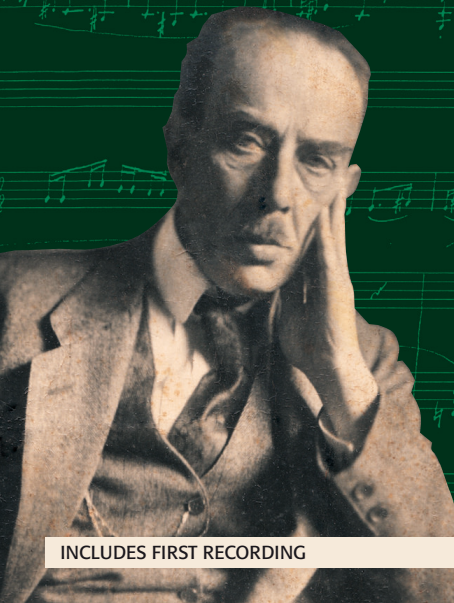


Allegro ma non troppo



Bernhard SEKLES



Chamber Music

Violin Sonata, Op. 44

Cello Sonata, Op. 28

Chaconne on an Eight-Bar
March-Theme, Op. 38,
for viola and piano

Capriccio in Four Movements
for piano trio

Solomia Soroka, violin and viola
Noreen Silver, cello
Phillip Silver, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDING

REDISCOVERING BERNHARD SEKLES

by Phillip Silver

The present-day obscurity of Bernhard Sekles illustrates how porous is contemporary knowledge of twentieth-century music: during his lifetime Sekles was prominent as teacher, administrator and composer alike. History has accorded him footnote status in two of these areas of endeavour: as an educator with an enviable list of students,¹ and as the Director of the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt from 1923 to 1933. During that period he established an opera school, much expanded the area of early-childhood music-education and, most notoriously, in 1928 established the world's first academic class in jazz studies, a decision which unleashed a storm of controversy and protest from nationalist and fascist quarters.

But Sekles was also a composer, a very good one whose music is imbued with a considerable dose of the unexpected; it is traditional without being derivative. He had the unenviable position of spending the prime of his life in a nation first rent by war and then enmeshed in a grotesque and ultimately suicidal battle between the warring political ideologies that paved the way for the Nazi take-over of 1933. The banning of his music by the Nazis and its subsequent inability to re-establish itself in the repertoire has obscured the fact that, dating back to at least 1919, the integration of jazz elements in his works marks him as one of the first European composers to use this emerging art-form within a formal classical structure. It should be noted that his use of jazz differed from that of many of his contemporaries in that he didn't construct entire jazz-inspired movements or create specific jazz-derived melodies. Instead, he integrated brief jazz-like rhythmic and/or harmonic passages within the structure of his movements, using them as one of the building blocks that make up his wider vocabulary.

¹ Among them Paul Hindemith, Erich Itor Kahn, Max Kowalski, Hans Rosbaud, Max Rudolf, Cyril Scott, and Rudi Stephan.

Sekles was born on 20 March 1872 in Frankfurt am Main. According to Paula Sekles, his great-granddaughter, the family name was originally Seckeles: 'It was changed by Bernhard to Sekles. I once asked my father why. He told me "Seckeles" sounded too much like a small sack. I do not know whether this is the real reason.'² His parents, Maximilian Seckeles and Anna (*née* Bischheim) were strongly opposed to his decision to devote his studies to music, but he was strong-willed and, his decision made, he entered the Hoch Conservatory in 1888, completing his studies five years later in 1893. His principal teachers were Lazaro Uzielli (1861–1943), a former pupil of Clara Schumann and Joachim Raff, for piano studies;³ Engelbert Humperdinck for instrumentation; and Ivan Knorr (1853–1916), once a student of Ignaz Moscheles and Carl Reinecke, for counterpoint and composition.⁴ Knorr, whose position in Frankfurt had come about through a recommendation from Brahms, favoured Sekles and after being appointed director of the Conservatory in 1908, used his influence to advance his protégé's career.

