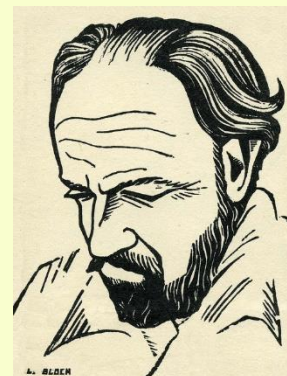


# International Ernest Bloch Society (IEBS)



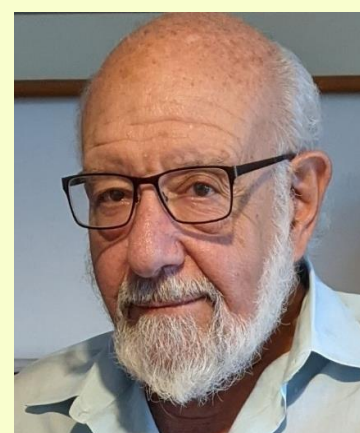
President: Steven Isserlis CBE Chairman: Alexander Knapp  
Associate Artists: Natalie Clein, Danny Driver, Rivka Golani, Mark Kligman  
Miriam Kramer, Jack Liebeck, Malcolm Singer, Raphael Wallfisch, Benjamin Wolf

[www.ernestbloch.org](http://www.ernestbloch.org) [info@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:info@ernestblochsociety.org) [Facebook Group](#)

## Newsletter No 11 – Summer 2023 Editor, Walter Simmons

### In this issue:

- Page 1 Bloch's most favorite works
- Page 2 New recordings
- Page 4 Performances around the world
- Page 11 Two Bloch letters sold at auction
- Page 15 Bloch Study Group recent presentations
- Page 16 Bloch Study Group previous presentations
- Page 17 2030: plans for Bloch's 150th Anniversary
- Page 18 How to keep in touch.



## Favorite Bloch Works

Several months ago, we invited members to submit lists of their favorites among the works of Ernest Bloch. We thought it would be interesting to see which works IEBS members respond to with the greatest enthusiasm. After several announcements in the recent Newsletters, we received 17 responses. Tallying them up, we conclude that the following are the membership's favorites among Bloch's works:

1. —Schelomo
2. —Sacred Service
3. —Concerto Grosso No. 1
4. —Piano Quintet No. 1
5. —Violin Sonata No. 2, "Poème Mystique"
6. —Baal Shem Suite
7. —From Jewish Life
8. —String Quartet No. 2
9. —Piano Sonata
- 10.—Concerto Symphonique



Looking over the results of our survey, we see few surprises. *Schelomo*, *Sacred Service*, and *Concerto Grosso No. 1* were the top three, and that's probably what most of our

members would have guessed. Somewhat more interesting is the fact that an additional five were either the subject of one of our presentations or were discussed in other meetings or newsletters: Violin Sonata No. 2, "Poeme Mystique," *Baal Shem Suite, From Jewish Life*, Piano Sonata, and String Quartet No. 2. This suggests that our monthly presentations make a significant impact on our members, inspiring interest in works that had not attracted attention previously.

It might be a good idea to focus our presentations on works that may be lesser known to members of the Society. I invite all readers to choose one work that they feel warrants greater attention, and then write a few paragraphs advocating it and include links to musical examples and post them on our interactive email list, in the hope that this will provoke interest in these works.



## New Recordings

### Suite for Viola and Piano, 1919

Harmonia Mundi has released a new recording that has attracted a notable degree of praise and attention. The CD offers two major works for viola and orchestra: Bloch's prize-winning 1919 Suite for Viola and Piano, in the orchestral version that he made the following year, and Elgar's Cello Concerto, as transcribed for viola by Lionel Tertis. The violist is Timothy Ridout, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra is conducted by Martyn Brabbins.

In the French publication *Le Monde*, Marie Aude Roux pointed out that much of this work was inspired by Bloch's visions of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and other countries of the Far East—lands that he never visited, but whose exoticism fascinated him and inspired his imagination.

Critic Andrew Clements commented that Bloch's work veers "between full-blooded romantic sweeps and nervy modernist juxtapositions; the best music comes in the third movement, an enchanted nocturne, which Ridout spins out on a beautiful thread of silvery tone."

Rob Cowan was even more enthusiastic in the February issue of *Gramophone*. Comparing the orchestral version of Bloch's Suite to the one with piano accompaniment, he notes that the former "gains a whole new dimension, ...." Cowan agrees with Clements concerning the third movement, which he found to be "charged with a sense of mystery especially as realized by these remarkably intuitive

performers. As Bloch recordings go (sadly there are still too few of them on the market), this is without question one of the finest. The music is quite simply glorious, more than a match for the Elgar Concerto.”

Violist Ridout himself commented to *The Violin Channel*, “I hope that this recording ... introduces people to the vivid colors of Ernest Bloch’s music.... I find it astonishing to think that these works which are so different were both composed in the same year.”

