

Anatol VIERU

PIANO AND CHAMBER MUSIC

VERSETE FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN, OP. 116

PIANO SONATA NO. 2, OP. 140

PIANO TRIO



Deutschlandfunk

FIRST RECORDINGS

Daniela Braun, violin
Anna Carewe, cello
Irmela Roelcke, piano

ANATOL VIERU: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

by Martin Anderson

Anatol Vieru's music occupies an unusual middle-ground between the age-old and the ultra-new: his initial musical impulses were born of the Romanian folksong he heard around him as he grew up, though he soon evolved towards the mainstream of European modernism.

Vieru was born in Iași on 8 June 1926, where during the Second World War he and his family, as Jews, were interned in the ghetto. Although they were beaten up, and on one occasion narrowly escaped a pogrom, they were not shipped to the death camps. After the War, Vieru was able to resume his interrupted education and attended the Bucharest Conservatoire between 1946 and 1951. The list of his teachers there features some of the most important names in Romanian music: he studied harmony with Paul Constantinescu, orchestration with Theodor Rogalski, composition with Leon Klepper and conducting with Constantin Silvestri. In 1951 he went to the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow, where for three years he took composition lessons with Aram Khachaturian. In spite of this rosy academic trajectory, it was not until 1978 that Vieru, aged 52, obtained his doctorate, from the G. Dima Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania. But he had been extremely busy in the meantime, as his catalogue – over 130 works strong – demonstrates.

The first piece that Vieru acknowledged was a *Suite in the Ancient Style* for strings, which he wrote in 1945, at the age of nineteen (before beginning his formal studies), and which won the George Enescu Prize a year later. He was to garner a number of prizes in the course of his life: his Cello Concerto¹ won the Reine Marie-José Prize in Geneva in 1962, and four years later he won a Serge Koussevitzky Prize in Washington. Among Vieru's other distinctions were a Romanian State Prize (1949),

¹ It turned out to be his Cello Concerto No. 1: No. 2 followed in 1991–96. There is also a *Sinfonia concertante* for cello and orchestra from 1987.

another George Enescu Prize (1967), that of the Union of Composers and Musicologists three times (1975, 1977 and 1979) and the Herder Prize (1986).

His early works manifest an interest in combining modality with folk elements, but his language soon began to take on a more radical accent, even as early as the oratorio *Miorița* ('The Ewe'; 1957). And from around 1964 Vieru began to apply serial techniques more explicitly to his Romanian inheritance. The result, a method of composition he adhered to for the rest of his life, he called the 'sieve principle', using it to generate a soundblock of 61 notes. Vieru systematised his approach to composition in a theoretical treatise, *Cartea modurilor*;² its English translation, *The Book of Modes*, contained a second part, 'From Modes towards Musical Time'.³

The music which results – often using rapid foreground textures built over a basic underlying pulse – sounds both modern and ancient. His orchestration, mirroring his marriage of ancient modes and avant-gardism, often integrates traditional Romanian instruments, such as panpipes and dulcimer, into the modern symphony orchestra.

Vieru was not afraid of the larger forms. His worklist includes four operas: *Iona* ('Jonah'; 1972–75), *Praznicul Calicilor* ('The Feast of the Cadgers'; 1978–81), *Telegrame, Tema și Variațiuni* ('Telegrams, Themes and Variations'; 1982–83) and *Ultimile zile, ultimile ore* ('Last Days, Last Hours', after Pushkin and Bulgakov; 1997–98). There are seven symphonies (1967–93), much chamber music (including eight string quartets), many *concertante* pieces, and a generous quantity of cantatas and other vocal works.

Vieru was active in a number of other capacities. In his earliest adulthood he was a conductor at the Bucharest National Theatre (1947–50) and immediately thereafter (1950–51) took over the editorship of the journal *Muzica*. In 1970 he founded the concert series 'Parallel Musics', and was to conduct its concerts for many years, presenting an enormous range of music, from Lassus via Ives, Skryabin and Schoenberg to Varèse and Schnittke. He also wrote on a wide range of musical topics, often on aspects of the theory of modern music.

² Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1980.

³ Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1993.

