

# THE



# DELIAN

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## BOOK REVIEW

A Rebecca Clarke Reader, Liane Curtis, editor. The Rebecca Clarke Society, Reprinted 2005 241 pp, softback. Numerous illustrations and musical examples. \$25.00 plus \$2.00 shipping in the U.S. \$5.00 shipping outside the U.S. from The Rebecca Clarke Society, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, MS 079, 515 South Street, Waltham, MA 02454.

This interesting collection of recent essays by women authors, Clarke's published writings on music (1923-1932), plus some interviews with Clarke when she was quite elderly serves as an illuminating portrait of Rebecca Clarke in lieu of a full biography. The book was first issued by Indiana University Press in 2004 and has a somewhat difficult publication history.

Liane Curtis kindly sent the review copy along with a reprint from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of July 16, 2004, outlining the copyright battle over certain unpublished works that were covered in the book and the withdrawal by Indiana University Press of its recent publication. Christopher Johnson manages the Clarke estate and refused for four years any access by Ms. Curtis to unpublished material. Just what value this copyright material has if hidden away remains a mystery to me. Ms. Curtis also sent a CD playable only on computer with much of the material in the book plus additional information omitted from the original publication which may appear in a supplementary volume.

But what we do have is valuable and of interest to those who at least know Clarke's *Viola Sonata* and perhaps the *Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano*. Philadelphia Delians will recall a beautiful performance of Clarke's *Morpheus* at our Temple University concert in the spring of 2005. The essays deal with biographical details of Clarke's life and her early days at both the RAM and RCM. In those days a fellow student was pianist James Friskin whom Clarke later married in the U.S. when she was 58 years old. Among the essays is an important one by Liane Curtis herself on "Rebecca Clarke and the British Musical Renaissance", a subject always of especial interest to us. I must warn readers however that here and in a couple of the other essays, the musicological analysis of the musical examples may be beyond the comprehension of the average reader and especially to those who do not read music at all. These can be skipped without destroying the enjoyment of the more general material.

Clarke lived in Manhattan in relative obscurity until Robert Sherman of WQXR in New York "rediscovered" her almost by accident. Robert Sherman wanted to interview Mrs. Friskin about her friendship with Myra Hess not realizing that she herself was a composer. Her interviews with Sherman and a couple of others often duplicate the stories, but so be it. I do have a quibble about the transcription of those interviews. "All right" is consistently spelled "alright" which, despite its increasing use, is not acceptable standard English. Academics should have known better. In any case, this inexpensive volume has much fascinating information. Selected. Discography.