

LENNOX BERKELEY

**CHAMBER
WORKS**

**BERKELEY
ENSEMBLE**



Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989)

Chamber Works

Berkeley Ensemble

Sophie Mather *violin*^{2-5, 7-9}

Dan Shilladay *viola*^{2-5, 7-12}

Gemma Wareham *cello*^{2-5, 7-9}

Lachlan Radford *double bass*⁵

John Slack *clarinet*^{1-4, 13-15}

Andrew Watson *bassoon*¹

Paul Cott *horn*²⁻⁴

with

Julia Loucks *violin*²⁻⁵

Sarah Bennington *flute*¹

Libby Burgess *piano*^{6, 13-15}

About the Berkeley Ensemble:

'[...] the ensemble gels cohesively, and the well-balanced recording shows the players in their best light'

The Strad

'[...] hardly more than one listening should convince you of Ferguson's high craft as he works within Schubert's Octet texture, as should the vibrancy of the Berkeley Ensemble's performance even compared with Dennis Brain and friends in [the Ferguson Octet's] first recording.'

Gramophone

1. **Pièce** (1929) * [2:50]
pour flûte, clarinette et basson

Sextet, Op. 47
for clarinet, horn and string quartet

2. **Allegro moderato** [5:45]
3. **Lento** [4:59]
4. **Allegro** [3:55]

5. **In Memoriam Igor Stravinsky** (1971) * [1:32]
Canon for string quartet

6. **Introduction and Allegro** (1971) [6:41]
for double bass and piano

String Trio, Op.19

7. **Moderato** [5:55]
8. **Adagio** [4:39]
9. **Allegro** [5:15]

Three Pieces for solo viola *

10. **Moderato** [0:59]
11. **[Largo]** [3:00]
12. **[Allegro]** [1:56]

Sonatine (1928)
pour clarinette et piano

13. **Moderato** [4:10]
14. **Lento** [5:30]
15. **Allegro** [2:31]

Total playing time [59:48]

* world premiere recording

Lennox Berkeley

Essentially orthodox in character, if unorthodox in his private and spiritual life, Lennox Berkeley was adventurous and open-minded as a composer. He never looked back at his work but always pressed on to the next piece, exploring and experimenting, in search of the ideal means of expressing his thoughts and feelings.

Like other composers of his time he was much influenced by Stravinsky, but also by Gregorian chant, Bach, Mozart, the French Impressionists, Poulenc. He tried, but rejected, twelve-tone serialism. He wrote songs and operas, piano studies and concertos, string quartets and symphonies, and a treasury of music for the church. He played the piano (better than he thought he did), conducted (when he had to), and taught an entire generation of younger composers, with a kindness and generosity which none of them ever forgot.

Though the piano was his only instrument, Berkeley was always ready to write for other instruments, and for unusual combinations of instruments. This often presented technical problems which were new to him, but, as in the case of

the guitar works for Julian Bream and the Violin Concerto for Yehudi Menuhin, he could always call on the specialist advice of a commissioning musician.

This new recording offers seven of his works for rarer forces, some of which the Berkeley Ensemble found at the British Library amongst the hundreds of manuscript scores acquired from the Berkeley family in 2014. These seven pieces span most of Berkeley's working life, from the **Sonatine pour clarinette et piano**, written in 1928, when he was just down from Oxford and studying in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, to the **Three Pieces for solo viola**, which date from the early 1970s.

The grandson of an earl who was himself adept on the zither, Lennox Berkeley first came to music as a small boy, listening to his mother playing Chopin on the piano, his French aunt playing her own salon pieces, his English godmother singing Schubert, and the pianola at home on Boars Hill near Oxford, which played, as though by magic, assorted rolls collected by his father, a naval officer, mathematician and passionate music-lover.

He started having piano lessons when he went to the Dragon School at the age of eight, though his progress was marred by

a marked disinclination to practice. Nevertheless he enjoyed the piano, and by the time he reached Gresham's School, Norfolk, in 1916, he had developed what a contemporary described as an uncharacteristically florid style of playing. His next school, the equally progressive St George's, Harpenden, encouraged him to compose, and in 1921 he won a prize for a piano piece he'd written that summer at his parents' villa in the shade of the Forest of Fontainebleau.

