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ERNEST  
BLOCH

Parry Karp cello  
BBC National  
Orchestra of Wales  
Kenneth Woods conductor

Schelomo (Solomon)  
– Hebraic Rhapsody  
Suite for Viola and Orchestra



# ERNEST BLOCH

## Schelomo (Solomon)

– Hebraic Rhapsody

## Suite for Viola and Orchestra

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### 1 Schelomo (Solomon) – Hebraic Rhapsody

for Violoncello Solo and Full Orchestra (1918) 23.09

### Suite for Viola and Orchestra (1919)

Version for Cello\* by Adolph Baller and Gábor Rejtő

2 I. Lento 15.57

3 II. Allegro ironico 6.08

4 III. Lento 5.45

5 IV. Molto vivo 10.01

Total 1.01.02

\*World Premiere Recording

**Parry Karp** cello

**BBC National**

**Orchestra of Wales**

**Kenneth Woods** conductor

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# ARTIST FOREWORD

I first heard a live performance of *Schelomo* around 1964 when I was about 9 years old. I heard Frank Miller, principal cellist of the Chicago Symphony, perform it with the Chicago Symphony in Champaign Illinois. It was an amazing experience and made me want to play the cello! I was thrilled to perform *Schelomo* with the Chicago Civic Orchestra in Orchestra Hall on my 23rd birthday. At the dress rehearsal I looked up in one of the boxes in Orchestra Hall and there was Frank Miller listening to the rehearsal!

In the ensuing years I have played *Schelomo* many times with orchestra. The most memorable was in Bucharest Romania in 2002. I had been invited to play a concerto with the National Radio Orchestra of Romania, and they asked what I would like to perform with them. I said *Schelomo*. There was a long silence on the phone and then they said it had never been performed with orchestra in Romania. (If I remember correctly, an openly antisemitic presidential candidate had received something like 49% of the vote in the 2000 presidential election there.) I replied that was all the more reason that we should play it there. They said they would look into it and two weeks later they said they had found a French conductor who had conducted it before and they said they would do it if I would bring orchestra parts,

which I did. It was very moving to perform it there in 2002, especially as members of the Jewish community came to the concert and thanked me for performing it. They were thrilled that they finally were able to hear a live performance of the piece. Some of them were of the age where they had survived World War II in Romania.

I studied with cellist Gábor Rejtő, the co-author of the arrangement of the Suite on this recording, in the summers of 1976 and 1977 and heard Rejtő and pianist Adolf Baller play the Bloch Viola Suite in their transcription. They were a magnificent duo and I was completely taken by their playing, the piece, and their transcription. I played the transcription quite a few times with piano through the years. Then in 2008, Ken Woods gave me the amazing chance to perform it with him and the Oregon East Symphony. We both loved the experience, and that is when we started discussing trying to record the piece together.

Bloch's music has been a constant in my musical life. In the 1980s as a member of the Pro Arte Quartet I recorded (for Laurel Records) all 5 of the Bloch String Quartets and the many String Quartet pieces, as well as the two Piano Quintets with pianist Howard Karp. Around 1991 I also recorded a solo Bloch CD for Laurel Records of the three solo cello Suites, the Three pieces from Jewish Life and the Meditation Hebraique with pianist Frances Karp. Bloch's heartfelt emotional writing for string instruments has always engaged me as a musician, and getting to record these two masterpieces with conductor Kenneth Woods and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales is a dream come true.

### **Parry Karp**

# NOTES PROGRAMME

*'For me, the greatest composer of our time is Ernest Bloch.'*

**Pablo Casals**

Although it would become the most celebrated part of his Jewish Cycle, Bloch's masterpiece, ***Schelomo: Rhapsodie Hébraïque for Violoncello and Orchestra***, began as his despairing response to the unfolding tragedy of World War I, which began in 1914. He saw in the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes text which could express his feelings regarding the pain of war.

