

Cedille Records
CDR 90000 053

AMERICAN VIOLA WORKS

Cathy Basrak
viola

William Koehler
Robert Koenig
piano

music by
George Rochberg
Frederick Jacobi
Alan Shulman
Quincy Porter
Lowell Liebermann



AMERICAN VIOLA WORKS

GEORGE ROCHBERG: SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO (1979) (20:24)

① I. ALLEGRO MODERATO (10:11) ② II. ADAGIO LAMENTOSO (7:06)

③ III. FANTASIA: EPILOGUE (2:58)

④ FREDERICK JACOBI: FANTASY FOR VIOLA AND PIANO (1941) (9:47)*

⑤ ALAN SHULMAN: THEME AND VARIATIONS (1940) (14:02)**

⑥ QUINCY PORTER: SPEED ETUDE (1948) (2:21)*

LOWELL LIEBERMANN: SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO (1984) (25:23)*

⑦ I. ALLEGRO MODERATO (8:53) ⑧ II. ANDANTE (8:57) ⑨ III. RECITATIVO (7:24)

CATHY BASRAK, VIOLA

WILLIAM KOEHLER ④, ⑦-⑨ & ROBERT KOENIG ①-③, ⑤, ⑥ PIANO

*FIRST RECORDING **FIRST RECORDING OF ORIGINAL VERSION

TT: (72:35)



Cedille Records is a trademark of The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation devoted to promoting the finest musicians and ensembles in the Chicago area. The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation's activities are supported in part by contributions and grants from individuals, foundations, and corporations, including the WPWR-TV Channel 50 Foundation.

PROGRAM NOTES

compiled by Cathy Basrak

George Rochberg (b. 1918) studied composition at the Mannes School of Music and the Curtis Institute. In 1948, he joined the faculty at Curtis, then taught at the University of Pennsylvania, retiring in 1983 as Annenberg Professor of the Humanities Emeritus. His many honors include a 1950 American Academy in Rome Fellowship and a 1952 George Gershwin Memorial Award. Rochberg's *Third String Quartet* (1971) signaled a departure from his earlier serial works, and his subsequent pieces display a highly expressive, romantic character. Brigham Young University and the American Viola Society commissioned Rochberg's *Sonata for Viola and Piano* to celebrate the 75th birthday of William Primrose. Composed in 1979, it was premiered that summer by Joseph de Pasquale and Vladimir Sokoloff. A greatly personal work, Rochberg's *Sonata* is lyrical and muscular, intellectually demanding and spiritually liberating.

Frederick Jacobi was born in 1891 in San Francisco and died in 1952 in New York. A composition pupil of Rubin Goldmark and Ernest Bloch, Jacobi served as an assistant conductor of the Metropolitan Opera and taught composition at Juilliard and harmony at the Master School of United Arts in New York. Jacobi lived with the Pueblo Indians in Arizona and New Mexico in the early 1920's, and some of his early compositions — *String Quartet on Indian Themes* (1924) and *Indian Dances for Orchestra* (1929), for example — are based on American Indian music. Later works, such as *Sabbath Evening Service* (1931), *Three Psalms for Cello and Orchestra* (1933), and the opera *The Prodigal Son* (1944), display a more personal voice. This style, which is more traditionally tonal and echoes melodies from Jacobi's Jewish heritage, synthesizes classical, romantic, and modern influences. The *Fantasy for Viola and Piano* (1941) is a product of this period. Dramatic and challenging, it

explores a wide range of colors and emotions. This is its first recording.

Alan Shulman (b. 1915) studied cello with Felix Salmond and composition with Bernard Wagenaar at Juilliard, and later worked with Emanuel Feuermann and Paul Hindemith. He was an original member of the NBC Symphony, and cellist of the Stuyvesant Quartet. A remarkably versatile musician, Shulman also composed for the Broadway stage and for television in its early days. He composed his *Theme and Variations* in 1940 in a neo-romantic style redolent of his Jewish roots. The piece was premiered by Emanuel Vardi the following year. It quickly became a fixture of the standard viola repertoire, and has been performed (in its original scoring with piano or two later versions with orchestra) by virtually every important violist of the past half-century. Alternating between duple and triple meter, the B minor theme is cast in the harmonic minor mode, conveying a sense of gravity and pathos. A shift to the relative major creates a moment of

fleeting optimism at the theme's halfway point, but the inevitable darkness of B minor quickly returns. The seven variations show influences of Brahms, Vaughan Williams, Debussy, and Bloch. The section marked *finale* includes a Bach-inspired chorale, a manic cadenza, and a deeply moving postlude. This is the first recording of Shulman's original version for viola and piano.

