



**The Diablo Regional Arts Association
presents the**

**2002-2003 Season
Program IV**

**Cathy Down, violin
Teresa Ling, violin
Christina King, viola
Madeline Prager, viola
Barbara Andres, cello
Sonia Leong, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
Sunday April 13, 2003 4pm**



This concert is dedicated to the memory of SCS board member
and supporter Charlie Prager

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906 - 1975)

Two Pieces for String Quartet
(1931)

Elegy (from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District Op. 29*)
Polka (from *The Age of Gold Op.22*)

Cathy Down, violin
Christina King, viola

Teresa Ling, violin
Barbara Andres, cello

Rebecca Clarke
(1886 - 1979)

Sonata for Viola and Piano
(1919)

- I Impetuoso
- II Vivace
- III Allegro - agitato

Madeline Prager, viola

Sonia Leong, piano

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 - 1827)

String Quartet No. 16 in F Major,
Op. 135 (1826)

- I Allegretto
- II Vivace
- III Lento assai, cantate e tranquillo
- IV Grave ma non troppo tratto - Allegro

Cathy Down, violin
Christina King, viola

Teresa Ling, violin
Barbara Andres, cello



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)
Two Pieces for String Quartet (1931)

As a program “opener,” a small dose of Shostakovich.

Two Pieces for String Quartet; are actually arrangements for string quartet of pieces from two different stage works. The first piece, entitled *Elegy*, is taken from his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*, Op.29 (revised and renamed *Katerina Izmailova*, Op. 114 more than twenty years later). It was this opera that caused its composer to incur the wrath of the Man of Steel (Stalin) and his murderous regime; a very dangerous position in which to be. Described by Shostakovich biographer Laurel Fay¹ as “the lyrical centerpiece of the opera,” this arrangement for quartet of Katerina’s aria from Act 1, scene 3 was actually made before the opera was ever completed. It is paired with the famous sardonic polka from his ballet *The Age of Gold* (1929-30) or *The Golden Age*, if you prefer, which portrays in music the health and athleticism of the Soviet proletariat contrasted with the “unhealthy eroticism” of (who else) the decadent Western bourgeois culture. (And we’ve only gotten worse, thank goodness)

Shostakovich and family were staying at a hotel in the Black Sea resort of Batumi, where he was working on the orchestration of the opera. These two pieces were “tossed off” on the evening of October 31, 1931. The next morning, the composer presented them to the members of the Vuillaume Quartet, also guests at the hotel.

These arrangements were never given an opus number, nor were they published by the composer. However, the parts turned up in Moscow in the 1980s and have been recorded. It should be noted that these pieces predate his series of string quartets which span the years 1938 to 1974. It is probably not “going out on a limb” to say that the first performance of these pieces was probably given by the Vuillaume Quartet.

¹ Fay, Laurel. *Shostakovich: A Life*. Oxford University Press, Inc. N.Y. 2000

A creative artist works on his next composition because he was not satisfied with his previous one.

Dmitri Shostakovich

NY Times 25 Oct 59



Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)
Sonata for Viola and Piano (1919)

Since its inception, the Sierra Chamber Society has presented works by composers that you might not have been familiar with: Ervin Schulhof, Frank Bridge, Alberto Ginastera, Astor Piazzola, Gian Francesco Malipiero, George Rochberg, Alfred Schnittke (forget Ben Franklin) to mention but a few. It is our intention to continue this practice in this and future seasons. As a part of today's concert we are pleased to perhaps introduce you to the music of Rebecca Clarke, with a performance of her beautiful, and exciting Sonata for Viola and Piano.

Rebecca Clarke was born in England to a Bavarian mother and Bostonian father. She received her music education at the Royal Academy of Music and London's Royal College of Music. Sir Charles Stanford, a highly esteemed composer and teacher at the Royal College, was so impressed with some works of hers, sent to him by her father, that he took her on as his composition student; the first woman to be so honored.

At Stanford's suggestion, she switched from violin to viola, and such was her mastery of the instrument that she became one of the first women to be admitted by Sir Henry Wood to the Queen's Hall Orchestra. In addition, she had a long career as a recitalist, as well as a founding member of a successful all-woman piano quartet. *The English Ensemble*, formed in 1928. During her London years, some of the performances she participated in were broadcast by the BBC. In 1939, she came to the USA to visit her brothers. During this visit, the war broke out in Europe, and she was denied a return visa. Stranded in the USA, she took a job as a nanny in Connecticut. By this time, she was in her mid-fifties, and arthritis made it no longer possible to continue her career as a violist. In 1944 she married the pianist James Friskin then teaching at Juilliard, whom she had known during her student years at the Royal College. She spent the rest of her long life as a resident of New York City.

