

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SOLO AND CHAMBER PIECES FOR VIOLA
BY FEMALE COMPOSERS: LATE
NINETEENTH TO TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURIES

Sinan Wang, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2023

Dissertation/Thesis directed by: Professor Katherine Murdock
School of Music

My dissertation performance project explores the captivating world of solo and sonata compositions for viola by female composers of the late nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. Through an exploration of this repertoire, this project seeks to illuminate the unique relationship between the viola and female composers, highlighting the ways in which these women, and many others, have contributed to and enriched the world of classical music. The unique connection between the viola and female composers is only recently coming to light; despite historical challenges and biases, these women have created significant compositions for the viola, resulting in a compelling and inspiring collaboration that has yet to be fully appreciated. My goal is to highlight the positive impact of this connection and to help bring a wider awareness to the works of these women composers.

The first recital is a showcase of female composers from the United States. This program features *No. III and No. X* from Lillian Fuchs' *Fifteen Characteristic Studies*;

Margaret Brouwer's *Two Pieces for Viola and Piano*; Jennifer Higdon's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*; and Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama's *Sonoran Storm* for Solo Viola.

The second recital presents the works of female composers from England. The program includes *Morpheus for Viola and Piano* by Rebecca Clarke; the *Sonata for Viola and Piano* by Elizabeth Maconchy; and Pamela Harrison's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*.

The third recital showcases masterpieces by female composers from Germany and France. The program presents *Three Pieces for Viola and Piano* by Germany's Luise Adolpha Le Beau; and two French compositions, the *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, Op. 25 by Marcelle Soulage, and Fernande Decruck's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*.

SOLO AND CHAMBER PIECES FOR VIOLA BY FEMALE COMPOSERS: LATE
NINETEENTH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

by

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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

2023

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2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my teacher, Professor Katherine Murdock, for her unwavering support and guidance during my doctoral studies at the University of Maryland. Her expertise and encouragement have been invaluable throughout the development of my dissertation and performances. Without her mentorship, this project would not have been possible.

I am also immensely grateful to my Advisory Committee members: Professors Rita Sloan, Delores Ziegler, Eric Kutz, and Harry Tamvakis. Their expertise, insightful feedback, and scholarly guidance have significantly enriched my research and performance. Their contributions have played a vital role in shaping the outcome of this work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Timothy Phillips for sharing the unpublished score of Pamela Harrison's Sonata for Viola and Piano, and to Elitsa Atanasova for helping me find the sheet music for Marcelle Soulage's Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25. Your contributions have enriched my recital repertoire.

Special thanks go to the pianists who accompanied me in my recital: Guzal Isametdinova, Yihan Satterfield, and Anthony Bock. Your musical collaboration and exceptional skills have elevated my performances to new heights. I am grateful for your dedication and support.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support of my friends, family, and colleagues. Your continuous encouragement and belief in my abilities have been a driving force throughout this endeavor. Thank you for being by my side and inspiring me to achieve my goals.

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Recital Programs

Recital I: United States

Sinan Wang, Viola
Guzal Isametdinova, Piano

March 17, 2022, 8 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall at UMD

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)

I. Calmly
II. Declamatory

Sonoran Storm for Solo Viola

Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama (b.1976)

- Intermission -

15 Characteristic Studies

Lillian Fuchs (1903–1995)

I. No. 3 *Andante*
II. No. 10 *Strepitoso*

Two Pieces for Viola and Piano

Margaret Brouwer (b. 1944)

I. *X4-I=0*
II. *Chaconne2*

Recital II: United Kingdom

Sinan Wang, Viola
Guzal Isametdinova, Piano

October 11, 2022, 8 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall at UMD

Morpheus for Viola and Piano

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979)

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994)

- I. Allegro
- II. Lento moderato
- III. Presto

- Intermission -

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Pamela Harrison (1915–1990)

- I. Moderato
- II. Vivace Leggiero
- III. Andante Affetuoso
- IV. Presto

Recital III: Germany and France

Sinan Wang, Viola
Yihan Satterfield, Piano
Anthony Bock, Piano

November 20, 2022, 5 PM
Ulrich Recital Hall at UMD

Three Pieces for Viola and Piano

Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850–1927)

- I. Nachtstück
- II. Träumerei
- III. Polonaise

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Fernande Decruck (1896–1954)

- I. Molto moderato, espressivo
- II. Noel: Andante
- III. Fileuse: Leggermente animato
- IV. Nocturne et Rondel: Molto moderato

- Intermission -

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25

Marcelle Soulage (1894–1970)

- I. Allegro
- II. Scherzo
- III. Complainte
- IV. Ronde

Introduction

The viola experienced a significant turning point in the early 1900s, as it gained popularity as a solo instrument. This was due to the rise of virtuoso performers and a growing demand for fresh repertoire. This flourishing of viola music can be largely attributed to the significant promotion and advocacy of the viola by eminent performers of the early twentieth century, such as Lionel Tertis, William Primrose, and Rebecca Clarke, who recognized and showcased the expressive potential of the instrument's beautiful middle-register voice. This, in turn, created a conducive environment for female composers to explore the unique capabilities of the viola in their compositions.

The selected composers in my dissertation performance project come from diverse geographical areas, including the United States, England, France, and Germany, and the repertoire ranges from as early as 1881 to as recent as 2016. While each composer has their own distinct style and artistic traits, the selected pieces are not necessarily their most representative works, but rather reflect my personal preferences. With the exception of a few pieces such as Rebecca Clarke's *Morpheus* and Lillian Fuchs' *Fifteen Characteristic Studies*, most of the repertoire is quite unknown to modern audiences. While there were of course many works for viola written by male composers in this time period, my goal in this project is to bring greater attention to the connection between women composers and the viola, which has resulted in a rich and inspiring body of work.

Chapter 1: Recital I, United States

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)
Sonata for Viola and Piano (1990)

Jennifer Higdon is considered one of the most distinguished and accomplished American composers of our era. Born in Brooklyn in 1962, Higdon grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, and Seymour, Tennessee, and began playing the flute in high school. After attending Bowling Green State University in Ohio to study flute performance, she discovered her passion for composition and began exploring the field further. Later, Higdon continued her music studies in Philadelphia at the Curtis Institute of Music. In addition to her studies at the Curtis Institute, she also attended the University of Pennsylvania, earning her master's and Ph.D. degrees in composition.

Higdon's music has earned her numerous awards and honors, including but not limited to three Grammys and the highly acclaimed Pulitzer Prize for Music. Her music is some of the most frequently performed by a living composer today, and she is widely recognized as a household name in classical music.

She has taught at many institutions, including the Curtis Institute of Music. Higdon is widely known for her supportive and nurturing teaching style, and many of her students have gone on to have successful careers as composers.

Characterized by its inventive use of texture, vivid colors, rhythmic energy, and emotional intensity, her compositions are often inspired by the natural world and by her own experiences as a performer and teacher. Whether writing for large ensembles or small chamber groups, Higdon's music is always fresh, inventive, and engaging.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1990)

The Viola and Piano Sonata by Jennifer Higdon, composed in 1990, is a dynamic and evocative work that showcases the expressive capabilities of the viola. The piece contains two movements, *Calmly* and *Declamatory*, which contrast with each other in mood and character. The composition was commissioned by violist Michael Strauss, and was premiered by Strauss and pianist Anthony Hewitt in October, 1990.¹ The *National Journal*'s review praised the sonata, stating that "The sonata reveals itself in waves of unfolding dramatic gestures, in a manner that is unforced, lyrical, and a natural expression of the material itself. It should be a welcome addition to the repertoire for any violist..."²

The first movement, *Calmly*, is marked by a sense of introspection and contemplation. The viola and piano engage in a delicate dance, with the viola playing long, sustained notes and the piano providing a gentle accompaniment. The movement gradually intensifies with the viola taking on a more prominent role and the piano adding layers of texture and color. The movement ends with a sense of resolution and calm.

The second movement, *Declamatory*, is marked by a more assertive and energetic character. The viola states the first theme in a bold rhythmic manner with piano accompaniment; the two instruments then become more playful, engaging in lively interwoven conversation which becomes increasingly more intricate. The energy gradually builds until about the two thirds of the way through the movement. Here the motion suddenly comes to a halt, as the piano sings a slow simple chorale tune with a

¹ Jennifer, Higdon Sonata for Viola and Piano (Philadelphia: Lawdon Press, 1990).