### ***From Jewish Life, Meditation and Processional, Suite Hébraïque*, and the Suite for Viola and Piano (performed on clarinet)**

A recording was recently issued on the Heritage label, which is wholly devoted to chamber works of Bloch that feature stringed instruments: ***From Jewish Life, Meditation and Processional, Suite Hébraïque***, and the **Suite for Viola and Piano**.

For this recording, all the string parts have been **transcribed for clarinet**, played expertly here by Yevgeny Dokshansky. Richard Masters serves as both pianist and as writer of the annotations. IEBS member Myron Silberstein gave the recording an enthusiastic review, emphasizing the effectiveness of the clarinet transcriptions, in the July/August 2022 issue of *Fanfare*.

### **Are all these Jewish works?**

But Silberstein raised one issue worth quoting from: ‘This album, entitled *From Jewish Life: Music of Ernest Bloch*, devotes the bulk of its program to the Viola Suite, which Bloch explicitly disavowed as being a Jewish-themed work.’ In fact, in his own program notes, the composer wrote,

‘[My] Suite does not belong to my so-called “Jewish works,” ... It is rather a vision of the Far East that inspired me: Java, Sumatra, Borneo—those wonderful countries I so often dreamed of, though I never was fortunate enough to visit them in any other way than through my imagination.’

Silberstein states that Richard Masters insists that all Bloch’s music displays his ‘Jewish Soul.’ Silberstein disputes this clichéd assertion, stating that ‘Bloch is often characterized as first and foremost a composer of Jewish music, even though explicitly Jewish themes occupy only about 15 of the 101 numbered works in his catalog. To be sure, some of these pieces are monumental: the “Israel” Symphony; *Schelomo*; the *Sacred Service*.’

But I wonder to what extent Bloch’s Jewish-themed music outweighs, for example, his Asian-themed music, ... or his nature-themed music...—not to mention his purely abstract music (five string quartets; six suites for unaccompanied solo string instruments; two piano quintets; numerous concertante works; two large-scale sonatas for violin and piano and one for piano solo; multiple symphonies aside from



the “Israel” Symphony), several of which rank among the finest of their respective genres.

The liner notes’ contention that “[a]lthough there were many other contemporary influences in Bloch’s music, it was ultimately a Jewish soul that sang the loudest within his musical heart” is essentialist and reductive, as if Bloch had been some type of channel for musicalized Judaism rather than a unique musical voice that worked on occasion with Jewish themes. It’s akin to suggesting that Bach’s keyboard suites are fundamentally Lutheran expressions.’ Silberstein raises important points worth bearing in mind when considering Bloch’s overall contribution to 20th century music.

## Abodah

Member Claude Torres informs us that Decca has issued a 6-CD set featuring the many recordings made by the late violinist Ida Haendel. Included in the set is Bloch’s *Abodah* for violin and piano.

---

## Recent Performances

These are listed in alphabetical order of the work performed.

*Baal Shem Suite* – Joshua Bell and Daniel Trifanov



On April 6, the world-renowned soloists Joshua Bell and Daniel Trifanov joined forces for a violin-and-piano recital. Featured on the program was *Nigun* from Bloch’s *Baal*

*Shem Suite*. The Classical Review reported that “the duo delivered a reading of rhetorical fervor and stirring mellifluousness: both players were intensely matched in rhythmic tautness and articulative unanimity. The result was a performance of Bloch’s paeon to his Jewish heritage that was about as moving—and, a night before Passover begins, fitting—as they come.”

### ***Baal Shem Suite* – Houston Texas**

On April 16, the Houston-based violin-and-piano team known as Duo Dramatique presented a concert, “Seeking Freedom,” to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The duo performed Bloch’s *Baal Shem Suite*. The concert, sponsored and supported by the Consulate General of Poland, took place at the Polish Church in Houston, Texas. Violinist Dominika Dancewicz commented, “The history of Jewish and Polish people is deeply interconnected, and the tragedy of Nazi occupation during World War II has touched both nations.... I think it is very significant that I, a Polish violinist who is non-Jewish, performs a concert of Jewish and Polish music, honoring the heroic fight of Jews, in a diverse American city.... Let us acknowledge the meaning of this concert as an effort to build bridges and cross-cultural understanding.”

### ***Baal Shem Suite* – Wilmette, Illinois**

In January, the Chabad of Wilmette, Illinois, presented an unusual program at the Center for Jewish Life and Learning. Violinist Aviva Chertok brought a musico-theatrical experience to the stage, connecting the audience to the lives of Jewish composers past and present, one of whom was Ernest Bloch. A classical music concert reimagined, *Meet Me in a Moment* shed light on the lives and works of these four great composers. The section on Bloch was set in Cleveland during the 1920s, when Bloch founded the Cleveland Institute of Music. The program featured Bloch’s *Baal Shem Suite*. The program presented each musical selection, followed by a historically-informed, theatrical scene from the composer's life.

