

REBECCA **CLARKE** WORKS FOR **VIOLA**  
RÚNYA DUO

*Recorded at Chiesa parrocchiale di Monticello, Lonigo the 3-5 December 2013.*

*Artistic direction: Alessandro Simonetto*

*Engineering: Alessandro Simonetto*

*Borgato Concert Grand Piano*

*Tuning: Luigi Borgato*

*Photo on the cover:*

*George Caleb*

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*Liane Curtis, The Rebecca Clarke Society, Inc.*

*[www.rebeccaclarke.org](http://www.rebeccaclarke.org)*

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*Rebecca Clarke*

She founded in 2007 the “Quartetto Avos” (piano quartet) and won in 2009 three of the most prestigious prizes in Italy, specifically the “ACM Trio di Trieste”, the “Premio Gui” and the “Salieri-Zinetti”. She performed in illustrious theaters, such as “La Fenice” in Venice, “Auditorium Parco della Musica” in Rome, etc. She performed also abroad in Holland and Japan (two tournées). In 2011 the piano quartets by Camille Saint-Saëns and by Wolfgang A. Mozart was performed and recorded for the OnClassical label. The Saint-Saëns recording has also been licensed for the label Brilliant Classics. With the quartet she also gained other honours including the “Diploma d’onore” from the Chigiana Academy: only few artists won that prize, among whom there were Uto Ughi and Joaquín Achucarro.

Nowadays, she plays in duo with Arianna Bonatesta, attending with her the International Chamber Music Academy in Duino (Trieste), led by Trio di Parma; she also teaches chamber music at Conservatory “F. Torrefranca” in Vibo Valentia (Italy).

**Arianna Bonatesta** was born in Rome in 1988. She has been studying piano since she was 6 y.o. She debuted as solo pianist at the age of 9.

She graduated in 2010 (I level degree) at Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome, having as mentor Aldo Tramma. She graduated with highest grades in 2012 (solo piano, II level degree) at Conservatorio G. Briccialdi in Terni, having as mentor Carlo Guaitoli; she graduated with highest grades in 2014 (chamber music, II level) with Angelo Pepicelli, playing in duo with Diana Bonatesta as violist.

As solo pianist, she attended international masterclasses of Michele Campanella, Bruno Canino, Aldo Ciccolini, Alexander Lonquich, Sergio Perticaroli, Carlo Guaitoli, and Joaquín Achucarro; she attended also International chamber music masterclasses led by Trio di Parma, Benedetto Lupo, and Anna Kravtchenko.

In 2010, she founded the “Quintetto Amarté” and won in this quintet formation an absolute first prize both in the national competition “Magliano Sabina” and “G. Rossopigliosi”. She studied with Trio di Trieste, Maureen Jones, and Enrico Bronzi at International Chamber Music Academy in Duino (Trieste) and won a scholarship as best chamber music formation. She attended the International Academy in Fiesole; the International Chamber Music Academy, led by Trio di Parma; the High Improvement Academy with Trio di Trieste, Maureen Jones, and Enrico Bronzi; the International Academy of Ars Trio di Roma in Rome; the International Academy of Scile with Stefania Redaelli, Davide Zaltron, Luca Simoncini. She performed in prestigious locations both in Italy and abroad, such as the Faculty of Architecture in Tunis (Tunisia), the Academic Hall at Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the “Festival dei Due Mondi” in Spoleto, the Castello Miramare in Trieste, etc.

She performed numerous concert lessons, among whom there were two concert lessons on F. Chopin’s Studies at Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome.

She was awarded as best young professional musician in 2005 and as best career in 2013 by Comune di Roma (city of Rome).

In 2013, her sister Diana Bonatesta and she founded the Rúnya Duo and this is their first CD.

