

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A COLLABORATIVE PIANIST'S SURVEY
OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY VIRTUOSO
VIOLA AND PIANO DUOS

Yihan Sun, Doctoral of Musical Arts, 2023

Dissertation directed by: Professor Rita Sloan
School of Music

While my colleagues in collaborative piano graduate studies were focusing on learning violin and cello repertoire, I found an affinity for the burnished, dark sound of the viola. I became interested in how the instrument evolved from mainly a background middle voice throughout the eighteenth century, to being worthy of solo star status in the later part of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. In this dissertation, I plan on exploring twentieth-century virtuoso viola and piano literature written between 1907 and 1979. The repertoire includes both sonatas and suites by composers Dmitri Shostakovich, York Bowen, Rebecca Clarke, George Rochberg, Paul Hindemith, and Ernest Bloch. Analyzing how these composers navigate and expand the tonal and coloristic possibilities of the instrument will provide valuable insights for the interpretation of their works. From the collaborative pianist's perspective, I aim to address key issues of balance and color when playing with lower-voice string instruments. Additionally, I will discuss the challenges involved in preparing and performing each individual piece and propose solutions to these challenges.

This DMA collaborative piano performance dissertation project included one lecture recital, two collaborative recitals, and extended program notes. All three recitals were performed in the Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland. All three recitals were performed in 2023: the first on February 11th, with violist William Satterfield, and

the second and third with violist Yu-Hsuan Chen on March 7th and May 11th respectively. The live audio recordings of these three recitals can be found in the Digital Repository of the University of Maryland (DRUM).

A COLLABORATIVE PIANIST'S SURVEY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY
VIRTUOSO VIOLA AND PIANO DUOS

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation to each member of my dissertation committee. I am especially grateful to my teacher Prof. Rita Sloan, for all her encouragement, support, and guidance. I still remember after my audition at the Gildenhorn Recital Hall, where Prof. Sloan welcomed me with warm arms and believed in my potential to study with her at University of Maryland. Prof. Sloan's teaching is deeply inspiring. She is dedicated to helping me grow not only to become a collaborative pianist but to become an artist. I'm grateful to Prof. Katherine Murdock for coaching my dissertation recitals; she helped me better understand how the viola works and how to better support a lower-voice instrument. Thank you to violists William Satterfield and Yu-Hsuan Chen for performing and supporting my dissertation project. Thank you to Professor Jason Max Ferdinand, Prof. Jennifer Cabot, and Prof. Larissa Dedova for their help and support during my time at the University of Maryland. Moreover, I want to thank my former teachers, Dr. Esther Park and Dr. Yi-Yang Chen; they have provided exceptional support and teaching during my studies in the United States. Lastly, I want to thank my husband, William Satterfield, and my parents for their boundless love and support. Regardless of life's challenges, they have always been by my side, engaging in meaningful discussions about my feelings, thoughts, and actions, and providing support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL PROGRAM	1
PROGRAM NOTES	2
SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL PROGRAM	10
PROGRAM NOTES	11
THIRD DISSERTATION LECTURE RECITAL PROGRAM	19
PROGRAM NOTES	20
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL PROGRAM

February 11, 2023. 7:30 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the University of Maryland at
College Park

Yihan Sun, piano

William Satterfield, viola

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Adagio

Sonata for Viola and Piano No. 1, Op. 18 (1907)

York Bowen (1884-1961)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Poco lento e cantabile
- III. *Finale*. Presto

PROGRAM NOTES

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)

Dmitri Shostakovich, the prolific twentieth-century Russian composer, made a lasting impression on the viola and piano repertoire with his sonata. The Viola Sonata Op. 147 is a perfect example of his distinct musical language and deep emotional profundity. This work stands as Shostakovich's final composition, written in the autumn of 1975 for his close friend and accomplished violist, Fyodor Druzhinin, the violist of the Beethoven Quartet.

