# ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BRITISH VIOLA REPERTOIRE OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Gregory R. Luce, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2015

Dissertation directed by: Associate Professor Katherine Murdock, School of Music

The aim of this dissertation performance project has been to obtain a familiarity with the sound and emotional palette of the British viola repertoire of 1900-1950. The music of this time and place has a uniquely soulful, pensive, and internally wrought emotional quality which translates perfectly into the character of the viola.

The first recital consisted of music written for the world's then-preeminent viola virtuoso, Lionel Tertis (1876-1975). This program included Vaughan Williams' *Romance for Viola and Piano,* Frank Bridge's *Two Pieces for Viola and Piano* (*Pensiero* and *Allegro Appassionato*), Arnold Bax's Sonata for Viola and Piano, and finally York Bowen's thrilling Sonata No. 1 in C Minor.

The second recital contained the chronologically ordered complete works for viola and piano of Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979). Thanks to the monumental sonata of 1919, Rebecca Clarke is thought of by many as a composer, but she was most certainly a remarkable violist as well, making her one of the last performer-composers to

continue the legacy of the great composer-virtuosi of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Clarke was at the very forefront of a time when female composers were beginning to be accepted socially. She is removed by only fifty or so years from the time of Clara Schumann, another great female artist, but is perhaps more remarkable in that her instrument of choice was not as widely accepted as a solo instrument at that time.

The final recital consisted of several works chosen to showcase the viola's unique relationship with British composers over time. The first half of the recital featured three under-celebrated works by Arnold Bax: *Concert Piece, Trio in One Movement,* and *Legend*. The second half of this program reached back into the late Renaissance with a pair of pieces by John Dowland arranged for violin and viola, then finishing with Benjamin Britten's *Lachrymae* of 1950, which was inspired by these two works.

# BRITISH VIOLA REPERTOIRE OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Gregory R. Luce

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2015

Advisory Committee:
Associate Professor Katherine Murdock, Chair
Professor David Salness
Professor Rita Sloan
Professor Mark Hill
Professor Andrew Baden

© Copyright by

Gregory R. Luce

2015

This performance dissertation project is dedicated to my wonderful wife Anna Luce. It is in large part her deep love of this time period, nation, and its style that sparked my desire to discover it for myself.

Table of Contents

Dedication. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .ii
Table of Contents . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . iii
Recital Programs . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .iv
Chapter 1: Selected Pieces Dedicated to Lionel Tertis . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1
Chapter 2: Complete Works for Viola and Piano by Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) . . . 10
Chapter 3: Selected Pieces by Arnold Bax, John Dowland, and Benjamin Britten. . . . 23
Bibliography. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 28

# Gregory Luce, viola

## Li Tan Hsu, piano

### Recital I: Selected Pieces Dedicated to Lionel Tertis

February 22nd, 2014, 5:00 p.m.
Ulrich Recital Hall

| | |
|---|---|
| Romance for Viola and Piano | Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) |
| | |
| Two Pieces for Viola and Piano | Frank Bridge (1879-1941) |
| I. Pensiero | |
| II. Allegro appassionato | |
| | |
| Sonata for Viola and Piano | Arnold Bax (1883-1958) |
| I. Molto moderato – Allegro | |
| II. Allegro energico ma non troppo presto | |
| III. Molto Lento | |

– Intermission –

| | |
|---|---|
| Sonata for Viola and Piano Op. 18, No. 1 in C Minor | York Bowen (1884-1961) |
| I. Allegro moderato | |
| II. Poco lento e cantabile | |
| III. Finale: Presto – meno presto | |

# Gregory Luce, viola

## Li Tan Hsu, piano

### Recital II: Complete Works for Viola and Piano by Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

November 16th, 2014, 2:00 p.m.
Ulrich Recital Hall

Lullaby (1909?)

Lullaby: An Arrangement of an Ancient Irish Tune (1913?)

Morpheus (1917)

Untitled (1917-1918)

– Intermission –

Sonata for Viola and Piano in A Minor (1919)

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

Passacaglia on an Old English Tune (1941)

I'll Bid My Heart Be Still (1944)

# Gregory Luce, viola

## Jasmine Lee, piano
## Anna Luce, violin

Recital III: Selected Pieces by Arnold Bax, John Dowland, and Benjamin Britten

April 27th, 2015, 5:00 p.m.
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall

| | |
|---|---|
| Concert Piece (1904) | Arnold Bax (1883-1953) |
| Trio in One Movement (1906) | |
| Legend (1929) | |

– Intermission –

| | |
|---|---|
| Flow My Tears (1596) | John Dowland (1563-1626) |
| If My Complaints Could Passions Move (1595) | |
| Lachrymae | Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) |

## Chapter 1: Selected Pieces Dedicated to Lionel Tertis

The twentieth century was a period of revitalized interest in the viola as a solo instrument. While the viola was nearly put on equal footing with its younger sibling the violin in (for example) Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* of 1779 and conceptually in Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* of 1834, the task of establishing the viola as a viable solo instrument with orchestra wasn't truly accomplished for several reasons. In the former, the acknowledgement of the viola's need for additional brightness by the assignment of scordatura can be viewed as a handicap; in the case of the latter the weight of the piece's narrative is in large part achieved without the viola playing at all. In a way, this leaves the task of bringing the viola to the fore as a soloistic instrument up to future composers.

