

Henriëtte BOSMANS

EARLY CHAMBER MUSIC

VIOLIN SONATA

PIANO TRIO

ARIETTA

Solarek Piano Trio

FIRST RECORDINGS

THREE EARLY CHAMBER WORKS BY HENRIËTTE BOSMANS

by Marina Solarek

Henriëtte Hilda Bosmans, who was of Jewish heritage, was born in Amsterdam on 6 December 1895 and grew up in a musical family. Both parents were reputable musicians in the Netherlands around 1900. Her mother, Sara Benedicts (1861–1949), a renowned pianist and teacher at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, was Bosmans' main piano teacher; her father, Henri Bosmans (1856–96), was the first cellist in the Concertgebouw Orchestra, although he died when Henriëtte was eight months old.

Bosmans became a prominent pianist herself. In November 1915, as a highly talented nineteen-year-old, she made her debut with the Utrechts Stedelijk Orkest with Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 15; it was followed by engagements with the Concertgebouw in 1916 with Beethoven's Fourth Concerto and frequent major concerto appearances, including a notable performance in 1936 of César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques*, with Willem Mengelberg conducting. Her performance was praised by the critic Herman Rutters in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* as 'shrewd, intuitive, with pure, vibrant and noble musicianship'.¹

Bosmans' first compositions, written at the age of seventeen, were mostly for violin and piano and were dedicated to her mother; they were strongly influenced by German Romanticism. From 1918 she devoted herself to composing chamber music. In 1919 she was commissioned by the cellist Marix Loevensohn to compose a work for the exhibition 'De Onafhankelijken' ('The Independents') in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. This piece for cello and piano was to mark her entry into the world of 'official' Dutch composers.

¹ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 March 1936.

Her friendship with cellists such as Loevensohn and Frieda Belinfante² inspired Bosmans to write several works for cello, including a *Poème* for cello and piano in 1920, a First Cello Concerto in 1922 and a *Poème* for cello and orchestra in 1923. Bosmans, who was openly bisexual, dedicated her Second Cello Concerto to Frieda Belinfante, who in 1921 became Henriëtte's lover, a relationship which lasted for seven years.

From 1927 to 1930 Bosmans studied orchestral music with Willem Pijper. During this time, she produced a number of important works: a string quartet (1927) and a Concertino for piano and orchestra (1928), as well as a *Concertstuk* for flute and orchestra (1929).

In 1934 she became engaged to the violinist Francis Koene, who had been concert-master at the Dresden State Opera until 1933, before he returned to the Netherlands because of the political situation in Germany. She dedicated her 1934 *Concertstuk* for violin and orchestra to him; tragically, he died of a brain tumour five months before the premiere, which had been planned for May 1935. The concert-master of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Louis Zimmermann, eventually premiered the work on 31 October 1935, conducted by Mengelberg. Her international breakthrough came in 1938, when the violinist Willem Noske played this concerto in Prague and Paris.

This creative and concertising phase was interrupted by the Nazi invasion. By 1939, performance of Jewish music was forbidden by the *Kultuurkamer* (the Nazi Chamber of Culture). In 1941 all Jews were obliged to register, which both Bosmans and her mother did, even though they stated 'none' for religion; unlike her mother, Bosmans had been baptised a Catholic. Although her mother rarely ventured outside any longer, Bosmans, as a 'half-Jewish woman', was able to get the ban on her performances lifted, but only for a limited period. From the autumn of 1941 Jewish musicians were no longer allowed to perform in public; they were confined to the Joodsch Symphonie Orkest, where they were allowed to play only music by Jewish composers to a Jewish audience. During this time her income obviously shrank. She received some financial help from her old friend Frieda Belinfante, who had joined the resistance, and earned some money

² As far as is known, Frieda Belinfante (1904–95) was no relation to the composer Daniël Belinfante (1893–1945).

at so-called ‘black evenings’ – underground house concerts. During this time, she stopped composing almost completely.

After the war Bosmans embarked on a new creative period, inspired by the mezzo-soprano Noémie Pérugia (1903–92), whom she first met in 1940. Pérugia became her last major love and was the dedicatee of numerous Bosmans songs.

In the summer of 1950, Bosmans developed an illness that turned out to be stomach cancer. On 16 June 1951 she was knighted in the Royal Order of Orange-Nassau. She died in Amsterdam on 2 July 1952. At least four streets in the Netherlands are named after her.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1918)

The Violin Sonata is one of Bosmans’ earliest chamber compositions: it stems from the time of her harmony and counterpoint studies with Jan Willem Kersbergen, to whom she dedicated the work. It was first performed in 1918 by Ferdinand Helmann, accompanied by Bosmans. The work is typical of her early Romantic style. The first movement, *Allegro passionato, ma non troppo mosso* [1], is by far the most substantial, accounting for more than half of the total duration of the Sonata. At first, it seems to follow traditional sonata form, introducing two highly melodic and dramatic main themes, but then Bosmans subverts the expectations of her listeners. At the point where one might expect the development to begin, she introduces a third idea before returning to a more formal development of the first one. After the recapitulation, the movement ends with a quasi-coda, giving a foretaste of the theme which will appear at the very end of the Sonata. It is followed by an eerie scherzo, marked *Non troppo presto* [2], and a characteristically sombre *Adagio* [3]. Here a simple wistful melody played on the violin, first marked *cantando teneramente* and later *con espressione*, is accompanied by a dark *ostinato* piano accompaniment which only now and then breaks free to imitate the melody line of the violin.³ The last movement, a *Moderato assai* [4], begins, *attacca*, with a fugue showing influences of Max Reger and, as in the violin *Concertstuk* that followed sixteen years later, it reintroduces themes from the previous three movements.