² "Review of Non-Orchestral Works", Composer USA National Journal, accessed January 6, 2023, <http://jenniferhigdon.com/nonorchestralreviews.html>.

tender and nostalgic character; eventually the viola joins in an other-worldly voice, floating above the piano bass line. The motion gradually increases and we find ourselves back in the playful dialog from the beginning of the movement.

This second movement is filled with virtuosic passages for both instruments; unusual modes, irregular rhythms and fluctuations in the timing add to the contrasting atmospheres. The movement ends with a triumphant flourish, bringing the piece to a thrilling conclusion.

This sonata is a powerful work that explores a wide range of expressive possibilities of the viola. What strikes me the most is the dreamlike atmosphere at the beginning of the first movement, as if the whole world suddenly becomes quiet. It feels like one can communicate one's deepest thoughts through the composer's musical language. The complex rhythms of the chase between the viola and piano in the second movement create a sense of tension and excitement demanding the utmost focus while playing, lest the one voice falls behind the other. Higdon's skill as a composer is communicated through the intricate harmonies, sophisticated rhythms, and expressive melodies. It is a significant addition to the viola repertoire and a testament to Higdon's continuous exploration of the expressive capabilities of the instrument.

Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama (b.1976)
Sonoran Storm for Solo Viola (2016)

Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama was born in Los Angeles and is of Zimbabwean and Japanese lineage. Her name means “mother of peace” and “lion” in Zulu.³ She began her musical education at a young age, starting piano lessons at the age of four and learning

³ “BIO,” Thula Music, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://thulamusic.com/about/>.

the violin at six. She would regularly attend music events at Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences, which furthered her interest in music. Ngwenyama started attending the Crossroads School at age twelve, where she studied counterpoint with Dr. Herbert Zipper, Mary Ann Cummins, and Warren Spaeth. This was also around the same time she took up the viola, which she would later become a master at playing. She went on to win the Primrose International Viola Competition at age sixteen and later graduated from Crossroads. An interesting connection to this program is that she continued her studies at the Curtis Institute, where she studied counterpoint and theory with Jennifer Higdon, as well as David Leob and Edward Aldwell. She became a Fulbright scholar at Paris Conservatory and later received a Master of Theological Studies degree at Harvard University, pursuing her interest in different religions of the world.⁴⁵

Ngwenyama is also a highly accomplished composer, with a growing catalog of works that spans chamber music, orchestral works, and instrumental music. Her music is characterized by a deep emotional resonance and a vibrant, eclectic style that draws on her diverse cultural and musical influences. Her works have been performed by major orchestras and ensembles around the world, including the San Francisco Symphony and the Kronos Quartet.

In addition to her many accomplishments as a performer and composer, Ngwenyama is also a dedicated educator and has taught at institutions such as Indiana University as a visiting professor. Her commitment to fostering the next generation of musicians and composers is a testament to her enduring artistic legacy.

⁴ Thula Music n.d.

⁵ “Alumni Profiles,” Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences, accessed January 7, 2023, <https://www.xrds.org/alumni-profile?pk=919172>.

***Sonoran Storm* for Solo Viola (2016)**

Sonoran Storm for solo viola was composed in 2016 and is inspired by Ngwenyama's experiences living in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona.

The piece is one continuous movement, in a standard form of ABA + coda. It is a striking and dynamic work, characterized by a sense of restlessness, much like the storms that sweep through the Sonoran Desert. The viola takes on a range of roles throughout the piece, at times evoking the howling winds of a storm, and at other times exploring more introspective, lyrical, and contemplative moods, feeling improvisatory with sudden changes.

Ngwenyama's compositional style in *Sonoran Storm* draws on a range of influences, from classical to jazz to traditional African music. The piece features a number of challenging techniques for the viola, including percussive effects, persistent double-stop passages, chords, and rapid shifts between different registers of the instrument. In addition, the work is non-stop for around 11 minutes, and requires great endurance from the performer.

This sonata was the piece that generated the most interest after the concert, with the audience being particularly astonished by the frequent double-stops throughout the piece. As a performer, performing *Sonoran Storm* made me both excited and nervous. On one hand, I was thrilled to showcase the virtuosity of the viola and demonstrate that the instrument can shine in technically demanding pieces when well-written for the instrument. On the other hand, the sonata requires an exceptional level of physical stamina, and playing a constant stream of sixteenth notes can be challenging. Additionally, it is crucial to effectively convey the sudden changes in character

throughout the piece and maintain the audience's curiosity by keeping the rhythmic patterns fresh.

To me, this work illuminated Ngwenyama's talents both as a composer and as a violist. With its constant 16th-note motion, the piece is a *moto perpetuo* that demands great virtuosity and endurance from the performer. *Sonoran Storm* is a compelling and evocative work that is sure to captivate audiences with its adventurous spirit and rich sonic palette.

Lillian Fuchs (1901–1995)
15 Characteristic Studies (1902–1995)

Lillian Fuchs was an outstanding American female violist, educator, and composer of the twentieth century. Born in New York City to a musical family, she began playing the violin and the viola at a young age, studying with her father, who was a violinist and conductor. She pursued further studies with Franz Kneisel at the Institute of Musical Art, which is now known as the Juilliard School. Later, she went to Berlin to study with the violist Adolf Busch.⁶ She was known for her virtuosic and distinctive style of viola playing and performed as a soloist with prestigious orchestras including the New York Philharmonic.

In addition to her performing career, Fuchs was also an accomplished composer. Her music is characterized by its expressive lyricism and emotional depth. One of her most famous works is her *Sonata Pastorale* for solo viola, which has become a staple of the viola repertoire.

⁶ David Sills, "In Memoriam: Lillian Fuchs - One Great Life," *Journal of the American Viola Society* (Provo: 1985), 63-68.

Fuchs was also a dedicated teacher and taught at Juilliard for over twenty years. Her students included many prominent violists such as Lawrence Dutton and Martha Katz. She was known for her rigorous teaching style and for her commitment to nurturing young talent. Fuchs' pedagogical approach emphasized the importance of developing a strong technical foundation while also cultivating a deep understanding of musical expression and interpretation.

Today, Lillian Fuchs is regarded as one of the preeminent violists of the twentieth century and as a trailblazer for women in classical music. Her music continues to be performed and celebrated by musicians and audiences around the world.

15 Characteristic Studies

Fuchs' 15 Characteristic Studies for solo viola is a collection of short virtuosic works that showcase the technical and expressive capabilities of the viola. The studies incorporate a variety of styles and address different aspects necessary to build the skills of a violist, including legato, vibrato, bow technique, left-hand skills, and musicianship, catering to various levels of players from intermediate to advanced. Fuchs drew inspiration for these studies from her deep understanding of viola technique and musical expression, as well as her own experiences as a performer and educator.

Each one of these concise studies explores a specific technical or musical element, such as double-stops, shifting, or bow control, while also incorporating elements of musical expression and interpretation. It is rare historically to have études and studies specifically written by a violist and for violists; these short pieces are not only technically demanding but are also musically rewarding and demonstrate Fuchs' keen sense of musicality and artistic expression.

For my recital, I chose Study No. III and Study No. X. Study No. III has a typical ternary form, A-B-A. The A and B sections have completely different characteristics; A, which is identical both times, has a melody that is slightly sad and very lyrical. The B section has more virtuosic material full of double stops and chords, an effective contrast to the lyrical exposition. The meter changes from 6/4 to 4/4 in the transition from the outer to the inner section and the study increases in tempo, making it musically tight and brilliant. This is followed by the identical restatement of the A section. No. III contains dramatic and sudden emotional changes. The constant eighth note double-stop sixths in section B are good material for intonation practice and for balancing the bow to draw a consistent sound quality on two strings simultaneously.

No. X is marked by “*Strepitoso*” which means “noisy and impetuous.” This is a short study in 3/4 meter, consisting of quarter notes preceded by grace notes. Grace notes are used to add ornamentation, embellishment, or a sense of decoration to a melody. This study is undoubtedly an excellent practice in keeping the flow, direction, and rhythmic integrity through the grace notes. Its E major key gives it a brilliant character throughout the whole piece.

Fuchs' studies are often compared to the études of Kreutzer, but with a distinct focus on the violist. They are also notable for their use of techniques such as harmonics and glissandi, which were becoming much more commonly used in viola repertoire at the time. Her studies reflect her pedagogical philosophy, providing a well-rounded approach to viola technique and musicianship. The melancholic beginning of No. III instantly captivates the listener with its poignant, lyrical expression that resonates like a human

voice. In contrast, No. X appears more playful, like a mischievous child jumping around and skipping about, offering the audience a completely different character.

