

Richard STÖHR

CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

STRING QUARTET NO. 3 IN A MINOR, OP. 92: SERENADE

SUITE FOR FLUTE, VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO, OP. 76

STRING QUARTET NO. 2 IN E FLAT, OP. 86

Conor Nelson, flute
Velda Kelly, violin
Priscilla Johnson, violin
Judith Teasdale, violin
Susan Schreiber, viola
Stefan Koch, cello
Mary Siciliano, piano

RICHARD STOEHR IN PHILADELPHIA

by Kristina Wilson

Richard Stöhr arrived in Philadelphia in early 1939, one year after the *Anschluss* and his subsequent expulsion from both his teaching post at the Akademie der Musik in Vienna and, soon after, from his native Austria. The decision to flee, though terrible, was urgent, as Stöhr's Jewish background put him in imminent danger of persecution at the hands of the occupying Nazis. After first ensuring the safety of his two children and bidding farewell to his non-Jewish wife – none of whom he was certain to see again – he boarded the *S. S. Hamburg* for New York to face an uncertain and solitary life that he had neither sought nor wanted.

Although, strictly speaking, exile may be too strong a word – after all, Stöhr 'chose' to leave Austria before he could be expelled or worse – his decision was nevertheless thrust upon him by the ideological, political and social forces beyond his control or understanding. The *Anschluss* began an immediate domino effect that toppled his entire world in a matter of months. The Akademie in Vienna put him on leave since he was classified as a 'full Jew' (despite his conversion to Christianity in 1897), forbidding him from even stepping foot inside the walls of the institution. As an 'Aryan', his wife was immune to persecution, but their children, because of his paternity, were not and had to be sent away for their own safety. Faced with such stark and uncompromising realities, Stöhr reluctantly but desperately began reaching out to associates and friends across Europe and the United States in the hope that they could facilitate a means for him to escape Austria while he could still do so.

Alice Foy, an American former student of Stöhr's, was the first to suggest that he seek employment at the Curtis Institute of Music and put him in touch with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, the founder of the school. A small but elite music conservatoire in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Curtis was a world away from the ancient, music-infused

atmosphere of Vienna, and yet Stöhr did not hesitate in appealing to Mrs Bok for any type of employment that would gain him entry into the United States. After receiving word that she truly wanted to help but was unable to do so – at the time Curtis was facing significant financial and administrative hardships – Stöhr wrote on 30 November 1938: ‘This letter means a last SOS call. Knowing by Mrs. Carter-Foy that you are unable to engage me for the Curtis Institute, I implore you to help me in the following way: send me a “sham-engagement” for your institute (or another) that never would be entered in fact but could enable me to get over to the USA immediately’.

It was probably this last desperate letter, coupled with an increasing awareness of the true horrors facing European Jews, that led Mrs Bok to wire a telegram to Stöhr on 19 January 1939, confirming a ‘literal and bona fide’ contract for a post of assistant librarian at Curtis – a contract that very probably saved his life. Thus, on 23 February 1939, Stöhr left Austria – the only home he had ever known – for a new life in the United States.

After disembarking in New York, Stöhr¹ made his way south to Philadelphia, where he met Bill Hargrave, a fellow participant in the American People’s College Program, a series of summer education courses held in the Austrian Alps in the 1930s. Considered novel at the time, the Program challenged the traditional approaches of classroom instruction by placing emphasis on interdisciplinary methodologies, ‘hands-on learning’ and an egalitarian relationship between teacher and student. Little could Stöhr have anticipated that the associations he made during those pastoral Alpine summers would re-enter his life so jarringly only a few years later. But Hargrave was there to support him at a pivotal time of transition, helping his former teacher find an apartment, introducing him to Philadelphia, and, perhaps most importantly, providing a friendship that eased, if not erased, Stöhr’s unrelenting loneliness and isolation.