Her entire output as a composer consists of chamber, vocal, and choral music, the bulk of which was written between 1918 - 38. Her last piece, a song "God Made a Tree" was written in 1954.

The Sonata for Viola is one of Clarke's best known works. It was written at the invitation of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge in 1919 for her annual Chamber Music competition. The works were presented anonymously, and the six judge panel was deadlocked between two pieces. Mrs. Coolidge herself was given the tie-breaking vote. The piece she chose turned out to be the Suite for Viola by Ernest Bloch. The loser in this case, was thought to have been composed by Ravel. The influence of Debussy and his last sonatas, not Ravel, is quite unmistakable in this piece. However, since he had been dead for a year, he was an unlikely choice as the composer. The composer was one Anthony Trent - a pseudonym used by



Rebecca Clarke. In that benighted era, it was difficult for a woman to get music performed or published. Indeed, it would be another year before women were even allowed to vote in the USA, Mrs. Coolidge included.

“You should have seen their faces when they saw it was written by a woman¹,” Mrs. Coolidge confided to Clarke.

Much like Erin Schulhof, the quality of whose music entitles him to be known far beyond being “a composer who died a Nazi concentration camp victim,” so Rebecca Clarke deserves to stand with the best composers of Twentieth Century Art Music, and not just a “woman” composer.

The Viola Sonata received its first public performance in Sept., 1919 at the Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music, with Louis Bailly on viola and Harold Bauer at the piano. It was published in 1921 and dedicated to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Though enthusiastically received and performed for a few years after its premiere, it then disappeared from the repertory, only to be revived and championed by discerning violists in the late 1970s. It has since become a great favorite with devotees of the viola.

Rebecca Clarke’s Piano Trio (which we hope to include in a future season) was runner-up in the Berkshire Festival Competition in 1921. The quality of these works led to Mrs. Coolidge’s commissioning a work from the composer; the *Rhapsody* for cello and piano.

The Viola Sonata is in three movements. From its opening fanfare, it spans a gamut of moods and emotions. As mentioned, it was influenced by the musical language of Debussy, though not without a good measure of English folk-like music as well. But then, Debussy himself was a lover of things English. Round we go. And, in the French “cyclical” style, music from the first movement reappears in the last. Indeed the score of the sonata is prefaced by a quote from Alfred de Musset’s poem *La Nuit de Mai* (May Night)

*Poète, prends ton luth; le vin de la jeunesse
Fermente cette nuit dans les veines de Dieu.²*

Poet play your lute, the wine of youth
ferments tonight in the veins of God

An apt quote for an intoxicating piece of music.

¹ Quote from liner notes written by Michael Ponder in 1995 for the ASV CD DCA932 by the Antillean Quartet and Martin Roscoe of the Piano Trio and Viola Sonata of Rebecca Clarke, along with the Piano Quintet by Amy Beach

²Ibid.



“Beethoven’s last quartets were written by a deaf man and should only be listened to by a deaf man.”

Sir Thomas Beecham¹

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)
String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135 (1826)

Warning:

Those expecting a dreary, serious “head in hands” listening experience, or those intimidated by the prospect of seven movements, thorny fugues, or endless, tedious variation movements will be disappointed by this last quartet of “The Big Deaf One”²

This last quartet of Beethoven is a somewhat uncomfortable finale to the Beethoven hagiography. It does not fit with the Promethean, fist shaking demigod, who expired during a thunderstorm. The composer, in whose hands the string quartet reached its heights of inspiration and depths of feeling. No. We have quite something else here, but something to my mind, which demonstrates that Beethoven was indeed bigger and more complex than the romantic tales spun about this tragic hero. And furthermore, he was a musician who had he lived longer would have composed more quartets, symphonies (he was working on a 10th) perhaps complex, perhaps simple, perhaps serious, perhaps comic. In point of fact, it was not even the last composition for string quartet. He was conned into writing a new finale for his quartet in B flat, Op. 130 by his publisher, who claimed that the original finale, the *Grosse Fuge*, was in demand as a separate work. The truth was that the musicians, audience and publisher did not care for the fugue and felt it marred the quartet, however no one was going to tell that to Ludwig van.