The 15 Characteristic Studies have been performed and recorded by countless violists and continue to be a standard part of the viola repertoire. They remain a testament to Lillian Fuchs' contributions to the viola world as both a performer and a teacher. Most significantly, they serve as a reminder of the importance of combining both technical mastery and musical expression in one's practice.

Margaret Brouwer (b. 1940)
Two Pieces for Viola and Piano (1989)

Margaret Brouwer is an accomplished American composer and music educator, born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1940. Brouwer began her college education at the Oberlin Conservatory and Michigan State University where she focused on the violin. After receiving a bachelor's and master's degrees from both institutions respectively, she went on to play with the Dallas and Fort Worth Symphonies, eventually realizing that she wanted to develop her musical career beyond orchestral performance. In pursuit of this goal, Brouwer enrolled in the music composition program at Indiana University, where she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

As she began her career as a composer, she was supported by several fellowships such as the Guggenheim Fellowship and a music award bestowed by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, after receiving her degree.⁷

⁷ Margaret Brouwer Bio, Margaret Brouwer's Personal Website, accessed January 21, 2023, <https://www.margaretbrouwer.com/bio>.

She was the Head of the Composition Department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, served as the NEA Composer in Residence with the Roanoke Symphony and was Composer-in-Residence at Washington and Lee University.

Brouwer has remained active and engaged in the music world, and her work as a composer has continued to play a pivotal role in advancing contemporary music and the promotion of diverse voices in the classical music world.

Two Pieces for Viola and Piano (1989)

X4-1=0

Brouwer composed Two Pieces for Viola and Piano in 1989, consisting of two movements: *X4-1=0* and *Chaconne2*. *X4-1=0* is the first of many pieces by Margaret Brouwer that took inspiration from the book *Chaos* by James Gleick. Other pieces of hers inspired by the same book are the chamber piece *Skyriding* in 1992, and the orchestral pieces *Caution Ahead*, *Guard Rail Out* written in 2012. Brouwer had become interested in using the theories in Gleick's book as the basis of musical form. This book essentially presents the paradigm that what is perceived to be disorder and chaos on the surface is in fact more organized than one might think.⁸ The following are program notes for *X4-1=0* by Brouwer, which contain the inspiration she drew from the book.

“In James Gleick’s book Chaos, his discussion of turbulence –the predictable elements and yet sometime chaotic moments of the motion of water through a pipe or of wind currents in a tunnel, for example – seemed upon reflection to provide inspiration for musical form. “Nature oscillates within her prescribed limits. The attracting pull of four

⁸ James Gleick, “Chaos: Making A New Science” (Book Review) Arnopoulos McLeod’s Perspective, Summer 1989, Periodicals Archive Online, 140.

points creates basins of attractions. But each particle does not move independently – its motion depends very much on the motion of its neighbors – and in a smooth flow, the degrees of freedom can be few.... Nearby bits remain nearby or drift apart in a smooth linear way that produces neat lines in wind-tunnel pictures: Gleick describes motion through space. Music is sound-motion through space and time.”

X4-1=0 at first hearing contains a myriad of dissonant intervals randomly organized together. The constant changes in meter give the piece an unstable and chaotic sound. Consistent with Gleick's theories on chaos, however, is the fact that the seemingly turbulent nature of the piece actually contains hidden consistencies. Most of the piece is engaged with developing the material presented in the first seven bars. Some parts imitate the rhythm, some imitate the intervals of that music. Brouwer explores the color possibilities of the instrument throughout the movement. The two instruments blend together at the opening of the movement with the viola muted while playing a cluster-like melody in unison with the piano, creating an impressionistic atmosphere. In contrast, the viola part includes several playing techniques, each marked with specific instructions. The marking "*con sord*" indicates the use of a mute, resulting in a muted or dampened sound. "*Sul tasto*" instructs the player to bow on the fingerboard, creating a delicate and soft timbre. The "*Bartok*" or "*snap*" pizzicato involves plucking the string away from the fingerboard with a sharp vertical motion, producing a percussive and snapping sound. Finally, viola harmonics require the player to lightly touch the string at a specific point while simultaneously bowing to produce a high-pitched, bell-like tone. At times, the score calls for the pianist to mute the piano strings with the left hand, done by reaching inside the body of the piano, imitating viola's pizzicato or sharp staccato.

Chaconne2

After the unconventional form of the first movement, we are presented with an old form, the chaconne, in the second movement titled *Chaconne2*. The chaconne is a genre that originated in the Baroque period. It is based on variations on a relatively short, fixed harmonic progression, typically in a slow triple meter. The title of the piece, *Chaconne2*, suggests that Brouwer took the structure and characteristics of the chaconne and expanded upon it uniquely and creatively, resulting in a new work that retains the essence of the original form while offering something fresh and original. In the composer's own words: "*Chaconne2, a loose version of the traditional form of variations on a chord progression, is based on two interwoven chord progressions, one traditional, the other non-traditional. A parody on romantic treatments of Baroque music, with a smile at Beethoven-style endings, it is virtuosic in the tradition of chaconnes.*"⁹

A broad registral range of the viola is shown in this movement, with the melody going up to the ninth position and staying in that high range for several phrases. The piece draws effectively on the expressive potential of the viola, using not only the beautiful low-register C string but the very powerful high register. It is a true showcase of the composer's knowledge of the instrument. Although the pitch range is very wide, the piece is still written idiomatically for the instrument; it is a powerful and expressive showpiece that exhibits both technical virtuosity and musicality.

This movement also contains rapid meter changes and some challenging rhythmic patterns which produce irregular beauty in a complete departure from the traditional chaconne.

⁹ Margaret Brouwer, *Two Pieces for Viola and Piano* (Brouwer New Music Publishing: 1999).

The ending of this piece is incredibly unique. Rather than finishing with a common dominant to tonic ending, it finishes in G# minor with the viola on an accentuated B natural quarter note – the 3rd degree of a G# minor triad. Brouwer’s comment about the “smile at Beethoven-style endings” must refer to the fact that Beethoven's instrumental works often end with three chords in fast movements.¹⁰ Brouwer imitates this with the three-chord ending here, but in a playful parody, the viola doesn't return to the tonic at the end. This leaves the audience with an abrupt, unexpected ending and an unresolved feeling.

Perhaps due to Brouwer’s background as a violinist, this sonata in general utilizes a registral range more typical to a violin sonata, often employing extended passages of high-pitched notes. The first movement immediately captured my attention with its dreamy yet unsettling quality; it evokes a sense of unease with its creepy, sneaky, and slightly dangerous undertone. *Chaconne2* takes the listener through a journey of various moods and emotions, expressing a range of sentiments before seeming to resolve near the end. However, at the very last moment the piece changes course, providing a final surprise for the ending. I found this piece to be both exciting and intriguing and felt it would be a perfect finale for my first recital.

¹⁰ Margaret Brouwer, *Two Pieces for Viola and Piano*.

Chapter 2: Recital II, United Kingdom

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979)

Morpheus for Viola and Piano (1917)

Rebecca Clarke was an English violist and composer whose contributions to viola repertoire and chamber music have made her a household name in Western classical music.

Rebecca Clarke was born in Harrow, England, and spent much of her youth there. Clarke's father, Joseph Thacher Clarke, was an admirer of music and an amateur musician. He allowed her to accompany her brother to his violin lessons, but did not support lessons for her. She enrolled at the Royal Academy of Music at the age of seventeen, but her education was cut short when her father demanded she withdraw due to a marriage proposal from her harmony teacher Percy Hilder Miles. Afterwards, Clarke continued her studies in composition at the Royal College of Music, where she was one of the first, and at that time only, female students of composer Charles Villiers Stanford. He encouraged Clarke to learn the viola to help her understand harmonic structure, which would in turn benefit her composition. Interested in both, she began studying viola with Lionel Tertis, an influential English violist who played a vital role in elevating the status of the viola as a solo instrument.

Clarke's compositions span a wide range of genres and styles, including works for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, and choral pieces. Most of her famous pieces are related to the viola, including her Viola Sonata, *Morpheus*, and *Rhapsody*. Her music is known for lyrical melodies, late impressionistic harmonies, and expressive emotional content.