In September 1939, six months after arriving in Philadelphia, Stöhr began his job in the Curtis Institute library. A month later, emboldened by an overwhelming desire to return to education, he began petitioning for a teaching post. Underlining to both Mrs Bok and Randall Thompson, the director of the school, that his extensive knowledge

¹ Like Arnold Schönberg, who became Schoenberg after he settled in the United States, Stöhr changed the orthography of his name to become Stoehr.



*Richard Stoehr with one of his classes at the Curtis Institute;
Leonard Bernstein is second from the left in the back row*

and teaching experience would be better used in the classroom than in the library, he soon prevailed and was appointed instructor for the Counterpoint, Harmony and Form classes. Although his teaching load was only six hours per week, Stoehr wrote in his diary that they were among his 'happiest moments'; a sentiment that evidently manifested itself in his students, among whom he proved quite popular. Although it is not possible to know exactly how many pupils studied under him during his tenure, those who did included Leonard Bernstein (with whom Stoehr remained lifelong friends), the composer Hershy Kay, the pianists Eugene Bossart, Elaine Flissler, Walter Hautzig and Eugene Istomin, the flautist John Krell and the violinist Veda Reynolds.

Unfortunately, the high regard in which many held Stoehr could not shield him from the increasingly austere wartime economy. By 1941 the financial hardships that had plagued Curtis since the Great Depression had not eased, and so, with no other recourse, Stoehr (who was no longer in danger of being deported) and many others saw their contracts terminated at the close of the 1940–41 school year. Stoehr's loss was also a huge blow to his students who, in a desperate final show of support, presented Mrs Bok with a petition signed by 54 of them, including Bernstein, Bossart, Flissler, Hautzig and Istomin, entreating her to reconsider. But what the students could not know – for Mrs Bok made a point of always being a calm, reassuring presence to her students – was that these staff dismissals were the only means through which she could ensure the continued solvency of the Institute.

Thus, in the summer of 1941 Stoehr travelled from Philadelphia to Colchester, Vermont, where, through the aid of another former student, he had obtained a teaching post at St Michael's College. He held the position until his retirement in 1950, remaining in Vermont with his family (with whom he was reunited in the United States in 1947) until his death on 11 December 1967, at the age of 93.

Kristina Wilson is Archivist of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

TWO-AND-A-BIT STOEHR QUARTETS

by Stefan Koch

The three earlier albums in this Toccata Classics series of chamber music by Richard Stöhr¹ all present music that he wrote in Vienna well before his emigration to the United States. This recording, for the first time, features music composed soon after his arrival in the New World, demonstrating that, though now getting on in years, he could still summon formidable creative powers. The Flute Suite, Op. 76, shows him finding his way back to full-length sonata forms, and the Second String Quartet, Op. 86, marks the full flowering of this second phase of his compositional career.

String Quartet No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 86

More than thirty years elapsed between Stöhr's First and Second String Quartets, Op. 22 and 86,² a gap for which the disruption in his life is partly to blame. The Second Quartet was composed in Vermont in September and October 1942. In this work, Stöhr seems to reconnect with his eastern European roots: his parents were Jews from the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, like Haydn, Liszt and Brahms before him, he drew upon the east for inspiration in this work. Might he have been reasserting his identity in view of the persecution of Jews under way on mainland Europe? Perhaps, although such an assumption must remain speculative for the time being. The Second Quartet is dedicated to The Stein Quartet,

¹ Volume One (rocc 0210) presented the *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 17 (1907), and the Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 40 (1915), with Stefan Koch, cello, and Robert Conway, piano; Volume Two (rocc 0446) offered the Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 16 (1905), and the *Three Songs for Low Voice and Piano with Cello Accompaniment*, Op. 21 (1909), with Laura Roelofs, violin, Stefan Koch, cello, Mary Siciliano, piano, and the bass-baritone Seth Keeton; and Volume Three (rocc 0461) brought the Violin Sonatas No. 1 in G major, Op. 27 (1911), and No. 2 in A major, Op. 62 (1923), with Ulrike-Anima Mathé, violin, and Scott Faigen, piano.