## REBECCA CLARKE WORKS FOR VIOLA

### Viola Sonata (1919)

①	Impetuoso	08:21
②	Vivace	04:22
③	Adagio	11:53

### Shorter Pieces

④	Lullaby (1909-1918)	04:19
⑤	Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune (1913)	02:49
⑥	Untitled Piece (1917-1918)	06:10
⑦	Chinese Puzzle (1921-1925)	01:57
⑧	Passacaglia on an Old English Tune (1940-1941)	06:04
⑨	I’ll Bid My Heart Be Still (Old Scottish Border Melody) (1944)	03:47
⑩	Morpheus (1917-1918)	08:13
⑪	Dumka for violin, viola and piano* (? 1941)	10:21

## RÚNYA DUO

**Diana Bonatesta: Viola**

**Arianna Bonatesta: Piano**

**\*Gabriele Campagna: Violin**

Rebecca Clarke

*Music with a woman's touch*

«Before disappearing from this world, we will have been women twice».

(Sibilla Aleramo)

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979), an Anglo-American violist and composer, is a fascinating musician, yet she is little known to the general public. Her musical personality is of particular interest for the amount of works (about a hundred songs, choral pieces, chamber works), and for the events which touched her life on a personal and professional level, and which had an impact on her artistic career. A brilliant performer alongside top names such as Pablo Casals, Artur Schnabel, Arthur Schnabel, and a passionate proponent of music (Music and Letters, BBC), Rebecca Clarke is one of the few women who left their mark on composition in a significant period - the first decades of the twentieth century - of prevailing male domination. Much of the music and writings of Clarke still remain unpublished. Studies and recordings were made only after her death, and she has gained greater importance over the last few decades. One wonders why this silence; how it were possible that one of the few British women composers between the two World Wars has remained in the shadows for so long?

Her name often appeared in the major music encyclopedias with reference to her famous husband, James Friskin, who was a pianist and composer, but Rebecca became Mrs. Friskin only in

1944, when she was 58, and after an intense career of her own in the concert halls and with a sizable production of her own pieces. Her character (she apparently suffered from low self-esteem) most likely did not play in favour of her gaining better visibility. It is certain that Clarke - ever since her youth - experienced constant conflict between self-expression, her talent, and the role conventionally attributed to the female figure by the society of the time. In a radio interview in 1976, following newly aroused interest during a tribute to Myra Hess\*, Clarke herself mentions but a few of her works, and considers worth mentioning only the "whiff of success" for the Sonata for Viola ("The only things of any length that I did were the Viola Sonata, the Trio, and the Suite for clarinet and viola"), recounting with pleasant disenchantment the vicissitudes she had to overcome in the course of her career ("Just think, that's fifty-seven years ago! A lifetime, two lifetimes!").

Of course at the time it was considered socially negative to enjoy the status of female composer, and the English and American socio-cultural context in the early and mid 1900s were loaded with restrictive assessments on the role and intellectual and creative capacity of women. The life of Rebecca Clarke is the testimony of an artistic journey which was often difficult, but which she tackled tenaciously to preserve her own niche and identity. After studying violin at the Royal Academy of Music, Rebecca went on to study composition at the Royal College of Music in London. She was Charles Villiers Stanford's first female pupil to specialize only in composition.

A difficult situation with her father forced her to leave home and find work as a musician. In 1913 Rebecca reached a new and remarkable achievement when she entered the Queen's Hall Orchestra as a viola player; being one of the first

# RÚNYA DUO

**Diana Bonatesta**  
*Viola*

**Arianna Bonatesta**  
*Piano*



**Diana Bonatesta** was born in Rome in 1983. She has been studying violin since she was 4 y.o.

She was admitted to Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome at the age of 10 and she graduated with honours both in I and II level, having as mentors Paolo Centurioni and Margot Burton. In 2014, led by Angelo Pepicelli, she graduated with honours (II level degree) in chamber music (viola duo with Arianna Bonatesta) at Conservatorio G. Briccialdi in Terni.

She accomplished the "Diploma di Alto perfezionamento" (high improvement certificate) at Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome both in chamber music with Rocco Filippini and in viola (with honours in 2011) with Massimo

Paris; for her brilliant outcome in "Diploma di Alto perfezionamento" in viola, she gained "G. Sinopoli" scholarship at Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia as best graduate of the year and she was rewarded with a honourable mention by the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano during a formal ceremony at Palazzo del Quirinale.