Sekles lived almost his entire life in Frankfurt. His son, Hans Maximilian Sekles, remarked that in his father's attachment to this region 'one can speak of a spiritual kinship' deeply rooted in his father's nature.⁵ Professionally, too, he was equally firmly focused, with virtually his entire career revolving around the Hoch Conservatory.⁶ Founded in 1878 by Dr Joseph Hoch with Raff as its first Director, the institution quickly established itself as one of the leading centres of music-education in Germany. The opening ceremony featured a performance by Clara Schumann who was one of the founding faculty members. Many prominent figures

² E-mail to the author, dated 30 May 2012.

³ Uzielli's other pupils included Fritz Busch, Hans Knappertsbusch, Cyril Scott and Wilhelm Steinberg.

⁴ Knorr's students included Ernest Bloch, Hans Pfitzner, Roger Quilter, Cyril Scott and Ernst Toch.

⁵ Hans Sekles, Hans Sekles – Errinerungen seines Sohnes, typescript dated 1961 in the Frankfurt State Archives.

⁶ 1888–93: student; 1896: teacher of theory and solfège; 1916: appointed Co-Director; 1923: appointed Director; 1933: forcibly removed from his position.

undertook their education there, among them Walter Braunfels, Percy Grainger, Otto Klemperer, Edward MacDowell, Hans Pfitzner and Ernst Toch.

From the time he entered as a student in 1893 until his forced retirement by the Nazis four decades later, Sekles was employed for only the years 1893–95 in other venues, one in Heidelberg, the other in Mainz where he was third Kapellmeister at the Stadttheater. He had an additional opportunity to leave Frankfurt in 1912 when he was offered, but declined, the position of Director of the Strasburg Conservatory as successor to Hans Pfitzner, a friend from student days. He began his tenure as Director during a period marked by ruinous and chaotic economic conditions, the result of hyperinflation which greatly exacerbated the instability of German society.⁷

In 1928, his fifth year as Director, Sekles fought for and ultimately established his course in jazz studies. (It would be four years before such a course was offered in an American university.⁸) He announced the course in an article⁹ where he began by posing the rhetorical question ‘Does a serious conservatory have the right to establish a jazz class?’ The response was an emphatic ‘not only the right but the duty’. He inveighed against the attempt in nationalist circles to label an ‘entire branch of art as being “degenerate”’ and emphasised the fact that rhythm, which he refers to as the ‘heartbeat of all music’, played a lesser part in German music as a whole – and as Director of the Conservatory he was only too aware of the fact that the rhythmical training was inadequate. He held up the study of jazz as a means of strengthening this essential element of music-making and, additionally, of reviving the almost lost art of improvisation.

The outrage from right-wing sources was immediate and violent. On 27

⁷ In January 1923 one US dollar equalled 17,972 marks; by December 1923 a dollar was equal to 4,200,000,000,000 marks.

⁸ That distinction went to New York University.

⁹ Bernhard Sekles, ‘Jazz-Klasse an Dr. Hoch’s Konservatorium’, *Deutsche Tonkünstler-Zeitung*, Vol. 25 (1927), p. 299.

November a member of the Prussian parliament called upon the state to prevent the 'niggerisation' (*Verniggerung*) of German music and referred to Sekles as 'un-German'.¹⁰ Sekles appointed the then 22-year-old Mátyás Seiber to direct the course with a curriculum that included rhythm studies, improvisation and ensemble-playing. The first concert given by course-participants took place on 3 March 1929 and was so successful that it had to be repeated. Other public performances ensued, as well as broadcasts on Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk.¹¹

On 10 April 1933, along with the all other Jewish staff-members of the Conservatory, Sekles was fired as part of the nationwide purge of Jewish employees that swept through Germany immediately after the passage of the 'Law for the Restoration of Tenure for the Civil Service'. Passed on 7 April 1933, the major promulgation of this law was the statement that 'civil servants who are not of Aryan ancestry' were to be immediately dismissed from their positions. Academic institutions such as the Hoch Conservatory fell under the rubric of the civil service. Shortly before the passage of this law the Frankfurt National Socialist newspaper had published a vicious attack on Sekles and all Jewish and foreign faculty members at the Conservatory, demanding they be purged.