Apart from her role as a composer, Clarke performed in numerous chamber ensembles and orchestras throughout her career. She collaborated with many of the top musicians of her time, including pianist Arthur Rubinstein, violinists Jascha Heifetz and Jacques Thibaud, and cellist Pablo Casals, and was a trailblazer for her generation in that she performed and toured internationally with several all-women chamber ensembles. As one of the first successful female professional violists, she paved the way for future generations of female performers. Clarke's music continues to be widely performed and celebrated, and today she is recognized as an important figure in the history of twentieth-century classical music. In Clarke's era, women faced harsh discrimination and bias in the music industry. Works composed by women were likely to be ignored or devalued due to gender bias. For example, when Clarke's viola sonata won an award under her own name in 1919, some people questioned whether it could possibly have been written by a woman and suggested that it might be a pseudonym for another talented male artist.¹¹ Furthermore, during her lifetime, her works were not extensively published. Fortunately, over time and with social progress, her works have been continually rediscovered and studied, leading to increasing recognition and appreciation.

Morpheus

Morpheus is a single-movement piece for viola and piano, composed in 1917–18 and premiered publicly by Clarke herself in New York City in 1918. The New York Tribune gave Clarke a glowing review for her 1918 debut at Aeolian Hall: “Rarely heard,

¹¹ David Bynog, “The 1919 Berkshire Festival Competition: A Momentous Weekend in the Viola's History,” violinist.com, August 22, 2019, <https://www.violinist.com/blog/dbynog/20198/27888/>.

except in company with some sixty or eighty other orchestral instruments, the viola was the chief center of interest at the recital given yesterday afternoon by Rebecca Clarke, violist, and May Mukle, 'cellist, at Aeolian Hall. The beauty of the instrument, which possesses something of the flexibility of the violin with the intensity of the 'cello, was admirably exploited by Miss Clarke, and set the audience wondering whether more could not be heard from this instrument, even if its limited repertory of music must be extended with works adapted from music written for other instruments. Miss Clarke masters the deep 'cello tones, as well as the song-like upper register of her instrument, and with more flexibility of bow phrasing will become an executant of real authority.”¹²

In *Morpheus*, Clarke employs modal scales, totally ambiguous progressions, and parallel chords to create a contemplative and otherworldly atmosphere. These techniques contribute to the piece’s dreamlike and introspective qualities. The work is named after the Greek god of dreams and is meant to evoke a dreamlike quality.¹³

Clarke's approach to the music focuses on texture and dynamics to create a sense of depth and atmosphere. The central section of the piece is particularly climactic, with the viola and piano working together to create an aura of intensity. The piece is more often in a soft dynamic while emphasizing the viola, adding to the emotional impact of the music. The viola part before the coda presents a brief cadenza passage. The piece concludes quietly, with both instruments slowly fading into silence. The use of modal harmonies is one of the many features that make *Morpheus* such a unique and compelling work.

¹² “Music: Miss Rebecca Clark Demonstrates Beauty of the Viola, Instrument Rarely Heard Alone,” New York Tribune, February 14, 1918, 9.

¹³ “Morpheus-The God of Dreams,” Greek Myths & Greek Mythology, accessed February 14, 2023, <https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/morpheus-the-god-of-dreams/>.

Clarke published *Morpheus* under the male pseudonym “Anthony Trent.”¹⁴ The composer herself mentioned in subsequent lectures, interviews, and conversations that she felt that it was inappropriate for her name to appear so many times in the program of a concert. It was also the only time she is known to have used a pseudonym during her composing career.

Morpheus remains one of Rebecca Clarke's most beloved and frequently performed works, often cited as a testament to her extraordinary talents as both a composer and a performer. When I play this piece, the melody gives me the impression of something ancient, like a lyrical melody from antiquity, with a strong focus on the solo instrument, reminiscent of a singer. It is imbued with a mysterious atmosphere that always captivates me, whether as a performer or as a member. Its enduring popularity speaks to Clarke's legacy as a pioneering female musician in the classical music world, and I never tire of playing or listening to this piece.

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994)

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1937)

Elizabeth Maconchy was less well-known than many of the outstanding twentieth-century British composers. Her works have been praised for their emotional intensity, technical skill, and individual style, and are starting to become more well-known internationally.

Maconchy was born in Broxbourne, a town located in Hertfordshire, England, just north of London. When she was young her family moved to the Howth Peninsula, an area

¹⁴ Rebecca Clarke Frequently Asked Questions, Rebecca Clarke Society, accessed March 22, 2023, <https://rebeccaclarkecomposer.com/frequently-asked-questions/>.

east of Dublin, where she lived until she was sixteen, when she moved to London to study music. The experience of living on the rugged Irish peninsula had a profound and lasting impact on her.

In the 1920s, Maconchy commenced her music studies at the Royal College of Music, where she studied composition with Ralph Vaughan Williams. Her early works were heavily influenced by the neoclassical style of Stravinsky and the English pastoral tradition, but over time she developed a more distinctive and experimental style that combined a modernist sensibility with a focus on melody and harmony.

Maconchy's compositional output encompassed not only chamber music and choral works but also genres such as symphonies and operas, which were less commonly explored by female composers of her time. Her music is characterized by a powerful emotional intensity and a sense of urgency, with a particular focus on themes of loss, isolation, and social justice.

Throughout her career, Maconchy was a champion of women in music and consistently worked to promote the work of other women composers. In 1959, Maconchy made history by becoming the first female to hold the position of Chair at the Composers' Guild of Great Britain, a notable achievement in her career.¹⁵ As with her position of president of the Society for the Promotion of New Music, Maconchy's leadership of the Guild was characterized by a commitment to promoting the work of emerging composers, particularly women, and she worked tirelessly to establish the Guild as a leading voice in the British musical community.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jennifer Uglow, *The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography*, ed. Maggy Hendry (Lebanon: Northeastern University Press 1999), 347–348.

¹⁶ Uglow, *The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography*, 347-348.

As a composer, Maconchy's achievements were recognized with numerous awards and honors, including the Cobbett Prize, and the London County Council Competition, and the award of Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1977, making her “Dame” Elizabeth Maconchy.¹⁷ Her compositions are still being performed and recorded today, and she is remembered as one of the innovative British composers of the twentieth century. Her music is a testament to the power of the human spirit and a celebration of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the British Isles.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1937)

Maconchy had a special passion for the viola, and in 1937 she poured herself into creating the Sonata for Viola and Piano, which was debuted in London the following year by Violist Frederick Riddle and pianist Adolph Hallis.¹⁸ This sonata explores the full range of the viola's expressive capabilities. In the heart of Maconchy's sonata, there is a sense of tension and conflict, which is expressed using powerful, almost aggressive, rhythms and harmonies. The opening movement, marked *Allegro*, features a series of jagged, angular melodies that seem to clash with each other in a kind of musical combat. The viola and piano take turns engaging in this struggle, sometimes in unison and sometimes in counterpoint, but always with a sense of urgency and intensity.

The second movement, marked *Lento moderato*, offers a brief respite from the tension of the first. The music takes on a more introspective character, with the viola's long, singing lines weaving in and out of the piano's soft, ethereal accompaniment.

¹⁷ Sophie Fuller, *The Pandora Guide To Women Composers: Britain and the United States 1629- Present*, (London: Pandora Press: 1994), 198

¹⁸ Fuller, *The Pandora Guide To Women Composers: Britain and the United States 1629- Present*, 198

However, there is a palpable sense of underlying loneliness and unease, a feeling that the momentary peace is fragile and could be shattered at any moment.

The final movement, marked *Presto*, brings the sonata to a dramatic and forceful conclusion. Maconchy returns to the aggressive, confrontational style of the first movement, with the viola and piano engaging in a frenzied dance of rhythms and harmonies. The movement builds to a climax of almost unbearable intensity before coming to an abrupt, unyielding end.

At my recital, this sonata received a tremendous amount of feedback post-concert; the audience seemed captivated by its tension-filled music. However, this tension has been the most challenging aspect for me, as the piano part is dramatic and bold, as well as very demanding; the viola part in this sonata can easily be overshadowed by the piano's sound. Finding the right balance between the two instruments requires great attention. Once a good balance is achieved, this sonata always delivers excellent results.

Pamela Harrison (1915–1990)
Sonata for Viola and Piano (1946)

Pamela Harrison was a British composer, pianist, and music educator who was born in 1915 in Orpington, Kent, southeast of London. Harrison was exposed to music from a young age. Afterward, she continued her musical studies at the Royal College of Music, where she focused on composition and piano. During her time at the college, she regularly performed piano and string chamber pieces by composers such as Fauré and Delius, who greatly influenced her early work.¹⁹

¹⁹ Pamela Harrison, Chamber Works, with Ground Piano Trio and Robert Plane (clarinet), recorded April 6, 2022, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, 2003.