Along with the advent of the twentieth century also came a new name in viola performance: Lionel Tertis, who was was appointed as Professor of Viola at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in 1900. A recent graduate of the same school, Tertis viewed his life's mission as the propagation of awareness of this colorful and soulful instrument, in his words, "the love and tyrant of my life – the viola."[1] Through the early part of his career, Tertis performed not just the then relatively small pool of original viola repertoire but also transcriptions of works originally for other instruments, such as Bach's Ciaccona for solo violin or the Elgar cello concerto. However, Tertis' good-natured bullying and cajoling on the behalf of the viola brought English composers out of the woodwork in order to write music for him. It is to this legendary, indomitable

[1] (Tertis, My Viola and I: A Complete Autobiography 1974, Foreward, xiii)

personality that I dedicate the first of my three lecture recitals; all of the works on this recital were written by British composers for Lionel Tertis. According to John White, "The foundation for this [modern] healthy state of viola playing was laid by Tertis and Tertis alone. It was largely owing to his seven decades…that the viola was finally taken seriously. It was no small achievement for such a long life, a life which began in the same year that Brahms wrote his first symphony and ended in the year of the Soyuz-Apollo test flight." [2]

## Romance for Viola and Piano – Ralph Vaughan Williams

"Where can we look for a surer proof that our art is living than in that music which has for generations voiced the spiritual longings of our race?"[3] This quote by the composer aptly displays a belief and desire for mystical expression in music. Many of Vaughan Williams' essays focus on the discussion of folk elements in music. The viola is of course considered to be a direct descendant of the viol family, for which British composer John Dowland wrote many works in the sixteenth century. In writing this music for the viola in particular Vaughan Williams is tapping into an ancient tradition of writing extraordinarily unique and melancholy works for viola.

This piece is in a simple tripartite arch form and begins with pentatonic rumblings in the piano, reminiscent of monastic chant. The viola line rises to a glorious, impetuous climax before the wave recedes and we are left with the same sort of writing which opened the piece. In the middle of the arch we are met by an inquisitive,

---

[2] (White 2006, 302)
[3] (Vaughan Williams, "National Music" and Other Essays 1963, 39)

exploratory character, which again grows into a climax. This climax rolls away into the softer material that began the piece, marking the beginning of the third and final section. The very high chords which marked the height of dramatic tension in the first section of the piece are realized in a much lower register this time, marking the final section with great sadness and emotional fatigue.

This piece was not published during the composer's lifetime but is estimated to date from around 1914, making it the composer's first work featuring a solo instrument. The piece was discovered in his personal library after his death in 1958 and received its premiere in 1962 after being published the year before.[4]

**Two pieces for Viola and Piano – Frank Bridge**

Many composers' early periods are marked first by "accessibility and practicality – admirable tenets if harnessed to pressure of vision, but dangerous when given over-riding importance, compelling the composer to use familiar tags, explore well-charted emotional territories, and smooth all corners and edges."[5] This seems to be a battle that many young composers face when encountering a natural, dualistic desire to expand the established styles of composition and yet not abandon them. Frank Bridge is one such composer, desiring for all else in his early period to be understood and

---

[4] Vaughan Williams famously rescinded the publishing of many of his early works, leaving them in existence only in manuscript form until forty years after his death when his widow Ursula released these treasures to the public. The Romance wasn't published during Vaughan Williams' lifetime but also wasn't placed under intellectual embargo as many other works were, allowing it its first performance so shortly after his death. (Mark 2013, 179-180)

[5] (Payne, Frank Bridge - Radical and Conservative 1984, 18)

appreciated. His music has aged well, however, and in my opinion has gained the accessibility of the emotionally familiar palette of early twentieth-century romanticism without coming across as prosaic.

These two salon-style character pieces operate within a medium popularized by the eminent violinist of the early twentieth century, Fritz Kreisler. While many of Kreisler's compositions favor a virtuosic raison d'être, a smaller number of them focus instead on sentimental, melancholic expression. The first of these two pieces by Bridge is akin to the latter, a familiar character in a new guise with the solemn, soulful character of the music intensified in effect by the color palette of the viola's lower register.

*Pensiero* is in a ternary form, the first and last sections mimicking one another in color, register, and emotional content; the middle section is more externally expressive yet is higher than the outer two in register. The emotional turbulence of the middle section is clearly displayed on the printed page with the sheer number of accidentals operating against the comfort of the home key.

*Allegro appassionato* plays off of another extremely popular medium at the time, the waltz. Dubious phrase lengths and an "incorrect" 6/8 time signature disguise the medium here, however. Also in ternary form, this piece's most sensible, predictable writing is in the middle section, however it is the ecstatic, celebratory outer sections (largely written in the higher register) that have the strongest lasting effect in this piece. The frequent syncopations in these outer sections lead to a restless quality, however, and the final high B natural doesn't fully resolve this tentative affect but rather sweeps the whole situation under the rug.

## Sonata for Viola and Piano – Arnold Bax

"I distinctly remember my first conscious apprehension of beauty…It was the hour of sunset, and as we stood there an unimaginable glory of flame developed in the west so that all the wooded heights seemed on fire…To my childish perception this visitation was sheer all-conquering splendor and majesty, untroubled by the sense of the transitoriness of all lovely things. The hour was immortal...And suddenly an ache of regret that this particular day of beauty should come to an end and nevermore return wrung my heart so cruelly that, unseen, I wept bitterly in my shadowy corner of the carriage."[6] The reader will here please forgive so extended a quotation by the composer. However, it is so different from the stereotypically disciplined and well-mannered British attitude that I feel some context must be shown to this extraordinarily expressive and delightfully colorful personality in order to display the originality of this under-celebrated composer.

