

AVS PRESENTS

2023 – Works by Underrepresented Composers



AMERICAN VIOLA SOCIETY

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In 2021, the American Viola Society announced the formation of a recording label to provide affordable recording opportunities for our members. For the inaugural album, the AVS requested submissions of works for solo viola or viola and piano by composers from underrepresented demographics. The response was tremendous, and the final selections on the album were determined through a rigorous peer review process. All violists heard on this album are members of the AVS.

A special thanks to Harold Thompson from Blackwater Recording for his patience and advice as we started this project. Thank you to David Bynog for his support of this new endeavor, and to Laurel Yu for tackling the numerous behind-the-scenes challenges that had to be overcome to make this album a reality.

The American Viola Society inspires excellence and builds community through viola study, performance, research, composition, and lutherie. Please visit our website to learn more about our mission and core values, current projects, and the wealth of resources we offer to the viola community. Discover, join, and donate at:

www.americanviolasociety.org

Lycia de Biase Bidart: Viola do Céu, performed by Fabio Saggin and Mauren Frey

Recorded August 24, 2022 at The Magic Place Studio, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Produced by Fábio Saggin, engineered by Renato Pimentel.

Lycia de Biase Bidart (1910-1991) was a Brazilian female composer who was praised for her performances and compositions during her early adulthood. After getting married, Bidart dedicated her time to her family and compositions. Bidart started her career composing mostly for orchestra, voice, and piano. It was only later in life that she gave more attention to chamber music. The influence of vocal music can be noticed in her compositions for viola. Written in 1969, *Viola do Céu* ("Viola from the Sky"), for viola and piano, is a short piece that highlights the singing quality of the viola, exploring mostly the middle range of the instrument. Lycia de Biase Bidart is considered the first Brazilian female composer to write for viola. A collection with works for viola by Lycia de Biase Bidart can be found for download on the Brazilian Viola Association website (ABRAV.org).

Fábio Saggin, principal viola of the Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra, is an award-winning musician. He completed his Bachelor's Degree at the Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina (Brazil) and later moved to the US, where he obtained his Master's Degree in Music from the Pennsylvania State University, and a Doctoral Degree in Musical Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He also studied for one year at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. During his stay in the US, he performed with orchestras, collaborated with chamber groups, and appeared as guest artist in music festivals.

Dr. Saggin focuses his research on Brazilian music and his album "The Roots Of Brazilian Viola Music" is one of his most recent releases. Dr. Saggin also published a collection of scores with seven works by Lycia de Biase Bidart, the first female Brazilian composer to ever write for the viola, in Brazil. Dr. Saggin is a proud member of the American Viola Society and the Brazilian Viola Society (ABRAV). He plays on a viola by Antonio Nilton Ferreira da Silva (2011) and a bow by Henry Guerra (2017).

Pianist **Mauren Frey** has received several awards in piano and chamber music competitions during her formative period. She is an assistant professor of piano in the Licensure Degree in Music program at the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEL). She holds a PhD in Music - Performance Practice - from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul



(UFRGS), and a Master's Degree in Music from the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC), where she completed her undergraduate work in Piano Performance. She is very active in chamber music performance and also as a soloist; her repertoire highlights Brazilian music for various instrumental ensembles. She conducts ongoing research exploring the Brazilian pianistic repertoire and always seeks to combine her research activities with performance. Ms. Frey is currently enrolled in the Graduate Program in Music at UDESC, where she has been developing her Post-Doctoral research work.

Tigran Mansurian: Lachrymae, performed by the Tallā Rouge Duo

Recorded June 16th 2022 in Typanic Studio, 8370 Ball Rd, Frederick, Maryland.

Recorded, engineered, edited and produced by Domenic Sabol.



Tigran Mansurian, born of Armenian parents in Beirut, Lebanon, merges the Armenian folk music of his heritage with the traditions of Western classical music. Mansurian's unique compositional style has a "mystically suggestive power built on a combination of ancient and modern elements," and his Lachrymae duo is no exception. Originally composed in 1999 for soprano sax and viola, this haunting work, written for violist Kim Kashkashian, explores the grief of illness.

Tallā Rouge, meaning 'The Red-Gold' in Farsi and French, was established by Persian-American & Cajun-American violists, **Aria Cheregosha & Lauren Spaulding**. Formed at The Juilliard School under the mentorship of Roger Tapping, Tallā Rouge has since grown to international acclaim for their engaging performances exploring the intersections of Jazz, West-Asian, Pop, and Fiddle music with Western classical traditions. Tallā Rouge will be the Artists-in-Residence for 2023 – 2024 at Dumbarton Oaks.

