

Program Notes: Paul Neubauer, *viola*; Michael Brown, *piano*

Notes on the program by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

(Born November 23, 1933, Dębica, Poland)

Cadenza for Solo Viola

Composed: 1984

Other works from this period: *Capriccio* for Solo Tuba (1980); *Agnus Dei* for Mixed Choir (1981; arr. for strings, 1984); Cello *Concerto* no. 2 (1982); Viola *Concerto* (1983); *Per Slava* for Solo Cello (1985–1986)

Approximate duration: 7 minutes

Krzysztof Penderecki (pen-de-RET-skee), the most significant Polish composer of his generation and one of the most inspired and influential musicians to emerge from Eastern Europe after World War II, enrolled at the University of Cracow when he was seventeen with the intention of studying humanities, but a year later he transferred to the Cracow Academy of Music as a composition student. Upon graduating from the academy in 1958, he was appointed to the school's faculty and soon began establishing an international reputation for his compositions. In 1966, he went to Münster for the premiere of his *St. Luke Passion*, and his presence and music made such a strong impression in West Germany that he was asked to join the faculty of the Folkwang Hochschule für Musik in Essen. Penderecki returned to Cracow in 1972 to become Director of the Academy of Music; while guiding the school during the next fifteen years, he also held an extended residency at Yale University. He has also been active as a conductor in Europe and America since 1972. Among Penderecki's many distinctions are the prestigious Grawemeyer Award from the University of Louisville, the Order of the White Eagle (Poland's highest honor), three Grammys, and honorary doctorates from several European and American universities.

Penderecki composed the **Cadenza** for Solo Viola for a private music festival at his country estate in Lustawice, fifty miles east of Cracow, in September 1984. The soloist was Grigori Zhislin, the Russian virtuoso who introduced Penderecki's Violin Concerto no. 1 to his homeland, gave the first European performance of the Viola Concerto (Penderecki convinced him to take up viola to play the piece), and recorded all of his violin and viola works. The Cadenza was composed as a pendant to the brooding 1983 Viola Concerto and takes as its **thematic** kernel a falling, two-note sigh prominent in that work. The piece begins quietly and hesitantly but gradually accumulates a ferocious energy that erupts in a central passage of almost savage virtuosity. Energy spent, the hesitancy returns and as the piece ends the music is released into the enigmatic ether of the instrument's highest register.

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH

(Born September 12/25, 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia; died August 9, 1975, Moscow)

Viola Sonata, op. 147

Composed: 1975

First performance: Detailed in the notes below

Other works from this period: *King Lear*, op. 137 (film score) (1970); *March of the Soviet Militia* for Military Band, op. 139 (1971); Symphony no. 15 in A Major, op. 141 (1971); String Quartet no. 15 in e-flat minor, op. 144 (1974); *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin* for Bass and Piano, op. 146 (1974)

Approximate duration: 32 minutes

On October 29, 1966, in Leningrad, Shostakovich suffered a massive heart attack. He survived, but his health for the remaining nine years of his life was poor, making work and travel difficult for him. More than just a change in his physical well-being was wrought by the illness of 1966, however, because his thoughts and his music thereafter became imbued with a pervasive, solemn tragedy, a residual fatalism that turned him from the overt, public works of his earlier years to the introspective, thoughtful compositions of his last decade. In his purported memoirs, *Testimony*, when the composer discusses the Fourteenth Symphony, a song cycle for soprano, bass, and chamber orchestra from 1969 comprising settings of eleven poems dealing with the subject of death, he was clear and specific concerning his views following his heart attack:

I tried to convince myself that I shouldn't fear death. But how can you not fear death? Death is not considered an appropriate theme for Soviet art, and writing about death is tantamount to wiping your nose on your sleeve in company. But I always thought that I was not alone in my thinking about death and that other people were concerned with it, too, despite the fact that they live in a socialist society in which even tragedies receive the epithet "optimistic." I wrote a number of works reflecting my understanding of the question, and it seems to me they're not particularly optimistic works...I think that working on these compositions had a positive effect, and I fear death less now; or rather, I'm used to the idea of an inevitable end and treat it as such. After all, it's a law of nature and no one has ever eluded it... When you ponder and write about death, you make some gains. First, you have time to think through things that are related to death and you lose the panicky fear. And second, you try to make fewer mistakes.

