

Gabriel Fauré and His Circle of Influence

April 18 through May 17, 2021

Cynthia Baehr-Williams, Concert Director and Violin
Chad Kaltinger, Viola ♦ Kristen Garbeff, Cello ♦ Kumi Uyeda, Piano
Kallan Nishimoto, Recording Engineer

PROGRAM

<i>Nocturne</i>	Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)
<i>Lullaby and Grotesque for Viola and Cello</i>	Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979)
<i>Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano</i> Allegretto ben moderato	César Franck (1822–1890)
<i>Suite Hébraïque for Viola and Piano</i> Rhapsodie - Andante Moderato	Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)
<i>Three Pieces for Cello and Piano</i> Modéré Sans vitesse et à l'aise Vite e nerveusement rythmé	Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979)

INTERMISSION

<i>Piano Quartet No.1 Op. 15 in C minor</i> Allegro molto moderato Scherzo: Allegro vivo Adagio Allegro molto	Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)
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🏹 Notes About the Program 🏹

Nocturne

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

French composer Lili Boulanger was born into a family of musicians. Her mother was a singer, her father an instructor of composition at the Paris Conservatory, and her older sister was the famous composer and pedagogue, Nadia Boulanger. At the age of two, Lili was discovered to have perfect pitch by composer and friend of the family, Gabriel Fauré. Before the age of five, Lili was accompanying Nadia to her classes at the Paris Conservatory, shortly thereafter sitting in on music theory classes and studying organ. She also sang and played piano, violin, cello, and harp.

Lili was sick for most of her life and although her illness gave her trouble in everyday life, it also allowed her to pursue a career. It was decided early on that the younger Boulanger could not marry and would need to be under the care of her family. This gave her the freedom to take up composition more seriously and she spent many hours training, writing, and practicing.

In 1911, at age eighteen, Lili wrote the *Nocturne* in just two days while taking a break from studying for the prestigious Prix de Rome. In the following year, she would become the first woman composer to win the prize for her cantata *Faust et Helene*. Originally composed for flute, the *Nocturne* was eventually rewritten for violin. The piece was one of Boulanger's more popular works and played at various memorial services after her death in 1918.

Lullaby and Grotesque for Viola and Cello

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979)

Rebecca Clarke was born in Harrow, Middlesex, of a German mother and an American father. She started playing the violin at the age of eight and her musical study was encouraged, although in her memoir Clarke describes her childhood as late-Victorian marked by her father's cruelty. In 1903 at the age of 17 she entered the Royal Academy of Music but left in 1905 when her harmony teacher proposed marriage. Her father immediately sent some of the songs she had recently composed to Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. She was accepted as Stanford's first female pupil and it was he who persuaded her to take up the viola.

Once again, Clarke was unable to complete her studies when this time her father banished her from the family home. To support herself, Clarke embarked on an active performing career as a violist, and in 1912 she became one of the first female musicians in a fully professional (and formerly all male) ensemble, when admitted to the Queen's Hall orchestra. The *Lullaby and Grotesque* is thought to have been composed during that time, in 1916.

Clarke's work as a performer of chamber music prospered and took her on tour to the United States. In 1917 she was visiting friends in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, when she was introduced to the famous patroness Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge who persuaded her to enter the 1919 competition at the Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music. The summit of Clarke's career was reached when her *Viola Sonata*, submitted anonymously, tied for first prize. It was Coolidge herself who exercised the casting vote which put Clarke's *Sonata* in second place, after Ernest Bloch who won the prize.

After touring, Clarke settled in London in 1924 where she performed as a soloist and chamber musician in BBC broadcasts. At this point her performing dominated her career, possibly because of the discouragement she faced as a female composer. With the onset of World War II, Clarke found herself back in the USA where she lived

alternately with her two brothers and their families. During this period she returned to composing. In the early 1940s Clarke became reacquainted with James Friskin, a member of the piano faculty at the Juilliard School, whom she had first known as a student at the RCM. The couple married in 1944.

Much of Rebecca Clarke's music was never published and remains the property of her estate. Her difficulties in publishing her now famous *Piano Trio* may have discouraged her from pursuing publication of later works. Although she has been identified as one of the most important British composers of the interwar years, a complete understanding of her significance will only be reached when more of her music is available for study.