Harrison's music reflects a unique and diverse compositional style, characterized by both pithy humor and poignant sentimentality. She created works for various instruments and ensembles, showcasing a range of musical forms and structures. Harrison persevered in the face of prejudice and bias as a woman in a male-dominated field, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to her craft through a diverse and impressive body of work. Her compositions span a range of genres, including orchestral works such as *A Suite for Timothy* for string orchestra and *Brimstone Down* for small orchestra, chamber music like *Lament* for viola and piano and her String Quartet of 1944, choral music such as *Songs for Children's Chorus and Piano*, and instrumental music. Her music was highly regarded in the years following World War II, and she was recognized for her creativity and compositional talent.

Harrison had close friendships with notable musicians, such as clarinetist Jack Brymer, as well as her husband, cellist Harvey Phillips, who supported her career and gave many high-profile performances of her work. Her compositions are innovative and deeply emotive and continue to captivate audiences. Although Harrison's contributions were somewhat overlooked in recent years, her music is being rediscovered and celebrated by contemporary musicians and audiences alike. Her ability to evoke powerful emotions through her compositions has earned her a dedicated following, and her influence on modern classical music cannot be overstated.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1946)

This sonata is a four-movement work that was written in 1946 and premiered the following year at Wigmore Hall in London. Its first broadcast performance was given by

violinist Watson Forbes and pianist Alan Richardson on March 17, 1951.²⁰ The sonata features a virtuosic and expressive viola part that intertwines with a lyrical and supportive piano accompaniment. Harrison's sonata showcases her unique compositional style, which is characterized by crisp and elegant writing and textures reminiscent of those of her composition teacher, Gordon Jacob.²¹

Jacob himself commented on Pamela Harrison's viola sonata and conveyed his profound appreciation for the piece. *"I want to tell you how beautiful your viola sonata is. This is not a biased judgment, but the plain truth. There is a beauty of sound about it all which is enthralling. You have, as I have told you before, real genius. The technical skill as well as the poetical imagination of the work is of the highest order."*²²

The work is in four movements; the sonata's first movement, *Moderato*, flows with a serene and tranquil quality throughout. The musical development is primarily based on the opening four-bar phrase; it returns in different keys or in fragments, which Harrison uses for further development. Throughout the movement, the viola and piano engage in a continuous dialogue, exchanging and elaborating on the theme in various ways.

The second movement, *Vivace Leggiero*, is infused with humor and lightness. The beginning theme is in a 3/4 meter alternating with 2/4 bars, and except in the middle section she rarely continues in the same meter for more than two to three measures. The whimsical exchange between the viola and piano creates a sense of two playful souls intertwining.

²⁰ "New Music," Radio Times, March 17, 1951.

²¹ Lewis Foreman, "Rebecca Clarke & Pamela Harrison," Saint Paul Sunday, 2002.

²² Harrison, Chamber Works.

The third movement, *Andante Affetuoso* is serene and contemplative, and features a hauntingly beautiful theme of flowing eighth notes which pass between the piano and the viola. Later the piano adds to the texture with arpeggiated triplets, creating an accompaniment that is delicate and supportive and provides a gentle harmonic foundation for the viola's melodic material. The movement is reflective and introspective, with a sense of nostalgic longing pervading the music.

The last movement, marked *Presto*, characterized by scampering passages filled with sixteenth notes and contrasting lyrical sections, effectively showcases Harrison's talent for swiftly transforming the musical character of a piece. This movement is kinetic in a similar manner to the second movement, but with a more urgent quality. The middle section slows down, a serene moment before the storm returns towards the end.

Overall, this sonata has a romantic character, especially the first and third movements which evoke warm emotions and expressiveness. The first movement goes through various moods, with the beginning and end sounding elegant and beautiful. The second movement has an exciting and anticipatory character with its quick pace. The lyrical swelling melody in the third movement makes me think of a lament, but a lament that is unsure or confused, with great emotional vulnerability. The fast ending of the last movement creates a sharp contrast with the previous movements.

Chapter 3: Recital III, Germany and France

Luise Adolpha Le Beau (German, 1850–1927)
Three Pieces for Viola and Piano (1881)

Luise Adolpha Le Beau was a gifted composer, pianist, and music critic who lived during the Romantic period of the late nineteenth century. Born in Rastatt, Germany in 1850, Le Beau showed promise as a musician from an early age, receiving instruction in piano, violin, and singing throughout her childhood. Her studies with Wilhelm Kalliwoda and Clara Schumann helped her to develop a keen sense of musicality and a deep understanding of theory and technique.²³

Le Beau's move to Munich in 1874 was a turning point in her career as a composer and performer. She quickly gained recognition for her remarkable talent and innovative compositions. However, her success did not come without challenges. Le Beau faced setbacks and disagreements with other musicians and organizations, including her teacher Rheinberger, from whose studio she eventually withdrew.²⁴ Despite her exceptional talent, she was regarded as an outsider in Munich musical society and struggled to find patronage.²⁵ Additionally, Le Beau was caught up in the controversy between advocates of "new music" aligned with Wagner and more conservative musicians, she intentionally chose not to be aligned with one side or the other.²⁶ But, in the face of all these difficulties, Le Beau remained steadfast in her passion for music, continuing to create beautiful and groundbreaking pieces.²⁷

²³ Annika Forkert, "Luise Adolpha Le Beau," MUGi, April 14, 2010, accessed April 23, 2023, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000477.

²⁴ Jane Bowers, *Women Making Music*, ed. Judith Tick (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1986), 286.

²⁵ Bowers, *Women Making Music*, 286.

²⁶ Bowers, *Women Making Music*, 286.

²⁷ Bowers, *Women Making Music*, 283–284.

One of Le Beau's most significant contributions to the field of music was her passionate advocacy for women's rights in the music industry, working to raise the status of female music teachers and composers and to promote the study and performance of works by women.²⁸ She also founded a private music course for the daughters of educated families, teaching them piano, and music theory; a subject that was often ignored in girls' music education at the time.

Despite the many challenges she faced during her lifetime, Le Beau remained devoted to her work as a composer and teacher. Her memoirs, published in 1910, offer a glimpse into the life and struggles of a female musician during her lifetime. As a woman myself, this makes me deeply aware of the inseparable connection between the gradual improvements in the status of female composers and the efforts of generations of musicians.

Three Pieces for Viola and Piano (1881)

In 1880, Le Beau met the violist of the Jean Becker Family Quartet, who had a special appreciation for Le Beau's work, and asked her to write a piece for each member of the quartet.²⁹ One of these resulting works is *Three Pieces for the Viola and Piano*, completed the following year. The *Three Pieces* are concise, accessible, and pleasant to listen to. They present signature characteristics of the Romantic era, such as the emphasis on sound, enriched harmony, and the expression of the individual's psychology and

²⁸ Forkert, "Luise Adolpha Le Beau."

²⁹ Luise Adolpha Le Beau, *Three Pieces for Viola and Piano* (Hildegard Publishing Company: 1997).

emotions over rationality. The singing lyricism of the melodies in the *Three Pieces* also fully embodies their romantic identity.

The first piece is titled *Nachtstück* which means “Nocturne” in English. The movement contains triplets throughout, giving the listener fluid continuity. *Nachtstück* is in Ternary form (ABA); section A is in G minor, with a sensitive, moody, and somber character. Le Beau utilized the viola's deep bass strings, the C and G to bring this quality out. The piece switches to G major in section B, giving the listener an exciting, glorious, active, and dynamic feeling. It has a husky, warm quality that makes one feel enveloped in a loving embrace.

Träumerei, which means “Reverie” in English, the second piece, is also in Ternary form (ABA). In Section A, which is in C major, the viola's soulful yet gentle voice invites the listener into a dreamy soundscape befitting the movement's namesake. Section B in A minor is faster than section A, featuring dance music and capricious and flirtatious characters. Then section A returns, mostly intact.

Finally, the third piece is a lively *Polonaise*, delightful and compelling. Polonaises are more commonly played on the piano. One might think of Chopin's piano *polonaises*, of which he wrote sixteen in total, arguably the most famous in the genre; viola pieces featuring the polonaise form are not as common. Like a minuet or a waltz, the polonaise is also a triple meter dance, however, it is different from the typical *forte-piano-piano* pattern of emphasis heard in those dances. The polonaise emphasizes the first and third beats, *forte-piano-mezzo forte*, as if the third beat prepares for the first beat of the next measure. Polonaises also feature a highly recognizable typical rhythmic pattern, characterized by the succession of one eighth-note, two sixteenths, and four

eighth notes at the opening of the dance. This rhythmic pattern can be found in both viola and piano parts of the piece, and it embodies the distinctive features of polonaise.