She studied with Bruno Giuranna, Trio di Trieste, and Quartetto Alban Berg at Accademia Chigiana in Siena; she attended with Bruno Giuranna the International academy "Walter Stauffer" in Cremona; she studied with Trio di Trieste, Maureen Jones and Enrico Bronzi, attending the "Collegio del Mondo unito" in Duino (Trieste); she studied with Quartetto Alban Berg, attending the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Köln (Germany).

first piece is supported by a light play of the piano, as though to evoke the pizzicato of a Celtic harp. In the second, a mildly hypnotic theme emphasizes the undulating motion in elegiac style as though indicating distant, unbridgeable origins.

The agility of *Untitled Piece* (tr. 6, 1917-18), interrupted only by a brief contrasting episode, defines an elegant transposition of dance, almost reminiscent of a Pavana, while the pentatonic arrangement leaves no doubt as to the localization of Chinese Puzzle (tr. 7, 1921), a delightful game of tiny steps, as light as rice paper.

Fascination for the musically archaic is even more evident in *Passacaglia* (tr. 8, 1940-41), on a tune attributed to the master of the English Renaissance Thomas Tallis (XVI cent.). The piece is part of a group of compositions by Clarke dating to the early 1940s, all inspired by the traditional English repertoire (Prelude, Allegro and Pastorale; arrangements of Christmas carols for string quartet and string ensemble); This series also includes the airy *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still* (tr. 9, 1944), arranged on a Scottish tune and written shortly before the marriage to her future husband, James Friskin, a former fellow student at the Royal College of London known 35 years before their chance meeting on American soil.

*Morpheus* (tr. 10, 1917) was performed for the first time by Rebecca Clarke and Katharine Ruth Heyman at the Aeolian Hall of New York on 13 February 1918. The theatre programme bore the name of Anthony Trent, a pseudonym that Clarke had coined by borrowing that of an English river: "I went through the rivers of England until I came across what I thought seemed like a handy surname and I took the name Trent, the river Trent... And this is one far Women's Lib, because although the piece by Anthony Trent was not particularly good, it had much more attention paid to it than the pieces that

I had written, I mean in my own name, which was rather a joke."

A charming piece of great fascination, *Morpheus* is the Greek god of dreams who has a pair of silent wings that carry him everywhere at once to observe human desires hidden away in the mysterious chasms of dreams. The enchanting sounds of *Morpheus* lend impalpable consistency to the stillness of night, and to the infinite, invisible and ephemeral hopes in man's dreams.

Echoes of traditional Slavonic folklore are enclosed in *Dumka* (tr. 11, 1941) which is inspired by an ancient form of singing of Ukrainian origin. Various instrumental versions of this style already existed in works by well-known composers, such as Dvořák and Janáček. There is a deep yearning expressed by the minor key and the slow and melancholy performance that pervades the entire piece. Though there may not be contrasting episodes, *Dumka* is a sublime and masterful description of absolute desolation.

Elisabetta Righini  
Tr.: Beverley K. Drabsch

*Gratitude is extended to the Rebecca Clarke Society for the documentary material which they kindly made available.*

*"What I had not expected, nor could hardly even have hoped for, is that my little radio party would spark a major Rebecca Clarke revival."*

Robert Sherman

amid the few women ever admitted. Her continued success took her to the United States in 1916 where she performed several solos and duets in a world tour which culminated in the years 1922-23.

In 1927, she was one of the founders of the English Ensemble, a piano quartet made up of entirely women. She participated in the Colonial Exposition in Paris in 1931. Rebecca Clarke's great passion, chamber music, was performed by her in duo with cellist May Mülé and with female colleagues, such as the Norah Clench Quartet and the Aranyi Sisters. She also maintained prolonged contact with the Society of Women Musicians. She met important female figures, including the American patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1917), who became her strong supporter.