The Viola Sonata exudes Shostakovich's distinctive style, with characteristic dissonances and chromaticism, intertwined with haunting melodies and introspective elements. This later style is described by Ian Macdonald: "...Shostakovich's late period is to his main sequence as the outer planets are to the sun – cold, remote, obscure, solitary, and relatively simple in constitution."¹ Shostakovich's use of twelve-tone rows later in his career became one of the most prominent elements of his compositional style. This is evident throughout his Viola Sonata, as well as in the stylistic language used in his late string quartets.

Shostakovich uses twelve-tone rows to construct a structural component that inspires the harmonic and melodic development of the Viola Sonata. This technique creates a sense of cohesiveness throughout the piece. The rows are not used precisely as twelve-tone rows, but rather as a source of thematic content. The quartets he composed between the 1960s and early 1970s also showcase this unique compositional feature. As Johnson wrote, "The use of twelve-

¹ MacDonald, Ian. *The New Shostakovich*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990, 235.

tone rows in this later works, which began with the Twelfth Quartet, Op. 133 (1968) is certainly an important element of Shostakovich's late style."²

As we delve into the rich history and stylistic evolution of Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, it becomes evident that the piece does not just demonstrate the composer's late-period inventiveness, but also brings challenges when performed. Just as Shostakovich has pushed the boundaries of composition, so must performers push the boundaries of interpretation, especially when working with a lower-voice string instrument like the viola. The Viola Sonata's intricate interplay between the two instruments, shaped by the composer's distinctive late style, demands careful consideration of balance and color. The control of sound from both instruments requires the highest level of performance skills. It is in this dynamic relationship between instruments where the performers' artistry can truly shine. First, they must navigate the complexities of harmony, thematic material, and texture, ultimately bringing this masterful composition to life on the stage.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

The basic awareness of good ensemble playing with any instrument involves pacing and an understanding of the structure of the piece. Pacing and subdivision determine the energy, flow, punctuation and dynamic of the piece. Understanding of the structure helps hold sections together and identifies where the climax occurs.

Movement I, Measure 114: The opening movement of the Viola Sonata immediately presents a difficulty in maintaining the balance between the piano and viola. At measure 114, the

² Johnson, Leslie Faye. "The Shostakovich Viola Sonata: An Analytical Performer's Guide." (Dissertation, 1992), 7.

piano is introduced with forceful high register chords as well as phrases that are rhythmic and easy to play forcefully, overpowering the viola's more lyrical lines. To address this, both piano and viola should be attentive to their respective dynamics, and make sure that the piano does not overwhelm the viola. The pianist can employ a sensitive touch and pedal control to achieve a strong yet balanced sound. Simultaneously, the violist should focus on projecting their melodic phrases clearly.

Example 1

(m 113-117)

The image shows a musical score for measures 113 to 117. It consists of three staves: a top staff in treble clef, a middle staff in treble clef, and a bottom staff in bass clef. The top staff contains a melodic line with several triplet markings. The middle staff contains a complex melodic line with a large slur and a fermata over the final measure. The bottom staff contains a bass line with chords and single notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Movement II, Measure 50: The second movement presents a different challenge in the section where the piano performs fast staccato notes while the viola maintains a sustained legato melody. This contrast can potentially lead to the piano overshadowing the viola's lyrical lines. To address this, the pianist should focus on switching to a lighter staccato touch and make sure that the staccato notes are articulate but not overly loud. At the same time, the violist can use their bowing technique to maintain a smoother and more connected legato. Awareness and responsiveness between the performers are important, allowing them to adapt their dynamics and articulation to each other's playing.

Example 2

(m 50-55)



In the final movement of the Viola Sonata, Shostakovich uses the theme of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 (the 'Moonlight' Sonata) as the basis for the whole movement. For this movement, the biggest challenge for both players is in finding the right tone color. As Roxburgh wrote, "Shostakovich had the greatest respect for Beethoven, and thus the allusion to his 'Moonlight' Sonata here must be played with not a hint of sarcasm, but a noble tone colour."³ This movement is the longest in length. Players can feel lost in finding an interpretation, and it's

³ Roxburgh, John David. "Approaches to the performance of musical and extra-musical references in Shostakovich's Viola Sonata." (Dissertation, 2013), 38.

essential that this movement does not feel like as if it is dragging, especially towards the end. The music should sound free, and played without any feeling of dissonance, only peace.