Despite being awarded knighthood in recognition of his services as Master of the King's Musick in 1937, Bax throughout his life held a strong affinity for Ireland's people, heritage, and landscapes. A sensitive personality, Bax first discovered Ireland around 1902 through the poetry of William Butler Yeats, leading to an understandable infatuation with its melancholic characterizations. At the time of this sonata's composition in 1921 the English attitude towards Ireland was one of pity and regret for this war-ridden territory, which after numerous battles both internally and with outside bodies, was given its independence in May of 1923. There must have been an innate

[6] (Bax 1992, 5)

struggle between these two realities of Bax's life, his English nationality on the one hand, and his love for this poor, forcibly controlled territory.

The aforementioned quote by Bax continues: "this tenderness of pain, half cruel, half sweet, is surely an essential quality of the never clearly defined 'Romantic mood.'"[5] These two prominent features of Bax's personality strongly flavor this piece: his love for Ireland and his personal identification with its relentlessly melancholic history and landscape.

The opening of this piece features an idyllic, eager, bittersweet melody reminiscent of the innocence of youth. As the youthful music is interrupted by a rolling piano gesture we are forced to grow up as the melody spins out into what seems like endless variation and opulence in a very Romantic fashion. Throughout all of the theme groups of this sonata form first movement we hear frequent jig-inspired rhythms and snaps, all providing a vivid and unusually craggy (certainly non-Germanic) musical landscape.

The second movement inhabits a wild, scherzo style rondo in Irish dance character. Of particular note is the modality of the middle section and its healthy lilting rhythms, alternating short-short-long note values with healthy rubato to embody a tantalizing and indomitable folk spirit.

The third movement is undoubtedly the most troubled of the three, with intensely wrought chromaticism imparting a heart-broken feeling. By having the 'slow movement' as the final one in this piece Bax brings us into his internally wrought world of over-riding nostalgia and sadness. The sentiment is certainly evident in the opening of the piece as well, but it seems that it is not entirely dealt with until this point.

Complex, meter-obscuring rhythmic treatments throughout the opening section are a hallmark of the late Romantic period, and lend to the final moments of the piece a feeling of great emotional arrival and comfort.

Essentially, this piece represents to me the great personal journey that we all take. From the opening, tender moments reminiscent of childhood to the busy-ness of the second movement, all the way into the wise old age of the third movement, we are here able to see an entire span of life in just twenty short minutes. As an art form, music lends humanity much perspective in the traversing of ideas and places; as the final bars of the piece come to pass with the same melody of the piece's opening, we are invited by Bax to enjoy this bittersweet "vision of youth with the added wisdom of experience."[7] In Bax's own fantasy-ridden words, "my life's blood it was that laughed and danced down the mountain, and the hill-stream coursed through my veins…I sensed the images of all the beauty and pain in beauty that had ever illuminated or shadowed the race-memory of man. It only lasted for a moment…Farewell, my youth!"[8]

## Sonata for Viola and Piano No. 1 in C Minor – York Bowen

The passing of Johannes Brahms in 1897 brought about a renewed interest in his compositions. The New York Times aptly said this in an obituary column: "When contemporary misapprehensions have died out and the world gets far enough away from Brahms to view him with a fair perspective, critical historians will probably award him

[7] (Scott-Sutherland 1973, 75)
[8] (Bax 1992, 96-99)

a seat of honor among the Titans of music."[9] York Bowen was at this time a young musician just one year away from entrance to the Royal Academy of Music at the young age of fourteen. Lionel Tertis recalls in his autobiography how in that year Bowen was afforded an orchestral reading due to his being awarded the Erard Scholarship and Bowen, "still in knickerbockers, turned up one day with his first orchestral work. There were some mistakes in the manuscript and Mackenzie [then principal of the Royal Academy of Music] exploded in wrath…the poor little composer went away in tears, swearing to never compose again."[10] Bowen's first Sonata for Viola and Piano in C Minor dating from 1908 in many ways continues the tradition of the recently passed Johannes Brahms.

The first movement is in an autumnal, turbulent emotional palette, reminiscent of many of Brahms' first movement sonata form works such as the op. 60, No. 3 Piano Quartet (also in C minor and in ¾ time) and the String Quartet op. 51, No. 1 (again, in C minor). The stormy, impetuous first theme spans a wide registral range on the viola, another common feature in the writing of Brahms' works, particularly the E flat Sonata's (op. 120, No. 2) first movement. By contrast to the spinning out of the first theme and the long phrase lengths featured in the first theme, the second theme is delightfully pristine and welcoming. Unlike Brahms, however, there is little to no manipulation of the standard sonata form. Of particular note in this first movement is the inversion of the figure that ends the second theme in the recapitulation, which lends a new strength and a propulsive energy in to the coda, expectedly finishing out the movement.