After his dismissal Sekles' economic situation rapidly deteriorated and he was forced to give up his home and move to a garret. He was strongly advised to emigrate but his attachment to Frankfurt, coupled with serious health issues resulting from tuberculosis, made this move impossible. According to his student Wilhelm Kuhlmann he must have been aware of his condition for a long time, although he eschewed medical intervention. He often 'made to me half-melancholic, half-ironic remarks whose subject was the transience of the flesh'.¹² Sekles died in a Jewish nursing home

¹⁰ Unnamed Prussian Parliamentarian quoted in Joachim Tschiedel, *Bernhard Sekles: Leben und Werk des Frankfurter Komponisten und Pädagogen*, Verlag für Musikbücher Karl Dieter Wagner, Schneverdingen, 2005, p. 82.

¹¹ A recording from 1931 survives and can be heard at <http://www.dra.de/ram/packay.ram>.

¹² Wilhelm Kuhlmann, 'Erinnerungen an Bernhard Sekles, zum 25. Todestag im Dezember 1959', quoted in Tschiedel, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

in Frankfurt on 8 December 1934, leaving a widow,¹³ son¹⁴ and grandson.¹⁵ They would soon go into Brazilian exile, moving to Rolândia, a newly developed region in Paraná, in southern Brazil. To this day members of the Sekles family remain in Brazil. Bernhard Sekles' sister, Paula, who remained in Germany, perished in Terezín.

Although not prolific, with only 44 opus numbers and two dozen unpublished works to his name, as a composer Sekles had an enviable career, composing three operas, two ballets, seven orchestral works, chamber music, works for solo piano and thirteen opus numbers devoted to lieder. His compositions were championed by many eminent performers, including Furtwängler, Kleiber, Mengelberg, Stokowski and Walter. Among critics and musicologists there is a noticeable uniformity of opinion about the quality of Sekles' music. Hugo Leichtentritt wrote that 'Sekles is a virtuoso of the modern orchestra, as well as of counterpoint, a master of all technical means'.¹⁶ Kathleen D. Hurst in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* described his music as being 'full of exotic charm, beauty and colour'.¹⁷ Max Unger lauded his 'excellent vaunted compositional virtues, rich imagination, rhythmic energy and spirit coupled with significant compositional and instrumental skill'.¹⁸ An indication of Sekles' popularity can be gleaned from Percy Scholes' statement that during the 1908–9 season the *Serenade for 11 Solo Instruments*, Op. 14, received 100 performances throughout Europe.¹⁹

Hans Sekles observed of his father's music that

Sensitivity and desire for colour and light caused him always to dream about exotic countries or of fairy tales from the German past. This attention given to a distant place and time

¹³ Rosel Sekles (née Blum), who had been a music-student at the Frankfurt Hochschule. She died on 20 May 1974 in São Paulo.

¹⁴ Hans Maximilian Sekles, 4 October 1898–3 February 1977.

¹⁵ Andreas Stefan Sekles, 29 March 1924–9 August 2007.

¹⁶ *The Musical Times*, Vol. 72, No. 1062, 1 August 1931, pp. 746–47.

¹⁷ 3rd edn., MacMillan, London, 1952, Vol. IV, p. 710.

¹⁸ *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 90 (1923), p. 297, quoted in Tschiedel, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁹ *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and London, 10th edn., 1970, pp. 941–42.

provided relief from his confrontation with the hard problems of daily reality. [...] His love was of German Romanticism, perhaps, of Romanticism in general.²⁰

Sekles' works are Brahmsian in style, a leaning later tempered by other influences, among them Impressionism, Neoclassicism, elements of non-European musical cultures, jazz and a contrapuntal linearity which occasionally push his harmonies to the limits of tonality. Towards the end of his life he turned to his Jewish roots with works such as *The Dybbuk* for orchestra and his final composition, a setting of Psalm 137, *By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept*, for soprano, chorus and organ.