² There is also an early string quartet in G major which remains in manuscript.

an ensemble formed in New York City by two former students of his, the violinist and cellist Ely and Vally Stein.

Stoehr, who wrote a lot of poetry, wrote these lines of his own on the front of the score:

Nach mehr als 25 Jahren
Sah ich auf Euch mit grauen Haaren
Und lege Euch mit vielen Grüßen
Dies tönende Symbol zu Füßen.
Es ist entstanden im Gedanken
daß doch, nach manchen Sturmes Schwanken
Es solchen festen Punkt kann geben
Der Freundschaft heißt, – für's ganze Leben.

*After more than 25 years
I saw you both with gray hair
And with best wishes to you
I lay this piece at your feet.
It came to my thoughts
that still, after many a toss of the storm
there can be a certain firm point
which is called friendship – for all of life.*³

The first movement, *Allegro moderato* [5], begins innovatively (and uniquely, as far as I am aware) with the main theme intoned by the solo cello. As the other instruments join in, the first violin takes over the theme for a more demonstrative statement. A somewhat martial rhythmic motif follows (of which much more will be heard later) and ushers in a lovely second theme in G, one of Stoehr's finest melodic creations. Heard in duet, first in the violins and then immediately in the viola and cello, this theme will be even more effective upon its return. The development section manipulates the first theme in a variety of keys and settings and, true to form, Stoehr creates accompanimental figures

³ Translation by Hedi Stoehr Ballantyne (1927–2018), Richard Stoehr's daughter.

from his thematic material throughout. Further development arises in the recapitulation, and the viola sings the last statement of the main theme quietly and elegiacally as the movement concludes.

The second-movement Scherzo (*Presto*) in C minor/major [6] is a Mendelssohnian romp through a field of triplets, in an unusual ABCD form. Unannounced changes in metre, between $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{9}{8}$, keep the music slightly off-balance in the A section, which is based upon a rising perfect fourth. The B section, in $\frac{2}{4}$, features a motif of a falling minor third but soon ushers in a return of the A section. The C section is really a lyrical, lilting $\frac{3}{4}$ version of the $\frac{2}{4}$ theme from the B section. This music still falls forward, as the movement never entirely loses the momentum from its beginning. The D section, at first, seems in the spirit of the $\frac{2}{4}$ B section, but quickly goes in a different direction, as $\frac{2}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ metres recall the main (A) section of the movement. Stoehr, the consummate craftsman, artfully combines the forward motion of the rising-fourth triplet theme with the lyricism of the falling-minor-third lilting theme into a satisfying conclusion to this brief but captivating movement.

The third movement, *Adagio mesto* [7], arises out of the spirit of Dvořák but is never derivative. A chromatic and highly original introduction ushers in a solemn and hymn-like first section in G minor. A *Poco animato* second section in G major features a sunny violin theme over a walking *pizzicato* cello bass. Shorter reprises of both sections follow, but G minor prevails in the end.

The dramatic opening of the fourth movement, *Allegro giusto* [8], could almost have been written by Shostakovich. It sets the stage for a charming and folksy, almost dance-like main theme. The lyrical first episode moves into B minor but retains the folk quality of the main theme. The dance-rhythms soon work their way back into the texture, and the main theme is heard again, this time in D, followed by a clever inversion of the theme in the violin. Another charmingly lyrical folk-tune episode leads to a *pizzicato* treatment of the main theme, leading directly to yet another folk-tune episode, this one an extraordinarily appealing violin duet. A lyrical version of the main theme ushers in a reprise of the dramatic opening figure of the movement. The coda (*poco presto*) highlights the dance-like main theme one last time before Stoehr launches into an

exciting and remarkably chromatic sweep to the end, in a manner reminiscent of the endings of the second and fourth movements of the Op. 76 Flute Suite.