Teaching was another thread that ran through his life: he taught at the Bucharest Conservatoire for 35 years, from 1950. Guest-lecturing took him abroad, too: he spoke at the Sarah Lawrence College, in the Bronx, and the Juilliard School (1968), in West Berlin (1972–73), in Israel (1982–83) and in the high temple of modernism, Darmstadt (1992–93). In 1992 he was composer-in-residence at New York University and lectured at Laval University in Canada.

Anatol Vieru died (from heart failure after an operation) on 8 October 1998.

Martin Anderson founded Toccata Classics in 2005 and publishes books on classical music as Toccata Press; he also writes on music for various publications in Britain and abroad. His degree (from the University of St Andrews, in 1977) was in mediaeval French and German, and thereafter he worked in economics for twenty years, in London and Paris.

PEELED MUSIC

by Dan Dediu

An introduction to Anatol Vieru's compositional laboratory cannot ignore the meticulous pre-compositional stages through which each of his works passed, as well as the aesthetic premises involved. Both composer and sound-researcher, Vieru delved deeply into the analysis of the technical procedures that he used in an original way, adapting them creatively. The multiplicity of analytical perspectives, the vast general and musical, theoretical and practical knowledge, the sources of inspiration, the keys to reading, the suggestions for further research, the revelation of the secrets of construction of many of his works – from the indication of the generating blocks of sounds of the Clarinet Concerto (1974) to the chordal matrices of the Fifth Symphony (1984–85) – are only a few of the directions to follow. In fact, Vieru himself indicated the procedures he used in various of his compositions in the *Book of Modes*, especially in the second part, entitled *From Modes to Musical Time*.¹

¹ *The Book of Modes*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1993, p. 217.

Several techniques can be identified that became, over time, characteristic of his music:

- hourglass – a musical form inspired by Charles Ives and composed of three different superimposed musics, for which Vieru proposes the terms ‘perpetuo’, ‘ephemerides’ and ‘soloists’, used in the eponymous works *Hourglass I* (1968) and *Hourglass II* (1970–71), both for soloists and orchestra.
- Eratosthenes’ sieve – an ancient algorithm for establishing prime numbers and their multiples in the order of their appearance, such as 2, 3 and 5, which are considered to be the basis of how the human brain works, used by Vieru in different ways, in *Eratosthenes’ Sieve* for clarinet, string trio and piano (1968), *Écran* for orchestra (‘Screen’; 1969–70) and *Horloges* for dancer, instruments and tape (‘Clocks’; 1970), in the opera *Jonah* (1972–75), with ‘the idea of creating a complex music through the use of a simple vocabulary, based on simple rules’²
- palimpsest – superimpositions of musical layers with different periodicities, as in the *Symphony No. 2* (1973)
- the harmonic psalm – a string of chords chosen, sometimes according to the rules of Eratosthenes’ sieve, and used either as permanent expository material, as in *Symphony No. 5* (1984–85), or according to the chaconne principle, as in *Psalm 1992*.

These ideas and techniques, though adapted from diverse disciplines, Vieru appropriated and then applied through an original and powerful rational and emotional filter. As he states in the afterword to *The Book of Modes*:

my evolution has taken place around these ideas and techniques. From my point of view, they are the most relevant. Stylistic issues are secondary. The style is not neoclassical, folkloric, atonal, neo-tonal, romantic, avant-garde, concertant, modern or post-modern. Of course, these aspects are not to be dismissed. On the contrary, they may be present here and there, but they are subordinate to the intuitions, ideas and techniques described above.³

² *Ibid.*, p. 281.

³ *Ibid.*

But the diversity of his interests did not stop there. He would write several more books of essays,⁴ produce impressive radio commentaries, aesthetic observations, scientific papers, articles on postmodernism and much more. Always remaining curious and alert, in the years after the Romanian revolution of 1989 he would quickly turn towards an all-embracing post-modernism, opening up to monumental musical horizons and narrative in the Sixth Symphony, *Exodus* (1989), and the Seventh, *Year of the Calm Sun* (1992–93), as well as in the opera *Last Days, Last Hours* (1997–98). In his many chamber pieces, Vieru can surprise with the freshness of his inspiration, irony and sly humour (as in *Trântă* ('Wrestle') for baritone saxophone and percussion (1987) and *Design-Dasein* for flute, alto flute and piccolo, played by a single performer (1993)), but he also impresses with his depth, simplicity and feeling for tragedy, as in *Centaurus* for baritone saxophone, trombone and percussion (1998) and *Elegia I in memoriam Myriam Marbe* for baritone saxophone, organ and percussion (1997).