Jeanne Behrend: Lamentation, performed by Jacob Adams, viola and Paul Lee, piano

Recorded August 12, 2022 in Moody Concert Hall, University of Alabama School of Music, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Recording engineer and producer: Paul Oliver

Jeanne Behrend's Lamentation is dedicated to the memory of her cousin, Private Edward Epstein, who was killed in the line of duty while serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. Written in 1944,

the work was first performed in 1949 and published in 1952. This is the work's premiere recording. A Philadelphia native, Behrend graduated from the Curtis Institute in 1934 where she studied piano and composition. As a pianist, she made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1937, performing one of her own compositions on the program. By the mid-1940s, she had become disillusioned with her compositional prospects. As her 1988 obituary in The New York Times put it, "After giving up composition in the late 1940s, she explained that she felt opportunities for women in composing were too limiting." She went on to promote American music as an accomplished performer and teacher, holding faculty positions at Curtis, Temple, and Juilliard.

There exists an extensive catalogue of viola works lamenting and remembering the dead – most notably the many elegies written for the instrument. Behrend's powerful viola writing in the Lamentation fits naturally into that collection of pieces in the repertoire.

– Jacob Adams

Lauded for his "engaging" performances and his "expressive and intense" playing (American Record Guide), **Jacob Adams** is Associate Professor of Viola at the University of Alabama. Since making his solo debut with the Cincinnati Symphony at age 17, he has performed at major venues across four continents. Jacob is Principal Viola with the Mobile and Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestras and performs frequently in the section of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared with A Far Cry, Camerata Pacifica, Rocket City New Music, and the Brevard Music Center. Jacob presents regularly at conferences, gives teaching classes throughout the country, and has been published in the Journal for the American Viola Society and Strad. He lives with his wife, Shannon McCue, and their sons, Isaac and Jesse, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Paul A. Lee is currently Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of West Alabama. Outside UWA, Dr. Lee also collaborates with the faculty and graduate students at the University of Alabama. His recent engagements have included multiple recitals in Arizona, string and chamber recitals in Alabama and Mississippi, and performances in New York City with the Litha Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Lee holds degrees from Virginia Tech, the University of Tennessee, and Arizona State University.



Andrea Clearfield: Convergence for Viola and Piano, performed by Sheila Browne, viola and Julie Nishimura, piano

Recorded on November 6, 2018 at Gore Recital Hall, University of Delaware.

Producer and Recording Engineer: Andreas K. Meyer

Convergence was commissioned by and dedicated to acclaimed violist Barbara Westphal. The work is built on the intervallic, melodic and harmonic materials heard in the opening two measures. These elements return in variation throughout the work; aggressive, lyrical, energetic and evocative. The viola and piano are equal partners, engaging in dialogue with these musical materials. Through the process of their dynamic exchange, their expressions converge and transform into a new synthesis.

An American with Irish citizenship, violist **Sheila Browne** has performed in major halls on six continents as a soloist and chamber artist, has recorded for the Sony, Nonesuch, Bridge, MSR and Albany labels, and has premiered several concerti written for her. She has performed/recorded with many great artists including Audra Macdonald, Carol Wincen, David Krakauer, Ruth Laredo, Richard Stoltzman, Diaz Trio, and American, Audubon, Brentano, Borromeo, Calidore, Cleveland, Guarneri, Juilliard, Shanghai and Vermeer quartet members.

Named the prestigious William Primrose Memorial Recitalist of 2016, Sheila was Karen Tuttle's Teaching Assistant at The Juilliard School (B.M.), thereafter earning an Aufbau degree with Kim Kashkashian at the MusikHochschule-Freiburg and a M.M at Rice University with Karen Ritscher and Paul Katz. A dedicated teacher, she was the inaugural faculty violist at Tianjin Juilliard School and TJS Ensemble, performing and giving masterclasses in 16 countries on four continents. She presently teaches as Associate Professor at Lynn University Conservatory. www.violasheilabrowne.com



Pianist **Julie Nishimura** was the University of Delaware School of Music's Faculty Accompanist for 31 years, having performed over 600 recitals, chamber music concerts and opera performances, and, in addition, teaching the Accompanying Classes. During part of that time, she was also a Staff Collaborative Artist for Philadelphia's Strings International Music Festival, now Philadelphia International Music Festival, and, for 20 years, San Francisco-based California Summer Music. Since retirement, she has stayed active as a freelance collaborative artist, enjoying a variety of projects, including work as a rehearsal pianist for Berkeley's West Edge Opera (2021), guest artist for the Gold Coast Chamber Players (2022),

pianist for soprano Elizabeth Joy Kelly's uchoose Opera Project (2022), and Faculty Pianist at Ohio's Encore Chamber Music Institute (2022). She can often be seen jumping in at the last minute for rehearsals and recitals! For over twenty years she has been Artistic Director for Wilmington, Delaware's non-profit, Distant Voices Touring Theatre, which she started with her late husband Danny Peak, performing a theatrical show underscored with piano music about her father's time in the Japanese American Concentration Camps of WWII. Julie has enjoyed recording projects with friends Denise Tryon, horn; Christopher Nichols, clarinet; Sheila Browne, viola; and can be heard on the Bridge, Albany and Navona labels. Currently, she divides her time between the San Francisco Bay Area and the East Coast.

