

International Ernest Bloch Society

President Steven Isserlis CBE

Associate musicians: Raphael Wallfisch, Natalie Clein, Rivka Golani, Liebeck, Danny Driver, Malcolm Singer, Benjamin Wolf

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Jack

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Bloch Anniversary Events

2019, 17 October, Royal Festival Hall: Schelomo with Raphael Wallfisch

We are delighted to announce that one of the flagship performances for the commemorative years, (2019, commemorating the 60th year of Bloch's death, and 2020 the 140th anniversary of his birth) is a performance of Ernest Bloch's Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra, Schelomo by Raphael Wallfisch with the Philharmonia, at the Royal Festival Hall on Thursday 17 October. This is a great opportunity to hear Bloch in first class fashion in our most iconic concert hall with arguably Britain's finest orchestra performed by an outstanding international soloist. Raphael is a Bloch enthusiast, who has recorded this work to great acclaim. The International Ernest Bloch Society looks forward to attending en bloc and is also thereby hoping to raise some funds for our Bloch masterclass project. If you would like to join the Society at this event please apply to events@ernestblochsociety.org for tickets @ £75 which include a reception together with the Bach Choir and a donation to the International Ernest Bloch Society. (or book at RFH)

2019, 25 September, Wigmore Hall: Viola Suite of 1919 – commemorated in its centenary year

Yet another anniversary is featured in our Bloch anniversary year. This is the centenary of the famous, or infamous, Coolidge competition for a viola and piano piece for the Berkshire Festival USA of 1919. Ms Coolidge had specifically encouraged **Ernest Bloch** and **Rebecca Clarke** who had both come to the USA in 1916 (Bloch from Switzerland and Clarke from the UK) to compose a work. There were apparently 72 who entered – all anonymously. Bloch was declared the winner and his Viola Suite of 1919 was ecstatically received and has been acclaimed ever since. Rebecca Clarke, an unknown composer, took second place and her Viola Sonata was also highly praised. Nobody seems sure who the other 70 composers were, but the hope is that their works, if not winners, somehow also enriched



the solo viola repertoire from that time on. You can read about the competition and reviews of both winning works in the American Viola Society Newsletter of April 1985 here:

<http://www.americanviolasociety.org/PDFs/Community/Newsletters/AVS-28.pdf>

To commemorate this event on the exact 100th anniversary (25 September 2019) of the first performance of Rebecca Clarke, Viola Sonata, , there will be a celebratory concert at the Wigmore Hall where **Raphael Wallfisch** will perform Ernest Bloch's winning work – in a later arrangement for cello and piano, with his regular piano partner John York. Rebecca Clarke's work and other works by both composers will be performed. (Raphael and John pictured above)

Recording: Symphony for Trombone (or Cello)

Raphael Wallfisch has also recorded for the CPO Label, Bloch's Trombone Symphony in the version for cello with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. This has never been recorded before and is a superb work, seldom performed on cello – or even trombone. Raphael says 'I have been listening to the first edits of the Bloch Trombone (Cello) Symphony. Alex Knapp is writing the sleeve notes. The release of this would be ideal at the time of the Wigmore and RFH concerts.' IEBS envisages hosting an interview with Alex, Raphael and Peter Moore, the outstanding young trombonist of the LSO, who has recently performed the work for trombone.

2020, Sunday 2 February: Ernest Bloch Day, featuring Masterclasses and Concert



Acclaimed Bloch interpreters **Rivka Golani** viola (pictured left), **Raphael Wallfisch** cello and **Danny Driver** piano, will guide selected young players through the intricacies of performance of significant and rewarding Bloch works. Members of the public are invited to listen to the masterclasses in the afternoon and to attend an evening concert to hear both the masterclass leaders and the participants. This event, which will include talks and interviews by outstanding Bloch scholars and interpreters, will be held in conjunction with the Jewish Music Institute, and will take place from 11.00am to 9.00pm at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
Concert £15 (free for students)
More information from events@ernestblochsociety.org

Natalie Clein moves to Berlin

Another Bloch enthusiast, the internationally renowned cellist Natalie Clein has also recorded Schelomo with the Scottish National orchestra to great acclaim. Last year and this year she has performed this great work in Poland and Lithuania and around Eastern Europe. In the UK she features Bloch's solo cello suites in many of her programmes. In 2018, Natalie who is a professor at the Royal College of Music was appointed professor at the Rostock Academy in Germany. The family have recently moved to Berlin, where Natalie hopes to share her love of the music of Ernest Bloch. You can hear Natalie perform 'Jewish Song' – From Jewish Life on the BBC 'In Tune' website. The programme is not available, but the music played is here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0000fnm>