Vieru's Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1997), written only a year before his death, is marked by the clarity of the writing and formal conception, the assurance of the compositional technique, the restrained expressivity and its ample dramaturgical breadth. The four movements reflect Vieru's symphonic conception in chamber music, as it appears from the Fourth Symphony (1982) onwards. The building blocks of his style are present in a perfectly crystallised form in this work:

1. harmony based on consonant chords (major, minor, dominant sevenths) in various polychordal combinations
2. simple melodicism
3. Neo-Classical rhythm, alternating with rubato passages, notated with extreme precision
4. modal scales
5. proliferation of melodic-rhythmic material on a combinatory basis
6. chaconne form
7. variation
8. Eratosthenes' sieve.

⁴ Vieru, *Cuvinte despre sunete* ('Words about Sounds'), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1994; *Ordinea în turnul Babel: însemnări despre muzică* ('Order in the Tower of Babel: Notes on Music'), Editura Hasefer, Bucharest, 2001.

Paradoxically, the Trio is characterised by both stylistic diversity and homogeneity. The fragile and eerie, elegant and bizarre atmosphere of the first movement [1] has as its thematic emblem a melodic formula derived from lullabies. In ternary form, the movement contrasts manners of expression, a limpid diatonic style being contrasted with a hazy chromatic one. Coming as it does in melodic cells from the Cello Concerto No. 1 (1962), the second movement [2] is a sonata-form fused with the beginning of a rondo, but using canonical and rhythmic techniques reminiscent of fugal form and Baroque rhythm: the Trio thus presents a synthesis of traditional forms, a *sui generis* fusion, realised with enormous skill and compositional courage. A cello cantilena – noble and deeply human, with a Romantic emotional intensity – opens the third movement [3]. Conceived as a chaconne on six consonant chords, the music develops like a tree: it grows slowly, underground. It is a clear example, in my opinion, of vegetal-like ‘growing’ music, in which the suggestion of long duration is the composer’s aim. The finale [4] is based on simple folk-motifs. It is in ternary form, with a reprise, plus a coda that intensifies the expression of doubt, and seems to suggest a new question, a mysterious, whispered ‘Who is there?’.

Versete (‘Verses’) for violin and piano (1989) [5] is an example of additive music, which Vieru used as a compositional matrix in several pieces. Additive music could be defined as a music that always brings new material, adding to the elements already in hand. The work is built from 24 microstructures that constitute a labyrinthine chain-form (explicitly numbered in the score), each microstructure springing from musical material of different characters, but sharing the same modal scales. The expressive style of *Versete* oscillates between dynamism and stasis, restlessness and lyricism. Similar to the concatenating verses of a biblical psalm, the musical kaleidoscope Vieru proposes is paradoxical: although they are of equal length, no two verses are alike, and the ideas they present are full of semantic turns, different expressions and questions. A collection of intermezzi, *Versete* is basically a rhapsody that brings with it a meditative and mysterious thrill.

Vieru’s Second Piano Sonata (1994) is cast in three movements, all different in their use of the instrument and their compositional approach. The first movement [6] adopts

a developmental strategy. It starts from a few motifs which combine repeated sounds with chromatic and diatonic scales, supported by harmonic relationships centred on intervallic progressions of perfect fifths. From these fragmented origins more ductile material emerges. The contrasting second movement [7] begins with a continuum of sound that generates its material in melodic waves in octaves, almost mechanically. In the last movement [8] a chorale overlays two progressions of major and minor chords, systematically shifted rhythmically. The rigorous pitch-organisation is also reflected in the inventive piano-writing, which proposes melodies plus clusters of sounds, mirror scale formulas and crystalline-sounding parallel intervals. The finale brings back the original chorale, breaking it down into strips, like a peeled apple.

Dan Dediú studied in Bucharest, Vienna and Paris and teaches composition at the National University of Music in Bucharest. His compositional output focuses on operas, concertos and chamber music, and his writings take an analytical approach to new Romanian music. He leads the Bucharest International New Music Week (festival) and the Romanian Society of Composers and Musicologists (since 2022).