Jessie Montgomery: Rhapsody No. 1, performed by Alyssa Warcup, viola

Recorded June 13, 2022 in Mixon Hall, Cleveland, Ohio.

Recording Engineer: Maxwell Porter & the Cleveland Institute of Music

Rhapsody No. 1 is the first solo violin piece I wrote for myself. It draws on inspiration from the Eugène Ysaÿe solo violin works and is intended to serve as both an etude and a stand-alone work. This piece is intended to be part of a set of 6 solo violin works, each of which will be dedicated to a different contemporary violinist, and inspired by an historical composer. This work for solo violin is the first Rhapsody in a series that will be written for six different instruments. The collection of six solo works pays homage to the tradition of J.S. Bach's solo violin Sonatas and Partitas, his Suites for solo cello and the six solo violin Sonatas of Eugène Ysaÿe. In paying tribute to this archetypal tradition, I have chosen to elaborate by writing for a variety of solo voices across instrument families—violin, viola, flute, bassoon, and double bass—so that the final Rhapsody in the cycle is a five part chamber work for all of the instruments in the collection. This piece represents my excitement for collaboration, as each solo work is written in collaboration with the premiere performer, and my love for chamber music as a staple in my current output.

– Jessie Montgomery

American violist **Alyssa Warcup** is currently pursuing her Master of Music degree at the Curtis Institute of Music where she holds the Edward Montgomery Fellowship. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music. Her mentors include Hsin-Yun Huang, Misha Amory, Jeffrey Irvine, Lynne Ramsey, and Stanley Konopka.



Originally from the Chicago area, Alyssa began her viola studies at age twelve. Alyssa made her solo debut performing the Schnittke Viola Concerto with the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra. She has won first prize in several competitions, including the National Federation of Music Clubs Biennial Collegiate Viola Competition and Wendell Irish Viola Award, as well as the Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition. She is the recipient of the inaugural Howard E. Leisinger Viola Prize from the Tuesday Musical Association.

Alyssa is an avid orchestral musician, performing as a substitute with The Cleveland Orchestra and as a member of Symphony in C. She has appeared as both soloist and chamber musician at festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, International Musicians Seminar Prussia Cove, Fontainebleau Schools, National Arts Centre Young Artists Program, Heifetz International Music Institute, and National YoungArts Foundation.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich: Fantasy for Solo Viola, performed by Mary Moran, viola

Recorded on August 24, 2022 in Michelsen Recital Hall, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, by Two Rivers Recording (Stephen Decker, audio engineer and Sarah Manasreh, producer).

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich adapted the Fantasy for Solo Viola from the original version for violin, which was composed as a compulsory work for the 2014 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. The version for solo viola maintains the soaring virtuosic character of the violin edition while also capturing the earthier qualities of the viola's sound. The music is at turns moody and playful, pensive and capricious, meandering and driving. Motives repeated throughout the piece bring a sense of unity to the contrasting lyrical and rhythmic sections.



Mary Moran has a multi-faceted career as a music performer, educator, and collaborator in the Central Wisconsin region. She is based at the Aber Suzuki Center at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where she teaches private viola lessons and group lessons, and helped initiate a Suzuki in the Schools program. She is also Coordinator for UWSP's American Suzuki Institute. Mary is principal viola of the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra, with which she has been a featured solo performer and a frequent collaborator as part of the CWSO's chamber music and community engagement programs.

Olivier Toni: Improviso para Viola Solo, performed by Rafael Videira, viola

Recorded July, 2022 in Blake Recital Hall at the Suzuki Music School of Westport, Westport, Connecticut.

Recording Engineer: Rafael Videira, Producer/Editor: Cadu Byington

Olivier Toni (1926-2017) was a Brazilian composer, conductor, and music educator. He was instrumental in the development of music education in Brazil, specially in the city of Sao Paulo, where convinced administrators to create a city-sponsored Music School and Youth Orchestra, as well as a Music Department within the Sao Paulo State University, where he was a professor from 1970 until his retirement in 1996, teaching generations of musicians from all over Brazil. He was also a founding member of many orchestras in Sao Paulo, as well as a music festival in the state of Minas Gerais, and took his graduate students to historical cities researching and preserving music written during the Colonial period in Brazil.

Toni defined his own compositional style as “refusing to use all 12 notes,” reacting to the vanguard movements of the early- and mid-twentieth century, such as dodecaphony/serialism and electro-acoustic music. The Improviso for solo viola (written in 2010) uses only six notes (in order of appearance: F, D-flat, E-flat, C, B, and A) and, at first glance it seems like a very rhythmic piece, but the composer indicates that it should be played “with freedom, in a recitative-like manner, and always expressive.”