These three pieces are incredibly concise, yet enchanting, and they are among the works that I have performed the most. They are short and can easily be incorporated into mixed-genre concerts. More importantly, each movement has a distinct character and a strong emotional impact, which easily captivates both the performer and the audience. The first and second movements immerse the listener in beautiful and lyrical music. The Polish dance in the third movement is full of excitement and uplifts the mood of the audience. Despite their brevity, these pieces also showcase the compositional prowess of Luise Adolpha Le Beau, the composer.

Fernande Decruck (French, 1896–1954)
Sonata for Viola and Piano (1943)

Fernande Breilh Decruck was a French composer, pianist, and organist. Born in Gaillac, France, she began her musical studies at a young age, excelling in both piano and composition. In 1918, she enrolled at the Paris Conservatory, where she studied organ, counterpoint, harmony, and piano accompaniment. Her instructors were some of the most renowned musicians of the time, including the highly acclaimed French organist and composer Marcel Dupré.³⁰

In 1924, Fernande Breilh married Maurice Decruck, a musician who played the clarinet, bass, and solo saxophone, and later became a music publisher.³¹ Perhaps inspired by Maurice's saxophone playing, Fernande Decruck composed a significant number of

³⁰ Joren Cain, "Rediscovering Fernande Decruck's Sonate en ut# pour saxophone alto (ou alto) et orchestre: A performance analysis," (D.M.A. diss., University of North Texas, 2010).

³¹ Matthew Welz Aubin, "Biography," *Fernande Decruck's* Personal Website, accessed April 23, 2023, <https://fernandedecruck.com/biography/>.

works for the saxophone throughout her life; during the 1930s alone, Fernande composed at least thirteen pieces for the saxophone. Decruck's mature period of composition began in the 1940s. The works she wrote in this period of her life, including her *Sonata in C#*, received positive critical response. Following a visit to the United States in 1947, she spent her final years revising previous compositions and creating film music. In 1950, Maurice and Fernande Decruck officially ended their marriage, having already lived apart for several years.³² Unfortunately, she passed away in 1954 after experiencing multiple strokes.

Fernande Decruck's composition style evolved considerably over time, from early novelty pieces to highly creative and sophisticated works that demonstrated a mastery of compositional techniques. Her later works also showcased greater mastery in melodic and harmonic development. Her compositions were characterized by the inventive use of nonfunctional harmony and a broadened scope, with her later works being multi-movement pieces that fully explored the possibilities and attributes of the instruments for which she was writing.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1943)

The sonata was composed and dedicated to Marcel Mule, a saxophonist, and professor at the Paris Conservatory. The work's title and dedication suggest that it was intended for the saxophone, however, the existence of a viola version raises questions about its original instrumentation or intended performance. The pitch and range of movements III and IV in the saxophone and viola versions are very similar, indicating

³² Aubin, "Biography."

that they may have been originally written for the saxophone.³³ However, the first two movements have discrepancies between the saxophone and viola parts, with the viola version having a wider range. Some theorize that the viola version may have been the original. There are several inconsistencies in articulation and phrasing between the parts that could suggest that the solo parts were not copied at the same time as the piano version.³⁴

This sonata has four movements. The first is a concise example of a sonata form. Despite its conservative formal construction, the movement incorporates modern melodic and harmonic language using nonfunctional harmony, polytonality, and chromaticism. Unlike the other three movements, it lacks a formal title and begins at a moderate tempo. Nonetheless, analysis of the movement reveals Decruck's adherence to the traditions of the sonata form while adding her own personal touches.³⁵

Decruck's choice of the title *Noël* for the second movement strongly suggests that she is referring to the traditional French carol *Noël Nouvelet*, which dates back to the fifteenth century and means “Christmas Comes Anew” in English.³⁶ Although Decruck made some alterations to the melody such as modifying the mode, the theme of the carol is clearly apparent in the beginning phrases of her sonata.³⁷ This follows a time-honored tradition of composers using pre-existing works as inspiration and integrating them into their own compositions, resulting in original and distinctive pieces while also acknowledging the music that came before them.

³³ Aubin, “Biography.”

³⁴ Aubin, “Biography.”

³⁵ Aubin, “Biography.”

³⁶ Henry Poulaille, *Bible Des Noël's Anciens* (“Club Des Éditeurs, Édition Nouvelle,” c 1958), pp. 61–63.

³⁷ Poulaille, *Bible Des Noël's Anciens*, 61–63.

The third movement is titled *Fileuse* which means "spinner" in English. The name typically refers to a musical composition or movement that depicts the spinning of thread or yarn on a spinning wheel. It is often characterized by a fast, running melody and a steady, rhythmic accompaniment.³⁸ The frequent use of sextuplets in the movement contributes to the movement's overall character and creates a vivid image of the continuous rotation of a spinning wheel.

The final movement is titled *Nocturne et Rondel*, which translates to "Nocturne and Rondo." A nocturne is a reflective character piece that evokes the atmosphere of the night, while a rondo is an ancient form of poetry with a specific rhyme scheme that alternates between the refrain and episodes.³⁹ In music, a rondo is often a popular choice for the final movement of sonatas, concertos, or symphonies; it typically features a joyful character, and this is no exception with its display of passion and energy.⁴⁰ The movement is divided into two parts: the first is the *Nocturne*, which has a reflective and peaceful character, while the second part is the *Rondo*. This rondo structure features a recurring refrain that alternates with episodes in different keys, showcasing Decruck's creative use of tonal shifts.

When I play or rehearse this sonata, I am always struck by the unique elements in each movement. The opening section of the first movement is strikingly mournful, as the melody begins in the lower register of the instrument, immediately capturing my attention. The second movement, with its Christmas carol-like, question-and-answer melody, evokes images of a cold snowy winter night in a forest; the third movement, with

³⁸ Barrie Jones, *The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music* (Milton Park: Routledge, 1999).

³⁹ Jones, *The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music*, 451.

⁴⁰ Jones, *The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music*, 555.

its brisk tempo and swells in the melody gives the impression of someone running through the snow, with moments of calm amidst the fast passages. In the final movement, the ethereal and mystical viola melody played on harmonics at the beginning is truly captivating. These are the moments that I find particularly extraordinary, but overall, this sonata is a riveting and excellent piece of music.

Marcelle Soulage (French, 1894–1970)
Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 (1919)

Marcelle Fanny Henriette Soulage was a remarkable musician, composer, and educator who made notable contributions to the field of music. She was born to French parents in Lima, Peru in 1894 and returned to Paris with her family at a young age, where she spent most of her life. Shortly after returning to Paris, Soulage began learning the piano which she later went on to study, along with composition, with several renowned teachers at the Paris Conservatory including Vincent d'Indy and Nadia Boulanger. After graduating, she became an outstanding music teacher. Between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-one, she taught piano and harmony at the Conservatory of Orleans, France, and later returned to her alma mater at age fifty-five to teach theory, a role she held until the age of seventy-one.

As a composer, Soulage was highly prolific, and her works encompassed various genres: orchestral, chamber music, keyboard, vocal, and choral pieces. Notably, she composed four pieces that prominently feature the viola, including the Suite in C minor for Violin, Viola, and Piano (1918), Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 (1919), Sonata for Viola Solo, Op. 43 (1921), and *Fantaisie hébraïque 'Yis-roël'* for viola and piano. In

1918, Soulage's Suite for Violin, Viola, and Piano was awarded the Prix Lépaule,⁴¹ while her Sonata for Viola and Piano won second place at the Salon des Musiciens Français the following year. Because of the inescapable sexism in the music industry during her lifetime, Soulage used the male pseudonym Marc Sauval to publish some of her orchestral works, including two compositions titled *Valse* and *Minuet*.⁴²

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 (1919)

1919 was a significant year for the viola. Many essential pieces were written that year, such as the viola and piano sonata of Rebecca Clarke, Paul Hindemith's Op. 11, No.4 and No.5, and Ernest Bloch's *Suite for Viola and Piano*. Although it was published in 1921, Soulage's Sonata for Viola and Piano was also written that year. During this period, the status of the viola was rising and both the quantity and quality of compositions for viola were increasing compared to previous eras. This was due in large part to the influence of an increasing number of fine violists, notably the British violists Lionel Tertis and Rebecca Clarke, the Scot William Primrose (both Clarke and Primrose toured extensively in the United States and internationally), and Maurice Vieux in France. Vieux, like Tertis, Clarke, and Primrose, was staunchly committed to the viola's status as a solo instrument, rather than just a supporting position in an ensemble. Aside from being a violist, Vieux was an excellent historian. The prestigious Maurice Vieux International Viola Competition is named after him. His influence inspired many wonderful viola pieces to be composed for him, among which Max Bruch's *Romanze for*

⁴¹ Walter Willson Cobbett, *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Volume 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 437; Marcelle Soulage, *Sonate pour Piano et Alto*. Buffet Crampon, (Paris: 1921).