### **Concerto Grosso No. 1 – Clark University**

On January 8, 2023 the Worcester Chamber Music Society presented "A Very Open Concert," comprising a discussion and performance of Bloch’s popular **Concerto Grosso No. 1** at Clark University. Bloch completed the work in 1925, shortly before his departure from the Cleveland Institute of Music, which he had founded. Bloch composed the work, as he explained, to demonstrate to his students how music could still be composed using only traditional forms.

### **Concerto Grosso No. 1 – Bohemian National Hall in New York City**

On April 4, the Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews presented a concert of music for strings, featuring a new chamber orchestra named underStaffed. The concert, which took place at the Bohemian National Hall in New York City, featured Bloch's Concerto Grosso No. 1.

### **Concerto Grosso No. 1 – Washington**

On May 14, the Seattle Baroque Orchestra joined forces with the Auburn Symphony Orchestra to present a concert of recent music based on principles and styles of Baroque music. The conductor was Wesley Schulz, and the program included Bloch's **Concerto Grosso No. 1**. The concert was held at the Federal Way Performing Arts and Events Center in Federal Way, Washington.

### **From Jewish Life – Drogheda Ireland**

On July 29, Ireland's Boyne Music Festival has announced a concert entitled, "Heaven and Earth," which will feature Bloch's **From Jewish Life** in the arrangement for cello and strings. The concert will be held at St. Peter's Church of Ireland in the town of Drogheda.

### **From Jewish Life – Philadelphia Radio station WRTI**

On April 5, Philadelphia's radio station WRTI devoted much of its programming to Jewish themes, in honor of Passover. Their programming included Bloch's **From Jewish Life**, played by the French-Jewish cellist Edgar Moreau on one of his most recent recordings.

### **Piano Quintet No. 1 – Milwaukee, Saratoga and Atherton CA**

This summer the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center will be taking its programs on tour throughout the United States. Several of their concerts will include Bloch's **Piano Quintet No. 1**. The first will take place on July 9, at the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee, and will feature Wu Han, pianist, with the Society's String Quartet. The ensemble will bring the work to the Music@Menlo Festival on July 30, at the Menlo School in Atherton, California, in a program entitled "The Turbulent Century." The program will feature works composed during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, on August 20, the Quintet will be presented at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, New York.

### **Piano Quintet No. 2 – several venues in Oregon**

Bloch's **Piano Quintet No. 2**, the composer's last major work, was performed during the first week of March at several major cities throughout Oregon, the state where the composer spent the last two decades of his life. German pianist Frank Immo-

Zichner joined the Delgani String Quartet in a work that, according to the Delgani announcement, “fills the ensemble with impulsive surges, yearning melodies, and rolling waves of unease.”

### ***Sacred Service – Oakland, California***

On March 19, the Cantare Chorale, a non-profit organization based in Oakland, California, gave a concert that included Bloch’s masterpiece *Sacred Service* (Avodat Hakodesh). The soloist with the Chorale was Simon Barrad and the conductor was David Morales. The organization promotes choral music through both adult and youth groups.

### ***Sacred Service – New York***

On March 23, the New York City-based MasterVoices (formerly known as the Collegiate Chorale) also performed Bloch’s *Sacred Service*—this one at Manhattan’s Central Synagogue. The soloist was baritone Justin Austin, and the conductor was Ted Sperling. The performers used the version with organ, rather than orchestral, accompaniment. Joanna Barouch reported a “sensational” performance, commenting that “the choral blend and balance were just about the best one could hope for. Although the sanctuary in which the group performed had an extremely high, vaulted ceiling, there was no mushiness of sound.... MasterVoices knocked it out of the park.”

### ***Schelomo – Amsterdam***

On January 12, cellist Sol Gabetta and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra performed Bloch’s perennial favorite ***Schelomo***, a meditation on the thoughts of King Solomon, at the orchestra’s home in Amsterdam. The orchestra was conducted by Klaus Mäkelä (who also happens to be a cellist).

### ***Schelomo – Mountain View California***

On February 18, a program entitled *Songs of Peace* was presented by the Nova Vista Symphony Orchestra in Mountain View, California. The program included Bloch’s ***Schelomo***, with cellist Jennifer Mori, winner of the 2022 Young Artist Concerto Competition.

### ***Schelomo – New Zealand***

On April 28 and 29, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Donald Runnicles, offered a program entitled “Bloch & Shostakovich, Enduring Spirit.” In





addition to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, the orchestra performed Bloch's ***Schelomo***, with cellist Nicolas Altstaedt as soloist. The program was presented in Wellington the first night, and in Auckland the second. *The Australian* reported that the audience 'hung on every note as if they were the words of a master storyteller.'

### ***Schelomo* – Tel Aviv**

On June 16, Susanna Mälkki guest-conducted the first of five concerts with the Israel Philharmonic. This concert featured **Bloch's *Schelomo***, with cellist Mischa Maisky as soloist. The concert took place in Tel Aviv's Charles Bronfman Auditorium.