York Bowen (1884-1961)

Sonata for Viola and Piano No. 1, Op. 18 (1907)

“English violist Lionel Tertis (1876-1975) was the ‘father of the viola’ and revolutionized viola playing as we know it today.... Tertis’s techniques are evident in the many works he requested from composers in his quest to promote the viola as a solo instrument.”⁴ English composer York Bowen is one of them and he dedicated many works to Tertis including the Sonata No. 1 in C Minor (1905), Sonata No. 2 in F Major (1906), and *Phantasy* for Viola and Piano (1918). Bowen’s two sonatas and *Phantasy* are among the most significant viola and piano works written in the early twentieth century. The sonatas are comparable in length, form, and harmonic language to the two sonatas by Johannes Brahms in the late nineteenth century.

Bowen’s unique musical style comes from the delicate fusion of various influences, traditions, and personal experiences. His music continues in the post-romantic tradition of expanding tonality through chromaticism. Even though many commentators have noted that his harmonic language, melodies, rhythmic vitality, and musical expression are inventive, they all still fall within traditional forms.

With encouragement from Lionel Tertis and years of collaborative friendship, Bowen was inspired by Tertis’s sound and technique to which he responded by writing several passages in the low register of the viola, differentiating the viola’s timbre from the violin and cello. As

⁴ Wilton, Amanda. "York Bowen's Three Viola and Piano Masterworks for Lionel Tertis." (Dissertation, 2014), iv.

Wilton wrote, “Tertis promoted the viola as a new timbral outlet for composers by presenting them with a ‘new’ viola sound which he developed with several new techniques, as well as with the design of a new viola model.”⁵ The warm and beautiful sonority helped the viola stand out from other string instruments, but it could also fall prey to being covered by piano writing which is thick and complex. In this case, it would require more attentiveness from the piano, more left hand, and a rich quality of sound from the viola. That would require the violist to vary the vibrato, bow speed, and pacing in the passages. In the sonata, Bowen also provided a variety of lyrical and rhythmic melodies to help the beauty of the viola’s low register stand out.

Since Bowen was a masterful pianist himself, his writing for the piano is richly textured, virtuosic and demanding. Not only is this rewarding for the pianist, it also presents many choices in terms of voicing, pedaling and balance with the viola. The end result is an emotionally engaging and powerful work.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

This piece is demanding, both technically and emotionally. Awareness and responsiveness between the performers are essential. This piece features a dense texture with flowing emotions and motives. It is easy for the music to become excessively loud, obscuring details and directions. Therefore, both performers need to be responsible for their dynamics and listen to their partner carefully.

⁵ Wilton, 5.

Movement I, Rehearsal F: This part needs to align with the previous tempo. The pianist needs to control the tempo and flow into the fermata.

Example 3

The musical score for Example 3 consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line in treble clef. The bottom two staves are a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'. The piano part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo (*cresc.*) leading to a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The music then transitions to a piano (*p*) dynamic with a 'legg.' (leggiero) marking. The final measure of the piano part features an 'espr.' (espressivo) marking. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the piano part.

Movement I, 8 Measures After Rehearsal K: It is easy for the pianist to overpower the viola line as the piano features forceful chords in a higher register. To address this, the pianist should be aware of the eighth-note rest and make sure to attentively listen to the violist's dynamics in this section and respond with a matching dynamic. The music doesn't have to be loud, but it should align with the violist's energy and momentum.

Example 4

The musical score for Example 4 consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line in treble clef. The bottom two staves are a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'furioso'. The piano part features a dynamic marking of '8' (likely representing fortissimo) and consists of a series of chords. The music is characterized by a strong, driving rhythm.