By the time Shostakovich began the **Sonata** for Viola and Piano in June 1975, his health was failing rapidly. Though his attendance at concerts and plays during the spring was limited by treatments and hospital stays, he did make it to the premiere of his *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin* by bass Yevgeny Nesterenko and pianist Yevgeny Shenderovich at the Moscow Conservatory on May 10th; it was the last time he would appear in public. He stopped in Repino, on the coast north of Leningrad, to visit an extrasensory healer whom he believed had brought him some relief during the winter ("the sorceress," he called her) and then headed for his country dacha at Zhukovka. At the end of June, he phoned Fyodor Druzhinin, violist of the Beethoven Quartet, the ensemble that had premiered all of his quartets from the second onwards, for some technical advice on the Viola Sonata. He told him that the piece would be in three **movements**: "The first is a novella, the second a **scherzo**, and the finale is an **Adagio** in memory of Beethoven." The score was finished on July 5th, just one day before Shostakovich was scheduled for another hospital stay, and immediately sent off for copying. (Shostakovich's motor control was much impaired after his heart attack, and he had enormous difficulty writing legibly during his last years.) Good days alternated with bad for the next month—he corrected the proofs of the Viola Sonata on August 5th—but his heart disease and lung cancer took their inevitable toll, and he died at 6:30 p.m. on August 9th in a Moscow hospital. Druzhinin and pianist Mikhail Muntyan played the new sonata privately at Shostakovich's Moscow home on September 25th, on what would have been the composer's sixty-ninth birthday, and gave the work's formal premiere at the Glinka Hall in Leningrad on October 1st.

*Bolted terms are defined in the glossary, which begins on page 94.

The Viola Sonata, like other late works of Shostakovich's, is lean to the point of asceticism. Its three movements—all of which end with the instruction *morendo* ("dying away")—are, like those of Beethoven's late quartets and sonatas, based on the fluid processes of form rather than on established models. The first movement begins almost inaudibly, with open-interval **pizzicato** notes from the viola across which the piano stretches a slow-moving melody of indeterminate tonality. These ideas are drawn out and joined by others of a more animated nature, allowing the music to rise twice to points of expressive intensity from which it retreats to the brooding quiet of the opening. The second movement is a sardonic scherzo whose march and dance **motives** Shostakovich borrowed from his unfinished opera of 1941, *The Gamblers*, based on a story by Gogol. Allusions to the somber opening movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* (op. 27, no. 2) pervade the finale. The movement, slow throughout, is really a meditation for the viola, with the piano supplying just a sparse, broken-chord accompaniment and long, bell-tone bass notes, both reminiscent of Beethoven's work. The mood is difficult to define: not angry, not optimistic, but certainly not despondent, either—perhaps weary, perhaps resigned, perhaps even consoling (the sonata ends on a major chord). Or, perhaps, in these final notes that he was ever to write, Shostakovich left us the music of the calm acceptance of life's last, inevitable experience. Such things strike us in a very deep and personal place, a place beyond the reach of mere words but which may, sometimes, be touched by the precise emotional vectors of music.

ERNEST BLOCH

(Born July 24, 1880, Geneva, Switzerland; died July 15, 1959, Portland, Oregon)

Suite hébraïque for Viola and Piano

Composed: 1951

Published: 1953

Dedication: Covenant Club of Illinois

First performance: Viola and piano version: March 3, 1952, Milton Preves (viola) and Helene Brahm (piano), Covenant Club of Illinois, Chicago; Orchestral version: January 1, 1953, Milton Preves (viola), Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Rafael Kubelík (conductor), Chicago

Other works from this period: *Four Wedding Marches* for Solo Organ (1950); *Concertino* for Flute, Viola, and Strings (1950); *Concerto Grosso* no. 2 for String Quartet and Strings (1952); String Quartet no. 3 (1952); String Quartet no. 4 (1953)

Approximate duration: 12 minutes

Ernest Bloch was born on July 24, 1880, in Geneva and took his initial music training in that city, later attending courses in Brussels (studying violin with Ysaÿe), Frankfurt, and Munich. He returned to Geneva in 1903 to teach composition and esthetics at the conservatory, gaining a reputation as a conductor of his own works during the following years. In 1917, he moved to New York, where he joined the faculty of the Mannes School of Music. Three years later, he became Director of the Cleveland Institute of Music, a post he held for five years; in 1925, he was appointed Head of the San Francisco Conservatory. Bloch left San Francisco and the United States in 1930 to return to Switzerland, but he was forced from Europe in 1939 by World War II and came back to America, settling in 1941 along the Oregon coast, where he spent the rest of his life. From the time of his return until he died on July 15, 1959, except for a few summers teaching at Berkeley, Bloch devoted himself entirely to composition.

