



LEADS & BOUNDS



Sheila Browne, viola
Julie Nishimura, piano

Prokofiev | Clearfield | Rochberg



*Sheila would like to thank Lynn University Conservatory,
Tianjin Juilliard School and University of Delaware School
of Music for making this recording possible.*

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1979)

George Rochberg (1918-2005)

- I. Allegro moderato 9:53
- II. Adagio lamentoso 6:26
- III. Fantasia: Epilogue 3:03

Convergence for Viola and Piano (2010) 12:30 Andrea Clearfield (1960-)

Sonata in C major, Op. 119 for Cello and Piano

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Transcribed for Viola by Sheila Browne

- I. Andante grave 13:00
- II. Moderato 5:00
- III. Allegro ma non troppo 8:52

Produced & Recorded by Andreas K. Meyer

Assistant Engineer: Jennifer Nulsen

Recorded in Gore Recital Hall,
University of Delaware
August 2018

Post production at
Swan Studios NYC



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Sheila Browne is an American violist from Philadelphia who also has Irish citizenship. She chose the viola in fourth grade because she liked the name, and subsequently has concertized in major halls on six continents as soloist, chamber artist, and as orchestral principal. Sheila has recorded for the Sony, Nonesuch, Albany, Bridge, MSR and SwanSong labels, and works with living composers, having premiered several concerti written for her. She has performed / recorded chamber music with famed artists Audra MacDonald, Natalie Cole, Carol Wincenc, David Krakauer, Ruth Laredo, Richard Stoltzman, Diaz Trio and American, Attacca, Brentano, Borromeo, Calidore, Cleveland, Guarneri, Miro, Juilliard, Pacifica, Shanghai, Ysaye and Vermeer quartet members.

Sheila was an undergraduate Naumburg scholarship student at Juilliard of famed pedagogue Karen Tuttle, as well as her Teaching Assistant. She earned an Aufbaustudium degree with Kim Kashkashian at MusikHochschule Freiburg, and a Masters degree at Rice University, studying with Karen Ritscher and Paul Katz. She has been in several string quartets, including the Arianna, Pelligrini and Gotham.

Honored to be named the William Primrose Memorial Recitalist of 2016, she has performed / taught in many festivals such as Evian, Tanglewood, Banff, Jeunesses Musicales, Chautauqua, Eastern Music Festival, etc.

A dedicated teacher, she was the inaugural violist for the Tianjin-Juilliard School faculty and TJS Ensemble, giving concerts and masterclasses on four continents in 16 countries. Presently Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at Lynn University Conservatory, she has given guest-artist masterclasses at most major music schools in North America, many in Europe and Asia. She was the first viola professor ever to teach in Iraqi Kurdistan for the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq. She is the Director of the popular annual Karen Tuttle Viola Workshop.

Sheila is a huge art, animal and nature lover, and believes strongly in the power of music to bring people together in peace around the world.

www.violasheilabrowne.com



Pianist Julie Nishimura was the University of Delaware School of Music's Faculty Accompanist from 1988 until her retirement in 2019, having performed over 600 recitals, chamber music concerts and opera performances, and, in addition, teaching the Accompanying Classes. During part of that time, she was also a Staff Collaborative Artist for Philadelphia's Strings International Music Festival, now Philadelphia International Music Festival; for 20 years, San Francisco-based California Summer Music; and a frequent guest artist with the Delaware Chamber Music Festival. Since retirement, she has stayed active as a freelance collaborative artist, enjoying a variety of projects including performances with Berkeley's West Edge Opera, Gold Coast Chamber Players, soprano Elizabeth Joy Kelly's uchoose Opera Project, Ohio's Encore Chamber Music Institute, The Candlelight Series playing Beatles covers, Class Act Big Band, Allegheny Ensemble, and most recently

rebranding herself as "Classical Lites with Jewels," performing in coffee shops and lounges. She can often still be seen jumping in at the last minute for rehearsals and recitals! For over twenty years she has been Artistic Director for Wilmington, Delaware's non-profit, Distant Voices Touring Theatre, which she started with her late husband Danny Peak, performing a theatrical show underscored with piano music about her father's time in the Japanese American Concentration Camps of WWII. Julie has enjoyed recording projects with friends Denise Tryon, horn; Christopher Nichols, clarinet; Sheila Browne, viola; and can be heard on the Bridge, Albany and Navona labels. Currently, she divides her time between the San Francisco Bay Area and the East Coast.

