

English composer **Rebecca Clark** began her musical career as one of Britain's first female orchestral musicians, joining the viola section of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1912. In 1916, she travelled to the United States seeking greater opportunities as a composer but found her gender to be a barrier there as well. *Morpheus* was premiered in New York City in 1917 at a chamber music recital featuring several of her works. Self-conscious about being the composer of so many pieces on the program, she decided to apply the pseudonym "Anthony Trent" to *Morpheus*. Predictably, critics raved about "Mr. Trent's" composition while largely ignoring the works attributed to her. While she was discouraged by rampant sexism in American musical circles, she believed in "the fertility of the United States to produce a major composer who happens to be a woman." *Morpheus* (the title refers to the mythical Greek god of sleep and dreams) employs impressionistic harmonies pioneered by Debussy later and adopted by several English composers during the early 20th century.

Arvo Pärt's, minimalist, quasi-mystical compositions are among the most popular and frequently performed works of any living composer. The Estonian's spare, *sui generis tintinnabuli* style was inspired by his self-described "mystical experiences" with Gregorian chant. *Fratres* (Latin for "brothers") was composed in 1977 without fixed instrumentation (Olmos Ensemble will perform the version for violin and piano) and comprises a set of nine chord sequences separated by a recurring percussive motif. According to the composer, the two elements combine the "frantic activity and sublime stillness that encapsulate the instant and eternity [struggling] within us." The piece has been featured on the soundtrack of dozens of films, including the 2007 Oscar winning picture *There Will Be Blood*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis.

Norwegian composer **Johan Halvorsen's** *Passacaglia* is a mainstay of the string repertoire and is frequently performed (Olmos Ensemble's audience will hear the piece on our March 2020 program.) The less well known *Sarabande and Variations*, like the *Passacaglia*, is based on a theme by Handel which film buffs will recognize as the main title to Stanley Kubrick's 1975 film *Barry Lyndon*. Compared with the *Passacaglia*, critic Robert Maxham writes that the piece is "longer and perhaps more imposing...[requiring] strong left hands to execute its massive double-stops as well as an agile right hand to survey its widely varied bowings."

Ludwig Thuille was born in the Austrian province of Tyrol (now part of modern Italy) where his musical talent was recognized at an early age. In the summer of 1877, as a fifteen year old composition student in Innsbruck, Thuille befriended and became pen pals with a twelve year old musical prodigy from Munich on holiday with his family in Austria. The younger boy, Richard Strauss, would go on to dedicate his famous orchestral tone poem, *Don Juan*, to his boyhood friend and the two composers maintained a close personal and professional relationship until Thuille's untimely death at age 45. Strauss was an early advocate for the *Sextet Op. 8*, urging Thuille to submit the work into competition for Vienna's Beethoven Prize and including it on his own programs while touring Europe. With its noble Romantic horn melodies, playful *Gavotte* and hunt-inspired finale, the *Sextet* is a perennial crowd pleaser.

Program Notes written by Jeff Garza.