⁴² Alexah Coon, Grace Tanner, "Pièce pour 2 Harpes à Pédales by Marcelle Soulage: Minerva Teichert Award Winner 2021," *AWE (A Woman's Experience)*: Vol. 8, Article 30.

Viola and Orchestra has become a classic viola piece. Soulage's excellent viola sonata is also dedicated to Vieux.

Soulage's sonata is a four-movement composition, with the first movement being an *Allegro*. This movement is a unique example of the sonata form, as Soulage incorporates modes instead of the traditional major-minor tonality. The movement starts with a beautiful and melodious piano melody, which is repeated by the viola fourteen bars later. The piece is constructed using three-bar motifs, which add to the overall coherence of the movement. The duet between the piano and viola creates a lovely playful melody, with the different timbres of the two instruments adding an extra dimension to the overall character.

The second movement is *Scherzo*, which is a playful and light-hearted piece of music. Its name originated from the Italian word “scherzare” meaning to joke or jest. It follows an A-B-A'-coda form. The first section is fast-paced and dance-like, featuring frequent use of semitones that create an unusual and humorous mood. In contrast, the B section is slower, featuring a folk-like melody in which the viola is muted to create a more melancholic feeling. This section suggests someone who is often lighthearted but has moments of sadness and regret. The movement concludes with a nearly identical return to the first section, followed by the coda.

The third movement is titled *Complainte*, meaning “lament”. It is a slow movement, divided into three parts, with the viola taking the lead in the first part in a low and profound solo. The tempo then increases with an *accelerando*, creating a sense of anxiety and discontent. In the final part, the viola and piano engage in a dialogue, trading

off bar-by-bar with a reiteration of the viola solo from the first section. The movement ends in a gloomy D minor, conveying a sense of melancholy.

The final movement, *Ronde*, is the fastest in the sonata and despite its name, is not in a typical rondo form. The composer uses slightly different principal themes each time, but each transition almost tricks the listener into thinking it is a return to the previous melody. The contrasting themes feature melodies from previous movements, with the same melodic material appearing in the B section and the coda. The composer's use of thematically oriented material in each movement showcases her talents as a composer, with the flexible use of the rondo form adding a unique touch to the piece.

The impressionistic textures in Marcelle Soulage's sonata occasionally remind me of works by French composers such as Gabriel Fauré or Claude Debussy, especially in the first and fourth movements. What I personally find most moving is the pensive hymn-like feeling in the first movement, as well as the feeling of solitude in the third movement. The waltz in the second movement has a distinct dance-like quality with a touch of humor. The final movement is characterized by many question-and-answer phrases, creating tension in the music. I have been asked to perform this movement separately in concerts; performing it alone is effective and highlights the movement's innate charm.

Conclusion

My dissertation performance project has explored the unique and captivating world of solo and sonata compositions for viola by female composers of the late nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The increase in awareness and appreciation for the works of female viola composers has led to a more diverse and inclusive music world, showcasing the remarkable talent, creativity, and ingenuity of female composers, and providing new and exciting opportunities for violists and audiences alike to explore a broader range of repertoire.

Throughout this project, I have presented works from a diverse group of composers from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, ranging from 1881 to 2016. As I studied and performed these works, I discovered deep artistic merits in each composition, as well as the ability of each composition to showcase the viola's attributes as a solo instrument. I hope that my project has brought greater attention to the connection between women composers and the viola, resulting in a rich and inspiring body of work that deserves more recognition.

Overall, this project contributes to the field of classical music by shedding light on the significant contributions of female composers to the viola repertoire, and by bringing these works together in highly varied and effective recital programs. Personally, I will continue to explore the canon of excellent but lesser-known works for the viola, especially those composed by women; I will actively perform these works as a player and assign them to my students as a teacher.

It is my hope that this project inspires more performers and educators to explore the works of female viola composers and to promote greater diversity and inclusivity in the classical music world.

Appendix

Other selected works for viola by composers in this dissertation

Jennifer Higdon:

Viola Concerto (2009)

Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama:

Arthur's Dance for solo viola (2021)

Down for flute, viola and harp

Arizona Duets for violin and viola (2015)

Lillian Fuchs:

Fifteen Characteristic Studies, for viola (1965)

Sixteen Fantasy Etudes, for viola (1959)

Sonata Pastorale, for viola (1956)

Twelve Caprices, for viola (1950)

Margaret Brouwer:

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (2010)

Rhapsodic Sonata for Viola and Piano (2011)

Pamela Harrison :

Lament for viola and piano (1965)

Rebecca Clarke:

Lullaby for viola and piano (1909)

Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune for viola and piano (1913)

Chinese puzzle for viola and piano (1921)

Elizabeth Maconchy:

Five Sketches for Viola

Romanza for viola & Orchestra (1979)

Marcelle Soulage:

Sonata for viola and piano, Op. 25 (1919)

Sonata for viola solo, Op. 43 (1921)

Annotated Bibliography

“Alumni Profiles.” *Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences*. Accessed January 7, 2023. <https://www.xrds.org/alumni-profile?pk=919172>.

This is the official website of Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences, located at <https://www.xrds.org/>. The specific link provided leads to the personal profile page of Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama, who is an alumna of the school.

Arnopoulos McLeod. "Gleick, James Chaos: Making A New Science (Book Review)." 1989.

This is a book review of Gleick, James "Chaos: Making A New Science". It provides an intuitive understanding of the book's content. It explains the basics of chaos theory and provides a few short examples such as the butterfly effect, which help readers to comprehend and appreciate the concepts presented in Gleick's book.

Aubin, Matthew Welz. 2015. "Biography." *Fernande Decruck's Personal Website*. Accessed April 23, 2023. <https://fernandedecruck.com/biography/>.

The biography is organized by the various regions in which the composer Fernande Decruck resided and chronicles the narrative of her life, encompassing details about her family, education, and professional pursuits. It serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to gain insight into the life of Fernande Decruck.

“Bio.” *Thula Music*. Accessed January 6, 2023. <https://thulamusic.com/about/>.

This website offers a comprehensive resource for those seeking to learn about the life and works of Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama. The site provides detailed information on the composer's biography, recordings, upcoming events, compositions, and contact details. As such, it is a valuable tool for anyone looking to gain insight into the composer and her published works.

Bowers, Jane. *Women Making Music*. Edited by Judith Tick. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

This book explores the role of women in music from the medieval period to contemporary times. Olson discusses the challenges women have faced in pursuing music careers and the ways in which women have overcome these challenges. The book provides a comprehensive overview of women's contributions to music history and their ongoing efforts to gain recognition and equality in the music industry. Olson draws on a variety of sources, including interviews with women musicians, to provide a nuanced and insightful analysis of the complex issues surrounding gender and music. Overall, *Women Making*

Music is an important and valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of women in music.

Brouwer, Margaret. *Two Pieces for Viola and Piano*. Brouwer New Music Publishing. 1999.

The Margaret Brouwer Two Pieces for Viola and Piano score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Bynog, David. "The 1919 Berkshire Festival Competition: A Momentous Weekend in the Viola's History." *VIOLINIST.COM*. August 22, 2019. <https://www.violinist.com/blog/dbynog/20198/27888/>.

This article contains some information about the Second Berkshire Festival Competition held in 1919. This article could inspire general readers to appreciate the depth and complexity of classical music, particularly the viola as an instrument. It also highlights the role of competitions and patrons in shaping the careers of musicians and the significance of recognizing and supporting the works of women in music.

Cain, Joren. "REDISCOVERING FERNANDE DECRUCK'S SONATE EN UT# POUR SAXOPHONE." D.M.A. diss., University of North Texas, 2010.