Among the clearly discernible characteristics of Sekles' music are a frequent use of march-rhythms, variable metre, fondness for variation-form, jazz-derived rhythmic and harmonic elements and an avoidance of literal repetitions of phrases, all within a language that was evolutionary rather than radical in character. Sekles' nature as composer was admirably summed up by another of his students, the philosopher Theodor Adorno, writing on the occasion of the composer's 50th birthday:

His earliest works [...] show him on the Brahmsian, not the Wagnerian, side. They already have that beautiful distance from the pompous and the pathetic which he continued more and more to put between himself and the contemporary German epigonal outpourings of some of his contemporaries. His works also possess a playful irony behind which he hid a chaste intensity. The grotesque quality which sometimes appears in his music is not a goal unto itself, but only the bridge which carries his soul into the world, in order not to fall into the abyss. Not only due to his warm humanity [...] but also because of his strictness against all pompous, un-organically produced work, the musical youth of Frankfurt clings to him as their leader and friend. He has never succumbed to the alien, but has remained truthful to himself. And that is a lot.²¹

The works on this recording were composed between the years 1919 and 1933, the

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

²¹ 'Bernhard Sekles', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 18: *Musikalische Schriften V*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, pp. 269–70.

acknowledged high point of his compositional maturity. Within these temporal parameters one can clearly discern the movement away from full-blooded late Romanticism into a language of growing asceticism derived from Neoclassicism.

Chaconne über ein Achttaktiges Marschtema, Op. 38, for viola and piano

The *Chaconne on an Eight-Bar March Theme*, published by C. F. Peters in Leipzig in 1931 [1], is one of two works bearing the opus number 38, the other being the unpublished Second Suite for piano. The theme, an unambiguously jaunty eight-bar march, as the title indicates, is followed by 21 variations, the first 20 of which vary in length between four and twelve bars. The final variation expands to 68 bars, subdivided into sections of 18, 18 and 26 bars respectively, ending with a coda six bars in length. The variations are fanciful with a wide variety in character; the seventeenth is particularly striking, with a terrifying development of the march-rhythm stated by the viola. By contrast, the finale is a strikingly beautiful transformation of the march into a chorale which is repeated three times, each reiteration presenting a growth in dynamic and textural intensity. The brief coda brings the work to a *quasi niente* conclusion with a dissolution of harmony, melody and texture. Writing in the *Signale für die musikalische Welt* in 1932, Walter Hirschberg noted that the Chaconne, which had received attention in a number of music magazines, contained:

an original theme with a very charming and surprising conclusion. The work is conceived in a progressive spirit and provides proof of the taste and skill of the sensitive director of the Frankfurt Conservatory. It represents a welcome addition to the small viola literature.²²

A revue by F. Seraphin in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was enthusiastic:

Melodically charming, rhythmically and harmonically interesting designs accompanied this witty

²² Quoted in Tschiedel, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

and amazing sequence of variations. This is an extremely rewarding work if carefully done.²³

This opinion was shared, with a caveat, by a reviewer ('F. B.' – probably Ferruccio Bonavia) in *The Musical Times*:

One could commend without reservations Bernhard Sekles' 'Chaconne über ein Achttaktiges Marschtema,' for viola and pianoforte, were it not that the composer has at times over-rated the carrying power of viola tone. [...] there are passages in this Chaconne where the viola will not be heard unless the pianist happens to be a man of infinite discretion.²⁴

That reservation perhaps gives an indication of the performance the reviewer heard, since it is no more true of Sekles' Chaconne than of any work for a stringed instrument with a substantial keyboard component.

Sonata in D Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 28

Sekles composed only two sonatas during his career, the Cello Sonata, Op. 28 (1919) published by F. E. C. Leuckart in Leipzig in 1919, and the unpublished Violin Sonata, Op. 44 (1933). The Cello Sonata is a product of late Romanticism: expansive in scope, at times it makes considerable demands on both performers.

The first movement *Allegro* [2], preceded by a brief, sombre introduction, erupts with a dynamic theme shared between the two instruments and marked *trotzig*, 'defiant'. The piano soon articulates a distant march theme, which is subsequently taken up by the cello and transformed into a poignant and emotively lyrical variant. These two elements, the defiant and the lyrical, contrast – indeed, conflict – with each other through the remainder of the movement before concluding in a brutal assertion of the *trotzig* theme.