### ***Schelomo* – London, Cardiff, Canterbury and Boston – and Snape**



In February this year the exciting young British cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, performed *Schelomo* with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall in London and also in Cardiff and Canterbury under the baton of Jukka-Pekka Saraste (as pictured above at the Royal Festival Hall).

Sheku tweeted: 'The work I'm currently playing with [@philharmonia](#), **Bloch's *Schelomo***, feels like I've discovered a long-lost friend. Thanks to all who came to my performances in Cardiff, London and Canterbury. I really hope you love it too.'

And somebody responded: 'What a perfect Sunday afternoon'. He also performed this work four times in Boston USA in February.



In our Newsletter No. 10, guest edited by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, was a compilation of articles and reviews of Sheku's performances earlier this year. It also included the story and reviews of the work performed with the specially commissioned (and highly praised) reduced orchestration, by composer and arranger George Morton, and performed by Sheku with the London Mozart Players and the Fantasia orchestra.

Sheku will perform *Schelomo* again on Wednesday 16 August 2023 with the pioneering artists of Aurora Orchestra, conducted by Nicholas Collon at the Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk, IP17 1SP. (This concert is already sold out!)

Especially noteworthy to my mind were the program notes for those Boston performances, which were provided by Klára Móricz, Professor of Music at Amherst College. These extraordinary notes far exceed in depth the usual norm for such annotations. Since *Schelomo* is Bloch's most popular work, we felt that some less familiar anecdotal and background information might be appreciated by our members. (See pages 11-12.)



### **Solo Cello Suite No. 3 – University of Nebraska**

On April 3, the Glenn Korff School of Music at the University of Nebraska presented a concert entitled *You Had Me at Cello* at the Lincoln campus. As part of this varied celebration of the instrument, the German cellist Sonja Kraus performed Bloch's *Solo Cello Suite No. 3*. She is active as a performer, a clinician, and a guest lecturer.

### **Three Nocturnes – Copenhagen**

On June 16, the Equinox Chamber Music and Dance Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark, featured two concerts headed *Jewish Voices*. Featured on the second program was Bloch's *Three Nocturnes*, described as "magical."

### **Three Nocturnes – Manurewa, South Auckland New Zealand**

In New Zealand, on November 4, the NZTrio will present Bloch's *Three Nocturnes* for piano trio at the Nathan Homestead in Manurewa, South Auckland. The announcement states that the "Swiss-American composer's evocative *Three Nocturnes* showcase his Jewish heritage with staggering impressionistic beauty,"

## Violin Concerto – London UK



On March 25, Bloch's rarely-performed **Violin Concerto** was performed by Hana Mizuta-Spencer, with the North London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Max.

The concert took place at St. James' Church in Muswell Hill. Previously, on February 8 Maestro Max gave a presentation on the work at our Ernest Bloch Study Group. Ms. Mizuta-Spencer participated in the talk as well, sharing some of her observations about learning the work. Robert Cowan, who has written extensively on Bloch's music, points out that Bloch's work was, coincidentally, written in 1938, the same year as Bartók's celebrated Second Violin Concerto. He asserts that both works share 'a formidable sense of scale, a powerful emotional subtext and a human dimension,' adding that the Bloch is superbly written for the instrument, reflecting the fact that the composer's primary instrument was the violin. Bloch emphatically denied any Jewish background to the concerto, insisting that its themes were based on fragments of Native American melodies. The premiere of the work was given by Joseph Szigeti.

The March 25 performance of Bloch's **Violin Concerto** was reviewed by Malcolm Miller in the *Classical Music Daily*, where he wrote approvingly that "the work recently found powerful advocates in the talented young violinist Hana Mizuta-Spencer" and "Robert Max, their musical director and also an outstanding cellist.... The peripatetic genesis of the Violin Concerto reflects the composer's own transcultural identity: conceived in 1930 in San Francisco, it was mostly composed in Paris during 1935-7, completed in January 1938 in Bloch's native Switzerland, shortly before his return to the USA, where it was premiered later that year, .... Bloch's distinctive voice emerges



at the very start where Robert Max drew out just the right atmosphere to enable the soloist's rising melody ... to evoke the opening stillness and brooding quality.... Hana Mizuta-Spencer, an award- winning graduate of the Guildhall and a prolific soloist and chamber musician, proved an ideal interpreter, having pursued her own in-depth study of a piece still unfamiliar to many leading violinists. Her confident and yet highly variegated tone was eloquent foil to the propulsive motifs of the rich orchestral texture, often in dialogue with soloistic woodwind and brass....

The audience ovations were much deserved by all involved, both for the excellence of the performance itself as too for the sheer effort to champion a work of substance still too unfamiliar. Fortunately, both soloist and conductor are scheduled to repeat it in 2024 with the Oxford Sinfonia of which Robert Max is also conductor, a performance well worth booking in advance.”