DISCOVERING ANATOL VIERU

by Irmela Roelcke

I first encountered Anatol Vieru's music at the 2016 festival 'Forum Neue Musik', run by Deutschlandfunk in Cologne, with the theme of Jewish identity. In his lecture the musicologist and composer Thomas Beimel threw light on composition in Romania and presented a recording of Vieru's First Symphony, *Ode to Silence* (1966–67). Under the direction of Dan Dediú, Ansamblul Profil, associated with the Bucharest University of Music, played music by Romanian composers in the large Deutschlandfunk broadcasting hall. Vieru's ensemble piece *Stages of Silence* (1966–68) for string quartet and percussion particularly impressed me. I was electrified by this music, immediately fascinated by its unique language that was simultaneously sensual, very expressive and highly energetic, prompting me to continue exploring this path.

Through Thomas Beigel and my Romanian composer-friend Laurențiu Beldean, I got in touch with Vieru's daughter, Lena Vieru-Conta, whom I met a few weeks after my first encounter with Vieru's music on an agreeable summer evening in 2016 in Bucharest, in a garden bar near the University of Music and Cișmigiu Park in the heart of the city, together with her brother, Andrei Vieru, who happened to be visiting from Paris.

Lena and Andrei, both of whom are also pianists, subsequently supported me considerably in my project, and I owe them much gratitude. They provided me with sheet music for solo piano music and for chamber music with piano – some of which was still unpublished at the time – for me to study. During a later stay in Bucharest, I was also able to take a direct look at their father's archive in the family apartment that still exists, which allowed me to feel the aura of this musician family much more closely and directly.

I would also like to thank the composer Dan Dediu, who supports Romanian music in many capacities. During a visit to the Romanian Composers' Association in the Cantacuzino Palace¹ in Bucharest, he gave me a lot of valuable information about Vieru's international importance and thereby gave me a good deal of encouragement to take on this project. From all the material I have collected over time, I have put together what I hope is a dramaturgically coherent selection from Anatol Vieru's late work for this album. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my two colleagues Daniela Braun (violin) and Anna Carewe (cello) for their fruitful collaboration.

¹ The Cantacuzino Palace was built in 1901–3 for Prince Gheorghe Cantacuzino, upon whose death, in 1913, it passed to his son Mihail; when he died, in 1928, it was inherited by his widow, who in 1937 married her long-standing partner, the composer George Enescu, and in 1945–46 the couple lived in a house at the back of the Palace. After the death of the composer in 1955, the George Enescu National Museum was established in the Palace, which also houses a number of Romanian musical institutions.

Daniela Braun, born in Potsdam, studied violin in Berlin with Antje Weithaas and Joachim Hantzschk and string quartet with Eberhard Feltz. She is an active chamber musician and declares herself 'interested in both old and new music and everything in between'. She also plays the viola, is intensively dedicated to the Baroque violin and loves cross-genre boundaries, where she sometimes takes up the singing saw.

A member of the Abraxas Quartet in 2004, since 2011 she has played with the Glorvigen Trio, which has, among other things, a programme 'El Arte de la Fuga y del Tango' that has taken her to prominent stages, in, for example, Brussels (BozArts), the Berlin Philharmonic, to chamber-music festivals in Stavanger, Rosendal and Oslo or the Rheingau music festival. Together with pianist Joachim Carr, the Glorvigen Trio paid homage to Astor Piazzolla in a series of concerts in 2021, his centenary year. In 2020 she became the violinist of the Max Brod Trio.

Formative partners included the pianists Fumiko Shiraga and Frank Lubnow, with whom she made a number of CD recordings. She also worked as a violin teacher for the West Eastern Divan Orchestra and accompanied the orchestra on concert tours. After five years at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Staatskapelle Berlin), in 2011 she moved to the Komische Oper Berlin, where she has worked as second-violin section leader ever since.

The English childhood home of the cellist **Anna Carewe** was filled with music, whether Monteverdi, Haydn, Jacques Loussier, The Swingle Singers, The Beatles or the sounds of contemporary classical music. Both of her parents – the conductor John Carewe and singer Rosemary Phillips – were at the forefront of the British new-music scene, and so it is hardly surprising that this musical diversity had a profound influence on Anna and laid the foundations for her artistic career.

After studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Florence Hooton and David Strange, she



Photograph: Klaus Mellenhörn

moved to Berlin, where her teacher Wolfgang Boettcher was a major guiding figure. For many years, she followed in her parents' footsteps, often playing with renowned contemporary-music ensembles such as the Ensemble Modern Frankfurt or bringing world premieres to life with her duo partner, the pianist Philip Mayers.