George Rochberg (1918-2005) was a major figure in American classical music during the last half of the twentieth century and was a central leader in the move from the Avant-garde, which dominated the post-World War II years, into postmodern Neo-romanticism. He taught for many years at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and along with George Crumb and Richard Wernick formed a triumvirate that made this school a magnet for some of the most talented composition students of the period.

In his early compositions Rochberg was influenced by most of the major figures of the early Modern Era—including Bartok, Stravinsky, and Berg—and by the early 1960s his style had arrived on a rather intense, expressionistic version of twelve-tone atonality. At this point, possibly as the result of various events in his life, which included the death of his son Paul in 1964 at the age of twenty, Rochberg, in middle age, was led to a reappraisal of the concept of “style” in his music. A transitional period in the late 1960s led to a breakthrough piece, the *Third String Quartet* (1972), a composition that created quite a stir at the time amongst composers and critics. This composition can be described as polystylistic as it is structured in a five-movement arch where the movements are in different styles. For the remainder of his life Rochberg continued to explore and develop the artistic philosophy that a modern

composer should be free to embrace various styles and harmonic languages in order to create expressive works of art.

The *Sonata for Viola and Piano* (1979) was commissioned jointly by the “Friends of William Primrose,” the American Viola Society, and Brigham Young University in honor of Primrose, the prominent Scottish violist, for his seventy-fifth birthday. The sonata was premiered by Joseph dePasquale, at the 1979 International Viola Congress in Provo, Utah as Primrose was too ill to perform the work. This work appeared more than a decade into Rochberg’s move into Neo-romanticism, and, as it stylistically reflects many of the major composers of the early twentieth century, seems a clear example of his new artistic philosophy; however, this composition’s genesis is rather more complicated. Perhaps its evocation of various twentieth-century styles primarily stems instead from the fact that the sonata actually began life as a two-movement composition for violin and piano that was sketched out in 1942. Soon after beginning the work, the composer was drafted into the army and it remained unfinished for over thirty-five years.

Rochberg, in his posthumously-published memoir *Five Lines Four Spaces: The World of My Music* (2009), stated that when he considered resurrecting the material of the earlier composition as the basis for the viola sonata he was concerned “with the viability

of the old ideas and their emotional substance. Would they lend themselves to transference to the darker timbres of the viola?" He became convinced that the earlier music was viable and "[i]t was the dirgelike, sadly singing character of the second-movement music that ultimately decided the issue." Rochberg retained much of the earlier music, observing that "[i]nvariably, a good many changes resulted in reworking the old sketches and proved the rightness of my decision to go ahead." He rewrote "the piano part in order to achieve a true duo sound" but "did virtually nothing to alter the basic design of the 1942 sketch. I touched it here and there to add fluency or strength, but I did nothing to add or take away from either of the essential structures of the original two movements. I wanted to preserve the traditional sonata form of the first and lyric-song form of the second." When he played the two completed movements for this wife, Gene, she immediately reacted, stating that the work felt incomplete. Rochberg agreed, but knew that he didn't want a traditional "fast, concluding movement in order to fulfill a purely perfunctory function After days of fretting and worrying about the problem, I settled on writing an epilogue, one that has the sense of ["]remembrance of things past,["] a musical recollection of major idiomatic elements that were characteristic of the opening Allegro moderato movement. To

accomplish this I knew that I needed to write a fantasia—a free, open, unhampered music flow that went from thought to thought without being bound into a tight formal structure."

Andrea Clearfield (1960-) is a prolific contemporary composer with over 160 compositions to her credit. After studying with composer Margaret Garwood as an undergraduate at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, she returned to Philadelphia, where she was born and grew up, receiving a MM degree in piano from the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts and a DMA in composition from Temple University, where she studied with Maurice Wright. She remained in the Philadelphia area, pursuing a diverse career that, as well as composition, has included founding the highly-acclaimed Salon concert series in 1986, and serving as its host in subsequent years; teaching at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia from 1986-2011; and serving as the keyboardist with the Relache Ensemble for 25 years. Clearfield's compositions span a wide range in terms of genre and ensemble, and throughout her career she has received numerous commissions, grants, and awards and has held a variety of composer-in-residence positions, both nationally and internationally.

