Rebecca Clarke's Shorter Pieces for Viola and Piano

Carl Rahkonen, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/carl-rahkonen/4/
Rebecca Clarke’s
Shorter Viola Pieces

Carl Rahkonen and Edwin Fry
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Ninth Festival of Women Composers
March 19, 2010
Rebecca Clarke

- British or American?
- German or French?
- Or all of the above?
- b. 1886 Harrow England  d. 1979 New York
- German form, French impressionism, British modal tonality and folksong
- A very cosmopolitan composer
Shorter Viola Pieces

• Lullaby (1909)
• Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune (1913)
• Morpheus (1917-18)
• [Viola Sonata (1919)]
• Chinese Puzzle (1921, arr. for viola 1925)
• Passacaglia on an Old English Tune (1940-41)
• I’ll Bid My Heart be Still (1944)
Lullaby series

• Lullaby (1909) vla/p.
• Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune (1913) vla/p.
• Lullaby and Grotesque (1916) vla(vln)/vc
• Lullaby (1918) vln/p.
• Morpheus (1917-18) vla/p.
Lullaby (1909)

- Key: A minor
- Theme 1 (ascending) presented twice in two octaves
- Theme 2 (eighth note triplets)
- Poly metric. 4/4 2/4 3/4
- Piano sextuplets against viola duples and triplets.
- Use of a blue note mm. 38-39 Not jazz, Like a folk lament.
- Beginnings of impressionism?
Lullaby (1913)

• “An Arrangement of an Ancient Irish Tune”
• Not an “arrangement,” but an *original composition* based on a traditional tune
• from Charles Stanford’s *The Complete Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music* (c1905)
• # 1007 “A Lullaby … from Miss Ross”
Lullaby (1913):
On an Ancient Irish Tune

- Key: Db major (5 flats)
- In spite of key, it lies well on the viola
- Theme presented 3 times, in 3 different octaves
- Has a quazi-cadenza; viola goes up to a high Eb
- In 6/8, two sets of three, but also three sets of two
- Piano acc. in stretto and chromatic harmony to the viola part
Aeolian Hall
34 West 43rd Street

Wednesday Afternoon at 3.00

Feb. 13

RECITAL

MAY MUKLE
VIOLONCELLIST

REBECCA CLARKE
VIOLA PLAYER

Assisted by

Katherine Ruth Heyman, Pianist

PROGRAMME

Sonata in G for Pianoforte and Violoncello
Adagio
Allegro, ma non tanto
Andante
Allegro moderato

Viola and Pianoforte
a. Sarabande
b. Morpheus
c. Allegro appassionato

First performance

Hubert Parry
Anthony Trent
Frank Bridge

Viola and Violoncello
a. Lullaby (Ms.)
b. Grotesque

Rebecca Clarke

Violoncello and Pianoforte
a. Allemande (Ms.)
b. Chant Elegique
c. Chinese Folk Tune

First performance

Lully
Florent Schmitt
Eugène Goossens

Trio for Pianoforte, Viola and Violoncello, Op. 114

First performance

Brahms

STEINWAY PIANO USED

Reserved Seats $1.50. $1.00. 75c., 50c.,
Boxes (seating 6) $12.00

On sale at the Box Office. Mail orders will be received and tickets sent on receipt of check or money order.
Checks payable to Haensel & Jones, Aeolian Hall, New York

Direction of HAESEL & JONES, Aeolian Hall, New York
Morpheus (1917-18)

- Key: Bb [minor] (5 flats) theme pres. 4 times
- Exposition (Bb)
- Calme - impressionistic; not melody & acc.; motifs, no themes; rhythmically complex; dreamlike; ethereal
- Development (F, G, A, Bb)
- Recap (Bb) acc. black key glissandos
- Viola cadenza based on whole tone scales
- Piano recap. of “calme” with viola harmonics
- Coda “senza mesura ma in tempo”
Some Rebecca Clarke Masterpieces

• *Viola sonata* (1919)
  – Tied for first prize in the Coolidge Competition

• *Piano Trio* (1921)
  – Won second prize in the Coolidge Competition

• *Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale* (1941) (duo for clarinet and viola)

• …several other string chamber works…
Chinese Puzzle

• For violin (1921), viola (1925, pub. 2002)
• Key: C major
• Pentatonic Theme, acc. 4\(^{th}\)s, 5\(^{th}\)s, and 8va.
• Viola and piano parts written in canon
• Viola *pizzacato*, like Chinese *pipa*
• *Vib.* and *gliss.* some notes
Passacaglia
On an Old English Tune

• Composed 1940-41 in New York
• Theme: Hymn #153 in the *English Hymnal* a Veni Creator attributed to Thomas Tallis
• Not a traditional passacaglia, but a set of variations on the theme, in three octaves
• Key: C minor (great for viola chords) also Dorian and Phrygian modes
• Dedicated to “B.B.”
I’ll Bid My Heart be Still

- Composed 1944 (her last instrumental piece)
- For her husband James Friskin (married 1944)
- Original piece on an “Old Scottish Border Melody”
- Key: A [minor] (Dorian and Phrygian modes)
- Centered around A, modulates to D, then A
- Interplay between viola and piano
- Extremely beautiful!