Born in Connecticut, **Quincy Porter** (1897-1966) studied in Paris with Vincent D'Indy (composition) and Lucien Capet (violin). After his return to America, he worked with Ernest Bloch and played viola in the De Ribaupierre String Quartet. He later taught at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Vassar College, and Yale University, and served as Dean of the New England Conservatory. In 1940, Porter helped found the American Music Center in New York (with Aaron Copland, Otto Luening, Howard Hanson, and Marion Bauer). He was awarded the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Medal and was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Porter's compositions are based almost exclusively on classical forms; his style is predominantly tonal, exploiting chromatic harmony and polyphony. He wrote extensively for strings, including ten string quartets. His works for viola include a *Solo Sonata* (1930) and a *Concerto* (1948) dedicated to William Primrose, which may be his finest work. Porter wrote *Speed Etude* in 1948 on a commission by the Juilliard Musical Foundation, and as a virtuosic tour-de-force for Paul Doktor. This is its first recording.

Lowell Liebermann was born in New York City in 1961. His works have been performed by leading musicians throughout the world, including Mstislav Rostropovich, James Galway, James Levine, and Leonard Slatkin. Liebermann's *Sonata for Viola and Piano* dates from 1984. Its vacillating tonality, between G-sharp major and minor, imbues the piece with an inherent half-step conflict. The first movement has an arc structure and employs polymetric devices; for instance,

the opening viola theme is first heard in augmentation, moving half as fast as the piano. Later, in the coda, the viola and piano end up "out of phase" by half a bar until the final chord. The second movement is a *passacaglia* whose variations are derived from a seventeen-note theme first heard in the opening movement. Each of the seventeen variations is transposed to a successive note of the theme itself, making the entire movement a single large variation. The third movement begins with a *recitativo* introduction, leading to the main body of the movement (*Allegro feroce*). Its rondo-like form develops material from previous movements. This is the first recording of Liebermann's *Sonata*.

George Rochberg's *Sonata for Viola & Piano* and Lowell Liebermann's *Sonata for Viola & Piano* are published by Theodore Presser Company.

Frederick Jabobi's *Fantasy for Viola & Piano* is published by Carl Fischer, Inc.

Alan Shulman's *Theme & Variations* is published by the composer.

Quincy Porter's *Speed Etude* is published by Valley Music Press.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



Photo: Antonia Small

One of the leading violinists of her generation, **Cathy Basrak** has appeared as soloist with major orchestras in Europe and North America including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Symphonie Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks. Born in 1977 in Arlington Heights, Illinois, Ms. Basrak began lessons at age three, and later studied at the Curtis Institute with Michael Tree and Joseph dePasquale. She has also worked with Richard Young, Jeffrey Irvine, and Roland and Almita Vamos.

Ms. Basrak holds prizes from many of the world's leading competitions. She won First Prize in the 1995 Irving M. Klein International String Competition — the first violinist ever to do so. Other top honors include the Grand Prize in the 1994 General Motors/Seventeen Magazine National Concerto Competition and the 1996 American String Teacher's Association Competition, First Prize in both the 1995 William Primrose Memorial Competition and 1995 Julius Stulberg Auditions, and Second Prize in the 46th International Music Competition of the ARD in Munich in 1997. An avid chamber musician, Ms. Basrak has performed at the Marlboro, Norfolk, Kammermusikstage Mettlach, and the Banff Chamber Music Festivals. Cathy Basrak was appointed Assistant Principal Violist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Principal Violist of the Boston Pops in 2000.

The viola used by Cathy Basrak for this recording is from the Curtis Institute of Music collection. It is attributed to Gasparo da Salò (1540-1609) and was previously owned by Virginia Majewski and Louis Bailly.



Photo: George Tarbay

A member of the piano faculty at Northern Illinois University since 1985, pianist **William Koehler** has appeared as piano soloist with significant U.S. orchestras, including Houston, Baltimore, and Long Beach. His competition awards include First Prize at the 1984 San Antonio International Keyboard Competition and the 1989 New Orleans International Piano Competition. Mr. Koehler has performed chamber music with the Vermeer, Prague, Pro Arte, and Arianna string quartets and with members of the Chicago Symphony and Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestras. He has collaborated with prominent soloists including bass-baritone William Warfield, violinist William Preucil, and oboist Alex Klein. He has previously recorded with violist Richard Young, lyric baritone Robert Sims, and the chamber ensemble, Midsummer's Music.

Pianist **Robert Koenig** performs regularly in the major musical centers of North and South America, Europe, and Asia. Mr. Koenig has appeared at many festivals, including Aspen, Ravinia, Banff, the Campos do Jordao Festival in Brazil, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Festival d'été du Québec, and the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York. He has collaborated with noted artists including violinists Aaron Rosand, Elmar Oliveira, Sarah Chang, and Pamela Frank. Since 1992, Mr. Koenig has been staff pianist at the Juilliard School, and a visiting artist-in-residence at the Curtis Institute. In May of 2000, Mr. Koenig was appointed Assistant Professor of Piano Chamber Music at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. His recent CD on the Biddulph label, with violinist Elmar Oliveira, features Chausson's Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet.



Photo: Robert Biddlecome