In 1918, in one of her performances with several of her own compositions, the piece that aroused attention and success was *Morpheus* which had been presented under the male pseudonym Anthony Trent. In the following year, Rebecca her Sonata for Viola to the competition at Mrs. Coolidge's Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music in Pittsfield, and received unexpected and extraordinary results, contending the top prize with the famous composer Ernest Bloch. The jurors were astonished when upon opening the envelopes. The music was remarkable, and they were surprised to read that it was composed by a woman, one who was almost unknown as a composer. In her own account, written years later as program notes, Rebecca Clarke once again claimed ownership of the work, which had become the subject of much speculation: rumor attributed to Bloch; it was even said that the name Rebecca Clarke was an invention to hide another author ("I even once received a press clipping stating that Rebecca Clarke was a pseudonym for someone else – in other words that I did not exist. So I take this opportunity to emphasize

that I do indeed exist.")

The competition in itself was very positive for Rebecca: she gained the esteem of Ernest Bloch, and it consolidated her friendship with Coolidge. The Sonata for Viola (1919) was followed by other pieces; the Piano Trio for Coolidge's Competition of 1921, and the Rhapsody for cello and piano in 1923 was commissioned by Coolidge. These three works represent the most "monumental" of Clarke's work which was generally single movements of more discreet dimensions, such as songs and choral pieces, or short pieces for instrumental duos.

When WW II broke out Clarke was in the USA and there she remained because she was unable to obtain a visa for her return. She moved to Connecticut, where she took on the unlikely work of governess ("My fingers are puckered from all the washing I have to do - self, children, bedding, dishes. Hard to play well that way." ... "Strange that an absent-minded, moody musician should be doing this!"). After a disorienting start, it can be said that her time in the States served to open the way for new beginnings in her personal life. In 1944 she married James ("Rain in the desert"). With regards to composing, which she loved, she admitted to there being limitations: "I can't do it unless it's the first thing I think of every morning when I wake and the last thing I think of every night before I go to sleep. And if one allows too many other things to take over, one is liable not to be able to do it. That's been my experience ... I can't do it otherwise."

This intense declaration of love enables us to see how passionate Rebecca Clarke was about her music, and how much a part of her life it was, both in terms of time and meaning. Her remarkable artistic identity, even under the most unfavourable conditions, was able to defy stereotypes and social customs, and perhaps even her own character since she was disinclined to speak of herself or her

work favourably. Just three years before her death in New York, when Clarke was ninety years old, she gave an interview in which she spoke of her experience as a female composer. Her subtle and engaging humour, her affable tenacity were clearly the qualities that made her the pioneer of women's music in the twentieth century.

## Expressing the intimate

The production of Rebecca Clarke is largely focused on music for a few performers and accompaniment for song: With the exception of choral compositions, Clarke preferred chamber music which allowed for intimate expression. According to the romantic interpretation, preferences act as mirrors that let one see into the inner space, the seat of the author's identity made up of the personal sphere and aesthetic experiences. In fact, Rebecca Clarke's poetic style is a very interesting synthesis of varying references. Her compositional style derives from the old continent and her canonical studies in London under the guidance of Charles Stanford, and reflects the great Western tradition of composition (Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, etc.). At the same time, the revision of the language of composition (composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Ernest Bloch) lent Clarke a more modern palette, which was continuously enriched with creative ideas and impressions gathered from the first years of activity (she started writing in 1905-06 during her first trip to the United States). The result is an eclectic lyricism, which is narrative, full of analogies, and highly evocative. The short pieces for duos are windows onto little worlds where Clarke expresses real stories not unlike one would write in a thoughtful travel diary. The musical vocabulary, which often refers to popular traits

of British folklore, is also not that distant from the quiet firmness of Native American song (Lullaby). One can detect a constant, yet discreet nostalgia in her lyricism able to recreate the atmosphere of the Slavic popular repertoire (Dumka), or bewitch with hypnotic suggestions (Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune, Chinese Puzzle).

A wonderful example of the relationship with the past and with tradition, and fruit of a highly personal use of sound, is her best known (and perhaps greatest) work: the Sonata for Viola (1919; tracks 1, 2, 3) which bears the essence of the great European tradition of composition with its formal and constructive procedures. The elaboration of the motifs and the structural system are close indeed to those of Beethoven, Brahms and Bloch. The melodies and the alternating chords might recall the writing of Debussy. The tones and rhythmic sequences are reminiscent of Ravel, but the vigorous, percussive strokes make one think of Bartók. Clarke combines with extreme naturalness sonoral combinations and proceedings of the old ways with bold tones that are typical of the twentieth-century avant-garde. Principles derived from vocal polyphony are thus used along with modern experimentation. In particular, Clarke uses as a basic element, the musical intervals of an augmented fourth and a minor second.. The three sections of the Sonata refer to the same material, presented in detail in the first movement (tr. 1, Impetuoso), where only a few themes generate all the motifs that appear in the three movements (cyclic form).