In 1922 he matriculated at Merton College, Oxford, supposedly to study French, Old French and Philology, but, by his own admission, he did little else but music (with a brief spell on the river in his first year, when he surprised himself by coxing his college boat to some notable successes in Eights Week). While the rest of the Bright Young Things of that Brideshead generation were swanning around in Oxford bags, getting drunk, kissing other men and dancing the Black Bottom, Berkeley was busy composing. During his four years at Oxford he wrote more than seventeen works - mostly songs and keyboard pieces, but also a score for a film starring Evelyn Waugh (as a sinister Dean of Balliol who seduces the Prince of Wales, in a

madcap plot to convert Britain back to Catholicism; alas, the score has vanished).

Converted to the early music revival as much by his own inclinations as by the examples of his organ teachers at Oxford, W.H. (later Sir William) Harris and Henry Ley, Berkeley wrote several harpsichord pieces for his friend Vere Pilkington, with whom he shared rooms. Both young men admired Bach and Stravinsky, French music of the turn of the century and the early Baroque, and despised the romanticism of Wagner.

Berkeley's favourite composer at Oxford was Ravel, and in 1925 he actually met Ravel, when the great man was staying with mutual friends in London. Plucking up his courage he played one of his harpsichord pieces: Ravel approved of the harmonies (which weren't a million miles from his own), but criticised the lack of technique. Berkeley wasn't surprised because he'd never had any composition lessons, and when Ravel prescribed a period of study with the greatest music teacher in Europe, Nadia Boulanger - and offered to make the introductions - he leapt at a chance that was to change his life.

Mademoiselle Boulanger accepted him as a



student, on condition that he wrote nothing of his own for a year, did daily exercises in counterpoint and fugue, and studied the works of the masters, analysing Beethoven piano sonatas, Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, pieces by Debussy and Ravel – and the complete Bach cantatas. Berkeley was up for it all: it's what he had always wanted.

Off duty, he haunted *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, the fashionable bar for the night owls of the avant garde – often with Ravel, who had become a special friend. There they listened to jazz and watched men dancing while Ravel talked. A young Oxford friend once found them at *Le Boeuf*, Lennox wearing a frayed mauve shirt and long hair, with his arm linked in Ravel's, as the older composer expounded his theories. Ravel was never intimate with anyone, but he was unusually close to Lennox, who was charming, nice-looking, talented and modest. More importantly they both 'lived within themselves', drawing from a spiritual well that neither of them needed to talk about, but which was to lead Berkeley to the Roman Catholic Church in 1929.

But there were other friends too: Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, and two other Boulanger students, Igor Markevitch (then

only fourteen) and Stravinsky's son Soulima. Sometimes Soulima took Lennox back home to the Stravinsky's apartment in the rue du Faubourg-St-Honoré. Years later Berkeley remembered Stravinsky's chain-smoking and the fine claret bought by the barrel from Bordeaux. Stravinsky, he said, was kind, well-mannered, elegant – and terrified of his old mother. Though he was courteous, 'he held very definite opinions about everything and could be devastatingly critical of what he didn't like'.

After nearly twelve months of Boulanger's strict regime, Berkeley was allowed to resume composing. One of the first fruits was the *Sonatine pour clarinette et piano*, which Frederick Thurston played with Gordon Bryan at the Aeolian Hall in London in 1928. Bryan, who was both a friend and a professional critic, liked the piece and noted its debt to Hindemith. But another English reviewer accused Berkeley of having 'caught some of the Paris tricks fashionable at the present moment' – in particular, Poulenc's way of creating a double tonality.

Undeterred, Berkeley followed this up a year later with *Pièce pour flûte, clarinette et basson*. The manuscript is stamped '36 Rue Ballu', which was where Boulanger lived. Whether this

indicates that the piece was written there, under Mademoiselle's watchful eye, or whether Berkeley later gave her the manuscript and the stamp is an Ex Libris, isn't clear. His musical biographer Professor Peter Dickinson describes the piece as showing 'a neat, terse, neo-classical technique'.

After six years of study at the 'Boulangerie', Berkeley went south to look after his aged parents in their opulent retirement on Cap Ferrat, next door to Somerset Maugham's villa, La Mauresque. Maugham was always surrounded by interesting people – film stars, royalty, intellectuals and handsome young men; Berkeley joined them for tennis, golf, swimming, visits to the Ballets Russes in Monte Carlo, and parties.