*"As will be seen, I had no descriptive intentions. I was saturated with the Biblical text and, **above all, with the misery of the world, for which I have always had so much compassion.**"*

*Schelomo* was to be the final work of Bloch's *Jewish Cycle*, and was written from 1915–1916. The premiere took place in Carnegie Hall on 3 May 1917, with cello soloist Hans Kindler and conductor Artur Bodanzky. This concert, given by the Society of the Friends of Music, included other works from Bloch's *Jewish Cycle*, including the premier of Bloch's work the *Israel Symphony*, which Bloch himself conducted. *Three Jewish Tone Poems* was also in the concert, but it had premiered two months earlier in

Boston. His original intention had been that the work be for solo voice and orchestra, setting the following text:

*“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.  
What profit hath man of all his labor  
Wherein he laboreth under the sun?  
One generation passeth away and another generation cometh;  
And the earth abideth forever.  
The sun also ariseth,  
And the sun goeth down,  
And hasteth to his place where he ariseth.  
The wind goeth toward the south,  
And turneth about unto the north;  
It turneth about continually in its circuit.  
And the wind returneth again to its circuits.  
All the rivers run into the sea,  
Yet the sea is not full;  
Unto the place whither the rivers go,  
thither they go again.  
All things toil to weariness:  
Man cannot utter it.  
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,  
Nor the ear filled with hearing.  
That which hath been is that which shall be,  
And that which hath been done is that which shall be done;  
And there is nothing new under the sun.  
(Ecclesiastes 1:2-9)” 9*

At some point, Bloch determined that no mortal singer could adequately embody Solomon. "One may imagine that the voice of the cello is the voice of King Solomon," he wrote, continuing:

"The complex voice of the orchestra is the voice of his age, the world, his experience. There are times when the orchestra seems to reflect his thoughts, just as the cello voices his words. The introduction, which contains the form of several essential motifs, is the plaint, the lamentation . . . a soliloquy. " . . . The mood changes, but the atmosphere of pessimism almost despairs. . . . There are rhythms of languorous dances a symbol of vanity? The rhapsody says, 'I have tasted all of this . . . and this too is vanity.'

Written entirely during the dark years of World War I, *Schelomo* was unique in Bloch's output in its almost

completely despairing view of the human condition.

"Even the darkest of my works end with hope. This work alone concludes in a complete negation, but the subject demands it! The only passage of light falls after the meditation of Solomon. I found the meaning of this fragment 15 years later, when I used it in the Sacred Service. The words are words of hope, of an ancient prayer that one day men will acknowledge their brotherhood and live in harmony and peace."

*'Ernest Bloch has always seemed to me to be one of the Seven Wonders. Like Hercules, a world of ecstasy, of pain rested on his shoulders. He also seemed at one with the great vistas and jagged peaks of the Swiss Alps, against which he loved to photograph himself (he was a superb photographer, one of the first generation of Leica fanatics!), as at Agate Beach, with the pounding Pacific breakers. He was cast by the gods in a superhuman mold — a prophetic scale of size and vision, of strength and vitality which exceeded the common mortals.'*

**Yehudi Menuhin**

The **Suite for Viola and Piano** (as it was originally written) was composed between February and May 1919. It was the first major work Bloch wrote entirely in the United States following his immigration, and subsequently won the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Prize for a new chamber work. In that year Coolidge herself broke a tie for first place (with Rebecca Clarke's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*), awarding the prize to Bloch. Bloch said that "from the beginning, I had the idea of an orchestral version, and took notes to that effect. The first movement was instrumented in June 1919 and the whole score was finished in the autumn." Violist Louis Bailly and pianist Harold Bauer gave the first performance of the piano version, with Bailly also giving the first orchestral performance with Artur Bodanzky and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Bloch's Suite predates the other major 20th Century works for viola and orchestra by Bartók, Walton

and Hindemith, and the importance of Bloch's contribution to the viola literature was immediately apparent, as musicologist Oscar Sonneck declared that "in either version Ernest Bloch has given us the greatest work for viola in musical literature, and what is more important, one of the most significant and powerful works of our time."

The cello version of Bloch's 1919 Suite for Viola and Piano is the work of the pianist and composer Adolph Baller and cellist Gábor Rejtő. Together, the two made the first recording in 1969 on an Orion LP sponsored by the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation. Menuhin said at the time that "It seems appropriate that... [given] the impact which Bloch had on me— should be renewed with the recording that my dear colleagues Adolph Baller and Gabor Rejto are making for Orion" The arrangement was subsequently published in 1972 by G. Schirmer. Since then, the cello version has attracted the attention

of only a handful of cellists, perhaps most notably Raphael Wallfisch, who recorded it with pianist John York. To the best of our knowledge, the first performance of the cello version with orchestra was given by Parry Karp and Kenneth Woods with the Oregon East Symphony on October 4th, 2008. The success of that experiment so encouraged Karp and Woods that it led directly to this recording.