Movement II, 4 Measures Before Rehearsal F: This section, including the entire rehearsal F section, is also prone to balance issues. The primary concern here is that the pianist might

easily focus on their right hand rather than their left hand. This could lead to significant balance issues with the viola part because the piano part is either in the same register or higher than the viola. The pianist should make sure their attention is on shaping the left hand and playing the right hand very softly.

Example 5

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: piano and viola. The piano part is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) and features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The tempo is marked 'tempo' at the beginning. The viola part is written in a single staff (treble clef) and features a melodic line with some vibrato markings. The tempo is marked 'vibrato molto' at the beginning. The score is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The piano part starts with a dynamic marking of 'p' (piano) and the viola part starts with a dynamic marking of 'f' (forte).

For the last movement, apart from always being careful with the balance, my biggest advice would be not to play it too fast. Due to the urgent nature of the introduction, this piece can start like an uncontrollable rocket. Ensure that both performers start with a reasonable tempo and enjoy.

SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL PROGRAM

March 7, 2023. 5:00 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the University of Maryland at
College Park

Yihan Sun, piano

Yu-Hsuan Chen, viola

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1979)

George Rochberg (1918-2005)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio lamentoso
- III. Fantasia. Epilogue

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 No. 4 (1922)

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

- I. Sehr lebhaft. Markiert und kraftvoll
- II. Sehr langsame Viertel
- III. Finale. Lebhaftes Viertel

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1919)

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

- I. Impetuoso – ma non troppo Allegro
- II. Vivace
- III. Adagio

PROGRAM NOTES

George Rochberg (1918-2005)

George Rochberg was an American composer known for his significant contributions to twentieth-century contemporary classical music. His early compositions were greatly influenced by atonality, serialism, and abstract art. Rochberg's Symphony No. 2 is considered one of the most accomplished serial compositions by an American composer. In 1964, shortly after his teenage son's death, he became less fond of atonal music. He expressed that he could not convey his grief and found atonal music lacking in emotional expressiveness. "...both serialism and aleatoric music lack humanistic energy and perceptible communicative abilities. Their sounds had become quantitative-fetishized-reified because of compositional procedures Rochberg believed objectified and destroyed their human expressivity. Modern music was not aging, he contended; it was 'dead'."⁶ By the 1970s, Rochberg's compositions were much more conventionally oriented.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1979)

Rochberg's Viola Sonata was composed in 1979. This piece has reserved a special place in the viola world of today. Due to Rochberg's atonal background, the sonata is much more inventive in terms of harmony while maintaining tonality. This work carefully explores the technical and expressive capacities of the viola making it a significant work for violists.

⁶ Wlodarski, Amy Lynn. *George Rochberg, American Composer: Personal Trauma and Artistic Creativity*. Eastman Studies in Music. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019, 74.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

In the first movement, starting from measure 26, pay close attention to the dynamic markings. Allow a brief pause between *forte* and *piano*, as this provides the space to hear the *piano* after a sudden *forte*. Additionally, be aware of all the quick character changes, carefully distinguish between lyrical and rhythmic sections, and savor the humorous elements throughout this movement.

Example 6

(m 26-29)

114-40246

In the second movement, embrace the expressive elements and appreciate all the harmonic changes. There are a number of special moments in this movement; make sure to take the time and make it sound full of character.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Paul Hindemith was a German composer and a famous violist. He was a significant figure in twentieth-century music, famous for his chamber music, operas, and orchestral works. Hindemith composed numerous compositions for the viola, including solo pieces and chamber music, as well as concertos. A substantial increase in the sheer numbers of works for viola is due to Hindemith's contributions, which also helped establish the viola as an expressive solo instrument. His compositions advanced the technical instrumental demands of the viola and helped it to be more recognized as a solo instrument in the string family.