Within a couple of years both his parents died. Alone in the Villa Melfort, Lennox Berkeley hit one of the lowest ebbs of his life. Then came an invitation to represent Britain at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Barcelona. With a heavy heart he set off for Spain in the spring of 1936, just as General Franco was stirring the army into rebellion against the Left-wing Second Republic. But the Civil War was still two months off. Meanwhile Barcelona was alive with music. The first person

Lennox Berkeley met was Benjamin Britten. They had never met before, and fell in a sort of love. For a week they were constantly in one another's company, listening to music, meeting other musicians, talking and sight-seeing – and in England that summer they spent a further, more intense, week composing, reading, talking and swimming in Cornwall. When Britten's mother died the following year, they moved into a converted mill at Snape in Suffolk. Their dream was to live and work together in an unofficial civil partnership. But it didn't turn out like that.

In 1938 Britten suddenly went off to America with Peter Pears, leaving Berkeley alone again – and devastated. On the rebound he formed an unsatisfactory relationship with a young airman who led him a merry dance till the end of the war, when, to their friends' astonishment (and his too), he married his beautiful secretary at the BBC, Freda Bernstein.

During the war Berkeley served as an ARP warden in the Blitz, before joining the BBC, first in the French Service, then in the Music Department as a programme builder for the Symphony Orchestra. In 1943, with one ear to Occupied France, where so many friends had been left



behind, and another to the neo-classical past (Mozart in particular), he wrote the **String Trio** and dedicated it to the Canadian-born violinist Frederick Grinke (Concertmaster of the Boyd Neil Orchestra, which had given the first performance of Berkeley's Serenade for Strings in 1940), Watson Forbes (who played viola in the Aeolian Quartet) and the cellist James Phillips. These three gave the first performance at the Wigmore Hall in August 1944.

Marriage to Freda brought Lennox Berkeley not only security, order, happiness – and three sons – but also the confidence and the peace to write some of his best music. In the decade that followed he produced the *Four Poems of St Teresa of Avila*, the *Stabat Mater*, concertos for one and two pianos and for flute, and the operas *Nelson*, *A Dinner Engagement* and *Ruth*. The **Sextet for clarinet, horn and string quartet** dates from this same fertile period. It was commissioned by the BBC for the opening concert of the Cheltenham Music Festival and played for the first time by the Melos Ensemble on 11 July 1955. The work is dedicated to Berkeley's friend, Alvide Lees-Milne, then married to the architectural historian

James Lees-Milne, but previously married to a Boulanger student, Anthony (later Viscount) Chaplin, whilst simultaneously conducting a discreet affair with the Singer sewing machine heiress, Winnaretta, princess Edmond de Polignac, patron of so many composers, including Berkeley and Stravinsky.

Stravinsky's death on 6 April 1971 was a blow to all those composers who had been influenced by his revolutionary ideas. Berkeley responded with **In Memoriam Igor Stravinsky: Canon for String Quartet**, which was published in *Tempo* magazine that summer, along with contributions from sixteen other composers, including Milhaud, Boulez, Copland, Tippett, Birtwistle and Berkeley's student Nicholas Maw. All the tribute pieces were scored for the instruments which Stravinsky himself had used in his own *Double Canon* of 1959, in memory of the painter Raoul Dufy, and *Epitaphium* (also 1959), in memory of Prince Max Egon zu Fürstenberg.

That same year, 1971, the double bass player Rodney Slatford, then a young man at the start of his career, was taking part in a performance of Berkeley's Serenade for Strings at St John's, Smith Square, and, in the crowded hall, he kept digging his bow into a





man in the front row. When, at the end of the piece, the man rose to acknowledge the applause, Slatford realised he'd been stabbing the composer. He introduced himself – and there and then asked Berkeley to write a work for him. The result was the **Introduction and Allegro for double bass and piano**, which Slatford and his accompanist Clifford Lee played for the first time in a Park Lane Group Young Artists Award concert at the Purcell Room later that year.

'Although he had not written for solo double bass before,' Slatford wrote in the 2014 Lennox Berkeley Society Journal, 'the piece needed no alteration, as Lennox had taken great pains to write something that would be useful not only for Clifford and me, but also for other young players looking for interesting repertoire that was both easily accessible and not too technically demanding.' The piece has been set on examination and competition syllabuses all over the world, and Slatford still feels 'a sense of pride in having secured such a useful piece for the repertoire from such an experienced and respected composer'.