Convergence (2008) for viola and piano was written for and commissioned

by the German violist Barbara Westphal, who recorded the work in 2013. Reviews of this recording praised *Convergence*, stating: “This fine piece is tightly argued and well designed to challenge both violist and pianist. The music has many textures, ranging from spiky and rhythmic to lyrical and expressive” (Paul L. Althouse, *The American Record Guide*) and “Clearfield’s *Convergence* balances formal rigor with a more flowing lyricism and stark emotional intensity that feels downright expressionistic.” (David Patrick Steams, *Classical Picks, The Philadelphia Inquirer*).

Convergence—highly chromatic, but with a strong tonal basis—is in one movement with contrasting parts that combine into a naturally flowing form. It begins with a rhapsodic rubato section employing a highly ornamental melodic line, as well as harmonics, in the viola. The music gradually accelerates, continuously gaining energy, leading to a fast, scherzo-like section with fugal elements, but still strongly melodic. After a convincing development of this material the piece returns to a slower tempo, recalling material, such as the harmonics, from the opening. Clearfield’s own program notes state that “The work is built on the intervallic, melodic and harmonic materials heard in the opening two measures. These elements return in variation throughout the work; aggressive, lyrical, energetic and evocative. The viola and piano are equal

partners, engaging in dialogue with these musical materials. Through the process of their dynamic exchange, their expressions transform and converge.”

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) is not generally recognized for his chamber music, having written fewer than ten major pieces during his career, and instead is remembered more for his piano, orchestral, and dramatic compositions; however, found within this small group are some of his finest works.

The *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Op. 119 (1949), a staple of the cello repertoire, was his last chamber work. It was commissioned by the State Committee of Television and Radio Broadcasting of the Soviet Union and was written for the twenty-two-year-old virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich, who premiered the work with Sviatoslav Richter at the piano on March 1st, 1950 in the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.

As did many of his compatriots, Prokofiev left Russia because of the Revolution, but, unlike such fellow composers as Rachmaninoff and Stravinsky who remained in the West for the remainder of their lives, he made the decision to return to the Soviet Union in 1936. In the following years his music seemed to become simpler in texture and more overtly melodic; however, it should be noted that, even if many earlier critics denied his melodic abilities and emphasized the ironic and sarcastic side of his

personality, he had always been an inspired composer of melodies. But, in contrast to the dissonant compositions of the 1920s, such as the *Second* and *Third Symphonies*, many of Prokofiev's Soviet works do seem to be a retrenchment of sorts. Whether this was a result of pressure from the government to write more accessible music, or a natural development in the composer's life, may be impossible to determine. At any rate, the Soviet government did exert great pressure on its composers, pointing out any example of formalism—the Soviet term for anything vaguely modern—in their music. This culminated with the infamous Resolution of February 1948 by the Union of Soviet Composers where Prokofiev along with Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and several other composers were severely castigated for their supposed failure to conform to the expected style of Soviet Realism. Over the next year he composed his final opera, *The Story of a Real Man*, which received a run-through concert performance for a limited audience on December 3rd, 1948 at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad. The work was severely criticized by the officials attending and all plans for later performances were dropped. Other difficulties that he experienced during this period included the separation and divorce from his first wife, Lina—the mother of his two sons—who was arrested in February 1948 and sentenced to the Gulag for twenty years for subversive

activities, almost simultaneously with the Resolution by the Composers Union. As well, Prokofiev's health began to seriously deteriorate, resulting in numerous hospital stays during the last years of his life.

It was in the midst of these circumstances that Prokofiev composed his *Cello Sonata*. It was initially performed before a closed meeting of the Composers Union in order to vet it prior to allowing a public performance. It became the first work by Prokofiev performed publicly after the Composers Union decree and the only composition by the composer to receive a public performance over a two-year period. The sonata was well received by the critics, but, unfortunately, Prokofiev was unable to attend the premiere due to his health.

This three-movement work is highly melodic, at times folk-like, clear in structure, and clean in its almost classical textures. It is generally quite diatonic with, as could be expected, a few of Prokofiev's characteristic chromatic digressions spicing up the harmonic and melodic flow. Its overall warm mood belies the fact that it was composed during a difficult period of great stress in the composer's life.

Arrangement by Sheila Browne, with assistance by Julie Nishimura and Juliana Osinchuk.

— *Program Notes by Thomas L. McKinley*

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