The second movement, an Intermezzo [3], borders at times on the grotesque. Beginning with a mysterious four-bar chordal passage marked *Lento*, the main

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *The Musical Times*, Vol. 72, No. 1065, 1 November 1931, p. 995.

thematic material is presented first *Presto* and then *Prestissimo*. Here, too, within moments of the beginning of the *Presto* the piano posits a prominent march theme. Shortly before the second appearance of the *Lento*, about a third of the way into the movement, the interplay between the instruments produces a surprisingly jazz-like passage.

The third movement, *Tema con Variazioni* [4], is longer than the first two put together. Although the theme is very much in the late-Romantic vein, it is accompanied by unexpectedly piquant harmonies, most notably the augmented triad within a passage of conventional diatonic chords. The variations are often fantastical in nature with several of them featuring the now ubiquitous march.

The first performance was given on 12 March 1920 by Maurits Frank (the cellist of the Amar Quartet²⁵ in 1922–24 and 1927–29) with the composer at the piano.

Capriccio in 4 Movements for piano, violin and cello

The *Capriccio* for piano trio, the last work of Sekles to be published in his lifetime (by Litolf, Braunschweig, in 1932, though without an opus number) presents four brief, characterful movements, all of which are constructed from shared building-blocks derived from a segment of the chromatic scale juxtaposed against wide leaps. These elements are immediately introduced in the opening *Praeludio* by the piano and cello [5]. This movement is the most severe in form with a heavily contrapuntal texture, only momentarily contrasted with a cheerful tune given out by the cello. The second movement, a lively and witty scherzo [6], is followed by a reflective Intermezzo [7], the emotional centre of the work – lyrical, colourful and infused with a mournful tinge that is interrupted by cadenzas for each of the three instruments. The ethereal ending features atmospheric harmonics in the strings which float away

²⁵ The Amar Quartet was founded in 1921 as a result of the refusal of the violinist Gustav Havemann to perform a quartet composed by Hindemith for the Donaueschingen Festival. Hindemith, out of necessity, formed an ensemble (in which he played viola) to perform the work.

into nothingness. Sekles' use of 'Yankee Doodle' as the basis for the set of variations that make up the fourth movement [8] has precedents in works by composers as diverse as Camilo Sivori (Paganini's only pupil),²⁶ Anton Rubinstein,²⁷ Henri Vieuxtemps,²⁸ Daniel Gregory Mason²⁹ and Josef Rudolf Schachner.³⁰ Familiarity with these works only reinforces the conviction that none come near to matching the eclectic nature of Sekles' work: the variations range from late Romanticism via Impressionism to jazz and illustrate the potential of the theme.

Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 44

Sekles avoids the overarching complexity of the Cello Sonata in his Violin Sonata, which has survived in an unpublished manuscript in the Sekles Collection in the Hochschule für Musik in Frankfurt.³¹ It is both simpler in thematic and harmonic terms and more direct and compact, yet carefully constructed, with several instances of thematic links between movements which create an overall high degree of cohesion. The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo* [9], is shaped by the march material articulated by both instruments at the outset. This material is briefly contrasted with a beautifully ethereal section which anticipates the theme of the second movement, before returning to assume an obsessive character during the development section. A brief coda ends the movement on an exuberant note.

The second movement, *Andantino* [10], is constructed in ABA form. The A section is a modified variation form marked by a folk-like ambience in which Joachim

²⁶ *Carnevale Americano (Yankee Doodle)* (1846).

²⁷ *Yankee Doodle Variations*, Op. 93 (1872).

²⁸ *Souvenir d'Amérique* (1844).

²⁹ *Variations on Yankee Doodle in the style of Various Composers*, Op. 6 (1912).

³⁰ *Fantasie mit Variationen über das amerikanische volkslied 'Yankee Doodle'*, Op. 32 (1863).

³¹ The Violin Sonata is one of about two dozen unpublished works in a special collection in the Library of the Frankfurt Conservatory. The survival of these works was assured when the family took them to Brazil when they went into exile. They were returned after the War and are available to researchers and performers.