---

[9] (Death of Johannes Brahms 1897)
[10] (Tertis, My Viola and I: A Complete Autobiography 1974, 49)

The placid, almost maternal second movement's theme houses a more inhibited pitch range than the first movement, and to my ears creates a feeling of greater comfort. A simple rondo form, Bowen offers the "B" section even greater positive emotional freedom by writing it in a 6/8 time signature with a rolling accompaniment in the piano. Following the next "A" section is a pleading, yearning "C" section which melts naturally into the final "A" section. Underneath the familiar melody this time can be heard chromatically borrowed dissonances, which are reminiscent of the more turbulent passages of this movement (the "C" section in particular). In the second movement of Brahms' F Minor Viola Sonata, carefully chosen dissonances below the melody create a sense of pained beauty, and the same effect can be heard here.

The third and final movement is a rollicking, earthy sonata-rondo form. The opening presto scale is a huge outburst that will not return or be outdone until the final seconds of the movement. The folksy and impassioned character of this movement is reminiscent of the last movement of the aforementioned String Quartet by Brahms, or of the final section of his F Minor Piano Quintet's last movement. Much of this movement is constructed of short, percussive gestures; in stark contrast, the second section features a soaring melody and clear-cut phrases. Shortly after the return of the last A section the piece is given new rhythmic energy by the reaching into faster and faster rhythmic values. As we near the end of the movement the barrier which tempo holds on these fast notes is broken; a brilliant presto lends to the piece a feeling of finality, with the final back-and-forth chords between viola and piano giving the piece a strong, guttural finish.

## **Chapter 2: Complete Works for Viola and Piano by Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)**

When programming a concert, the performing artist is often implored by the presenting organization to find a "hook" or "catch." It is perhaps possible that the presenter's fears are true: in the current world of quicker and more shallow satisfaction, audiences often seem to need more than the emotional and personal offerings of going to a standard mix-and-match recital of classical music. The performer is left with several programmatic paths. The first of these is to find a common thematic thread and program a concert based on music sharing this criteria. This model works on a conceptual level but unfortunately the criteria itself narrows down the audience experience based on the similarity of inspiration between one composition and the next.

Another possibility, tried and true and perhaps the most common model, is to program something old, something new, and something in between. This model also has its apparent strengths because of the inherent variety, but due to the scale of many Romantic works one tends to find them fulfilling the same place on each program: the big closer. For certain audience members this has led to an under-appreciation of some genres, for example a given quartet by Haydn, which will frequently be put on the front of such a program in a near-apologetic fashion so that the dreaded new work on the program will not by necessity be the first sounds heard on the program.

A third option is to perform music by a single composer in efforts to bring the scope of an entire life into focus in a single event. A vast majority of the time, when the idea of performing a full night's music by a single composer comes up, Ludwig van

Beethoven is the composer of choice. His life and work are linked in a beautifully deep way and the widely accepted division of his work into three periods (early, middle, and late) aptly follows conversions in his compositional style lending diversity as well as unity to these programs. However, an attempt at offering a full understanding of this composer inevitably falls short; in a single night it is not possible to listen to the full compositional scope of any one medium of Beethoven excepting an attempt to perform all of Beethoven's operas. After all, he only wrote one.

On the other hand, a program featuring the entire works of Rebecca Clarke for viola and piano satisfies handily the desire for a thematic thread in conjunction with the idea of hearing an entire cycle of works by a composer. The musical story of this evening's program was rather like a single large arch form. Performed in chronological order, the music gains momentum and strength as the recital progresses, with the apex of dramatic weight occurring in the sonata of 1919. After the completion of her magnum opus, the style of music written in her last compositional years returns again to a placid yet strong state in her last two works for this instrumentation.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) began her musical studies on the violin at the age of nine, and entered the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) to study violin at the college level in 1903. She enjoyed her studies there for only two years, at which point she withdrew at the request of her father due to the fact that a teacher proposed to her. For the next two years she toured as a performer and made the first of her trips to the United States, then beginning a study at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in 1907, studying composition with Charles Stanford, who encouraged her to take up the viola. Once she did so she also began studying viola with Lionel Tertis, the eminent viola virtuoso of his

day, during her time at the RCM. It was over the next ten years that she composed her first five pieces for viola and piano, the last of which being the sonata, written in 1919. The time after her graduation from the RCM was spent both composing and performing in equal measure. She enjoyed much success in her role as performer, but by many accounts her music was not widely circulated on account of her gender. Clarke was unable to return to England from the United States following a concert tour because of the outbreak of World War II, and at that point settled in New York City. Here she gave more time to her performing career and gradually began to compose less and less, until around 1944, at which point she was reunited with former RCM classmate James Friskin by chance in New York. The two were married shortly thereafter in the same year in which she composed "I'll Bid My Heart Be Still," which marks her final instrumental work and her penultimate composition in any genre. In the final three decades of her life she wrote only a single work, a song for voice and piano, favoring the demands of her married and personal life over her performing and compositional career.

