

Jacob Avshalomov

***Sonatine* (1947) 14:00 for Viola and Piano**

**Daniel Avshalomov, viola
Robert MacDonald, piano**

***Evocations* (1947) 17:00**

for Viola and Piano

**Daniel Avshalomov, viola
Robert MacDonald, piano**

Frank La Rocca

***Secret Thoughts* (1981) 9:57**

for Violoncello Solo

Lawrence Granger, violoncello

***String Trio* (1986) 15:52**

for Violin, Viola and Violoncello

Members of the Alexander String Quartet

Eric Pritchard, violin

Paul Yarbrough, viola

Sandy Wilson, violoncello

Jacob Avshalomov

Over the years I've felt glimmerings of pre-destiny in that the *Sonatine* (1947), my first-published work, dedicated to my wife Doris, was somehow intended for my son, Daniel, long before he was born. He has played it on and off since he was fifteen, and one of the sweetest occasions was a surprise bon voyage performed at a Tully Hall midday music-hour the day before we sailed to Europe on sabbatical.

The first movement of the *Sonatine* is unabashedly modeled on Ravel's charming piano piece so titled. It is bi-thematic, without development, a brief re-transition recalls the exposition fairly literally. The second movement can be outlined: A B C B A. It was written first, a couple of months earlier, as a lullaby for the infant daughter of a fellow-student, William Thompson. In making an instrumental movement of it I added a C section for the piano to sing. The third movement is a headlong seven-part Rondo, with shifting meters, which picks up and develops the previous movement's C section enroute to the work's peroration.

I am pleased to find that after forty-five years there seems nothing to change in diction or form beyond a brief cut in the finale which I made years ago.

Evocations was begun in the summer of 1947 while I was studying with Copland at Tanglewood. Its original medium was the clarinet. Following tradition, I made an alternate version for both these works—viola for clarinet, and vice versa. *Evocations* has the further dimension of an orchestral setting which serves only the clarinet, not the viola. The title, which now makes me wince a little (banal through overuse), implies that each of the three movements is intended to evoke a distinct state of being: the first, exuberance and mischief, the second, grief, the third, suppleness and grace. There is a certain carry-over between movements.

Scored for clarinet and chamber orchestra, *Evocations* is in the nature of a concerto, although there are no cadenzas or sonata movements, nor are there any development sections. Instead, developing recurrence is what takes place. Thus, while the outline of the first movement is A B A C A, the reappearance of the elements does not bring mere repetition but transformation. The thematic material of all three movements is treated in this way. The second movement is a three-part song form, and the 1st is a five-part Rondo.

The chamber orchestra comprises strings, piano, percussion and piccolo. This environment was not intended for the viola, hence the viola is meant to perform the work only as a duo with piano—as here recorded.

After three decades of obscurity, *Evocations* was revived in 1986 by clarinetist David Shifrin and pianist David Oei at the Chamber Music Northwest festival in Portland. Their beautiful playing, and the audience response, moved me to send it out to a publisher again. Galaxy Press accepted it, and now we look forward to the publication and first recording of both *Sonatine* and *Evocations*. A happy conjunction.

I found nothing substantive to change in *Evocations*, either; but experience did show me how to simplify the barring which should ease the way for performances ahead. And, of course, some special variants for the viola are the result of my son Daniel's fine Italian hand. Other than that, these smooth-faced children of my youth now sally forth into the world again without any of the character-lines my own visage has earned in the intervening years.

—Jacob Avshalomov

Daniel Avshalomov is best known as the violist of the American String Quartet. Formed in 1974, the Quartet performs over 70 concerts each season in the US and Europe. Its performances have been broadcast by the national networks in eight countries. In addition to being Quartet-in-Residence at the Manhattan School of Music, the Aspen and Taos Music Festivals, the group has also appeared at the Spoleto, Blossom and Mostly Mozart Festivals. He is currently a member of the viola faculties of the Manhattan School of Music and the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. His instrument is an Amati from 1568.

