complete Works Edition published by B. Schott's Söhne in 1976, that renewed attention was focused upon this work.

Stylistically, Op. 25, No. 4 may be seen to resemble such earlier works as the *Marienleben* in the expressive lyricism of its brief central slow movement, while the outer movements display the vitality of later works such as the *Kammermusik*, Op. 36. The spareness of the viola part, utilizing few double and triple stops, belies Hindemith's own virtuosity on this instrument. Whatever the reasons for this sonata's half-century of obscurity, violists and all who know the music of Hindemith will welcome the work's re-entry into the repertoire.

Discovered in Israel and brought to this country by William Primrose, YIZHAK SCHOTTEN studied with him and later with Lillian Fuchs. He left the Boston Symphony to become principal violist with the Cincinnati Symphony and has been a soloist with conductors Seiji Ozawa, Thomas Schippers and Arthur Fiedler, among others. He has concertized throughout the United States, Europe, Japan and Israel, and was a featured artist at both the 1979 and 1980 International Viola Congresses. He has made frequent broadcasts on National Public Radio and has also recorded for Crystal Records. KATHERINE COLLIER received her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees and Performer's Certificate from Eastman where she studied piano with Cecile Genhart and accompanying with Brooks Smith. She won the National Young Artists Competition and other numerous awards and received a grant to do postgraduate work in London at the Royal College of Music. She has been soloist with orchestras in the United States, including the Dallas, Cincinnati, Eastman-Rochester, and Houston Symphonies, has collaborated with many well known musicians in this country and abroad, and has concertized throughout Europe, the British Isles, Israel and the U.S. She and her husband, Mr. Schotten, are on the faculty at the University of Washington, Seattle.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)