It is possible to make no further mention of Rebecca Clarke's gender in regard to her musical career, as the widespread appeal of her music needs no further defense other than its own merit. However, to do so would be to ignore perhaps the most paramount circumstance affecting her professional development. Given the incredibly conservative musical climate in England in the early twentieth century, there were certain organizations such as the Society of Women Composers, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and the Oxford Ladies Musical Society in place to celebrate the virtues and capabilities of female composers. Whether these organizations

serve to bring women into an equal status as their male counterparts or to simply set them apart in a prejudiced fashion is up to debate. *The Overture* (The RAM student magazine in the time shortly before Clarke's attendance) published the following representative opinion over gender roles in musical composition. "The woman composer has a great deal of prejudice to overcome, and her best plan is to give the public only her surname and the initial letter of her Christian name. Then she will stand some chance of getting a certain amount of unbiased criticism - till she is found out." (n.a. 1893)

**Lullaby** (1909) and **Lullaby on an Irish Tune** (1913)

The first two of Clarke's works for viola and piano exist in the form of the gentle lullaby. Existing in Clarke's performance repertoire from the many recitals she gave in the 1910s, these works were not published until the Rebecca Clarke Estate released them to Oxford University Press for publication in 2002. The first has a demure, domestic sort of affect and exists in a simple binary form. The second, however, is rather atypical in structure, with a single thematic group existing throughout and a more haunting ambience complemented by the unfavorable key of D Flat Major. Neither of these two works peak above *piano* in dynamic range. These works are both of a heart-warming and lyrical nature and along with miscellaneous pieces for violin(s) and piano, represent Clarke's first forays into composition. A striking moment is heard faintly in the final chord of the second Lullaby, which can be identified most directly as a G major chord with an unresolved whole step suspension in the bass.

The Irish Tune on which the second lullaby was crafted is from "The Complete Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music," by Charles Stanford, number 1007, and is written without accompaniment. It is there in E flat Major and simply labeled "A Lullaby…from Miss Ross." (Stanford 1905, 256)

**Morpheus** (1917-1918)

This work stands among Clarke's most celebrated works for this medium. The quality of Morpheus is comparable to the pieces surrounding it in Clarke's chronology but the story of its premiere earns for it a special place in her musical oeuvre. Composed for a premiere in a concert in Aeolian Hall in New York in February of 1918, it was originally written under the pseudonym of Anthony Trent. Clarke stated in an interview with Ellen Lerner in 1978, "I thought it's idiotic to have my name down as composer three times on the program, I'll invent a name. So I thought, now, what name shall I have? And I tried to think of all the rivers in England that would make a good surname, and I came across the name Trent…And I took the name Anthony because I liked Anthony and I put that piece down as Anthony Trent…After that, I just killed Anthony Trent in a painless way because he was of no further use to me." (Curtis 2004, 204)

This piece is named after the Greek god of sleep perhaps because in coming after the first works of her career, tamely labeled as lullabies, she is labeling this work as a mastery over her earlier forays into the instrumental medium. She wrote a lullaby for violin and piano in the same year, 1918, but excepting a single song for voice and

piano titled *Dreams* from 1926, the prevalence as sleep metaphor in music fades from her compositions.

Many program notes on this work point out that Morpheus was particularly celebrated by critics because it was written by an unknown man rather than by a known woman (perhaps out of a sincere desire to wish that it were so), but in observing a picture of a scrapbook page from the Clarke Estate in NY, it is rather clear that the reviews were mixed across the board. One periodical even states that "the Morpheus of Trent [lacked in] originality." According to Clarke, however, a review in *Vogue* magazine said, "among English composers, there was one who should be better known called Anthony Trent." (Curtis 2004, 204) The conclusion that could be drawn is perhaps that the reviews weren't necessarily as overwhelmingly positive as has been so frequently reported, but rather that the piece did get more attention than the Lullaby and Grotesque for viola and cello, which were also on the program and billed as being written by Clarke directly.

**Untitled Piece** (1917-1918)

Formally this piece is a simple ternary form. This comfortably familiar form is a clever mask, however, for Clarke's compositional mastery of coloristic harmonies. The first three bars for example spell out home base as a simple E minor, with the next chord being an enharmonically spelled F half diminished seventh chord. This chord serves myriad purposes in this piece. It functions as a neighboring chord in some places (like the beginning), sometimes as a Neapolitan chord, and other times as a dominant

pathway to a distant key area given its similarity to a dominant seventh chord. This chord is coupled nearly always with whole tone figuration above it, giving the piece a vibrant, exotic, even dangerous feeling. Perhaps the danger in this piece lies in being lulled into too great a sense of comfort; even at what seems to be the very end of the piece, one tiny surprise lurks for the overly casual listener. An interesting segment from the editorial notes in the performance edition used in this recital reads, “The manuscript originally consisted of eight pages on two folded sheets, but the sheets became separated while in Clarke’s possession. In 1976, she presented only the outer sheet for cataloging, either failing to notice the slightly odd join between the present mm. 27 and 71 or finding it plausible and in this form the piece was circulated, performed, and recorded. The inner sheet was recently discovered...[making] the entire piece available for the first time in some decades.” (Johnson 2002, 2)

### **Sonata in A Minor** (1919)

It is with the completion of this work that Rebecca Clarke truly sealed her place as a celebrated champion of violists everywhere. This work’s breadth, drama, and technical panache set it apart from many of the works of Clarke’s peers. According to Clarke, it was inspired “quite a lot by Debussy, and also influenced by Vaughan Williams, who was a friend of mine and whose music I admired very much.” (Curtis 2004, 212) This work displays a cosmopolitan interest in German forms, French harmonies, and British affect.

The confidence pervading this work is exemplary of the fact that it was written as an entrant into the Berkshire Festival Chamber Music Competition of 1919, which was sponsored and overseen by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and of which Ernest Bloch was the victor. Clarke herself wrote program notes in 1977 to this work, which state the following (The reader here will hopefully excuse a lengthy quote as it would be foolhardy to explain these factual details in any other than the composer's own words).