String Quartet No. 3 in A minor, Op. 92: II. Serenade

Whatever inroads this project might make into Richard Stöhr's music, the sheer scale of his output means that the systematic documentation of his works in recordings is unlikely ever to come about. We therefore took the opportunity to add to our recording of the Second String Quartet the second movement, 'Serenade' [9], of String Quartet No. 3, Op. 92, as a further taste of 'late Stöhr': the manuscript of the Third Quartet is dated 19 April 1943, less than six months after completion of the Second, making its composer 69 when he wrote it. Stöhr employs a very simple ABA form in this movement, but creates interest by sticking with a $\frac{5}{4}$ metre throughout. The viola and second violin play prominent roles, with all instruments taking their turn at the thematic material.

RICHARD STOEHR'S FLUTE SUITE, OP. 76

by Mary Siciliano

Richard Stöhr completed his *Suite für Flöte, Violine, Cello und Klavier*, Op. 76, on 7 January 1942. Its German title notwithstanding, it was one of the first works that he wrote in the United States. This combination was unusual for Stöhr, who tended to write in conventional genres for piano and strings and used the standard forms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,¹ and it suggests that he was writing for a specific group of musicians – perhaps colleagues at St Michael's College or musician friends in Colchester. This Suite incorporates late-Romantic idioms, as well as folk, ethnic and pop idioms of the 1930s; the influences of Brahms, Schumann, Wagner and even Humperdinck can also be heard.

¹ For example, his output of chamber music, which can be consulted at www.richardstoehr.com, includes at least four piano quintets, two piano quartets, six piano trios and fifteen violin sonatas.

The first movement, a Prelude [1], begins with a piano-solo introduction that presents a chromatic motif which subtly reappears in each movement: the violin quotes it in exactly the same key at the conclusion of the entire work. This first movement is ternary in form. The first A section is initially in G minor and has many parallel fifths and sixths, suggesting some solemn and sacred procession of the Renaissance. This modal theme is then woven into the texture of a faster *poco agitato* section. The middle, B, section features sweeping lines that dovetail between all the instruments. It begins in D major, but restlessly modulates until it peacefully returns to the second A section, now in G major.

The second movement is a kind of waltz-fantasy in D major which reflects Stoehr's deep Viennese roots. It begins [2] with a string *pizzicato* calling the listener to the dance. The flute has the first statement of this elegant material, followed by the violin. The cello then introduces a new, stately waltz, followed by a repetition from the violin. Everything then escalates into a waltz-scherzo, which is repeated. A middle section begins in B minor, with a wistful theme that almost has the feeling of a popular song. *Pizzicato* strings call back both the original waltz theme and the second, stately waltz. After one final nostalgic statement in the piano, the movement erupts into a manic coda that distorts the opening theme and abandons all pretence of elegance and order.

In 'Morning Devotion in the Woods' [3] the flute presents a variety of bird-calls that receive responses from the other instruments – perhaps crickets, frogs or other animals. This section is followed by a hymn in E major that pays homage to the beauty of nature. The foreboding middle section, in C minor, features syncopated rhythms, heightened textures and the dovetailing of material between instruments. It finally resigns and evolves back to the E major hymn, which then returns with more glory through the thicker texture. The bird trills return to close the movement peacefully.

The fourth movement, cast in a large ternary form with coda, features abrupt changes of character. The piano and strings open the movement [4] with the unsettling chromaticism that introduced the first movement, before the music settles into G minor twelve bars later. This *Allegro* section is *doppio movimento*, restless and agitated. After a transition to B flat major, a playful theme in D major is introduced in the violin and

makes its way through all of the instruments, only to return to the G minor theme. This time it is marked *forte* and is very dramatic. Then Stoehr combines the opening theme with two themes from the G minor section. The textures become thicker, and the dynamics catapult to *fortissimo*. The B section of this ternary form is a Hebrew-like lament that bends into a horah – a Jewish round-dance. After a dramatic piano solo, the music returns to the G minor *Allegro* theme. The earlier playful theme, this time in E flat major, is transformed into chromatic ‘carnival’ music, which leads in turn to the coda. It begins *fortissimo* with a combination of thematic material from the G minor *Allegro* theme and chromatic motifs in contrary motion. The texture thins abruptly, and the dynamic reduces to *piano*. The last bar is a shocking *subito fortissimo* that reaffirms the disturbing abandonment of expectation and order.