2019, 14 September Paris:, Bloch and Lewinski Commemoration

emmanuelledijon@noos.fr

Emmanuelle Dijon, who co-authored the 4 Volume set of Bloch's letters and commentaries with Dr Joseph Lewinski, writes: 'I want to inform you that I will be presenting a Bloch event in Paris

on 14 September 2019. It is a concert in tribute to Ernest Bloch. It will be also a kind of homage to Joseph Lewinski, who was the great French biographer of this composer'. Called **'The music of Ernest Bloch, between classical learned music and Jewish music'** The Programme includes **Ernest Bloch's Poème Mystique, Suite n°1 for violin, Baal Shem and Enfantes**) also Maurice Ravel's Kaddish and George Perlman's Dances of the Rabbis. The artists will be Ariane Granjeon, violin and Laurent Cabasso, piano. It takes place on Saturday, September 14, 2019 at 3.00 pm at Mairie du IVème arrondissement (area 4, borough Town Hall) 2 Place Baudoyer, 75004 PARIS, Métro : Hôtel de Ville, *Free entrance* (follow this link <https://www.cfmj.fr/fr/agenda/concerts-melomania.html>)

2019, 16 June, Nigun, Prague

Katerina Hager writes Our 16-year-old son Matteo Hager, has won the honor to perform Bloch's Nigun from Baal Shem with the Orchestra at the Prague Municipal Hall in his music school's end of year gala concert on June 12th 2019. You can see the performance in the municipal House in Prague here: <https://youtu.be/GCOG8sTJY>
katerina@bohemian-productions.cz 420 604216830

2020 May 17, Richmond Virginia:

Yehudi Menuhin Competition, Jury Concert, salutes Ernest Bloch

The Yehudi Menuhin competition of 2020 in Richmond Virginia, salutes the 140th anniversary of the birth of Ernest Bloch. The five, renowned jurors of the Menuhin Competition will be joined by the Artistic Director, Gordon Back, in a powerhouse evening showcasing chamber music at its very best. The program also celebrates the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth culminating in the five jurors performing the brilliant Schumann Piano Quintet. (Pictured, the young Yehudi Menuhin and Ernest Bloch in San Francisco)