Interestingly enough, there was of course no need for the piano to be promoted as a solo instrument by Hindemith: it was an already well-loved and established solo and duo instrument. Additionally, all pianists have a healthy respect for Hindemith's treatment of the piano in his many duo sonatas. The writing is demanding, difficult, brilliant, and virtuosic. Op. 25 No. 4 goes from lyrical to percussive in the piano part, once again creating the need for the pianist to raise their aural awareness.

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 25 No. 4 (1922)

Hindemith's Op. 25 No. 4 is one in a series of compositions of viola sonatas. The others being Op. 11 No. 4, composed in 1919 and the Sonata of 1939. These three works represent an invaluable addition to the string duo repertoire. The Op. 25 No. 4 is a demanding work, both technically and musically. This piece is also known for its polyphonic textures, rich harmonies, and rhythmic vitality.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

In the first movement, it is crucial to play the beginning with a marcato touch and use less pedal; this will give the movement the right character. Make sure to follow the written accents as there is a tendency to accentuate the second note because it is shorter.

Starting from measure 86, the pianist might find this part challenging as it is uncomfortable for the hand. Having a plan regarding fingering is absolutely necessary. Additionally, since this part is a piano solo, make sure not to rush and play it as lyrically as possible.

Example 7

(m 86-88)



The image shows a musical score for three staves, likely piano and violin. The first staff (top) is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. It contains measures 86, 87, and 88. A slur covers the first two notes of measure 86. The second staff (middle) is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. It contains measures 86, 87, and 88. The third staff (bottom) is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. It contains measures 86, 87, and 88. The score includes dynamic markings such as *espr.* and *p*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs.

In this movement, due to the writing, the piano can easily overpower the viola. A lighter touch when the viola comes in and less pedal would be optimal. Keep the momentum but not necessarily by using a louder dynamic.

In the third movement, things can easily sound like a disaster due to the fragmented rhythm and the urgency that arises from the chordal crashes in the piano and viola. It needs a steady inner tempo from both players. Apart from always being careful with the balance, practice each new entrance after a brief pause, for example, measure 26-27 and measure 36. This would help prevent the music from getting faster and helps create breathing room for both players to avoid panic.

Example 8

(m26-27)

(m36)

The image displays two musical excerpts. The first excerpt, labeled '(m26-27)', consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, starting at measure 27, with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *cresc.* instruction. The middle staff is in treble clef, starting at measure 26, with a dynamic marking of *pp* and a *cresc.* instruction. The bottom staff is in bass clef, starting at measure 26, with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second excerpt, labeled '(m36)', consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, starting at measure 36, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The middle staff is in bass clef, starting at measure 36, with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The bottom staff is in bass clef, starting at measure 36, with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

“The viola music of Rebecca Clarke comprises some of the most important literature written for the instrument during the first half of the twentieth century.”⁷ Rebecca Clarke was a British-American composer and violist known for her international performing career as well as her contributions to the viola repertoire.

⁷ Bullard, Julia Katharine. "The Viola and Piano Music of Rebecca Clarke." (Dissertation, 2000), 1.

Despite the gender prejudice faced by women in many fields in the early twentieth century, Rebecca Clarke was somewhat of a renegade and had a brilliant and successful career as both a composer and performer. She attended the Royal College of Music, studying with Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), the leading composition professor in the UK of that time.

Most resources have shown that Rebecca Clarke gained recognition for her compositions. However, Clarke was also an international public figure as a violist and toured extensively from 1910 until 1945. Unfortunately, her compositions did not attract attention until after her death. Her dedication to performing and composing for the viola has since drawn consistent praise and influenced people's perceptions of the viola.