"It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible," wrote Ernest Bloch in 1917, soon after he had finished *Schelomo*, his "Hebraic Rhapsody" for Cello and Orchestra portraying King Solomon. "The

freshness and naïveté of the Patriarchs; the violence that is evident in the prophetic books; the Jew's savage love of justice; the despair of the Preacher in Jerusalem; the sorrow and immensity of the Book of Job; the sensuality of the Song of Songs—all this is in us; all this is in me, and it is the better part of me. It is all this that I endeavor to hear in myself and to transcribe in my music." Bloch found deep creative inspiration in his Judaism throughout his life and composed many works grown from Jewish subjects, thought, and music. His *Suite hébraïque* was written in 1951 in appreciation of a weeklong celebration of his seventieth birthday the previous December in Chicago, sponsored by the city's Covenant Club under the supervision of Sam Laderman (whose nephew, Ezra, was one of America's most distinguished composers and teachers); the work was orchestrated three years later at the insistence of Rafael Kubelík, Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who had conducted two concerts of Bloch's music at the birthday observances. The three movements of the *Suite hébraïque*—*Rapsodie*, *Processional*, and *Affirmation*—are characterized by the exotically altered scales, melancholy lyricism, and pungent **harmonies** that Bloch used to evoke his Jewish heritage.

BENJAMIN DALE

(Born July 17, 1885, London; died July 30, 1943, London)

Romance from *Suite* for Viola and Piano, op. 2

Composed: 1906

Published: 1906

Dedication: Lionel Tertis

Other works from this period: Detailed in the notes below

Approximate duration: 10 minutes

Benjamin Dale, born in London in 1885, showed musical promise early and entered the Royal Academy of Music at age fifteen to study composition with the German-trained Englishman Frederick Corder. Dale found his teacher's late **Romantic** idiom congenial, and he espoused it in the Piano Sonata (1902–1905), *Concertstück* for Organ and Orchestra (1904), and *Suite* for Viola and Piano (1906) that earned him a number of composition prizes and brought him his earliest acclaim; he was appointed to the RAM faculty in 1909. Dale was in Germany in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I, and he was interned as an enemy alien with more than five thousand British and other foreigners at a hastily constructed prisoner-of-war camp at the Ruhleben racecourse outside Berlin, where he organized, conducted, and composed music for camp entertainment, lectured, and contributed articles to the compound's magazine. After the war, he traveled in Australia and New Zealand as an examiner for the Associated Board, the London-based organization that distributes educational materials and tests musical proficiency in the British Commonwealth. He resumed his teaching duties at the RAM after returning to England in 1920 and composed a number of chamber and choral works before being appointed Warden of the school in 1936. Except for the orchestral **tone poem** *The Flowing Tide*, Dale largely devoted himself thereafter to his administrative duties until his death, in London in 1943.

Dale's 1906 *Suite* for Viola and Piano found its first advocate in Lionel Tertis (1876–1975), the foremost violist of his generation and a faculty colleague at the RAM. "The art of playing the viola," Tertis once said, "lies in the touch of a dove and the strength of an elephant," qualities he found in the Romance from Dale's *Suite* for Viola and Piano. This spacious movement comprises several large formal paragraphs: a dramatic accompanied soliloquy for viola, a dulcet **episode** of long melodic arches, a gently wistful dance that becomes more impassioned and rhapsodic, and the returns of the soliloquy and the dulcet episode.