> "At the finals a jury of six distinguished musicians divided their votes equally between these two works. (One, they were reported to have said, was the work of a philosopher, the other, that of a poet.) A second round of votes…remained obstinately the same. Finally Mrs. Coolidge herself was called on to give the casting vote…According to the rules of the contest, only the envelope [bearing the name] of the winner was supposed to be opened. But the jury, claiming that as there had been a tie the name of the composer of the runner-up should also be disclosed…"You should have seen their faces when they saw it was by a woman!"…So I take this opportunity to emphasize that I do indeed exist…and that my Viola Sonata is my own unaided work!" (Clarke, Program Notes for Viola Sonata 1977)

Clarke understood this strong tendency to undervalue her gender's capabilities and promoted the piece rather sheepishly shortly after its completion. "I was never much good at blowing my own horn." (Clarke, Interview with Robert Sherman and Rebecca Clarke Friskin 1976)

Atop the first movement of this work's three is a fantastic inscription from French poet Alfred de Musset's *Le Nuit de mai* (1835), which translates "*Poet, take up your lute; the wine of youth this night is fermenting in the veins of God*."

The first movement of this work opens with a declamatory viola cadenza in the mode of A mixolydian. The character is brilliant, ebullient, and just a bit mysterious until a real shock: a single half step downward brings the work into the mode of A flat

mixolydian. Equally daring motions exist throughout this piece's first movement in particular, yet for all of the work's drunken, joyous harmonic motion, the formal shape of the piece is quite conservative if viewed in terms of thematic groups. Sonata form regularly, of course, operates not based on thematic groups (despite the temptation to look at it as such by many inexperienced observers) but rather by key area in diatonic music. As Clarke is writing music here in non-traditional modalities (for her time), this frees her from the stereotypical uses of tonic and dominant relationships. As such, she chooses G for her primary key area for the development of this movement by giving us a simple vertical G chord at the appropriate moment. The development contrasts from a more traditional development section by being rather subdued and pained in character, rather than being too bombastic or overbearing. Clarke begins taking this movement into a direction of strength and assertion, but turns aside just before a particularly intense arrival.

It could be said that in order to build variety in a musical composition composers represent one characteristic in the first theme group of a sonata form and then an opposite, complimentary one in the second theme group. Therefore, we often perceive sonata form as a dialogue between hot and cool, aggressive and subservient, even masculine and feminine. Susan McClary suggests that the "end of the development section in classical sonata form is [often] an event of power and violence with the masculine theme forcefully returning." (McClary 1991) With McClary's 1991 comment in mind, it is interesting to consider that the development of this first movement (written in 1919) takes a sharp turn away from a more traditional route, and also moves the climax of the movement into a different location. It was perhaps due to the fact that she

was "inhabiting a female body, [therefore] conceiving of her musical proportions differently than does a male composer." (Seddon 2013)[11]

For all the first movement's strength of melodic and modal interest, the second movement works in a different direction. It bears throughout a strong rhythmic motor and zesty vitality. The main theme group of this movement is based around a free alternation of two whole tone scales. In a slower tempo this would give a feeling of frightening instability, but thanks to the comfortable reliability of the quick 6/8 time signature, there is instead a quirky sensibility. Other aural features of this movement are the use of a mute on the viola for the majority of the movement, and brilliant high harmonics in order to gain an airy effervescence.

The final movement of this work is the freest of form. Despite this work's three movements as opposed to the more typical four, Clarke manages to build the usual variety into this work by merging the slow movement affect with that of a brisk finale. This single movement presents first a slow section which over the course of its twelve-minute duration evolves gradually into an exuberant, boisterous finish. Despite no chronicled evidence of interest in Irish music by Clarke on the part of her biographers, the opening slow section seems to bear several pentatonic nods to a fantasy-style of music that immediately summons the Irish sentiment. Clarke reaches a climax of extremely loud, high register writing just before showing the stark opposite, a low, quiet open C tremolo paired with a sparse texture in the piano. This symbolizes the formal turning point of this movement from its slow opening section to a more vivacious, triumphant ending. The piano cadenza develops fluidly from the melodic material of

[11] For a more in-depth analysis of this trend in this work and others, see Seddon chapter 4.

this movement into the music of the quasi viola cadenza of the first movement, also birthed from an open C. This awakening of old melodic material is also the impetus for the quickening of tempo that leads to the end of the piece. The movement maintains its Irish sensibility, however, in a short, delightful 12/8 jig. One last sectional interruption, a final recollection of the slow material which opened the movement (this time in a muted E flat Dorian mode) requires one last reinvigoration leading to the vivacious and bright E major finale.

**Passacaglia on an Old English Tune** (1940-1941)

Clarke's final two works for this instrumentation represent two different outlooks on the onset of her self-imposed retirement from her compositional career. Written just over two decades after the Sonata, the first of these two works is a heroic, declamatory work set in the formidable key of C minor. The title page of this work bears the inscription of dedication to a certain "B.B.," an alliteration at the time of this piece's composition which would most likely lead the observer to think of Benjamin Britten, despite Clarke never being on record saying that this were the case.[12] The "Old English Tune" referred to in the title is in fact Hymn #153 in the *English Hymnal*, a tune attributed to the sixteenth century British composer Thomas Tallis. (Milford 1906, 217) It is interesting to note that this Hymnal was edited by Ralph Vaughan Williams , the noted English composer and contemporary of Clarke, who spent much time with Clarke

[12] See Curtis pg. 35 for one possible explanation of this viewpoint.

at the RCM. It is possible that they both shared a great interest in the ancient liturgical music of England and spoke of it together.