This paper offers an in-depth performance analysis of Fernande Decruck's Sonata in C# for Alto Saxophone (or Viola) and Orchestra. In addition to analyzing the piece itself, the paper also delves into the historical context of the composition and includes discussions on the origins of the saxophone and viola versions, among other topics. As a result, this paper is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to gain a deeper understanding of Decruck's Sonata.

Clarke, Rebecca. *Morpheus for Viola and Piano*. Oxford University Press, Inc. 2002.

The Rebecca Clarke Morpheus for Viola and Piano (1917) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Cobbett, Walter Willson. *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music. Vol.2*. London: Oxford University Press, 1930.

This book offers a rather extensive analysis of chamber music. It provides a detailed analysis of chamber music from the 18th and 19th centuries. The book includes information on the history and development of chamber music, as well as an analysis of specific works and composers. Overall, this book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in chamber music, providing a wealth of information on its history, development, and repertoire.

Coon, Alexah and Tanner, Grace. "Pièce pour 2 Harpes à Pédales by Marcelle Soulage: Minerva Teichert Award Winner 2021," *AWE (A Woman's Experience)*: Vol. 8, Article 30. 2022.

The article focuses on female composers who have been overlooked throughout history, with Marcelle Soulage being one of them. It aims to promote Soulage's music and raise awareness about her among the harp community and beyond. As a result, the article has had some impact on increasing awareness of Marcelle Soulage and promoting her works.

Decruck, Fernande. *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. Lucien de LACOUR. 1943.

The Fernande Decruck Sonata for Viola and Piano (1943) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Foreman, Lewis. "Rebecca Clarke & Pamela Harrison." *Saint Paul Sunday*. 2002.

This article discusses some historical information about two female composers, Rebecca Clarke and Pamela Harrison, both of whom are British composers. Although Rebecca Clarke has more coverage in the article, there is still useful information about Pamela Harrison, making it a good source to learn about both composers.

Forkert, Annika. "Luise Adolpha Le Beau." *MUGi*. April 14, 2010. Accessed April 23, 2023. https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000477 .

This is a comprehensive article about the life and work of Pamela Harrison, an English composer and music educator. The article covers her early life, education, and musical influences, as well as her compositions, which include orchestral works, chamber music, and songs. The article also discusses Harrison's teaching career and her contributions to the development of music education in England. Overall, this is a very useful resource for anyone interested in learning more about Harrison and her music.

Fuchs, Lillian. *15 Characteristic Studies*. Oxford University Press, Inc. 1965.

The Lillian Fuchs 15 Characteristic Studies (1965) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Fuller, Sophie. *The Pandora Guide to Women Composers: Britain and the United States 1629 to the Present*. London: Pandora Press, 1995.

This guide provides a thorough introduction to the history of many female composers in both Britain and the United States, covering a period spanning from the seventeenth century up to the present. The book features biographical information on more than 100 composers, including detailed accounts of their lives and works. It also includes an analysis of the cultural and social factors that

have influenced the role of women in music, and a discussion of the challenges they have faced in pursuing their careers. The book is well-researched and provides a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of classical music and the contributions of women composers.

Harrison, Pamela. *Chamber Works*. With Ground Piano and Robert Plane, clarinet. Recorded April 6, 2002. Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, 2003.

This is a CD featuring the chamber works of Pamela Harrison. The CD's liner notes include a biography of the composer, particularly highlighting her history in chamber music. This is a valuable resource for those looking to study and understand the composer.

Harrison, Pamela. *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. PH Music. 2001.

The Pamela Harrison Sonata for Viola and Piano (1946) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Henry Poulaille, Bible Des Noël's Anciens ("Club Des Éditeurs, Édition Nouvelle," c 1958), pp. 61-63.

A translation of NOEL NOUVELET's lyrics.

Higdon, Jennifer. *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. Philadelphia: Lawdon Press, 1990.

This is a music score, consisting of one book for viola and another for piano. The title page of each book contains basic information about a specific musical composition, including the information about the date of composition, the length of the piece, and details about its premiere performance.

Jones, Barrie. *The Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music*. Routledge, 1999.

This book is a concise dictionary of music, covering a wide range of musical terms and topics. The entries provide definitions and explanations of musical terms, composers, performers, musical instruments, and musical styles, among other topics. The book also includes a chronology of musical events, a list of musical symbols and terms, and a guide to musical notation. Overall, this book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in music, from beginners to professionals.

Le Beau, Luise Adolpha. *Three Pieces for Viola and Piano*. Hildegard Publishing Company. 1997.

The Luise Adolpha Le Beau Three Pieces for Viola and Piano (1881) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Maconchy, Elizabeth. *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. Chester Music Limited. 2015.

The Elizabeth Maconchy Sonata for Viola and Piano (1937) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Margaret Brouwer Bio. *Margaret Brouwer's Personal Website*. Accessed January 21, 2023. <https://www.margaretbrouwer.com/bio>.

The website is an extensive source of information about composer Margaret Brouwer, featuring her biography, works, recordings, performances, reviews, and contact information. It is a valuable resource for those looking for details about Brouwer's life and works, with program notes available for most of her compositions. The website also offers the option to purchase scores and get in touch with Brouwer directly. Overall, this website is a great reference for anyone interested in exploring Margaret Brouwer's contributions to the classical music world.

“Morpheus-The God of Dreams.” *Greek Myths & Greek Mythology*. Accessed February 14, 2023. <https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/morpheus-the-god-of-dreams/>.

The article is about the Greek god Morpheus and his role in shaping dreams and communicating divine messages. It may inspire readers to learn more about Greek mythology and Morpheus' significance in it.

“Music: Miss Rebecca Clark Demonstrates Beauty of the Viola, Instrument Rarely Heard Alone,” *New York Tribune*, February 14, 1918.

The article highlights the remarkable performance of Rebecca Clarke, revealing the beauty of her presentation and her extraordinary abilities.

“New Music.” *Radio Times*. March 9, 1951.

This newspaper article features a recording that includes works by multiple composers and performers, including Pamela Harrison. It also provides historical information on the Harrison viola sonata within this context, as well as brief introductions of each composer and performer. This article serves as historical evidence for gaining insights into the life and work of Pamela Harrison and her Viola Sonata.

Ngwenyama, Endo Nokuthula. *Sonoran Storm for Solo Viola*. 2016.

The Nokuthula Endo Ngwenyama *Sonoran Storm for Solo Viola* (2016) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Rebecca Clarke Frequently Asked Questions. *Rebecca Clarke Society*. Accessed March 22, 2023. <https://rebeccaclarkecomposer.com/frequently-asked-questions/>.

This source offers answers to common questions about Rebecca Clarke's life, music, and legacy. The questions cover a range of topics, including Clarke's early life, musical education, compositions, collaborations, and influences. The answers draw from primary sources such as Clarke's personal letters, interviews, and archival material. The page also includes links to additional resources.

“Review of Non-Orchestral Works.” *Composer USA National Journal*. Accessed January 6, 2023. <http://jenniferhigdon.com/nonorchestralreviews.html>.

This website provides comprehensive information on Jennifer Higdon, including her biography, works, performances, residencies, recordings, reviews, and contact details. The site is a valuable resource for those seeking information about the composer and her published works, with program notes provided for the majority of her compositions. Additionally, the website offers the option to purchase scores and contact the composer directly. This website is an excellent source for those interested in learning more about Jennifer Higdon and her contributions to the world of classical music.

Sills, David. "In Memoriam: Lillian Fuchs - One Great Life." *Journal of the American Viola Society*. (Provo: 1985): 63–68.
<http://www.americanviolasociety.org/PDFs/Journal/JAVS12-01.pdf>.

This is a scholarly journal article published by the American Viola Society. The article serves as a memorial to Lillian Fuchs, a renowned violist and composer. The author, David Sills, provides a brief overview of Fuchs' life and her contributions to the world of music, with a particular emphasis on her role as a composer. The article also highlights Fuchs' most significant compositions, including the Fifteen Characteristic Studies. Overall, this article is a valuable resource for those interested in learning about Fuchs and her contributions to the viola repertoire.

Soulage, Marcelle. *Sonate pour Piano et Alto*. (Paris: 1921).

The Marcelle Soulage Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 (1919) score provides basic information about the sonata and is helpful for understanding its key features.

Uglow, Jennifer. *The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography*. Edited by Maggy Hendry. Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 1999. 347–348.

The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography entry on Elizabeth Maconchy offers a brief yet thorough overview of the life and professional achievements of the British composer. The article covers Maconchy's early musical education, including details of her studies at specific institutions, as well as her personal life. The entry is well-researched and provides a useful introduction to Maconchy's life and work.