Her interest in historical performance practice was awakened as a long-standing principal cellist of the Ensemble Oriol (now the Kammerakademie Potsdam), and as a founding member of the Manon Quartet Berlin she performed on both modern and historical instruments, at major festivals in both Europe and the USA.

Working with young refugees as part of the award-winning *Hangarmusik* project has been a major focus of her work since 2023 and forms the basis of her philosophy that music can benefit people in many different ways. Her mantra is that every musical goal serves also as a springboard into the unknown. That attitude – the fruit of the seeds planted so early on in her childhood – characterises work with her duo partner, the vibraphonist Oli Bott, and with the Sheridan Ensemble, both ensembles that lead audiences through surprising musical worlds and invite listeners to expand their listening horizons.

In her work, **Irmela Roelcke** combines concerts with teaching, and practice with reflection on and communication of music, to which end she develops innovative concepts and dramaturgically profiled programmes. One important strand of her work concerns the rediscovery and performance of rarely played or forgotten piano works and chamber music with piano: for example, she released the first recording of Artur Schnabel's monumental Piano Quintet on the CPO label. She is also committed to contemporary music and has been involved in performing works for multiple pianos. Notable examples are John McGuire's *Frieze*, Clarence Barlow's *Çoğluotobüşişletmesi* and Stefan Wolpe's *Enactments*. She was part of the ensemble that gave the first performance of *Farben der Frühe* for seven pianos by Mathias Spahlinger.

She also specialises in historic keyboard instruments: fortepiano, harpsichord and clavichord. She has played



Photograph: Astrid Ackermann

original works and arrangements in unusual line-ups, alongside such instruments as arpeggione, cimbalom and psaltery.

Her collaboration with the author and film-maker Alexander Kluge has provided her with a close knowledge of the use and purpose of music in interdisciplinary contexts. She has devised and implemented a wide range of projects with Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Surplus, Staatskapelle Berlin, Filmorchester Babelsberg and the Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau, as well as the GrauSchumacher Piano Duo, her piano-duet partner Axel Gremmelspacher, the cellist and arpeggione player Gerhart Darmstadt and the Pellegrini and Bennewitz String Quartets.

A large number of albums and broadcasts testify to her work. Genuin recently released the album *textures* (GEN21714) with Axel Gremmelspacher, featuring works for two pianos by Debussy, Ligeti and Messiaen, and Toccata Next the solo album *Cloches et Carillons* (TOCN 0020), which contains a cross-section of works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the subject of bells and chimes as represented in piano music.

She has a private piano-teaching practice in Berlin and works with the pre-university course at Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Music School. She is often invited to lecture at the Hanns Eisler conservatoire in Berlin, as well as those in Frankfurt am Main, Hanover, Lucerne and Saarbrücken, and at the Berlin University of the Arts.

She also plays as a violist in the audience orchestra of the Konzerthaus Berlin.

Recorded on 14–17 June 2024 in the Deutschlandfunk Kammermusiksaal, Cologne, Germany

Recording Engineer: Philipp Wissner

Recording technician: Oliver Dannert

Recording producer, editing, mixing, mastering: Justus Beyer

Executive producer, Deutschlandfunk: Frank Kämpfer

A Co-Production with Deutschlandfunk

This recording was supported by the 'Neustart Kultur' programme of the Deutscher Musikrat.

Booklet essays: Martin Anderson, Dan Dediú and Irmela Roelcke

Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)

Typesetting and lay-out: ALN Design, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

© Toccata Classics, London, 2025 © Toccata Classics, London, 2025



Deutschlandfunk

ANATOL VIERU Piano and Chamber Music

Piano Trio (1997)

28:36

1 I ♩ ≈ 72

7:34

2 II ♩ = 84–88

7:14

3 III ♩ = 80

7:12

4 IV ♩ = 64

6:36

5 *Verse* for piano and violin, Op. 116 (1989)

17:58

Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 140 (1994)

18:33

6 I ♩ ≈ 48–50

9:04

7 II ♩ = 120

1:31

1 III ♩ = 40

7:58

TT 65:09

FIRST RECORDINGS

Daniela Braun, violin 1–5

Anna Carewe, cello 1–4

Irmela Roelcke, piano