One of the last of the many students who knocked on the door of 8 Warwick Avenue, Little Venice, for a composition lesson with

Lennox Berkeley – and tea with Freda – was a Hungarian-born musician called Stephan Deák, a Jewish refugee from the Holocaust. Berkeley, who probably never knew the details of his tragic life, was touched by his seriousness and wrote for him **Three Pieces for solo viola**, inscribing the manuscript, 'To Stephan Deák, With all good wishes, Lennox Berkeley'. The fingering and bowing instructions on the manuscript are assumed to be those of Deák himself, but there is no indication that he ever actually played the pieces in public, and the work has never been published.

The son of wealthy parents, Stefan Deák began his music studies at the Budapest Academy. When he was eighteen and threatened with forced labour camp, his father smuggled him into Belgium and enrolled him in the Royal Conservatory in Brussels. When the Nazis occupied Belgium, Deák fled south to Lyon and altered his passport to show his religion as Protestant. He then travelled on down to Marseilles and joined the French Radio Orchestra under the conductor Paul Paray, who did so much to help Jewish musicians later in the war when the Nazis occupied France.

In the middle of the war Deák learned that

both his parents and one of his sisters had lost their lives at home in Hungary, and he suffered a mental breakdown.

Diagnosed as schizophrenic, he was treated with electroconvulsive therapy.

On his discharge from hospital he went to Paris, where, in 1946, he married a fellow Jew from Hungary, and shortly afterwards they emigrated to South Africa. But Deák was a difficult man to live with, and, in 1949, his wife left him and took their son to a new life in Israel.

This resulted in another mental collapse, and Deák was admitted to an asylum in Pietermaritzburg. In the 1950s he moved to Britain and joined the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he remained for twenty-seven years, with intermittent spells in hospital. After the suicide of his son, Dr Ilan Deák, he had another relapse, had to leave the Philharmonia and went into a mental hospital in St Albans. He spent his final years in a Jewish care home in Barnet, where he spoke to no one but read and walked. He died in Camden Town in 1999.

The manuscript of his Berkeley viola pieces turned up in a second-hand bookshop in Camden five years later. The buyer gave it to the viola player Elizabeth Watson, who allowed Morgan Goff, viola player with

the Kreutzer Quartet, to give what was thought to have been the world premiere at the West Norfolk Music Festival in September 2009.

Lennox Berkeley remained at home in Little Venice till the last year of his life when, with Alzheimer's disease, he was admitted to St Charles' Hospital, North Kensington, where he died, with his family around him, on Boxing Day 1989.

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Tony Scotland is the author of Lennox & Freda, Michael Russell Publishing, 2010





Berkeley Ensemble

Patron: Michael Berkeley,
Baron Berkeley of Knighton, CBE

Hailed as ‘an instinctive collective’ (*The Strad*) the Berkeley Ensemble takes its name from two British composers of the last hundred years, father and son Sir Lennox and Michael Berkeley. It was formed in 2008 by members of Southbank Sinfonia, Britain’s young professional orchestra, with the aim of exploring the wealth of little-known twentieth- and twenty-first century British chamber music alongside more established repertoire. It now enjoys a busy concert schedule performing throughout the UK and abroad, and is also much in demand for its inspiring work in education.

The ensemble’s flexible configuration and collaborative spirit has led to performances with leading musicians including Sir Thomas Allen, Richard Sisson and Gabriel Prokofiev. The group is an enthusiastic champion of new music and has worked with composers John Casken and Robin Holloway. It was proud to premiere its first commission, Michael Berkeley’s *Clarion Call and Gallop*, in 2013 and featured the piece on its debut recording. Released in March 2014, the

album was praised by Gramophone for ‘the vibrancy of the Berkeley Ensemble’s performance even compared with Dennis Brain and friends in [the Ferguson Octet’s] first recording.’

The ensemble is rapidly building a reputation for innovative and thought-provoking programming and in spring 2014 received official recognition with a Help Musicians UK Emerging Excellence award. Equally at home on the summer festival circuit as in the concert hall, the group has performed at the Latitude and Greenbelt festivals.

Taking its music to new audiences, most importantly through education work, is central to the ensemble’s activities. Its work in this area includes self-directed projects in addition to collaborations with Southbank Sinfonia, Merton Music Foundation and Pan Concerts for Children. The ensemble regularly coaches students in chamber performance at the University of York, is ensemble-in-residence at Queen Elizabeth School in Cumbria and Ibstock Place School in London and runs an annual residential chamber music course in Somerset.

www.berkeleyensemble.co.uk

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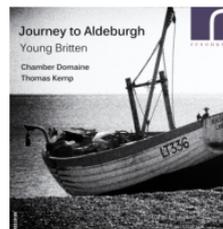


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