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1919)

The Sonata for Viola and Piano, written in 1919, is one of Clarke's most famous pieces. In this sonata, she often leaned toward using long melodic lines. These melodic themes were constructed from several smaller motives, which she developed and reintroduced across the composition. This sonata can be viewed as a large cyclic structure. In the last movement, there are restatements of thematic materials from the first movement, followed by the development of variations on that material. Even the second movement can be seen as a continuation of the first movement through the use of developing variations. The use of cyclic structure and developing variations reflects the influence of the romantic era, while her harmonic language combines impressionistic features.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

In the first movement, the primary issue is how to align triplets with quadruplets. Starting from rehearsal number 1, the piano maintains a consistent triplet rhythm on the right hand, while the viola plays in quadruplets. I recommend both players think of each measure as one large beat. Instead of counting three beats in a measure, count one big beat. This way, there will always be a clear beat to hear without feeling lost. Also, making sure to align either the second or third beat together is invaluable in terms of ensemble.

Example 9

The second movement is one of the trickiest for balance due to the mute on the viola and the light, quick, athletic passagework. It is important for the violist to listen for balance, and the pianist to use less pedal. Another concern is starting the movement too fast. There are many details written in both the viola and piano parts. If the tempo is too fast, many wonderful and magical moments could go unheard or sound awkward. This requires the pianist to start by articulating every note in the first few measures so that the tempo doesn't begin too fast right from the beginning.

In the last movement, the two main concerns are pacing and tempo. This movement has numerous different sections and sudden tempo changes. The biggest issue would be pacing. If both players do not have a similar feeling of pacing, i.e., having the same the subdivision, the entire movement could easily sound lengthy and disjointed. Understanding the structure and finding successful pacing that both players agree upon would help determine everything else, such as dynamic flow, articulation, punctuation and so on.

THIRD LECTURE RECITAL PROGRAM

May 11, 2023. 5:00 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the University of Maryland at
College Park

Yihan Sun, piano

Yu-Hsuan Chen, viola

Suite, B. 41 (1919)

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

- I. Lento — Meno lento — Animato
- II. Allegro ironico
- III. Lento
- IV. Molto vivo

Suite Hébraïque (1951)

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

- I. Rapsodie
- II. Processional
- III. Affirmation

PROGRAM NOTES

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

Ernest Bloch, a Swiss-American composer, is considered one of the important composers of the twentieth century. His compositions, which include symphonic works, chamber compositions, choral works and solo as well as duos, are characterized by the richness of their harmony, intense spirituality, and stylistic freedom.

Bloch was born in a non-musical family but showed a huge interest from an early age in learning the violin. After he turned nine, he attended the Brussels Royal Conservatory focusing on violin. He later studied composition in Frankfurt and Munich. This exposure to various European musical traditions greatly influenced his compositions.

In 1916, Bloch moved to the United States, where he spent the rest of his life. Bloch's exploration of different musical elements became a central focus of his compositions during this period. The Viola Suite 1919 is one of his most famous compositions. Written as a wonderful representation of Bloch's early exploration of exotic Far Eastern music, he described it as:

My suite does not belong to my so-called "Jewish works"-though, perhaps, in spite of myself, one may perceive in a very few places a certain Jewish inspiration. It is rather a vision of the Far East...that inspired me...Java, Sumatra, Borneo, those wonderful countries I dreamed of so often though I never was fortunate enough to visit them myself in any other way than in my imagination.⁸

⁸ Letter to Hugo Kortschalk, 8 September 1919, quoted in Sills, "Catalogue of the Works of Ernest Bloch," 47.

Suite, B. 41 (1919)

The viola was gaining popularity across the globe around the time Bloch decided to write the Viola Suite 1919, thanks to notable violists like Lionel Tertis, William Primrose and Rebecca Clarke. Bloch won the 1919 Coolidge Competition organized by the Berkshire Chamber Music Festival, while Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata won second prize. In fact, Bloch and Clarke tied for 1st place. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge herself cast the vote in favor of Bloch to break the tie; as she knew Clarke personally, she apparently felt compelled to convince the judges she was not showing favoritism.