Baller and Rejtő's transcription was made after Bloch's passing, but according to a letter from Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff (the composer's daughter) to Adolph Baller, co-arranger, Bloch was enthusiastic about the idea of a cello version of the Suite:

"It might interest you to know that Alexander Berjansky [sic.], the 'cellist to whom SCHELOMO was dedicated, had proposed to my father this idea, back in 1929... I remember being there

when Berjansky (sic.) with great caution, so as to not shock Father, announced that he had been working on the Viola Suite, then played it to him on the 'cello. Father was tremendously impressed and agreed with Berjansky that this could be quite wonderful. Unfortunately, Berjansky did not go beyond this idea, and did not follow up. Since then I have wondered and wished that this could be done."

Bloch wrote a programme note for the piece which captures the fantastical nature of the score.

"I originally first intended to give more explicit – or picturesque– titles to the four movements... but those titles seemed rather incomplete and unsatisfactory to me. Therefore, I prefer to leave the imagination of the hearer completely unfettered, rather than to tie him up to a definite programme."

The first movement, originally

titled *In the Jungle* "aims to give the impression of a very wild and primitive Nature," according to the composer. "It begins with "a kind of savage cry, like that of a fierce bird of prey", followed immediately by a deep silence, *misterioso*, and the meditation of the viola". The ensuing *Allegro* "brings a motive of joyful and perhaps exotic character" (resembling, perhaps coincidentally, the medieval tune *L'homme armé*). A second melodic idea, described by the composer as "perhaps a little Jewish, in my sense", provides lyric contrast. After an extensive development of his motivic material, Bloch concludes with a brief climax where, "Like a sun rising out of clouds in the mystery of primitive Nature, one of the earlier viola motives arises in a broader shape." Bloch said that the third movement "expresses the mystery of tropical nights," while the finale was "probably the most cheerful thing I ever wrote."

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# PARRY KARP

Cellist Parry Karp is Artist-in-Residence and the Graebner Professor of Chamber Music and Cello, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he is also director of the string chamber music program. He has been cellist of the Pro Arte Quartet for the past 49 years, the longest tenure of any member in the quartet's over 100-year history.

Parry Karp is an active solo artist, performing numerous recitals annually in the United States. Karp has played concerti throughout the United States and gave the first performance in Romania of Ernest Bloch's Schelomo with the National Radio Orchestra in Bucharest in 2002. He is active as a performer of new music and has performed in the premieres of dozens of works, many of which were written for him, including concerti, sonatas and chamber music. As a solo recording artist, he has recorded six CDs. Unearthing and performing unjustly neglected repertoire for cello is his passion. In recent years he has transcribed for cello many masterpieces written for other instruments. This project has included performances of all of the Duo Sonatas of Brahms, all but one of the Duo Sonatas of Beethoven, as well as compositions of Bach, Dvorak, Hindemith, Schumann, Strauss, Stravinsky and Szymanowski.

As cellist of the Pro Arte Quartet, he has performed over 1000 concerts throughout North, Central and South



America, Europe, and Japan. His discography with the group has been extensive (over two dozen recordings) and includes the complete string quartets of Ernest Bloch, Miklos Rosza, and Karol Szymanowski. Many of these recordings received awards from Fanfare and High Fidelity Magazines.

Karp had a visiting professorship at

the University of British Columbia, and has been a visiting fellow at Princeton University. Former students of Karp, including Kenneth Woods, are members of professional string quartets, major orchestras, and teachers in North America. In the spring of 2016, he was named a Fellow of the Wisconsin Academy.

# WOODS KENNETH

Hailed by Gramophone Magazine as “a symphonic conductor of stature”, Kenneth Woods was appointed Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the English Symphony Orchestra in 2013, and has quickly built up an impressive and acclaimed body of work and recordings with them. Woods also serves as Artistic Director of both the Colorado MahlerFest – the only US organisation other than the New York Philharmonic to receive the International Gustav Mahler Society’s Gold Medal – and (since 2017) the founding Artistic Director of The Elgar Festival in Worcester. Woods has conducted the National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia and the English Chamber Orchestra, and has made numerous broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, National Public Radio and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He has appeared on the stages of some of the world’s leading music festivals, such as Aspen, Scotia and Lucerne.

