

# **VIOLAPALOOZA!**

**Sunday, September 3, 2023 | 3:00 p.m.**  
**Nelson Music Room, Duke University**

*Jonathan Bagg, Samuel Gold, Scott Rawls, Suzanne Rousso – viola*  
*Annie Jeng, Teddy Robie – piano*  
*Ruth Johnsen – play-along conductor*

**Fantasia for viola quartet, Op. 41, No. 1** **York Bowen**  
(1884-1961)  
*Mr. Bagg, Mr. Rawls, Ms. Rousso, Mr. Gold*

**Sonata for viola and piano** **Rebecca Clarke**  
(1886-1979)  
I. Impetuoso  
II. Vivace  
III. Adagio  
*Mr. Gold, Mr. Robie*

**Sonata, Op. 11, No. 4** **Paul Hindemith**  
(1895-1963)  
I. Fantasie  
II. Thema mit variationen  
III. Finale  
*Mr. Bagg, Mr. Robie*

----intermission ----

**Concerto in G Major, TWV 51:G9** **G.F. Telemann**  
(1681-1767)  
I. Lento  
II. Allegro  
*Viola Tutti*

## Suite for viola and piano, B. 41

**Ernest Bloch**

(1880-1959)

- I. Lento — Meno lento — Animato
- II. Allegro ironico
- III. Lento
- IV. Molto vivo

*Mr. Rawls, Ms. Jeng*



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Jonathan Bagg for assisting with the venue in Durham.

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### ***1919 Viola Celebration with Telemann Concerto Play-Along***

Wed, September 6 at 7:30 pm, Tew Recital Hall, UNCG School of Music

## Artists



**Jonathan Bagg** is Professor of the Practice at Duke University and violist with the Ciompi String Quartet. His career with the Ciompi includes hundreds of concerts across the U.S. and around the world, as well as dozens of recordings. He is a founding Artistic Director of Electric Earth Concerts in New Hampshire, and he directed the Monadnock Music festival from 2007-2011. As an Artistic Director, his programming has included many creative

collaborations with composers, authors, poets, and choreographers resulting in several unique multi-media works.

He has performed at the Portland and Sebago-Long Lake festivals in Maine, Detroit's Great Lakes Festival, the Eastern Music Festival and the Highlands

festival in North Carolina, and the Mohawk Trail and Castle Hill festivals in Massachusetts.

From 2015-2020, Bagg was principal violist and soloist with the CityMusic Cleveland chamber orchestra. As an orchestral player he appeared often with the Boston Symphony, Boston's Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra, the New Haven Symphony, and the New Hampshire Symphony, where he was principal viola.

Bagg's most recent CD on the Albany label, titled "Elation," brings together several works he commissioned, including a sonata and trio by Duke colleague Stephen Jaffe and a trio by Scott Lindroth. His other solo CDs contain music for viola and piano by Robert and Clara Schumann, and by the Viennese composer Robert Fuchs. Contemporary solo works by Robert Ward, Arthur Levering, Malcolm Peyton, and Donald Wheelock are on Bridge, Albany, Centaur and Gasparo Records.

Currently Chair in the Department of Music, Bagg has directed the chamber music program at Duke, and he has served as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Director of Performance.

**Samuel Gold** began studying the viola at the age of four with Sherida Josephson of the Des Moines Symphony. He is a graduate of the New England Conservatory, where he studied primarily with Martha Strongin Katz and Roger Tapping, and the University of Iowa, where he studied with Christine Rutledge and Elizabeth Oakes.



Gold is currently the principal violist with the North Carolina Symphony. He has performed at the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Taos School of Music, and the Montreal International String Quartet Academy.



Violist **Scott Rawls** has appeared as soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Europe. Recent chamber music endeavors include performances with Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Bill Preucil, Kurt Nikkanen, Paul Rosenthal, Jinjoo Cho, Zuill Bailey, and Sergey Antonov. Last season, he was a featured artist at chamber festivals ranging from Sitka Summer Chamber

Music Festival and El Paso Pro Musica to Northwest Bach Festival. His solo and chamber music recordings can be heard on the Centaur, CRI, Nonesuch, Capstone, and Philips labels.

A strong proponent of new music, Rawls has premiered dozens of new works by prominent composers. Most notable, he has toured extensively as a member of Steve Reich and Musicians. As the violist in this ensemble, he performed numerous premieres of Daniel Variations, The Cave and Three Tales by Steve Reich and Beryl Korot, videographer. And under the auspices of presenting organizations such as the Wiener Festwochen, Festival d'Automne a Paris, Holland Festival, Berlin Festival, Spoleto Festival USA and the Lincoln Center Festival, he has performed in major music centers around the world including London, Vienna, Rome, Milan, Tokyo, Prague, Amsterdam, Brussels, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York.

