



The Rebecca Clarke Society Newsletter Fall 2004 Vol. 4

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Rebecca Clarke, ca.1945

Philomela Once More: First Book on Clarke Censored by her Estate Manager

A message from Liane Curtis
RCS President and editor of
A Rebecca Clarke Reader

Dear Members and Supporters,

Prize-winning works premiered

After a snowstorm forced the cancellation of the first planned concert, the performance of the two prize-winning works (announced in our Fall 2003 newsletter) finally took place on October 2, 2004, at Brandeis University. Richard Dyer reported in the *Boston Globe*:

“The two winners of a competition named in honor of composer Rebecca Clarke were present to hear the premieres of their works. The Lydian String Quartet made an eloquent case for “Shifting Landscapes” by Ellen Harrison, music of mingled grief, remembrance, and celebration. Martha Callison Horst’s “Cloister Songs” are based on 18th-century texts from a religious community in rural Pennsylvania. The music speaks for those who are rooted in a time and place but yearn for the infinite and otherworldly. The stylistic idiom suggests the Vienna of a century ago, and there is a rapturous quality in the music that was matched in the steady, radiant singing of soprano Nancy Armstrong.”

This was supposed to be the issue of the newsletter where we celebrated the publication of the first book on Clarke, *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*. Indiana University Press published it late in May and for a while it looked like celebration was called for. Two book-release parties were held in the Boston area, and interest was high. The book was for sale through many outlets on the Internet, and I watched its sales figures go up on Amazon.com. Then the current manager of Rebecca Clarke’s estate, Christopher Johnson, threatened the publisher with a lawsuit. Claiming that the book defamed him, and used unpublished material that is his intellectual property without his permission, he demanded that the book be recalled. His claims are groundless: what he alleges is defamatory is based on verifiable fact, and the unpublished materials that are quoted fall within the “fair use” clause of copyright law. Unfortunately, Indiana University Press feared costly litigation and reluctantly withdrew the book. Shortly thereafter an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* featured this extraordinary incident in their July 16, 2004 issue; the

Philomela Once More, continued from p.1

Chronicle saw IUP as an example of a financially strapped academic publisher, blackmailed by a threat of litigation, unable to support its research goals. The entire *Chronicle* article is available through a link on the RCS website, www.rebeccaclarke.org.

An excerpt is provided below.

The situation brings to mind the mythological story of Philomela, who was silenced by having her tongue cut out, and was later transformed into a nightingale. The recall amounts to censorship of Clarke's own voice, as

one-third of the book consists of transcribed interviews made with Clarke in the three years before her death in 1979. Clarke herself invoked the image of Philomela in a choral setting, a work (like most of her music) that was never published and that she never heard performed. It remained in her estate, withheld from access until 2002, when her choral music was finally published (by Oxford University Press).

The Rebecca Clarke Society is determined to give voice to Clarke's words, by making the *Rebecca Clarke Reader* available through our website. A photocopied format is also available.

(See enclosed order form.)

An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 16, 2004) explored the dramatic and rare withdrawal of an important work of scholarship, *The Rebecca Clarke Reader*. The entire article (by Richard Byrne) is available at the *CHE* website, reached through the link on the RCS website, www.rebeccaclarke.org. Excerpts are provided below.

Silent Treatment: A copyright battle kills an anthology of essays about the composer Rebecca Clarke


By RICHARD BYRNE

Two letters arrived in book reviewers' mail in the middle of June. One missive came from Indiana University Press, withdrawing its just-published *A Rebecca Clarke Reader* from circulation ... [and asking] reviewers and editors to ship it back at the press's expense. The second letter came from Liane Curtis, editor of the *Reader* and founding member of the Rebecca Clarke Society. The label pasted onto the face of the envelope was bold and succinct: "DON'T RETURN your Rebecca Clarke Reader! The recall is groundless! We are fighting back!!"

...A lawyer for Christopher Johnson argued that the *Reader* "was replete with unauthorized excerpts from unpublished works, as well as defamatory and libelous statements regarding Mr. Johnson."

"We very much regret having to withdraw the book," [says Ms. Rabinowitch, Indiana press's director]. "We were very proud of it." [Ms. Curtis] says that Mr. Johnson has quashed the book out of personal animus against her. She says that the unpublished material in the *Reader* falls under "fair use" provisions of copyright law, which permit the reproduction of such materials without permission for the purposes of comment or parody. ...

Ms. Curtis won Mr. Johnson's cooperation in her early efforts to study and promote Clarke's work, which culminated in a 1999 conference on Clarke held at Brandeis. But her working relationship with him frayed, she acknowledges, thanks to her public critiques of Mr. Johnson's editing of Clarke's music and her intensive campaign for greater access to unpublished material.... In a September 2003 review in the journal *Notes* of six editions of Clarke's music edited by Mr. Johnson, Ms. Curtis took aim both at his editing and his stewardship of Clarke's musical legacy. ... Mr. Johnson rejects Ms. Curtis's accusations in their entirety. "This is private property," he says. "Who is Dr. Curtis, or anyone else, to say what's to be done with this?"

.... According to Ms. Rabinowitch, the alleged copyright infringements added up to 94 lines, or slightly more than two pages of a 241-page book. ... Ms. Curtis argues that Indiana University Press should test those provisions of copyright law. "I would like to see Indiana stand up to [Mr. Johnson]." ... The withdrawal of the book deprives readers of new scholarship on Clarke and a number of Clarke's published writings and interviews. ... 

Shorter Pieces for Cello and Piano published, Rhapsody still withheld

A recent publication in Oxford University Press's series of music by Clarke is this set of three pieces for cello and piano, including one work, "Epilogue," which was not previously available. The other two works, the "Passacaglia on an Old English Tune," and "I'll Bid My Heart Be Still" (an arrangement of a Scottish folk song), are Clarke's transcriptions of works for viola, included in the OUP edition "Shorter Pieces for Viola and Piano." The Passacaglia is in the public domain and is available through several publishers.