(Photos, courtesy of Judy Obrart)



---

## Professor Klara M6ricz writing about Schelomo, in the Boston program book:

Professor M6ricz reports that in 1916, shortly after Bloch's arrival to the United States (around the time he composed *Schelomo*), the distinguished music critic Olin Downes visited the composer in New York. His account of that meeting creates an unforgettable impression and is worth quoting: Downes described Bloch as 'a maniac with blazing eyes, jet-black hair and a face lined with suffering and will and vision.' The composer 'sat at the piano, beating it as a madman his drum, and, bawling, singing, shouting, released a torrent of music which poured out of him like lava from a volcano.' The work Bloch played for the astonished critic was *Schelomo*, which Downes described as "a torrent of music, bitter, passionate, exalted, and all purple and gold."

Born in Switzerland, with its French, German, and Italian cultural threads, the young Bloch was impressed by the works of Debussy, as well as by those of Mahler and Strauss. But he found his own music criticized for lacking a sense of national identity. This led him to identify himself as a Jewish composer, who sought to express in his music what he felt was "the Jewish soul." In addition to *Schelomo* he composed a

number of works during the 1910s and 20s that represented this quest, with titles carrying explicit Jewish references.

“Despite its title and program,” Prof. Móricz notes, “Bloch’s *Schelomo* is not strictly Jewish or even Biblical. It is a turn-of-the-century Orientalist fantasy in the spirit of Gustave Flaubert’s historical novel *Sallambô* and Richard Strauss’s opera *Salome*, both admired by Bloch.... Bloch spent hours in front of the paintings of Salome by Gustave Moreau, the inspiration for Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*, which Strauss used as the libretto of his scandalous opera.”

Bloch enjoyed an unusually long creative life, continuing to compose for more than 40 years after he completed *Schelomo*. After composing the *Sacred Service* in 1933 his interests broadened, with fewer specifically Jewish references in his music, and increased use of abstract forms such as sonatas, quartets and quintets, concertos, and symphonies. His musical style became tighter and less rhapsodic, although, as Prof. Móricz notes, his music “always remained passionate, romantically inspired, and accessible even when critics accused him of modernist harshness.”

Bloch’s immediate source of inspiration in composing *Schelomo* (Solomon in Hebrew) was the ardent intensity of the cello playing of Alexandre Barjansky. After hearing him play, Bloch promptly began writing the work. His view of King Solomon was “sober, severe, and profound, both sensuous and bitter, dominating and resigned.” After hearing *Schelomo*, Barjansky’s wife, a sculptor, was moved to create “a wax sculpture of King Solomon that combined Orientalist splendor with spiritual intensity.... Prone to despair,” Prof. Móricz continues, “Bloch found wisdom in this bitter message, accepting that since life has no meaning, one has to go through it without hope. Bloch captures this pessimistic tone in *Schelomo* by the frequent use of descending, chromatic melodic lines that evoke intense lamentation.” In his work, the cello represents King Solomon, while the orchestra serves as the world at large “that tempts and distracts the tragic figure with lavish colors, barbaric force, and lascivious melodic lines representing the king’s wives and concubines.”

Prof. Móricz points out that “the contrast Bloch posits in *Schelomo* between solo and orchestra is not simply a division of roles but also a conflict between the physical and the spiritual, the Oriental opulence of the external world and the inward, tortured voice of the solo instrument. In his agonizingly torn condition, the protagonist of *Schelomo* can offer only bitter resignation.” Significantly, this is Bloch’s only work that ends in unmistakable pessimism.

The performance of *Schelomo* by Sheku Kanneh-Mason was extraordinarily moving and was received enthusiastically by the audience. In the *Boston Music Intelligencer*, Julie Ingelfinger wrote, “Kanneh-Mason seemed entranced; he dug into the score with intensity and in turn, entranced the hall. His dynamic range, deep tone and expressive demeanor roused the hall.”



---

## Two Bloch Letters Sold at Auction

Two letters by Ernest Bloch were recently sold in auction by Lion Heart Autographs in New York on May 10, 2023.

One was written to a 'Mr. Hurwitz' and was dated April 14, 1934. The short letter expresses the composer's defense against Nazi claims that Jews lack the ability to be artistically creative. It was sold - its estimated price being \$1,600 USD to \$1,800 USD. (We reproduce this letter below). The second, much longer, letter is dated July 1, 1936, and is addressed to Ben Nayim Pine. In it, Bloch touches upon the situation of Jews in Palestine, the relative importance of heredity and environment in shaping human nature, and the ways that the dispersion of Jews throughout the world and their ability to adapt to a wide range of social and economic circumstances have contributed to their ability to survive in the face of so much harshness and cruelty. Bloch emphasizes that he is not an expert in such matters and would readily defer to social scientists who have studied these issues to a greater extent than he.