Despite being labeled as a passacaglia this work is more like a set of variations on a powerful theme, with the first two iterations starting on different octaves in the viola and the last one beginning in the piano. At the end of the third iteration of the tune the piece ends directly, without any coda and without adding even a single beat of music. This rigorously academic approach perhaps represents Clarke's belief that she "always had it in [her] to write something really good, perhaps, if I'd only gone on with it." (Curtis 2004, 213)

**I'll Bid My Heart Be Still** (1944)

This work stands as Clarke's final instrumental work and her penultimate composition of any genre. Only a song (*God Made a* Tree) written in 1954 follows. *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still* was written for her husband James Friskin, who played the piano. As a violist herself, the romantic title of the piece paired with the meaningful instrumentation makes it a wonderful farewell to her compositional life, a deliberate choice on the part of Clarke in order to make more room in her life for personal and domestic concerns. Clarke stated in an interview with Robert Sherman in 1976, "Why did I stop writing altogether? Well that's the $64,000 question, isn't it…It was a lot of personal considerations, and I just stopped…There's nothing in the *world* more thrilling, or practically nothing. But I can't do it unless it's the first thing I think of

every morning when I wake and the last thing I think of every night before I go to sleep." (Clarke, Interview with Robert Sherman and Rebecca Clarke Friskin 1976)

This piece's greatest strength is its wonderful simplicity. The form here is not a compositional concern, as the piece is simply inhabited by a blissful melody (according to Clarke an "old Scottish Border melody," although no trace of the tune's roots can be found) stated in the keys of A minor and D minor. As the bulk of variation is done in the piano part with literally no divergence from the original melody in the viola part, one could imagine a statement made by Clarke regarding her professional path in contrast to that of her husband, who taught at the Juilliard School for an astonishing fifty-two years. She here bids not only her heart be still but her pen as well.

## Chapter 3: Selected Pieces by Arnold Bax, John Dowland, and Benjamin Britten

This recital consisted of a number of works chosen to showcase the viola's unique relationship with British composers over time. This is achieved first in focusing on the music of a given composer whose music spreads the central breadth of this dissertation's focus time frame (1900-1950), Arnold Bax. Following this experience some much older and newer music were heard, first two songs by John Dowland (*Flow My Tears*, or *Lachrimae Antiquae*, and *If My Complaints Could Passions Move*), written in the late 16$^{th}$ century, and finally *Lachrymae* by Benjamin Britten, which draws inspiration from these songs not only in title but also in sound, as it quotes the incipit of both pieces.

### **Concert Piece** and **Trio in One Movement** (1904, 1906)

"The masters of the four winds of the world
    Plunder the seas around the shores of Eire,
And from their wasted treasures are hurled
    Pale harps of foam by hands that never weary…
And I their human child that stands apart
    From this new boastful age smile proudly, knowing
The shadow of their song lies in my heart
    And trembles down the reed my lips are blowing." (O'Byrne 1910, 26)
-Dermot O'Byrne

By personality Arnold Bax was whimsical and passionate, with a sensitive and aged soul. In addition to composition he expressed his searching nature with poetry and prose, using a pseudonym: Dermot O'Byrne. The chosen epigraph above is from 1910,

dating shortly after the composition of the first two pieces of this program, Concert Piece and Trio in One Movement. Following his discovery of Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival in 1902 he derived a great deal of his personal identity from the struggles and joys of Irish peasantry and from the idyllic beauty of the Irish landscape. His own upbringing was far from this way of life and according to Bax biographer Lewis Foreman, Bax, having grown up in an upper class Victorian family, desired the unique blend of simple joy and hardship that comes with living a rural life. (Foreman 2007) At the time of the composition of these works Bax was a recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, living in London yet traveling often to Glencolumbkille (annually for almost thirty years) to find inspirational outlets for this inner yearning.

The style of these two early works is one of great volatility, breathtaking beauty, and immense virtuosity. By means of analysis one can at times see uses of the entire gamut of tonal possibility, from distant key relationships to augmented chords to gigantic melodic leaps. This molten gaiety is on occasion punctuated by moments of great simplicity, which embody the true, Irish essence of Bax's joy throughout his life. If the immensely ebullient brand of writing at this period is akin to his Victorian, high-class upbringing, then the simple, folksy melodies which are perhaps the true focal points of this music are his idealized view of peasant life.

***Legend*** (1929)

1909-1914 was a blissful period of Bax's life. Following his marriage to his childhood love Elsita Sobrino, Bax and his wife settled in Dublin and Arnold's brother

Clifford introduced them to a group of idealistic poets, artists, and authors in the home of George William Russell, painter and poet. This group, known as the Rathgar Circle, engaged in active community on intellectual and spiritual issues until it was necessarily dissolved into the terrors of World War I as many of its members fled Europe. These events combined with the fateful Easter Rising of Dublin let to a darker, more reflective period of Bax's life. This period was compounded by a forbidden love interest with Harriett Cohen, initially a positive professional connection, which turned into a rather less-than-professional affection. (Fry 2008)

Beginning in 1928 Bax ceased his annual pilgrimage to Glencolumbkille and instead travelled to the village of Morar in the Scottish Highlands to orchestrate his works, after the initial ideas had been crafted at home in London.