This set of pieces offers an interesting insight into Clarke's breadth of style. "Epilogue," with its evocative declamatory quality, creates a mood of intimacy, spontaneity and introspection. The "Passacaglia," with its underlying formal structure, is solemn, thoughtful, proclamatory, rising to a bold and resilient conclusion. "I'll Bid My Heart Be Still" employs a folk tune in a straightforward manner, with the accompaniment providing wistful atmosphere. Although the edition itself has some flaws, the music is destined to become standard in most cellists' repertory.

Oxford University Press (OUP) has few recent publications for cello and piano, and that lack of experience shows. When editing Clarke's music for viola, editor Christopher Johnson consulted with musicians who play that instrument, but clearly this was not done in the case of the cello works. Anyone familiar with the conventions of the cello would have corrected the awkward use of treble clef instead of the tenor clef that cellists prefer. The leaps from bass to treble clef are jolting to the eye and cellists are much more used to moving between bass and tenor clef.

"Passacaglia" was one of Clarke's two works for viola published in her lifetime. The other is the well-known Viola Sonata, and both these works were published in arrangements for cello. It is worth noting that a copy of the work that Clarke signed "love, Becca" survives in the estate of cellist May Mukle. Given the importance of Mukle in Clarke's career and personal life, Clarke's arrangement of the work for cello may have been made with her in mind (as was probably the case with the Sonata as well).

"Epilogue" is dedicated to Guilhermina Suggia, but the preface makes no mention of this. The distinguished Portuguese cellist, a student and later a colleague of Casals, played in a string quartet with Clarke before World War I (as Clarke mentions in a 1978 interview, *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*, p. 192). Since the date of composition for "Epilogue" is unknown, it is possible that it might have been written in this early period, when Clarke worked with Suggia.

That "Epilogue" was first titled "L'envoie" is fascinating. The editorial notes do not explore the significance of the change in title. The words "L'envoie" and "Epilogue" both have similar literary meanings, but an Epilogue can function as an ending to many things, while an Envoie is much more specific, referring to a closing couplet that involves direct address in poetry of the Trouveres. Practicality might have motivated Clarke to change the title to the more comprehensible "Epilogue." What might have prompted the use of the title "L'envoie" is worth pondering, and the term gives some significance to the declamatory, recitative-style writing of the piece. This is an exciting and dramatic work that should prove a favorite among cellists.

In his editorial notes, Johnson states that "the only known documentation for the piece ... is Clarke's diary-entry for January 26, 1932..." He has overlooked an entry from December 17, 1930: "Went to the Izard's in the morning to hear Toddles try my cello piece 'Epilogue'." Toddles was the husband of the violinist Constance Izard, the dedicatee of Clarke's "Chinese Puzzle."

Many of Clarke's compositions are technically out of reach for most amateur musicians. Thus I (as an amateur cellist) had looked forward to the publication of "I'll bid my Heart Be Still" for cello as an accessible work without obstacles of difficult technique. Unfortunately this edition's interpretation of the cello part renders the work needlessly difficult. The manuscript annotation the editor claims indicates the cello version leaps up an octave in m. 25 is a tentative draft. In the case of the "Epilogue" such "indefinite and incomplete" additions to the score were ignored, and that

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approach should have been applied in “I’ll bid my Heart Be Still.” The use of the higher register is retained through the end of the piece, however the score contains no such indication after m. 30. My advice to cellists is to find a copy of the viola part and simply play it an octave lower; the piece works beautifully without further tampering.

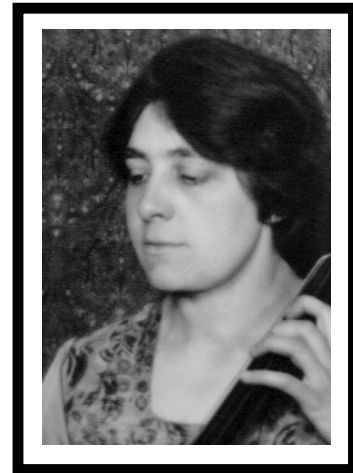
While these pieces, one of them originally for cello, are interesting and important contributions to the repertoire, Clarke’s great piece for cello, and one of the most historically significant as well as aesthetically powerful achievements of her career, continues to be withheld from performance and publication. This is the Rhapsody for cello and piano of 1923 that was commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. It was Coolidge’s first commission in what would become her role as a patroness of monumental importance; it was also her only commission to a woman. It was the only commission of Clarke’s career, and resulted in a work that deserves to be known alongside the other two Coolidge works, the Viola Sonata and Piano Trio. In 1993, I discussed with A-R Editions the possibility of their publishing this work so that it might be available and performed. They were very interested and suggested that the work might be published under a non-exclusive license, which would not restrict other uses of it by its copyright owner. Despite this enthusiasm from this respected publisher, Christopher Johnson (current manager of Clarke’s estate) was not interested in letting the work go. Apparently he is only willing to consider publication through his employer, Oxford University Press, and thus, because of this conflict of interest, the Rhapsody continues to be withheld. ॐ

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The Federal government has approved the RCS as a 501(c) 3, a tax-exempt non-profit organization. Your donations are now fully tax deductible.

Also, our status as a public charity means we need to continue to grow our membership base. Thus we are launching a membership drive and reducing the rate of membership to only \$5 per year for “electronic” members (those who receive the newsletter via email).

Please encourage friends and colleagues to join. A membership form is enclosed and you may also renew (or join) on our web site.



What would May Mukle do?
Give to the Rebecca Clarke Society today!

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