After residing nearly 15 years in the U.S., Bloch returned to his native Switzerland in 1930, and lived in Europe until World War II prompted his return to his adopted America. It was while in Europe, during this so-called second period of composing, that Bloch wrote Avodath Hakodesh in 1933, and on April 11, 1934, he conducted its American premiere, just three days before writing our powerful letter.

The points raised in our revealing letter underscores Bloch's motivation to compose and have led scholars to observe that 'his firm beliefs in his own work and his faith in the spirituality of mankind make him a singular figure of 20th-century music,' (The New Grove Dictionary).

In addition to mentioning German dictator Adolph Hitler (1889-1945) a year after his election as German chancellor and his propaganda minister and closest supporter Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), our letter also criticizes British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) who declared his 'general policy of appeasement' toward Germany on June 30, 1934, which culminated in the infamous Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938.

Letter folds, otherwise in excellent condition.

A QUIET  
RESIDENTIAL HOTEL  
OVERLOOKING  
CENTRAL PARK

# Hotel Peter Stuyvesant

CENTRAL PARK WEST  
AT 86TH STREET

NEW YORK

April 14<sup>th</sup> 1934

Dear Mr. Hurwitz,

Many thanks — I wish I had  
the time to see you — but I am  
sailing back for Europe, on the  
21<sup>st</sup>, — to conduct 2 concerts at the  
Scala, and in London (there will  
be the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> performance in  
Europe of Aradath Hakodesh) and  
you may imagine how busy I am!  
I have not one minute! —

The service will be given in  
Germany (Jewish Kulturbund —)  
and Chom, A. S. C., Cantor, in the  
greatest Synagogue in Berlin  
and probably Leipzig too —

I hope it may help, and show



that Jews too can create  
and refute Chamberlain - Hitler -  
Goebbels - arguments! -

This is my way to fight them -

In the long run, it may prove  
more helpful than it seems -

The situation of the Jews in Germany,  
and gradually everywhere in Europe, is  
growing worse and worse, and this  
terrible movement is speeding rapidly  
too! Where will the Jews undoubtedly  
it, and cope with it, not with mock-  
trials and other farcical advertising  
affairs but with intelligence??

I am so sorry I cannot talk to  
you more with you - Possibly in the

Fall -

With cordial regards

Yours

Ernest Bloch

## Recent Presentations of the Bloch Study Group

**8 February 2023:** As noted above, conductor Robert Max gave a presentation on his upcoming performance of Bloch's **Violin Concerto** on March 25. Violin soloist Hana Mizuta-Spencer participated in the presentation, which is available on video, at the following link: [Robert Max - the Violin Concerto](#)

**15 March 2023:** the study group welcomed **Jehoash Hirshberg**, Professor of Musicology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The subject of his talk was a work by Tzvi Avni (b. 1927) an important Israeli composer. The work was a cello sonata subtitled *Hommage a Bloch*, composed in 2008. Avni was present for the presentation of his work, which reflects Bloch's identity as a composer of Jewish music, while also revealing non-Jewish aspects of his complex personality. Professor Hirshberg was recently awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in Musicology. The presentation may be viewed here [Jehoash Hirschberg Tzvi Avni Homage to Bloch](#)

## 2022 Presentations from the Bloch Study Group

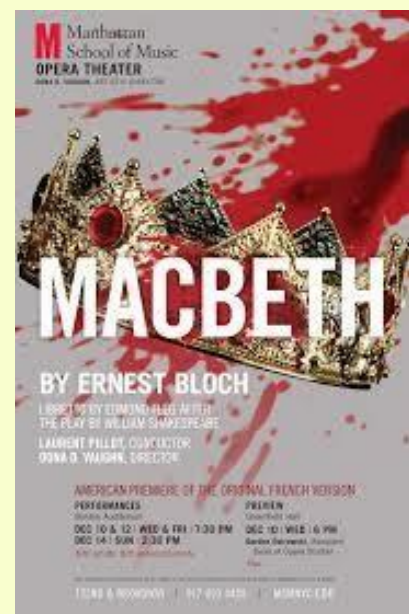
Members and friends of the Ernest Bloch Society have been treated to some illuminating presentations on a surprising variety of aspects of Bloch's life and work. Throughout 2022, usually on the second Wednesday of the month, we have been rewarded with enthusiastic illustrated talks by scholars and musicians on Bloch's only opera *Macbeth*, on his Jewish identity, his photography and about the String Quartet No. 2. See below for the details; and you can look at and enjoy these again on the Bloch Society YouTube channel. (video links included)

**February 2022—Charles Peebles** who conducted the University College (London) Opera Company in four performances of Bloch's *Macbeth* in 2009, shared his thoughts on what he considers a neglected masterpiece and the reasons behind its equivocal status within the operatic world today. [Peebles, Macbeth](#)

**March 2022—Norman Solomon** rabbi and scholar in the field of Jewish studies, gave a talk entitled 'Bloch, Jewish Angst, and Me: Reflections on Music and Jewish Identity.' In it he discussed the ambiguities and complexities involved in determining what is 'authentic Jewish music.' [Solomon Reflections](#)