Under the baton of maestro Dmitry Sitkovetsky, he plays principal viola in the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra. And during the summers, Rawls plays principal viola in the festival orchestra at Brevard Music Center where he also coordinates the viola program.

Dr. Rawls currently serves as Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He holds a BM degree from Indiana University and an MM and DMA from State University of New York at Stony Brook. His major mentors include Abraham Skernick, Georges Janzer, John Graham and Julius Levine.

**Suzanne Rousso's** biography can be found on page 2 of the playbill.

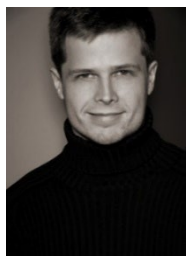


Hailed for her “brilliant pianism” (Gramophone) and “acrobatic” performances (Take Effect), Taiwanese-American pianist **Annie Jeng** has performed widely as a solo and chamber musician at the Brancaloni International Music Festival in Italy, the Gijón International Piano Festival in Spain, the Kennedy Center, New York City, China, and at numerous academic institutions as a guest artist. As an advocate for pushing the boundaries of traditional performances, Annie has performed and curated concerts at breweries, parking deck rooftops, intimate living room settings, and other unconventional spaces, all with the aim of making the arts more accessible and interdisciplinary. Annie has

presented at Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) conferences at collegiate, state, and national levels, The National Conference of Keyboard Pedagogy (NCKP), and College Music Society (CMS) conferences. She is the current President of Greensboro Music Teachers Association (GMTA) and serves on the board for the North Carolina Music Teachers Association (NCMTA). Annie is also the Assistant Director of Piano for the Brancaleoni International Music Festival ([brancaleonifestival.com](http://brancaleonifestival.com)) in Piobbico, Italy.

Annie has commissioned and premiered dozens of new works. She is the pianist of Khemia Ensemble ([khemiaensemble.com](http://khemiaensemble.com)), a contemporary chamber ensemble that is dedicated to promoting contemporary classical music by cultivating inclusive place-making, collaborative mentorships, and authentic storytelling through immersive, multimedia performances. She also released the album “World Map” with Parma Recordings as the former pianist of Four Corner’s Ensemble. Her latest commissioning project, Circles and Lines, consists of new pedagogical works by women composers that introduces contemporary piano techniques to intermediate pianists. As a strong believer in creating a better and more equitable “normal” in the piano community, she also founded A Seat at the Piano (ASAP) in the summer of 2020 ([aseatatthepiano.com](http://aseatatthepiano.com)). ASAP is a 501(c)(3) that is dedicated to the promotion of inclusion in the performance and study of solo piano repertoire.

Annie received her DMA in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Michigan, where she also received her MM. She earned her BM in Piano Performance with a minor in Public Health from New York University. Her primary teachers have included Logan Skelton, José Ramón Mendez, Miyoko Lotto, Anne-Marie McDermott, and Faye Bonner. She is currently Assistant Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



A native of Raleigh, North Carolina, **Teddy Robie** began studying piano and violin at the age of 6. By age 13, he had already made solo appearances with the Winston-Salem and Raleigh Symphonies, garnering praise for precocious readings of Mozart and Tchaikovsky.

Described as “a poet at the piano” (New York Sun) and praised for his “striking pianism” (Cleveland Plain Dealer),

pianist Teddy Robie has performed extensively both as soloist and chamber musician in Canada, Taiwan, Italy, and across the United States.

Robie has performed in many prestigious venues, including the Rising Stars series at Ravinia, the Performances series in San Francisco, the Peggy Rockefeller series in New York, Alice Tully Hall, and at Cleveland's Mixon Hall master's series. He has also appeared live numerous times on WQXR (New York) and WCLV (Cleveland) and has been a frequent guest performer on WFMT (Chicago). Robie has won prizes in numerous competitions, including Juilliard's Gina Bachauer Scholarship competition, the Fischhoff National Chamber Music competition, and the SUNY Stony Brook concerto competition.

An avid chamber musician as well as soloist, Robie has collaborated with many renowned artists, including Roger Tapping, Donald Weilerstein, Catherine Cho, Bonnie Hampton, Joan Kwuon, Joel Smirnoff, Violaine Melancon, and Jean-Michel Fonteneau. Festival appearances include Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival, Taos Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, and Pianofest in the Hamptons, and faculty at the Heifetz Institute and Luzerne Music Center.

Robie's teachers have included Jerome Lowenthal, Robert McDonald, Veda Kaplinsky, Randall Hodgkinson, and John Ruggero. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School and is now a doctoral candidate at SUNY Stony Brook, where he studies with Christina Dahl. Robie recently returned to the Triangle, where he maintains a private teaching studio in Cary and continues to perform.