This last quartet was somewhat of an embarrassment to the writers on Beethoven, coming as it does after three huge quartets Op. 130, 131, 132, and the *Grosse Fuge* (Great Fugue) Op. 133. In his classic work *Beethoven’s Quartets*, Joseph de Marliave remarks: “It is not inferior from the point of technique, but its imaginative significance is infinitely less; here can be traced no sequence of psychological meaning, as in the earlier works of Beethoven’s later manner. The first, second and fourth movements are, rather, a fluent play of brilliant but irresponsible wit.”³ Irresponsible wit? And why not.

Why the relative brevity of this work?

Karl Holz, devoted friend, violinist with the Schuppanzigh Quartet, and butt of endless bad jokes and verbal abuse concerning his name Holz, (which means “wood” in German) supplies the following tale. The publisher Moritz Schlesinger bought the as yet uncomposed quartet for “80 gold ducats to be paid immediately.”



Schlesinger sent only 360 florins (I have no idea how many florins to a ducat), which prompted the following anti-Semitic comment from Beethoven; “If the Jew sends circumcised ducats he shall have a circumcised quartet.”

I have no doubt that Beethoven was wont to make such remarks. However it is also possible that he wished to write something more classically proportioned after having expanded the form in the previous three quartets. Another tale has it that since it was dedicated to a cloth merchant, one Johann Wolfmayer rather than a nobleman, it was tailored, so to speak to simpler bourgeois taste. Neither story is convincing.

However, the greatest cause for speculative tales in this quartet is the inscription found on the finale. In the composers own hand is written: *Der Schwer gefasste Entschluss Muss es sein? Es muss sein! Es muss sein!* The difficult resolution. Must it be? It must be! It must be!⁴. Again, there are several tales. One, a little bit of BS supplied by Ludwig van himself to his Paris publisher Schlesinger. He claimed that he had great difficulty completing the work, was in dire need of money, and lacking a copyist had to write all the parts out himself.

Another story is supplied by Beethoven friend and biographer Anton Schindler. “Questions have frequently been addressed to me respecting the motivo of the last movement of the Quartet in F, Op. 135: to which Beethoven affixed as a superscription the words - Der schwer-gefasste Entschluss. Un effort d’inspiration. ‘Muss es sein?’ ‘Es muss sein!’ [The difficult resolution. An effort of inspiration. ‘Must it be?’ ‘It must be!’] Between Beethoven and the people in whose houses he at different times lodged, the most ludicrous scenes arose whenever the period arrived for demanding payment of the rent. The keeper of the house was obliged to go to him, almanack in hand, to prove that the week was expired, and that the money must be paid. Even in his last illness he sang with the most comical seriousness to his landlady the interrogatory motivo of the quartet above mentioned. The woman understood his meaning, and, entering into his jocose humour, she stamped her foot, and emphatically answered, ‘Es muss sein!’”⁵

As you can see, the *motivo* has changed somewhat.

And yet another story. “A certain Ignaz Dembscher, an official in the Austrian War Department wished to have Beethoven’s then new B Flat quartet Op. 130 performed at one of the quartet parties held at his home. But Dembscher had neglected to subscribe for Schuppanzigh’s concert (where the work was premiered) and had said that he would have it played at his house, since it was easy for him to get the manuscripts from Beethoven for that purpose. He applied to Beethoven for the quartet, but the latter refused to let him have it and Holz, as he related to Beethoven, told Dembscher in the presence of other persons that Beethoven would not let him have any more music because he had not attended Schuppanzigh’s concert. Dembscher stammered in confusion and begged Holz to find some means to restore him to Beethoven’s good graces. Holz said that the first step should be to send Schuppanzigh



50 florins, the price of the subscription. Dembscher laughingly asked ‘Must it be?’⁶ When Holz told Beethoven of the incident, he wrote a canon (a vocal round) to the words “*It must be! Yes. It must be! Out, out with the money! It must be!*” This canon provided the theme for the finale of Op. 135. Thayer gives this story more credence than Schindler’s version.

And so, we have a quartet comprising three movements of brilliant but irresponsible wit. In the first movement *Allegretto*, Beethoven keeps many musical motifs aloft like a master juggler. The second movement *Vivace* is a scherzo characterized by quirky syncopations. The very lovely third movement *Lento assai, cantando e tranquillo* is a set of free variations. In a notebook containing sketches for the work, the composer referred to this movement as “*Susser Ruhegesang oder Friedensgesang*” - A Sweet Song of Rest or Song of Peace. The last movement, after a serious sounding opening posing the question “Muss es sein?” is followed with a light-hearted and ebullient answer to the question which contains a tune, sounding for all the world like one of Dvorak’s “American” themes, which you might find yourself humming on your way home.

Whatever its meaning, it is indeed an affirming answer - florins, ducats, or Life.