³ In an exchange of e-mails with me on 13 May 2022 Martin Anderson argued for an echo of Bach’s concerto slow movements in this *Adagio*; he also finds a parallel in the third-movement *Adagio* of Enescu’s First Piano Suite, Op. 3 (1897).

Since the work remained unpublished until 2021, this performance uses Bosmans' manuscript and, in parts, an edition of the first movement made by Helen Metzelaar, a Dutch musicologist who has researched and written about the composer.⁴ The manuscript contains many discrepancies: this performance gives priority to the separate violin part, which seems more logical than the violin part given in the manuscript full score.

***Arietta* (1917)**

Bosmans' brief *Arietta*, marked *Largo* [5], consists of a beautiful, reflective melody played by the violin above a warm and solemn piano accompaniment. The range of the violin part and tone-colour required from the violinist suggests that the bright top string of the instrument should be avoided, which then gives the piece a viola-like character. For this reason, understandably, the *Arietta* has hitherto generally been performed and recorded on viola; this recording is its first with a violin, although because it is notated solely in the treble clef, never venturing below the violin G string, and is clearly marked for 'viool en piano', it is obvious that Bosmans intended this piece for violin.

Piano Trio (1921)

The fanfare-like main theme of the first-movement *Allegro con brio* [6] is introduced by the piano, accompanied by repetitive semiquavers in violin and cello, and produces an atmosphere of euphoria. There is a hint of oriental feeling and eastern-European style in the thematic material which follows – something that can also be heard in her 1934 *Concertstuk* for violin and orchestra. The writing for the cello sits very high in its register, which gives the instrument a much more prominent role than in the texture of more conventional piano-trio repertoire.

In the *Andante moderato* second movement [7] the cello introduces a lament which is later taken up by the violin over a haunting piano accompaniment. This material is repeatedly interrupted by an *Allegretto scherzo* and finishes by reintroducing the main

⁴ Helen Metzelaar is the author of *Zonder muziek is het leven onnodig: Henriëtte Bosmans (1895–1952), een biografie* ('Without music life is unnecessary: Henriëtte Bosmans (1895–1952), A Biography'), Walburg Pers, Zutphen, 2002.

theme on the cello, with improvisatory piano accompaniment, and on an ascending line in the violin.

The last movement [8] starts with an *Andante* violin solo that sounds like a cadenza, supported by intermittent piano chords, before falling into a wild dance theme, *Molto vivace*, which is introduced by the piano. It is accompanied by intense cello *tremolo* and percussive *pizzicato* chords on the violin before both string instruments take over the theme. After introducing another fanfare motif, the trio ends in typical Bosmans style by reintroducing the initial theme of the first movement in a flamboyant, almost orchestral-sounding finale, with arpeggios in the strings and a virtuoso cascading octave passage on the piano.

Marina Solarek was born in Germany. After studying violin, piano and conducting in Mannheim and Hamburg, she completed her violin studies in London with Yfrah Neaman. She has frequently performed, in Britain and abroad, with the Feinstein Ensemble and the Baroque ensemble Kontraste. She has given concerts at the South Bank and has performed in several broadcasts for Classic FM and BBC Radio 3. She is the Artistic Director of the Youth Music Centre in north-west London.



The **Solarek Piano Trio** – Marina Solarek, violin; Miriam Lowbury, cello; and Andrew Bottrill, piano – is dedicated to the memory of neglected female composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially those who have not yet been published. The many concerts by the Solarek Piano Trio in Britain and Europe have shone a light on the substantial output of composers like Amy Beach, Mélanie Bonis, Lili Boulanger, Cécile Chaminade, Rebecca Clarke, Dora Pejačević, Johanna Senfter and Germaine Tailleferre. The Trio has now embarked on ‘Silent Scores’, a series of workshops and talks that aim to make this vast, unheard repertoire part of the curriculum for schools and colleges.

www.solarekpianotrio.com



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HENRIËTTE BOSMANS Early Chamber Music

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1918)*	26:02
[1] I <i>Allegro passionato, ma non troppo mosso</i>	14:43
[2] II <i>Non troppo presto</i>	2:37
[3] III <i>Adagio –</i>	3:40
[4] IV <i>Moderato assai</i>	5:02
Arietta for violin and piano (1917)**	2:53
[5] <i>Largo</i>	
Piano Trio (1921)*	26:25
[6] I <i>Allegro con brio</i>	8:53
[7] II <i>Andante moderato</i>	8:16
[8] III <i>Andante – Molto vivace</i>	9:16

Solarek Piano Trio

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Marina Solarek, violin
Miriam Lowbury, cello
Andrew Bottrill, piano

*FIRST RECORDINGS

**FIRST RECORDING OF ORIGINAL VERSION