Brazilian-American violist, **Rafael Videira**, DMA, enjoys a prolific and multifaceted career as a pedagogue, performer, and conductor. He has taught and performed across the USA, Mexico, Brazil, and Germany. As a freelance performer, Dr. Videira has appeared as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player, including concerts and recordings under the direction of Kurt Masur and Helmuth Rilling.

Currently living in Albuquerque, NM, Dr. Videira performs in various local and regional ensembles, teaches at the University of New Mexico's String Lab School, and he serves as one of the conductors for the Albuquerque Youth Symphony. Prior to that, he was a conductor for the Norwalk Youth Symphony, and a violin and viola teacher at the Suzuki Music School of Westport, both in Connecticut. His students have won many competitions and they have also been accepted into prestigious institutions such as The Manhattan School of Music, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Jacobs School of Music (University of Indiana), and The Hartt School (University of Hartford).



Reena Esmail: Varsha वर्षा (Rain), performed by Vijay Chalasani, viola

Recorded on August 15, 2022 at Musirex Studios in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Recorded and edited by engineer Larry Roy, produced by Vijay Chalasani.

Varsha वर्षा (Rain) [2019/2021] was written for the Haydn Seven Last Words project, for Juilliard415. The project commissioned seven composers (including Nico Muhly, Paola Prestini, Jessica Meyer, Tania Leon, Caroline Shaw, and Colin Jacobsen) to write interludes between each of the Haydn quartets. This piece, Varsha, serves as an interlude between Sonata V (Sitio – “I Thirst”) and Sonata VI (Consummatus Est – “It is finished”) of Haydn’s Seven Last Words. The combination of Hindustani raags used in this piece are from the Malhaar family, which are sung to beckon rain. I imagined an interlude between these two sonatas: Christ thirsts. Rain comes from the distance (Megh Malhaar). There is a downpour around him (Miyan ki Malhaar), but he grows slowly weaker. His next words make clear that even the rain is not enough: his thirst is of another sort, which cannot be quenched by water. And so, it is finished.

– Reena Esmail

South Asian-American violist **Vijay Chalasani** is a performer, scholar, teaching-artist, and advocate for diversity and equity whose work focuses on the performance practice of music of the last five centuries. Equally at home on both modern and historical violas, Chalasani has been featured as a soloist in repertoire ranging from Telemann and Graun to Walton and Feldman. An avid advocate for contemporary music, Chalasani was the soloist in the US premiere of Vinko Globokar’s chamber-theater piece *Blinde Zeit* with members of the Callithumpian Consort, supervised by the composer. He has also performed with violist-composer Garth Knox, pianist-conductor Stephen Drury, and the Inverted Space Ensemble, and coached with many living composers including Vijay Iyer, Kamala Sankaram, and Nicole Mitchell. Chalasani performs frequently on period instruments with ensembles such as American Bach Soloists, Boulder Bach Festival, and Sinfonia Spirituosa, as well as in chamber music performances of works from the classical and romantic eras on historical instruments. His research on original viola pedagogy and performance practices of the long 19th century has led to performance collaborations and conference presentations at the Universities of Oxford and Huddersfield (UK), as well as a recording of works by Tchaikovsky and Fuchs made by the Accordes! International Chamber Orchestra released in 2020. Since becoming a permanent resident of Canada in early 2023, Chalasani has performed with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra and Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra. Born in Northern California, he is grateful to now reside on Treaty One territory in Winnipeg with his wife Ruth Denton.



- 1) **Lycia de Biase Bidart: Viola do Céu** (2:07)
Fabio Saggin, viola and Mauren Frey, piano
- 2) **Tigran Mansurian: Lachrymae** (7:47)
Tallā Rouge Duo
- 3) **Jeanne Behrend: Lamentation for Viola and Piano** (7:14)
Jacob Adams, viola and Paul Lee, piano
- 4) **Andrea Clearfield: Convergence for Viola and Piano** (12:27)
Sheila Browne, viola and Julie Nishimura, piano
- 5) **Jessie Montgomery: Rhapsody No. 1** (7:42)
Alyssa Warcup, viola
- 6) **Ellen Taaffe Zwilich: Fantasy for Solo Viola** (6:19)
Mary Moran, viola
- 7) **Olivier Toni: Improviso para Viola Solo** (1:52)
Rafael Videira, viola
- 8) **Reena Esmail: Varsha वर्षा (Rain)** (5:29)
Vijay Chalasani, viola

Mastered by Harold Thompson, Blackwater Recording, Inc.
Cover image: "Contact" Acrylic painting on canvas (2021)
by Susana Amundaraín

Design and layout by Ames Asbell

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