The Canadian flautist **Conor Nelson** gave his New York recital debut in the Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall and has appeared frequently as soloist and recitalist throughout the United States and abroad. Solo engagements include performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and numerous other orchestras. He is currently the Associate Professor of Flute at Bowling Green State University; he previously taught in the same capacity at Oklahoma State University and has given master-classes at over 100 colleges and universities. He has received degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, Yale University and Stony Brook University, where he was the winner of school-wide concerto competitions at all three institutions.



Priscilla Johnson, violin, has performed and taught in Southeast Michigan for over thirty years. After obtaining both a Bachelor of Music Degree and a Master of Music Degree in performance from The University of Michigan, her extensive freelancing career has included concerts with the Ann Arbor, Flint, Saginaw and Lansing Symphony Orchestras. She has also performed with James Dapogny, Louis Nagel, Johnny Mathis, Harry Connick Jr and a host of other musicians, classical and non-classical. In addition to her orchestral and freelance work, she is a member of the River Raisin Ragtime Revue and the Beaumont String Quartet. She maintains a small private studio.

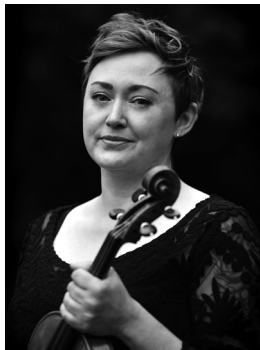


The violinist **Velda Kelly** has been teaching and performing in metropolitan Detroit since 1983. As the recipient of a Music Assistance Fund fellowship, she moved to the area to work with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, remaining for three seasons, from 1983 until 1986. She holds music degrees from Boston University and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where her violin teachers included Henry Meyer, Joseph Silverstein and Denes Zsigmondy. She is a member of the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) Orchestra and also has an active career as a chamber musician. She and the MOT principal cellist Nadine Deleury co-founded and are the artistic directors of Chamber Music at the Scarab Club. She currently performs as an extra with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, has a large class of private violin students and is on



the faculty of Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan. She has also taught for the Sphinx Preparatory Academy, the Michigan State University Community Music School in Detroit and at Wayne State University.

Judith Teasdale, violin, is a native of Pontiac, Michigan, and a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy. She received a Bachelor's in Music from Oakland University, in Auburn Hills, Michigan, where she studied with Ann Elliott-Goldschmid and Joanna Hood, both members of the Lafayette String Quartet. She went on to graduate studies with Walter Verdehr at Michigan State University, earning a Master's in Violin Performance. She holds principal positions in several orchestras in the Detroit area, and performs regularly with the Flint, Ann Arbor and Lansing Symphony Orchestras, as well as the Michigan Opera Theater and the Detroit Jazz Festival Orchestra. Her recording credits include work with Aretha Franklin, Kem, Shaun Martin, the avant-garde rock group The Sursiks and 'American Idol' finalist Jena Irene. She has also shared the stage with a wide variety of artists, including Victor Borge, Sarah Brightman, Dave Brubeck, Glen Campbell, Disturbed, Robert Goulet, Richard Marx, The Moody Blues and The Who. A resident of Detroit, she has been a founding member of several string quartets and maintains an active teaching studio at Oakland University.



Susan Schreiber, viola, comes originally from Concord, Massachusetts, and holds degrees from Michigan State University in violin performance and music education. While pursuing a graduate viola performance degree at Arizona State University, she was a member of the Phoenix Symphony and the Arizona Opera Company. She has been a member of the Aspen Festival Orchestra, the Grand Rapids and Tucson Symphonies and the Göttinger Symphonie Orchester in Göttingen, Germany, and now plays with numerous orchestras in Michigan and Ohio. She is a member of the Horizon Strings Group and the Beaumont String Quartet, and records for various artists. A passionate teacher, she has a private teaching studio in Ann Arbor.