The Suite has four movements, each with its own distinct character. Bloch's primary objectives in the first movement was to showcase the suite's immense structural scope and introduce harmonic and melodic themes that reoccur in later movements. The second movement has frequent and sudden mood alterations making it difficult to characterize. It is not clear whether the music in the movement is influenced by Jewish themes or by the more exotic ones from the Far East. The third movement is the most exotic and contains beautiful emotional complexity. Bloch used motives and materials from the first movement. In order to improve on the exotic images found in the last movement, Bloch employed the use of whole-tone octatonic scales, most of which were derived from the first movement. This allowed him to create momentum that propels the movement to its climactic conclusion.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

Bloch had an orchestral vision in mind while composing the piano part for this piece. The range and configuration in the piano part are on a relatively large scale, requiring extremely

Careful listening from both performers. Given the size of this piece, it is advisable to have a clear structure of the composition in mind. There are many passages where the piano's register is higher than the viola's. This, in conjunction with the dynamic markings, can cause potential balance issues. Marking all the sections that might have this issue, recording them, and listening back can be helpful.

Suite Hébraïque (1951)

Another great work of Bloch's is the "Suite Hébraïque " which comes from his Jewish heritage. The Suite was written considerably after the 1919 Viola Suite and presents a detailed study on Jewish themes displaying Bloch's capability of composing personal and powerful culturally affiliated music. The first movement starts with a sad melodious piano theme accompanied by the voice of the viola, painting a moody and meditative atmosphere. The second movement has a vibrant and rhythmic character. It represents a festive and celebratory mood. Bloch blends a dance-like motive with playful themes. This dance emphasizes the joyful nature of the Jewish tradition and is a delightful contrast to the first movement. In the last movement, there is again an introspective mood, though not without a sense of purpose and resolution. The climax comes after a gradual build up and is an affirmation of all the motives and themes that have been explored throughout the suite.

Things to consider when rehearsing:

I would recommend that both performers practice breathing together in this piece, especially the first movement. There are many sections that can easily go awry if both performers are not feeling the same pulse. Regarding balance issues, the pianist should focus

more on their left hand, especially the thumb in the octaves, to effectively voice the lowest notes. Even when the piano part becomes thick, still focus on voicing the pinky fingers in both hands so that the viola line can easily come through.

The Suite for Viola and Piano (1919), as well as the Suite Hébraïque are both remarkable viola compositions, but are different in stylistic and thematic attributes. The Suite 1919 portrays Bloch's earlier, more European-influenced style, while the Suite Hébraïque reflects his advanced exploration of Jewish themes and a blending of cultural influences. The Viola Suite 1919 puts more emphasis on outgoing emotional expressiveness and not any definite Jewish thematic context, while the Suite Hébraïque is fully submerged in Jewish musical heritage. The Suite Hébraïque, in my opinion, feels more introspective and spiritual while the Suite 1919 is a more flamboyant and exotic piece. Both works make great demands on the performers however the Suite 1919 is especially difficult since the piano part is essentially an orchestral reduction over which the viola should soar.

Conclusion

As I made my way through some of the most significant literature for piano and viola, I was amazed by how many fantastic works there are and how powerful the combination of piano and viola can be. Even though the piano has a long history as a virtuoso solo and duo instrument, the viola is a relative newcomer to the solo and duo world. I realized that having performed these giant works of twentieth-century viola and piano works, I have now covered most of the significant repertoire available for this combination of instruments. Since I already had a special affinity for the viola and had already learned a large number of the other works written for this combination, this only increased my interest in continuing to perform collaboratively with

violists. Obviously, the natural path will be to include more string repertoire, enlarging my knowledge and experience with violin and cello as well.

After playing these masterpieces with two amazing violists, I have gained a better understanding of collaboration. I have explored how to rehearse and what to rehearse, as well as how to communicate effectively. This research project has made me a better listener, collaborator, and performer. I plan to apply what I have learned from this research to teaching, future performances, and especially rehearsing. This is a never-ending journey, and I am grateful for choosing this topic –there is enough inspiration and motivation here to last a lifetime.

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