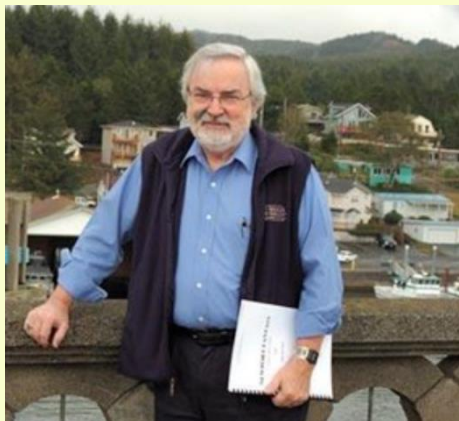
**April 2022—Walter Simmons**, musicologist, critic, and record producer (and Editor of this Newsletter) discussed Bloch's String Quartet No. 2, providing his reasons for citing this work as a consummate masterpiece, focusing especially on the brilliant structure of the last movement. [Simmons, String Quartet no2](#)

**May 2022—Eric Johnson**, photographer and photography professor, discussed the 1922 meeting between Bloch and the master photographer Alfred Stieglitz, delving into the confluence of these two important creative personalities and their mutual exchange of ideas on the commonalities between their respective arts. [Bloch and Stieglitz](#)





**October 2022** - pianist **Zecharia Plavin** of the Jerusalem Academy for Music and Dance shared his insights into **Bloch's *Visions and Prophecies***, a cycle of five eloquently moody preludes for piano solo, based on material from *Voice in the Wilderness*, a work for cello and orchestra. Prof. Plavin drew particular attention to the connections between this work, the geography of the Negev desert, and Bloch's reading of the book of Isaiah. A brief comparison to Hans Sachs' workshop scene in Act 3 from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* highlighted the profound difference between the approaches of Bloch and Wagner, and why these affect different plateaus of human psyche. Video link [Plavin Visions and Prophecies](#)