Robert MacDonald concertizes extensively as a recitalist, chamber musician and soloist with orchestras throughout the US, Latin America and Europe. He is the recipient of a number of prizes, both in this country and abroad, including the Gold Medal at the Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Italy.

MacDonald is a member of the piano faculty at the Oberlin College-Conservatory of Music, and during the summer months is the Director of the keyboard program at the Taos School of Music and Chamber Music Festival in New Mexico—where he and Daniel Avshalomov have been frequent collaborators.

Frank La Rocca

Written as a large one-movement work, *String Trio* (1981) is divided into two major, contrasting sections. The first, *Giocoso*, is rhythmically active, with sharp, angular lines and dense chordal passages. The second, *Lamentoso*, is darkly lyrical and more contrapuntal in texture. The *Giocoso* owes its agitated character to the discontinuities that arise from numerous foreshadowings of the *Lamentoso*, including one extended interruption marked "Intermezzo," characterized by the poignant duet in thirds for the violin and viola. These thirds provide not only expressive focus, but also reveal clearly the work's underlying pitch structure—an interlocking sequence of alternating major and minor thirds.

The first phrase pair of the piece already reflects the discontinuities to come, and the conflict is worked out until the *Lamentoso* ultimately prevails.

Secret Thoughts (1986), was written to explore the instrument's great expressive potential, an approach that inspired, in certain sections, music of a highly personal, even private nature—hence the title. Perhaps because its range encompasses that of the human voice, the 'cello has always been, for me, the most expressive and intimate of instruments.

The work was completed in July of 1986 on a commission from Lawrence Granger, and is dedicated to my wife Priscilla and my son Christian.

—Frank La Rocca

Frank La Rocca was born in 1951 in Newark, New Jersey. He received the B.A. in music at Yale University and the M.A. and Ph.D in composition from the University of California at Berkeley, where he studies with Ed Dugger, Andrew Imbrie, and Olly Wilson. His music, which has been performed throughout the US and in Europe, includes works for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensemble, and solo instrumental and vocal works, as well as some early work with film and television scores. He has received awards and fellowships for his work from the ASCAP Foundation, Amherst College, the University of California at Berkeley, and the California State University Foundation.

Mr. La Rocca is an active advocate of the works of American composers, serving as Executive Director of Composers, Inc. of San Francisco, and on the National Council of the Society of Composers of New York. He is currently Associate Professor of Composition and Theory at California State University, Hayward.

Lawrence Granger, violoncello, has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1979. Prior to that he held the position of principal cellist of the Oakland Symphony. Mr. Granger has studied with Laszlo Varga, Gabor Rejto, Michael Grebanier, Bonnie Hampton and Allen Gove, and has participated in master classes with Rostropovich, Tortelier, Starker and Lorne Monroe. An active recitalist and chamber musician, he has also appeared as soloist with several orchestras, including the Oakland Symphony, San Mateo Symphony and Nova Vista Symphony.

Violinist **Erich Pritchard**, violist **Paul Yarbrough** and cellist **Sandy Wilson** are members of **The Alexander String Quartet**, acclaimed as one of the brightest, most impressive ensembles to emerge in recent years. The skill and artistry which the Alexander brings to its performances of an unusually diverse repertoire has won the ensemble enthusiastic praise. The Quartet has appeared in major cities throughout North America and with numerous chamber music societies and universities. In the spring of 1985 the Alexander Quartet attracted worldwide attention when it won First Prize at the City of Portsmouth, England International String Quartet Competition. As the first American quartet to win in Portsmouth, the Alexander received both the jury's highest award and Audience Prize.

Major support for this recording was provided by the California State University at Hayward, with thanks to the Committee on Research, the CSUH Foundation and President Ellis E. McCune.

My thanks to all the performers on this recording, who play my music with consummate skill and insight.—Frank La Rocca

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(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)