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano: Allegretto ben moderato
César Franck (1822–1890)

Belgian-born César Franck is one of the most influential composers of late-Romantic France. Pushed by his father into a virtuoso career from a very young age, Franck obtained a great reputation from his earliest public concerts in the 1830s. He enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire in 1837 to study piano and counterpoint, winning several prizes in both disciplines.

After a few years of frustrating attempts at establishing a career as a virtuoso, Franck broke his relationship with his authoritarian father to pursue his interest in teaching and composing. In 1871 he joined the Société Nationale de Music, founded by Gabriel Fauré in order to promote new French music. Franck finally gained a respectable place in the Parisian public's opinion by being nominated as Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire in 1872. It was only after he started teaching at the Conservatoire that Franck, now 50 years old, entered a particularly prolific period and composed his most famous works, among them the *Violin Sonata*.

The *Violin Sonata* was written as a wedding present for Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe in September 1886. Ysaÿe decided to include it in his frequent tours around Europe and the US and it was an immediate success, soon becoming not only one of the landmarks of the violin and piano repertoire, but also Franck's most popular work. Originally Franck had conceived the poetic opening movement in a slow tempo. After hearing Ysaÿe perform it he however changed the tempo to Allegretto ben moderato, opening the possibility for different interpretations.

Suite Hébraïque for Viola and Piano: Rhapsodie - Andante Moderato
Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

To celebrate Ernst Bloch's seventieth birthday in 1950, the Chicago Federation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations helped to sponsor a six-day festival of the composer's music. This event featured the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Fine Arts Quartet, and various distinguished soloists. Moved by the performances, Bloch returned home to Oregon and wrote a group of five pieces for viola and piano (which he entitled *Five Jewish Pieces: Rapsodie, Three Processionals and Meditation*) as a token of his appreciation. In 1953, G. Schirmer published three of the pieces as the *Suite Hébraïque*, which includes the Rapsodie performed on this program.

Many years prior to this event, specifically between 1911 and 1916, Bloch had written seven works that are considered to be in his "Jewish Cycle," where Bloch purportedly found his unique voice. He wrote in 1917 that:

It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible... 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.

All in all, about one quarter of Bloch's published works bear Jewish titles, reveal a Jewish ethos on closer examination, or include traditional Jewish musical elements.

The genesis of *Suite Hébraïque* could be traced back to ca. 1918, when Bloch, having recently settled in New York with his family, was making regular visits to the New York Public Library to copy out examples of traditional Jewish music from many parts of the world that were in the twelve-volume *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and he wrote most of them in a manuscript book that bears the name *Chants juifs*. The *Rapsodie* contains two Jewish themes written out by Bloch. The first, in the Jewish *magen avot* mode of G, is stated at the very opening of the work and it is related to the motifs of the *Oren chant* as they appear in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. This theme is heard frequently in the Ashkenazi prayer chant repertoire, as it appears frequently in liturgical music in the Ashkenazi liturgical calendar. The second theme is entitled *Shemot*—as chanted in many Ashkenazi synagogues at the very end of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

Ernest Bloch was born on July 24, 1880, in Geneva, and later attended music courses in Brussels (where he studied violin with Ysaÿe), Frankfurt, and Munich. 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 the U.S., settling in Oregon, where he spent the rest of his life.

Three Pieces for Cello and Piano
Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979)

Juliette Nadia Boulanger was a French composer, conductor, and a renowned teacher. Boulanger entered the Paris Conservatory at age nine where she studied composition with Gabriel Fauré. In 1903, she won the Conservatory's first prize in harmony. The next year, she won first prize in three categories: organ, accompaniment, and composition. Much to the disappointment of Fauré, Boulanger turned her focus to teaching both as a means of supporting her family and because she believed she “wrote useless music.”

As a teacher, Boulanger influenced generations of composers, conductors, and soloists. Some of her most notable students were Aaron Copland, Daniel Barenboim, Elliott Carter, Philip Glass, Darius Milhaud, Astor Piazzolla, and Virgil Thomson. Boulanger had an immense amount of wisdom and knowledge to share. She is quoted as saying, “I can't provide anyone with inventiveness, nor can I take it away; I can simply provide the liberty to read, to listen, to see, to understand.” Copland described her near encyclopedic knowledge of music this way:

Nadia Boulanger knew everything there was to know about music; she knew the oldest and the latest music, pre-Bach and post-Stravinsky. All technical know-how was at her fingertips: harmonic transposition, the figured bass, score reading, organ registration, instrumental techniques, structural analyses, the school fugue and the free fugue, the Greek modes and Gregorian chant.