Under Kenneth Woods’ leadership, the English Symphony Orchestra has gained widespread recognition as one of the most innovative and influential orchestras in the UK. The first of Woods’ many acclaimed ESO discs was volume one in the Complete Piano Concertos of Ernst Krenek, selected by The Times as one of their “Best Recordings of 2016.” His



recording of Fraser's Elgar orchestrations for Avie was a Classic FM Disc of the Month. The ESO's Nimbus Alliance recording of Kenneth's orchestration of Brahms' Piano Quartet in A Major was chosen as one of the 10 Best Classical CDs of 2018 by The Arts Desk. In 2016 Woods and the ESO launched their 21st Century Symphony Project, an ambitious multi-year effort to commission, premiere and record nine new symphonies by leading composers,

with the triumphant premiere of Philip Sawyers' Third Symphony at St John's Smith Square. In 2018, the Project continued with the premiere of David Matthews' Ninth Symphony, selected by The Spectator as one of the Top Ten Classical Events of the year, followed in 2019 by Matthew Taylor's Fifth Symphony, hailed by ClassicalSource as "a masterpiece" at its premiere.

**[kennethwoods.net](http://kennethwoods.net)**

# BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

For over 90 years, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW), the only professional symphony orchestra in Wales, has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of the country, occupying a distinctive role as both a broadcast and national orchestra, and serving as an ambassador of Welsh culture, regularly performing music created in Wales and championing Welsh composers and artists.

Part of BBC Cymru Wales and supported by the Arts Council of Wales, BBC NOW performs a busy schedule of live concerts and broadcasts, working with acclaimed conductors and soloists from across the world, including their Principal Conductor, the award-winning Ryan Bancroft.

The orchestra is committed to working in partnership with community groups and charities and takes music out of the concert hall and into settings such as schools and hospitals to enable others to experience and be empowered by music. It undertakes workshops, concerts and side-by-side performances to inspire and encourage the next generation of performers, composers and arts leaders, and welcomes thousands



of young people and community members annually through its outreach and education projects.

BBC NOW performs annually at the BBC Proms and biennially at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, and its concerts can be heard regularly across the BBC: on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru. On screen, music performed by BBC NOW can be heard widely across the BBC and other global

channels, including the soundtrack and theme tune for Doctor Who, Planet Earth III, Prehistoric Planet, The Pact and Children in Need.

Based at BBC Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff Bay, BBC NOW utilises a state-of-the-art recording studio with a camera system for livestreams and TV broadcasts to bring BBC NOW's music to a broader audience across Wales and the world.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/bbcnow](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcnow)**

# PLAYERS

## **Violin 1**

Lesley Hatfield *Leader*  
Nick Whiting  
Martin Gwilym-Jones  
Terry Porteus  
Anna Cleworth  
Žanete Uškāne  
Ruth Heney  
Alejandro Trigo  
Emilie Godden  
Kerry Gordon Smith  
Rebecca Totterdell  
Amy Fletcher

## **Violin 2**

Anna Smith  
Sheila Smith  
Ilze Abola  
Lydia Caines  
Katherine Miller  
Beverley Wescott  
Michael Topping  
Vickie Ringguth  
Joseph Williams  
Roussanka Karatchivieva

## **Violas**

Kate Musker  
Peter Taylor  
Lydia Abell  
Lowri Thomas  
Robert Gibbons  
Catherine Palmer  
Daire Roberts  
Anna Growsn

## **Cellos**

Jessica Burrows  
Jessica Feaver  
Sandy Bartai  
Alistair Howes  
Rachel Ford  
Katy Cox

## **Basses**

Sebastian Pennar  
Christopher Wescott  
Richard Gibbons  
Callum Duggan

## **Flutes**

John Hall  
Elizabeth May  
Lindsey Ellis

## **Piccolo**

Lindsey Ellis

## **Oboes**

Steve Hudson  
Rachel Harwood White

## **Cor Anglais**

Amy McKean

## **Clarinets**

Emidio André Costa  
Jennie Joy Porton

## **Bass Clarinet**

Steve Morris

## **Bassoons**

Ben Hudson  
Jo Shewan

## **Contrabassoon**

David Buckland

## **Horns**

Tim Thorpe  
Meilyr Hughes  
Neil Shewan  
Dave Ransom  
John Davy

## **Trumpets**

Philippe Schartz  
Robert Samuel  
Corey Morris

## **Trombones**

Roger Cutts  
Jake Durham

## **Bass Trombone**

Roger Angente

## **Tuba**

Daniel Trodden

## **Timpani**

Steve Barnard

## **Percussion**

Phil Girling  
Phil Hughes  
Max Ireland  
Rhydian Griffiths  
Harry Lovell-Jones  
Sarah Mason

## **Harp**

Bethan Semmens  
Nia Evans

## **Celeste**

Catherine Roe Williams

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