**Ruth Johnsen**, violinist and conductor, has spent her entire career trying to help people of all ages learn to love playing in orchestras. Just this June she conducted a children's beginning orchestra through an orchestra of professionals at Blue Ridge Suzuki Camp in Virginia, as she does every summer. As a veteran orchestra teacher at Ligon GT Magnet Middle School, in Wake County, the orchestras were chosen to perform at Carnegie Hall six different times over 20 years. This past spring, she was asked to conduct the Junior Eastern Regional All State Orchestra for the 3rd time. She and her husband Brent Wissick shared conducting the Chapel Hill Philharmonia in its early development. She continues to

perform as a baroque and modern violinist in groups such as Mallarme Music and the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra. While teaching and performing at UNC, she was a founding member of Ensemble Courant. She received an Outstanding Educator award from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. She received her Master of Music in Violin Performance at Ithaca College where her chief influence was Maestra Pamela Gerhart and her Bachelor in Violin Performance at Hartt School of Music.

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

One of the most important contributors to the development of chamber music in the USA in the first half of the 20th century was a wealthy socialite and an accomplished amateur pianist – called America's lady bountiful of chamber music – Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. In addition to sponsoring many prizes, grants and commissions, she started the Berkshire Music Festival in Pittsfield, MA, in 1916, and in 1918 started the Berkshire Festival Competition for new chamber music works there. The first year was devoted to new string quartets, but the next year highlighted sonatas or suites for viola and piano. The requirement was that they had to be new and unperformed, to insure anonymity. A total of 72 composers submitted their works and of these, 10 made it to the final rounds. Unfortunately, the list of the 72 submissions to the competition was lost.

The judging panel was made up of six members, and they split evenly about the top two, Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata and Ernest Bloch's Viola Suite. A rehearing of the two changed no minds and the final decision to declare Bloch's Suite the winner, was Mrs. Coolidge's. Both works, however, were performed at the upcoming festival that September.

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### **Fantasia for Viola Quartet, Op. 41, No. 1**

English composer and pianist **York Bowen** came from a family of whiskey distillers. He received his musical education from age 14 at the Royal Academy of Music and spent most of his life as a music educator, teaching piano and composition at the Royal Academy.

Bowen was a prolific composer. Among his works are four piano concertos which he premiered as soloist. Unfortunately, his lush Romantic style did not go over well after WWI, and his music went into neglect, only now being gradually revived. Like Paul Hindemith, he was proficient enough to play most instruments of the symphony orchestra.

Bowen composed *Fantasia* in 1907 for violist Lionel Tertis, to perform with his students. He also wrote for Tertis a viola concerto and two sonatas, which they frequently performed together.

### **Sonata for Viola and Piano**

Born in Harrow, England, **Rebecca Clarke** studied composition and viola at the Royal Academy in London. She embarked on a career as violist in chamber ensembles and as soloist, and in 1912 became one of the first women to be a member of a major symphony orchestra. In 1916 she moved to the USA and settled permanently in New York.

Clarke only composed chamber music, choral pieces and songs, never trying her hand at orchestral writing. Her style is Romantic and post-impressionistic in its harmonic idiom and has a lot of kinship with Ravel.

Clarke started the Sonata in Honolulu and finished in Detroit, entering it in the competition under a pseudonym. Years later she described the reaction when it became known that the Sonata was composed by a woman: "An amusing sidelight, underlining the status of women composers at that time, was that certain reports reached me averring that I had not written my own work, or that I had been helped by other composers, among whom, ironically, Bloch himself was named. I even once received a press clipping stating that Rebecca Clarke was a pseudonym for someone else – other words, that I did not exist. So I take this opportunity to emphasize that I do indeed exist."

Like the impressionists, Clarke was inspired by French poetry. On the opening page of the Sonata, she gives us a cue to her Romantic nature, quoting from a poem, *La Nuit de Mai* (May Night), by Alfred de Musette:

<i>Poète, prends ton luth; le vin de la jeunesse</i>	Poet, take up your lute; the wine of youth
<i>Fermente cette nuit dans les veines de Dieu.</i>	this night is fermenting in the veins of God.

Clarke's Romantic language in the Sonata is strongly influenced by the turn of the 20th century revival of interest in English folk music, especially the efforts of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The first movement opens with a viola passage, leading to an original but folksong like theme. The *Scherzo* second movement is full of humor and scurries around. Its spirit of dance



uses many challenging viola techniques. The finale *Adagio – Allegro* comes back to the English folk music, then returns to the themes from the opening, ending in a flourishing technical display.