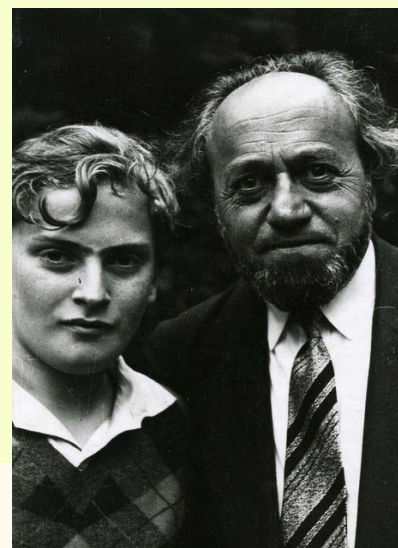
**November 2022 Greg Steinke** (left) was our guest speaker. He is a composer, author, and oboist, on the faculty of Marylhurst University, in Marylhurst, Oregon. There he is Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. From 1993 to 1997 he was **Associate Director** of the **Ernest Bloch Music Festival** in Newport, Oregon. He was also involved with the Bloch Composers Symposium activities in Newport. His fascinating talk was entitled “**The Ernest Bloch Music Festival, Bloch’s Music, and My Own.**” Video link [Steinke Festivals](#)

~~~~~

## Presentations prior to 2022:

If you missed any of the previous presentations, here is a reminder of what they were and links to where you can see and hear them.

1. **Evan Pardi, a double-bassist** a doctoral student at Arizona State University, presented a discussion and analysis of the Suite No. 1 for Cello Solo. His discussion included reference to cellist Zara Nelsova, who played an important role in the performance of Bloch’s works featuring the cello. Listen again at this Video link <https://youtu.be/IT5HYJ9FtSg>
2. **Aaron Klaus, trumpeter**, presented a discussion of the *Proclamation* for Trumpet and Orchestra, with special reference to the musical elements that appear to suggest Jewish inflections in the work’s musical language. Video link [https://youtu.be/A\\_QRoPjq8WY](https://youtu.be/A_QRoPjq8WY)
3. **Joshua Friedlander, violinist** and music director of the Pacific Northwest Chamber Orchestra, earned his doctorate with a treatise on Bloch’s Violin Concerto. His presentation focused on Native American musical elements that infused the thematic material of the concerto. Video link <https://youtu.be/34x6K7pde5E>
4. **Jesse Rosenberg, musicologist** on the faculty of Northwestern University, has done considerable research on the musical role played by Jews in Italy. His presentation focused on the way Bloch was regarded in Italy during the period of Italian fascism. Video link <https://youtu.be/WRq9hZcf5j4>
5. **Malcolm Singer, composer, conductor, and educator**, discussed the long and fruitful relationship between Bloch and violinist Yehudi Menuhin, which dated back to the latter’s childhood. (See picture on the right of the teenage Menuhin with composer Bloch in San Francisco.) Video link <https://youtu.be/bxX7WJ0EDAg>
6. **Rivka Golani, pre-eminent violist**, and the renowned scholar **Alexander Knapp**, discussed various aspects of Bloch's works for



viola. Excerpts from Golani's live and recorded performances were played. Video link

<https://youtu.be/88cCs1-8MIY>

7. **Myron Silberstein**, pianist and composer, presented an analysis and discussion of Bloch's Piano Sonata. Silberstein made a widely-praised recording of the sonata when he was 18! Video link <https://youtu.be/oOjFW8NvGt8>
8. **Edison Verbisck, Portuguese violinist**, discussed one of Bloch's most frequently performed works: the 'Nigun' movement from the *Baal Shem Suite*. (Unfortunately there is no video recording of this session)
9. **Eric Johnson** has been studying Bloch's photography for some five decades, and he provided an in-depth presentation on this side of the composer's creative work. Video link <https://youtu.be/R4PAPahQuQg>
10. **Sita Milchev** and **Lucienne Allen**, Bloch's great-grand-daughter, offered us an interview with her mother Sita Milchev. Ms. Milchev shared illuminating memories of her grandfather. Video link part 1 <https://youtu.be/iZ3CGbf2faM> Video link Part 2 [https://youtu.be/Tx\\_sMjKYy3o](https://youtu.be/Tx_sMjKYy3o)
11. **Matthias Brack**, a Swiss physicist with advanced musical training, gave a presentation sharing his insights into Ernest Bloch's *Poème Mystique* for violin and piano, covering the background of its creation and the discrepancies between different versions, and putting forth an interpretation of a central episode in the context of Bloch's religious identity. Video link <https://youtu.be/zfrsgb3XaSA> Matthias says: 'I have presented my hypothesis that Bloch in the *Poème Mystique* describes a vision of his encounter with God, expressed both musically and through explicitly written quotations in the score (above the musical quotations of the Gregorian Chant). In the discussion after my presentation, this hypothesis was supported in statements by Alexander Knapp and Lucienne Bloch.'

Jesse Rosenberg, who organises and runs these presentations, says: 'We very much look forward to your joining in for these sessions, wherever in the world you may be. Together we will illuminate further aspects of Ernest Bloch's life and music.' If you want to be kept informed, please join the interactive email list. (See instructions on the next page) We look forward to a presentation by **Professor David Kushner in the Autumn.**

---

## The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bloch's birth in 2030

2030 will mark the 150th anniversary of Bloch's birth. Musicians and organisations world-wide, professional, and amateur, are gearing up to perform Bloch's music. Many musicians and organisations will be putting on performances and creating mini-festivals along the way – in 'Building Blochs' up to the anniversary.

**We hope this anniversary will stimulate many more conductors, soloists, orchestras and chamber groups** to discover the many wonderful and seldom heard works, just waiting to be performed. You can peruse Bloch's works by instrument here [Ernest Bloch's music, by instrument](#) For information about how to source Bloch scores, contact [music@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:music@ernestblochsociety.org) Please contact [enquiries@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:enquiries@ernestblochsociety.org) with information about what you are planning, so we can publicise it.

~~~~~

## How to keep in touch:

**Ernest Bloch Society Mailing List:** There is an interactive mailing list of people who are interested in or involved with the music of Ernest Bloch. Please join this list (which is free of charge) to be informed about activity, post questions and announce your Bloch programmes. To join this mailing list, send an email to [listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk). Leave the 'subject' line BLANK and in the 'Message' say: SUBSCRIBE ERNESTBLOCHSOCIETY followed by your First name and your Last name only (please delete any automatic signatures). (Or you can contact [info@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:info@ernestblochsociety.org) for assistance)

**Ernest Bloch Society Facebook Group** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2810320052621256> For those who like Facebook we have a new Facebook group for the Ernest Bloch Society. You may like to join to see what is going on and post your own ideas.

**Ernest Bloch Society YouTube Channel** [Bloch Playlist](#) stores the study session presentations.

**Lewinski-Dijon books available free.** Alex Knapp reminds us that he has several sets of the substantial **four-volume Lewinski-Dijon Compendium in French** entitled: *Ernest Bloch: sa vie et sa pensée* ('his life and his thought'). Alex is happy to send them to whomever would like one, for the cost of just the packaging and postage. Alex will invoice you for postage and packing. Email [knappalexander1@gmail.com](mailto:knappalexander1@gmail.com) to request a set.

**If you know someone** who may be interested in receiving this occasional Newsletter, please either pass on their details or invite them to join our electronic mailing list (see above). **If you no longer wish** to receive these occasional Ernest Bloch Newsletters, please email [info@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:info@ernestblochsociety.org) and we will remove your name from our list.

---

## Bloch Newsletter #11, Summer 2023

**Editor Walter Simmons** [editor@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:editor@ernestblochsociety.org)

Graphics Geraldine Auerbach MBE, Secretary [info@ernestblochsociety.org](mailto:info@ernestblochsociety.org)

~~~~~