*Legend* for viola and piano dates from this period of Bax's life, and the work carries even from the outset a heavier burden than either of the first two works on this program. Throughout this piece the distant dream of youth's joys are not so readily realized and the piece doesn't display so great a number of virtuosic inclinations; when these virtuosic moments do appear, they embody terror rather than joy.

The title of this piece is not an uncommon one in the late nineteenth century, with composers such as Bridge, Tchaikovsky, Weniawski, and Enescu all making use of it for similarly dark pieces or movements written in a narrative style.

***Flow My Tears*** (1595) and ***If My Complaints Could Passions Move*** (1596)

These two works are from the first two “Bookes of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4, and 5. parts” of John Dowland. The viola da gamba was widely celebrated throughout Britain in the late 1500’s, particularly in compositions of Dowland (more specifically arrangements of works originally written for lute) and Tobias Hume, Scottish viol player and soldier. Dowland initially wrote “If My Complaints” as an ayre for lute and voice, only after the widespread success of each led him to arrange them for alternate instrumentations.

Flow My Tears, the more widely celebrated of the two, was first a plaintive tune for lute, after which it took on its most famous lute song form, then a work for viol consort, and finally “Lachrimae, or Seven Teares,” which is a collection of variations based on the original tune of the piece. According to historian Anthony Boden, this song was “probably the most widely known English song of the early 17$^{th}$ century.” (Boden 2005, 322)

***Lachrymae*** (1950)

This thoroughly modernist work explores in interwoven complexity the sound world of the two Dowland songs heard previously: “Flow My Tears” and “If My Complaints Could Passions Move.” The most extensively interesting point for Britten lies not in the more popular of the two, “Flow My Tears,” but in the first three notes of “If My Complaints Could Passions Move.” This incipit, although technically a major

chord, is more readily understood as a minor chord with the sixth raised in a half step suspension. While this work technically could be called a theme and variations, it would more aptly be known as a variations and theme, as only at the last is the full phrase from the Dowland song heard in its entirety.

The B section's opening phrase from "Flow My Tears" can be heard in the corresponding proportional section of Britten's work, which is perhaps its most hopeful moment. It is a tragically short hopeful moment for Dowland as well, given the sharp turn of the phrase "from the highest spire of contentment my fortune is thrown…and fear and grief and pain for my deserts are my hopes, since hope is gone."

As the torn, soaring melody of Dowland arranged by Britten is heard towards the end of the piece our attentions can be drawn back in time to Dowland's words at the outset of the published consort edition of *Lachrimae*. Indeed, words by both composers lend further understanding to the beauty of this moment.

> "Music for me is a clarification; I try to clarify, to refine, to sensitize…But what is technique? My technique is to tear all the waste away; to achieve perfect clarity of expression, that is my aim." –Benjamin Britten (Schafer 1963, 118)

> "Though the title doth promise teares, unfit guests in these joyfull times, yet no doubt pleasant are the teares which Musicke weeps, neither are tears shed alwayes in sorrowe, but sometime in joy and gladness." (Dowland 1605)

## Bibliography

Bax, Arnold. "*Farewell, My Youth*" *and other writings by Arnold Bax*. Edited by Lewis Foreman. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992.

Boden, Anthony. *Thomas Tomkins: The Last Elizabethan*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005.

Clarke, Rebecca, interview by Robert Sherman. *Interview with Robert Sherman and Rebecca Clarke Friskin* New York, NY, (1976).

Clarke, Rebecca. "Program Notes for Viola Sonata." In *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*, by Liane Curtis, 226. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977.

Curtis, Liane. *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Dowland, John. *Lachrimae, Or Seven Teares Figured in Seaven Passionate Pavans*. London: John Windet, 1605.

Foreman, Lewis. *Bax: A Composer and His Times*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007.

Fry, Helen. *Music & Men: The Life and Loves of Harriet Cohen*. Stroud: History Press, 2008.

Johnson, Christopher. *Shorter Pieces for Viola and Piano*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Mark, Christopher. *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*. Edited by Alain

Frogley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, Sexuality*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Milford, Humphrey. *The English Hymnal with Tunes*. London: Oxford University Press, 1906.

n.a. "Correspondence to the Editor." *The Overture* (Royal Academy of Music), March 1893: 16.

O'Byrne, Dermot. *Seafoam and Firelight*. Hampstead: The Orpheus Press, 1910.

Payne, Anthony. *Frank Bridge - Radical and Conservative*. London: Thames Publishing, 1984.

—. *The Music of Frank Bridge*. London: Thames Publishing, 1976.

Schafer, Murray. *British Composers in Interview*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.

Scott-Sutherland, Colin. *Arnold Bax*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1973.

Seddon, Laura. *British Women Composers and Instrumental Chamber Music in the Early Twentieth Century*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013.

Stanford, Charles. *The Complete Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music*. London: Boosey & Co., 1905.

Tertis, Lionel. *Cinderella No More*. London: Peter Nevill LTD., 1953.

—. *My Viola and I: A Complete Autobiography*. London: Elek Books Limited, 1974.

*The New York Times*. "Death of Johannes Brahms." April 4, 1897: 13.

White, John. *Lionel Tertis: The First Great Viruoso of the Viola*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006.

Williams, Ralph Vaughan. *"National Music" and Other Essays*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

—. *Heirs and Rebels*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1974.

—. *Vaughan Williams Essays*. Edited by Byron Adams. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003.