¹ Jarman, Colin. *The Guinness Book of Poisonous Quotes*. Contemporary Books. Chicago 1993

² Maurice Ravel’s nickname for Ludwig van.

³ De Marliave, Joseph *Beethoven’s Quartets* Dover Publications. N.Y. 1961 (originally published 1925, 1928)

⁴ Boy, do I know the feeling. I ask myself the same question a week or two before each concert, knowing that these program notes are soon due.

⁵ Lebrecht, Norman. *The Book of Musical Anecdotes* Free Press. N.Y. 1985

⁶ Forbes, Elliot ed. *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven* Princeton University Press N.J. 1921, 1970

Program Notes by Joseph Way

The Musicians

Cathy Down, violin, was 5 years of age when she began taking lessons, emulating her mother who was a professional violinist. She attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she received her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, studying with Zaven Melikian. Her desire for travel led her to move to Europe where she played as Second Concertmaster with the Baden-Baden Orchestra in Germany for one year and as Associate Concertmaster of the National Orchestra of Belgium for 3 years. In September 1993 Cathy moved back to the Bay Area and played with the New Century Chamber Orchestra and Sacramento Symphony until joining the San Francisco Symphony as an acting member in 1994. She became a member of that orchestra in September of 2001.



Teresa Ling, violin, is on the faculty at University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music. Previously she was Artistic Director and Artist in Residence at the Garth Newel Music Center in Hot Springs, Virginia. An avid chamber musician, Ms. Ling has been a member of the Garth Newel Piano Quartet, the Mariposa Piano Trio, the Aurelian Trio and the Dakota String Quartet while serving as Concertmaster of the South Dakota Symphony. She has also served on the faculties of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the University of South Dakota, and Augustana, Northwestern and Dordt Colleges. Among her awards and prizes was a Artist Fellowship from the South Dakota Arts Council and she was a prize winner of the Winnifred Small Solo Prize in London. She received a Master's Degree in Violin Performance from the Eastman School of Music and a Bachelor's Degree in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale University. Her teachers have included Paul Kantor, Donald Weilerstein, Carmel Kaine and Mark Volkert.

Christina King, viola, joined the San Francisco Symphony's viola section in the Fall of 1996. She has been a member of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, was principal violist in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, (training orchestra of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and has also played with Lyric Opera of Chicago and various orchestras in Mexico City. She received a Master's in Music from Northwestern University, and an A.B. in English from Barnard College/Columbia University.

Madeline Prager, viola, has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe, where she lived for 25 years. After receiving a BA in Music from UC Berkeley, and a Masters degree in Germany studying with Bruno Giuranna, she performed as principal violist of the Wuerttemberg Chamber Orchestra and the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. Until two years ago she held a Professorship of Viola at the Music Conservatory in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has won several prizes and competitions including a Hertz Memorial Performing Arts Scholarship from UC Berkeley. Ms Prager has attended the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, and appears with the Nova Trio, Philharmonic Trio of Berlin, Villa Musica Ensemble, and the Ulf Hoelscher Ensemble, which recently performed, recorded, and released the world premiere of a newly discovered Octet by Max Bruch on the CPO record label. In addition to playing as much chamber music as possible, Madeline Prager teaches at the Crowden School, in the Berkeley Public schools, at the University of the Pacific, and in her private studio.

Barbara Andres, cello, is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Lynn Harrell and Stephen Geber. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1977. She was cello performance coach for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra for four years and since 1999 has performed the



same role as mentor and coach for young performers at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is active as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the Bay Area, and has appeared as Principal Cellist of the Sierra Chamber Society for the last eleven seasons.

Sierra Chamber Society - 2002-2003 Season

June 8, 2003

Shostakovich - String Quartet No 10

Schulhoff - "Hot" Sonata for Saxophone and Piano

Mendelssohn - String Octet

The Sierra Chamber Society:

Stevan Cavalier, General Director
Greg Mazmanian, Executive Director
Joseph Way, Artistic Director
Richard A. Gylgayton, Program
Editor

Our Mailing Address is:

Sierra Chamber Society
PO Box 4485
Walnut Creek CA 94596
925-932-1731

Web Site

<http://www.fuguemasters.com/scs.html>

Email

The Musicians - players@fuguemasters.com
Stevan Cavalier - steve@fuguemasters.com
Richard A. Gylgayton - richard@fuguemasters.com
Greg Mazmanian - greg@fuguemasters.com
Joseph Way - joe@fuguemasters.com

Music says nothing to the reason. It is a kind
of closely structured nonsense.

Anthony Burgess



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