Tschiedel identified ‘an inner kinship with Mahler’s folk-oriented material’.³² Strikingly, the variations occur primarily as a result of the shifting harmonic patterns in the piano as opposed to changes in the violin line which repeats the theme unchanged. There is precedence for such a procedure going back to the work of the nineteenth-century composer Peter Cornelius, whose song ‘Ein Ton’ is perhaps the most extreme example.³³ The B section, the melody of which is derived from the prominent repeated-note passage heard at the opening of the movement, presents material of a more lively character. This passage leads to a repetition of the A section and a coda in which materials from A and B are combined with the violin playing a portion of the B section motif over a piano accompaniment derived from the repeated-note figure of A. There are also several harmonic/melodic gestures derived from jazz, such as can be found in the piano line beginning at 0:47 as well as at the lovely unison passage beginning at 4:12.

The mercurial third movement, *Vivace* [11], playful and witty in character, derives its principal motive from a segment of the second-movement theme, which also features in the theme of the chaconne finale.

The theme of the finale, *Allegro maestoso* [12], harkens back to the opening dotted figure of the first movement. It also bears a distant relationship to the medieval plainchant ‘Dies Irae’ with specific elements such as the descending chromatic half-step – descending minor-third figure presented in mirror-like fashion. The theme is not the only element harkening back to an earlier age: several of the eleven variations seem to evoke the Middle Ages. Variations six and seven, for example, have a Moorish atmosphere, and the eighth, with the theme presented in longer note-values in the violin accompanied by imitative contrapuntal material in the piano, is patterned upon the Renaissance *ricercar*. The final three variations have

³² *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

³³ ‘Ein Ton’ is the third of the six songs in Cornelius’ *Trauer und Trost*, Op. 3.

an aura of a dance of death and make prodigious technical demands upon both performers. As the date of composition is thought to have been January 1933, conjuring-up the mediaeval dance of death was certainly not out of place in the context of contemporary history. © Phillip Silver, 2012

Solomia Soroka was born in L'viv, Ukraine. She earned her master's degree and completed her postgraduate studies in the Kyiv Conservatory, and later served on its staff in the department of chamber music. She also has a DMA degree from Eastman School of Music. She studied with Hersh Heifetz, Bohodar Kotorovych, Lyudmyla Zvirko and Charles Castleman. Solomia made her solo debut at ten, playing the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with the L'viv Philharmonic Orchestra. She has appeared at concerts and festivals in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Taiwan and the Ukraine. Since her American debut in 1997, she has performed throughout the United States as well. She is a professor of violin at Goshen College, Indiana.

She has given the Australian and American premieres of a number of important contemporary Ukrainian compositions for violin, among them works by Lyatoshynsky, Skoryk and Stankovych. Her recording of four violin sonatas by William Bolcom for Naxos, made together with her pianist-husband, Arthur Greene, was selected as recording of the month by Classics Today with the highest ranking for both artistry and sound. Their recording of violin sonatas by Nikolai Roslavets (again for Naxos) also received international acclaim. For Toccata Classics she and Arthur Greene have recorded discs of music by Arthur Hartmann on rocc 0089 ('the performances are warm, sympathetic and very well recorded,' wrote Jonathan Woolf for MusicWeb International) and Miroslav Skoryk on rocc 0137 (of which Robert Maxham in *Fanfare* reported that 'Soroka and Greene extract all the poignant lyricism and stormy drama, and gaiety, respectively, that the music and its program suggest').

Noreen Silver, born in Glasgow, studied at the Royal College of Music in London before spending a year in Geneva, studying with the great Pierre Fournier. Her studies later took her to the New England Conservatory, where she met her husband-to-be, Phillip Silver. Noreen's

performing career is centred on the cello-piano duo that she and Phillip formed while students. The Silver Duo has presented most of the standard cello-and-piano repertoire – and much non-standard material – in live performance and radio broadcast on three continents.

In addition to the duo repertoire, Noreen's love of chamber music is evident in the many performances she has given as a member of the Van Leer Trio – which was awarded the Israel Prize in 1990 – and, more recently, of Cadenzato, the faculty chamber ensemble of the University of Maine. Noreen is currently an adjunct faculty member at the University of Maine, teaching cello and chamber music.

Phillip Silver studied with Katja Andy and Leonard Shure at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, where he earned the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Music cum laude. He also earned the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Washington for his research into the music of Ignaz Moscheles.