### **Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11, No. 4**

One of the most accomplished and prolific composers of the twentieth century, **Paul Hindemith** spent most of his life and energies in music education. He was arguably the finest violist of his generation and was said to have been able to play all the standard instruments of the orchestra with more than adequate skill, writing sonatas for all of them, from the violin and harp to the bassoon and tuba. He was a master craftsman (as he called himself) and composed many works for teaching and for student entertainment. He also wrote several books on harmony and musical training.

In post-World War I Germany, Hindemith became one of the leaders of the musical avant-garde, revolting against German Romanticism, whose art he described as “images of wilted flowers, scented letters and damsels in distress.” He experimented with stretching the limits of tonality but never discarded it completely as did his contemporary, Arnold Schoenberg.

The year 1919 was a pivotal one for Hindemith; He decided to switch from violin to viola as his primary instrument, playing the viola in the Amar string quartet and performing as world-renown soloist. Early in the year he composed the first 2 of his seven viola sonatas – three with piano and four solo. He premiered the Sonata Op. 11/4 in June of that year in Frankfurt.

At the time Hindemith wrote this three-movement Sonata, his musical language has not yet changed significantly, and it is still anchored in the late Romanticism of the turn of the century. But the mastery of his craft is unassailable. Using a few simple themes, most no more than short musical phrases, he modifies and transforms them to express a whole spectrum of emotions and techniques.

The three movements of the Sonata are to be played without a pause. The short first movement, *Fantasia*, opens with a lyrical melody, which is treated seemingly randomly, as if the composer tries out what its possibilities were. The instructions for the second and third movements, both of them theme and variations, is that they are to be played “...tied together, so that the listener...will see the finale as a continuation of the variations”. The theme is “Serene and simple, like a folksong”. The seven variations cover the whole spectrum of emotions, carefully specified in the score, but never veer into extremes of agony or ecstasy.

## **Viola Concerto in G major, TWV 51:G9**

Fame and fortune in a creative artist's lifetime does not necessarily presage the judgment of posterity. Throughout Germany, **Georg Philipp Telemann** basked in the sunshine of success, far eclipsing his contemporary and competitor, Johann Sebastian Bach. But history judged him harshly, relegating most of his massive output – larger than Bach's and Handel's combined – to the archives (he composed about 134 orchestral suites and over 700 cantatas alone!). Only in recent years has a part of his surviving compositions been published.

Telemann's Viola Concerto is one of the first to give this instrument a solo role. It was written sometime between 1712 and 1721 while the composer was music director and church *Kapellmeister* in Frankfurt. It probably was composed for one of the weekly public concerts which he helped to organize.

The Concerto is in the conservative four movement (slow-fast-slow-fast) pattern of the Italian *Sonata da Chiesa*, rather than in the already popular three-movement "modern" style of Vivaldi. Throughout the Concerto, the orchestral accompaniment of the solo episodes is very light, taking care never to drown out the soloist.

## **Suite for Viola and Piano**

Compared to his contemporaries, Schoenberg or Stravinsky, Swiss composer **Ernest Bloch** must be considered conservative. Although he did not shy away from such modern techniques as serialism, the intensity and passion in much of his work harks back to the more traditional era of his youth. He avoided "schools" and was careful to allow his many students to use their own gifts and express themselves in their own personal way.

Bloch studied violin and composition in Switzerland, Belgium (where he studied violin with famed violinist Eugène Ysaÿe), France and Germany then returned to Geneva where he entered the family's clockmaking business as bookkeeper.

Teaching and composing on the side, Bloch tried to establish a conducting career. The opportunity came in 1916, when he became conductor of the Maud Allan dance company for a tour of the United States. When the tour failed and he was stranded, he accepted a position teaching theory and composition at the newly formed David Mannes College of Music in NY.

Bloch composed the Viola suite in early 1919 for the Berkshire competition. He immediately arranged it for viola and orchestra. He said that he was

inspired by a friend's memories of the Far East, the music of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, " those wonderful countries I so often dreamed of, though never was fortunate enough to visit in any other way than through my imagination."

While Bloch claims that the Suite does not belong to his so-called 'Jewish works', inspiration from these works is evident, especially in the first movement. He had difficulties with the *Allegro ironico* second movement, describing it as "a curious mixture of grotesque and fantastic characters, of sardonic and mysterious moods".

Bloch got poetic describing the third movement, *Lento*: "... expresses the mystery of tropical nights. I remembered the wonderful account of a dear friend who lived once in Java ... their arrival at small villages in the darkness ... the distant sounds of curious, soft, wooden instruments with strange rhythms."

It is in the fourth movement, *Molto vivo*, that the sound of the Far East is most evident, especially at the beginning. Bloch considered it the most cheerful thing he ever wrote.

**Program notes by: Joe & Elizabeth Kahn**

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