Three Pieces for Violoncello and Piano was originally composed for organ in 1911 and transcribed by Boulanger for cello and piano three years later. The style is best described as Post-Impressionist and is heavily influenced by the music of Debussy and her mentor, Fauré. The first piece is delicate and mysterious. The second, a peaceful lament. The final piece provides a stark contrast with a frenetic energy that aims to imitate the pace of modern life.

-Kristin Garbeff

Piano Quartet No.1 Op. 15 in C minor
Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

The *Piano Quartet No. 1* was written during Gabriel Fauré’s “early period,” a time when Fauré was struggling to make a living as an organist and piano teacher. On Valentine’s Day in 1880, Gabriel Fauré played the piano for the premier of the *Piano Quartet No. 1*. The quartet was actually composed a few years prior, between 1876 and 1879, during an emotionally charged time. In 1872, he had met and fallen deeply in love with Marianne Viardot, the daughter of the famous contralto and composer Pauline Viardot. Despite Marianne’s shyness, Fauré persisted in his attentions for nearly five years, and in 1877 the couple finally became engaged. It seems, however, that Fauré’s passion was unreciprocated, for Marianne broke off the engagement and confessed that she found her fiancé more intimidating than endearing. To distract Fauré from his distress over the break-up, Camille Saint-Saëns took him to Weimar and introduced him to Franz Liszt, which sparked Fauré’s interest in foreign travel as well as Wagner’s operas, both of which he indulged for the rest of his life. Fauré had no intention of remaining a bachelor, and later agreed to an arranged marriage. A friend found three potential brides, but unable to make up his mind, Fauré finally wrote their names on slips of paper and randomly picked the name of Marie Fremiet, the daughter of a sculptor. They married and had two children.

Saint-Saëns was Fauré’s teacher from Fauré’s young teenage years (piano and composition) and was to become Fauré’s mentor and lifelong friend. It was Saint-Saëns who had introduced Fauré to the fashionable Paris society and enabled Fauré to join the newly formed Société Nationale de Musique Française in 1871 where he became acquainted with many prominent French musicians. It was at a concert of the Société where his *Piano Quartet No. 1* was premiered in 1880. A decade later, it was also through Saint-Saëns that Fauré acquired a position at the Paris Conservatoire. He taught many young composers, including Maurice Ravel, George Enescu, Nadia Boulanger, and Lili Boulanger. Fauré eventually became the Director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1905.

The first movement (*Allegro molto moderato*) of the *Quartet No. 1* is in a fairly conventional sonata form, but even so, one should not expect a powerful, closely argued drama à la Beethoven. Fauré is a lyricist and the melodic evolution is continuous from first to last bar.

The Scherzo (*Allegro vivo*) is a gloriously lighthearted affair. Frequent alternations between 6/8 and 2/4 add a touch of humor. This movement contains muted strings that introduce an element of sobriety in the central trio section, but their efforts are deflated by the piano’s rippling triplets. This movement has been described as “a buzzing of fairy insects on a moonbeam in a Shakespearean glade.”

The Adagio is one of Fauré’s finest slow movements. Here one gains more than a hint of his feelings during the heartbreaking year of 1877. Nevertheless, the emotion is always nobly restrained, with not even the slightest hint of self-indulgence. The solemn opening theme would not be out of place in a liturgical work (parts of the Requiem were also written during 1877), but the conciliatory coda has a quality of intimacy which is appropriate only to chamber music.

The energetic Finale is not the music that concluded this work when it was premiered in 1880. Fauré was dissatisfied with the original Finale, for he rewrote it “from top to toe” in 1883. The original Finale is believed to have been destroyed by Fauré in later years. The new version was premiered in 1884 with Fauré at the piano and the *Quartet No. 1* was published in its present form in 1884. Somewhat reminiscent of a mazurka in its vigor the Finale builds to an exciting climax to conclude one of the most beloved works of the piano quartet repertoire.