Over the past decade Phillip has devoted himself to researching music and musicians affected by the Holocaust, presenting his findings in the form of lectures and recitals in venues across the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Israel. He also works closely with a number of Israeli composers, bringing their music to a wider international public. As a member of the Jerusalem-based Van Leer Trio, he was a recipient of the prestigious Israel Prize for best performance of an Israeli chamber composition. He is a professor at the School of Performing Arts of the University of Maine in Orono.

Also from Solomia Soroka, Noreen Silver and Phillip Silver on Toccata Classics



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Leone Sinigaglia, born in Turin in 1868, was a friend of Brahms in Vienna and a student of Dvořák in Prague, applying their classical techniques to the inspiration he found in Italian folksong: his music is marked by strong melodies and a sophisticated use of harmony. Championed by musicians of the standing of Barbiroli, Furtwängler, Kreisler, Stokowski and Toscanini, he was also a famous mountaineer, with two first climbs in the Dolomites to his credit. Sinigaglia, who was Jewish, died in Turin in 1944 as he was being arrested, at the age of 75, by the occupying Nazi forces. His tuneful chamber music bears witness to the happy life that preceded that tragic end.

‘Leone Sinigaglia was not a great innovator, but an excellent melodically inventive composer who stayed with the late classical/romantic style he learned in his youth. These well-played chamber pieces are a delight to listen to, and the performers are to be commended for bringing this music back to us.’

Customer comment, Amazon.co.uk

‘this is German Romanticism with strong melodies and sophisticated harmonies and the adagios of each sonata are among the more affecting and moving pieces of their type we’ve heard in months.’

Records International



Recorded 28, 29 and 31 May 2012, Blue Griffin Studios, Lansing, Michigan
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Booklet text: Phillip Silver

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Bernhard Sekles (1872–1933) was one of the leading figures in German music in the first decades of the twentieth century, prominent as composer, educator and administrator. In 1928, as director of the Hoch Conservatorium in Frankfurt, he established the first academic programme in jazz studies, an act of courage and conviction that unleashed furious attacks from the Nazi press. His own music, banned during the Third Reich, has been virtually forgotten, although he composed in all major genres, including opera, symphony, lieder and chamber music. As the works on this recording illustrate, Sekles often juxtaposes diverse elements – including Neoclassicism, Brahmsian Romanticism and jazz – in his compositions, which can be refreshingly quirky.

BERNHARD SEKLES Chamber Music

1 Chaconne on an Eight-Bar March-Theme, Op. 38, for viola and piano* (publ. 1931)

8:58

Cello Sonata, Op. 28 (1919)

27:20

- 2 I *Sostenuto assai (Schwerlastend) – Allegro marcato ma moderato*
- 3 II *Intermezzo: Lento – Presto – Prestissimo*
- 4 III *Tema con Variazioni*

8:58

4:48

13:34

Capriccio in Four Movements for piano trio (publ. 1932)

13:00

- 5 I *Praeludio: Moderato ma energico*
- 6 II *Scherzino: Vivace*
- 7 III *Intermezzo: Larghetto*
- 8 IV *Finale: Yankee-Doodle con Variazioni – Allegretto comodo (Nicht schnell)*

2:07

2:17

4:26

4:20

Violin Sonata, Op. 44 (date unknown)

18:20

- 9 I *Allegro ma non troppo*
- 10 II *Andantino*
- 11 III *Vivace*
- 12 IV *Allegro maestoso*

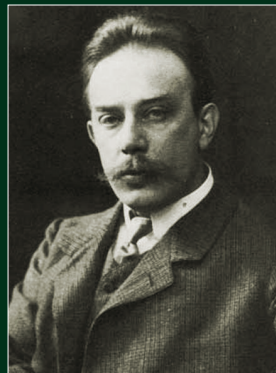
4:03

5:24

2:41

6:16

TT 67:55



Solomia Soroka, viola 1 and violin 5–12

Noreen Silver, cello 2–8

Phillip Silver, piano 1–12

TOCCATA CLASSICS

16 Dalkeith Court

Vincent Street

London SW1P 4HH, UK

Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020

E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

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*FIRST RECORDING



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