MANA-ZUCCA

(Born December 25, 1885, New York City; died March 8, 1981, Miami, Florida)

Hakinoh (Lament), op. 186

Composed: 1956

Published: 1956

Approximate duration: 4 minutes

The remarkable Mana-Zucca, born in New York City in 1885, was a child prodigy of piano and composition who began rigorous lessons with the eminent Warsaw-born pianist and pedagogue Alexander Lambert at age seven and theory and composition study with Herman Spielter soon thereafter. Her career as a prodigy flourished—she made her debut in Beethoven's Concerto no. 1 with the New York Symphony Orchestra when she was eight—and Lambert suggested she adopt a stage name more fitting than the Gizella Zuccamanof (Americanized to Zuckermann when the family was processed through Ellis Island) bestowed on her at birth by her Polish-émigré parents. She had settled on "Mana-Zucca," an anagram of her family name, by the time she headed for Europe in 1907, where she studied with Busoni, performed widely as both a pianist and singer (she made her London operetta debut in Lehár's *Der Graf von Luxemburg* in 1919), submitted lively descriptions to American journals of the musical personalities she met, and gained enough celebrity that her picture appeared in advertisements for soap, cigarettes, and chocolate. Mana-Zucca also composed steadily during those years, both concert works and songs, and she returned to New York in 1919 to premiere her own Piano Concerto. Two years later she married the prosperous financier Irwin M. Cassel, who was to not only provide lyrics for many of the songs she continued to write throughout her long life but also promise her they would spend seven months of each year in New York City and the remaining five months in Florida. By 1926, they had settled permanently in Miami, where Mana-Zucca became the city's grande dame of music, teaching, writing more than a thousand compositions (including opera, orchestral works, ballet, chamber music, piano pieces, and songs—her best-known, *I Love Life* [1923], was a recital staple of such celebrated artists as John Charles Thomas and Lawrence Tibbett), entertaining prominent visiting musicians, and holding musicales in her elegant home. She died in Miami in 1981, at age ninety-six; her archives were bequeathed to Florida International University.

Hakinoh (Lament), published in 1956, recalls Mana-Zucca's Jewish patrimony.

GEORGES BOULANGER

(Born April 18, 1893, Tulcea, Romania; died June 3, 1958, Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Salon Pieces for Viola and Piano

Composed: *Afrika*: 1937; *Avant de mourir*: 1939; *American Vision*: 1938

Approximate duration: 9 minutes

Georges Boulanger (no relation to the famed pedagogue, Nadia—his grandfather changed the ancestral family name of Pantazi to the more fashionable French pseudonym during Napoleon's day) was born in 1893 in Tulcea, Romania, a border town with Russia not far from the Black Sea. He was brought into the family music trade by his father, who taught him violin with such corporal rigor that Georges once ended up in the hospital for three days. Such strict discipline apparently paid off, because Boulanger was admitted to the Bucharest Conservatory at age twelve and three years later so impressed the visiting Leopold Auer, the dedicatee of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto and his generation's most venerated teacher of the instrument (Heif-

etz, Zimbalist, and Elman were among his students), that he taught the teenager for free. In 1910, Auer arranged a job for Boulanger playing at the elegant Café Chantant in St. Petersburg, where he became one of the city's favorite instrumentalists; Rasputin was among his admirers. Boulanger was reduced to playing on the streets after the 1917 Revolution, and eventually he drifted back to Romania before settling in Berlin in 1922. He found work at the Hotel Förster, frequented by many of the same now-exiled Russians he had entertained in St. Petersburg, and started composing short pieces in popular styles and appearing on German radio. He formed an orchestra of strings and piano, began recording, and even appeared as a Gypsy fiddler in films, and by the early 1930s he had regained the success of his years in St. Petersburg. He remained in Germany throughout World War II, playing for troops, radio broadcasts, and Nazi officers, and he shifted his repertory only slightly when first the Russians and then the Americans took over Berlin. By 1948, however, his sympathies during the war had been called into question, and he moved to Brazil. He was successful in clubs and broadcasts for several years, but his health and his hearing failed in later years, and he died in Buenos Aires in 1958.

Georges Boulanger's many salon pieces imbue the popular styles of the 1920s and 1930s with a distinctively Eastern European accent. *American Vision* (1938) is a lighthearted Gypsy trope on ragtime, and *Afrika* (1937) riffs on the blues. *Avant de mourir* (1939) is a sentimental ballad that became Boulanger's greatest hit when the British songwriter Jimmy Kennedy fitted it with the English lyric, "My prayer is to linger with you."