The most frequent theme appears with different characters: sometimes with impetuous, stubborn and vehement impulses, [0'00, 1'07], at other times it emerges vaguely with diaphanous sonorities [3' 09", 4' 35"]. The cyclical nature of the composition is evident from the outset, with the same masterful

motif that opens and closes the Sonata as if it were a command, the sound of a trumpet in the initial attack of the first movement, and with its tumultuous motto we see one of the recurring sound signals [5' 26", 7' 57"]. Next to this we see another rapid rhythmic pattern (four semiquavers) occurring on several occasions [1' 00", 3' 42"]; the rhapsodic incipit evokes memories comparable to those created by Debussy in his Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915), and relevant is the extraordinary, stylistic affinity with Sonata n. 2 of Poème mystique, by Bloch (1924). The entrance of the second theme is made evident by the gentle piano key attack [1'28], followed by the viola; the same theme [5' 40"] will softly close the first movement of the sonata, as it becomes an ecstatic melody.

Charles Stanford said, "A piece of music has to breathe like a human being." In the Sonata for Viola the musical movements flow within contrasts between conflict and peace, between adventure and free flight, suggesting analogies of autobiographical character. Included in the score of the Sonata are a pair of verses by the French romantic poet Alfred de Musset, taken from *Les Nuits*, which enhance the themes of pain, love and artistic inspiration in an intimate conversation between the poet and the muse. The dialogue weaves a painful sense of existence with vital abandonement, "Poète, prends ton luth; le vin de la jeunesse / fermenté cette nuit dans les veines de Dieu." (*La Nuit de Mai*, vv. 34-35). Perhaps the choice of Clarke is due to the affinity between the reflection of the poet and the expressive intention of the artist: both, with different means, consider art as an ideal space in which pain and love coexist and are transfigured.

The Second movement (tr. 2, Vivace) is graciously vivace and brings a substantial change: the thematic material of before becomes an effervescent swarm which recalls the verve of the Quartet Op. 10 of

Claude Debussy (II mov.) which was so dear to Rebecca Clarke. There is a brief episode with the melody overlying a vibrating piano [1 '11"] which refers to the theme loaded with nostalgia in the first movement. The main theme [2' 03"] - as though a mischievous elf - is markedly percussive, and contrasts the "sorcery" of a Chinese music box before ending extravagantly in the guise of a cakewalk. We then hear what seems to be a series of prolonged jeers [2 ' 57"] which precedes the very brief appearance of the second thematic fragment of the Viola (lamenting) [3' 27"]. The re-emerging of the "elfish" theme, fast and full of energy, ends with a curious finale of the light and relentless ticking of a metronome.

In the final movement (tr. 3, Adagio) there is a return of the pensive theme heard at the beginning of the Sonata. Here it becomes a solitary e meditative piece for piano. The resumption of the Viola is similar, but its chromatisms suggest greater anxiety, and transform the initial reflection into commiseration. Now the Viola [1 '37 "], acute and then quieter, rests on a fluid, lulling motion of the piano, ending in delicate song. Restlessness and quiet alternate, culminating in the shrill motto of the start of the Sonata [6' 34"], so dissonant and charged with vigour as it heads towards the next stormy and rhythmic episode (agitato) [7 ' 03"]. An ethereal song for two voices [8' 34"] evokes the ecstatic equilibrium of ancient memory (vocal polyphony). The opening theme enters again [9' 31"] and overlapping themes alternate (piano, viola) preceding once again the Viola [10' 30"] which is quiet and composed. The closure is with the initial motto, with imperious insistence.

Lullaby (tr. 4), written in 1909 and included in Clarke's concert repertoire, as was Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune (tr. 5, 1913) reconstructs the atmosphere of ancient traditional melodies. The