Stefan Koch, cello, is a native of York, Pennsylvania, and received his musical training at Temple University in Philadelphia, where he studied with Hirofumi Kanno and Orlando Cole. He also has a Master's Degree in Philosophy from the University of Michigan. He is a member of the Lansing Symphony and a frequent member with the Kalamazoo Symphony, West Michigan Symphony, Toledo Symphony, Michigan Opera Theatre and Grand Rapids Symphony orchestras. In 2004, 2006 and 2007 he toured the USA and Canada with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and since 2007 has been spending his summers at the Utah Festival Opera in Logan, Utah. In 2012 he undertook a series of recitals presenting the first US performances of the music for cello and piano by Richard Stöhr, the fruits of which, with the pianist Robert Conway, were released on a Toccata Classics album (TOCC 0210) in August 2014. In 2018 he released a second volume of Richard Stöhr's Chamber Music (TOCC 0446). Outside of the classical realm, he has also performed with Sarah Brightman, Anne Murray, Barbara Cook, Dionne Warwick and Burt Bacharach,



Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, Garrison Keillor, Dave Brubeck, The Boys' Choir of Harlem, Mannheim Steamroller, Bernadette Peters, Amy Grant, the Von Trapp Family, Doc Severinsen, Earth Wind & Fire, and Julius 'Dr. J.' Erving. He has also contributed music to the Showtime television movie *The Staircase Murders* (2007) and the French horror film *House of Voices* (2005) and has also appeared in a Toyota Highlander television commercial. He is a long-time resident of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Mary Siciliano, piano, has a multi-faceted career. She performs throughout the United States, Canada and France and as a piano clinician has presented workshops and master-classes in all three countries. She has been broadcast on the radio stations CBC, WDET and WRCJ. She has collaborated on several recordings that have received very positive reviews, and her writing has been published in several piano journals. She received her Masters in Piano Performance from the University of Michigan, where she was awarded the Joseph Brinkman award for outstanding performance. Her former teachers include David Renner, Marian Owen, Eugene Bossart and Louis Nagel. Her own students have distinguished themselves in many prestigious competitions, such as the Music Teachers National Association National Finals, the Piano Arts International Competition and the Oberlin International High School Competition. She was on the piano faculty at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, where she taught applied piano and piano ensemble and coordinated the piano pedagogy programme. She has also taught piano-pedagogy classes at the University of Michigan, Madonna University and Schoolcraft College. She currently has a very successful private studio and continues to give pedagogy workshops throughout the state of Michigan and recently taught in the Interlochen Adult Education Seminar.





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RICHARD STÖHR Chamber Music, Volume Four

Suite for Flute, Violin, Cello and Piano, Op. 76 (1942)	32:06
1 I Prelude: <i>Grave, Poco agitato</i>	7:06
2 II Waltz: <i>Tempo di Valse</i>	6:07
3 III Morning Devotion in the Woods: <i>Quasi recitativo – Andante religioso</i>	10:43
4 IV Introduction and Finale: <i>Andante – Allegro (Doppio movimento)</i>	8:10

String Quartet No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 86 (1942)	29:42
5 I <i>Allegro moderato</i>	10:52
6 II Scherzo: <i>Presto</i>	4:46
7 III <i>Adagio mesto</i>	7:16
8 IV <i>Allegro giusto</i>	6:48

String Quartet No. 3 in A minor, Op. 92 (1943)	
9 II Serenade: <i>Andante sostenuto, ma grazioso</i>	4:49

Conor Nelson, flute 1–4

TT 66:39

Velda Kelly, violin 1–4

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Judith Teasdale, violin 5–9

Susan Schreiber, viola 5–9

Stefan Koch, cello

Mary Siciliano 1–4