Pamela Frank (violin) *

Noah Bendix-Balgley (violin) **

Joji Hattori (viola) ^

Ralph Kirshbaum (cello) °

Anton Nel (piano) *

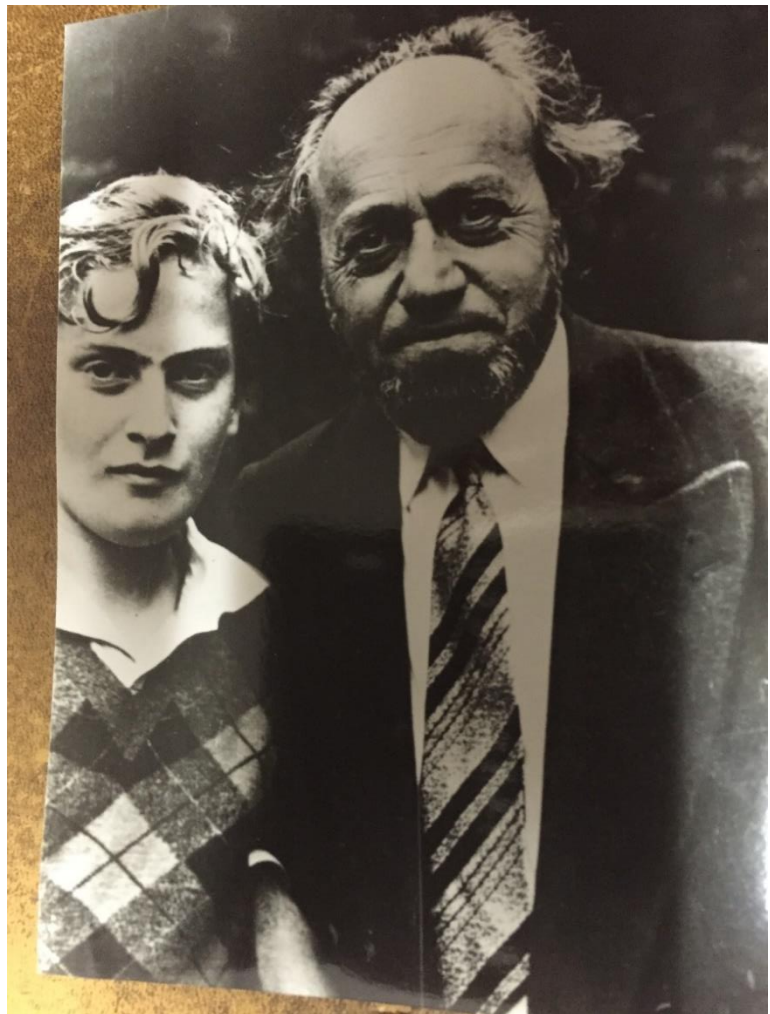
Gordon Back (piano) ***

Beethoven Sonata in A Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 69

Bloch Baal Shem: Three Pictures of Hassidic Life, B. 47 ** ***

Schumann Piano Quintet in E-Flat Major, Op. 44 * ** ^ ° *

This concert is presented as part of Virginia Commonwealth University's Mary Anne Rennolds Chamber Concert Series.



Listings of Bloch activities on the website

Details of these and all the Bloch-related activities that have been brought to our notice, can be seen on the activities page of the IEBS website

<http://ernestblochsociety.org/index.php?id=activites>

Any musicians planning Bloch performances

or recordings in the coming years should please inform the International Ernest Bloch Society so that we can include the details on our website and in our promotions.

info@ernestblochsociety.org

Complete list of Bloch Compositions

Alexander Knapp and Frank Geltner have worked together to revise a list of Bloch's works. It is incorporated into the latest edition of the Bloch Booklet that Frank and Alex worked on last year - The complete list appears as page two of the booklet. The link can be found on the International Ernest Bloch Society website homepage.

<http://ernestblochsociety.org/data/uploads/compositionslist.pdf>

You can also see a list of works sorted by genre here <http://bloch.music.coocan.jp/list02.htm>

News from Bloch Societies Across the World

To hear more about these events, please contact the convenors at the email addresses below.



Dalia Atlas, Israel

datlas@g.technion.ac.il

In May 2019 Dalia Atlas wrote: Congratulations on all your activities, old and new! Today in Israel, we celebrated, 71 years of Independence of Israel. Yesterday evening our Radio station 'Can Kol Ha' Musica' opened the celebration with my recording of **Bloch's ISRAEL Symphony** with the vocal prayer at the end, which was accepted enthusiastically according to all phone calls I got. It is very interesting and beautiful. I conducted the Bloch's two symphonies: Israel and America some years ago at the Bratislava - Festival with their opera singers. The critics

wrote that it was the 'diamond' of the festival... I also gave programs for our Radio station about Bloch's many styles in his interesting music and more. With all my admiration to your activities, and greetings to all our members.

Frank Geltner, Oregon USA fgeltner@ernestbloch.org 001 541-961-1482

Frank writes: I am pleased to announce that Israeli-born Yaacov (Yaki) Bergman, who is Artistic Director of the Siletz Bay Music Festival, will be guest speaker at our annual informal dinner at the Sylvia Beach hotel on Friday, July 5, beginning at 6pm. In addition, on behalf of the Siletz Bay Music Festival, he has offered us a special Bloch concert on Thursday, June 20. Yaacov will be talking about his history with the Bloch family and some observations about Bloch's music. They will perform Ernest Bloch's 'Nirvana' from 1923. In the Bloch program source book, *Creative Spirit*, Susanne Bloch mentions that 'Nirvana is all atmosphere, sonorities, and contemplative. The repeated patterns, slow tempo, texture, parallel motion and soft dynamics reflect Bloch's idea of nirvana as something eternal, timeless, broad, mysterious, and distant. Bloch creates a general mood that is quiet, static, pure, and peaceful. This piece shows the influences of two major elements, impressionism and exoticism.'

Frank also writes that One of the goals of the Ernest Bloch Legacy Project was to arrange that **Ernest Bloch Place** would be illuminated during the evening. 'So, we are delighted that on Thursday, May 9, 2019, the council installed a



new light which creates some magic to the place after dark.'



Frank adds: One additional detail I might add is the return to the Newport area of one of **Ernest Bloch's capes**, which had made its way to a closet of Ernest Bloch II. It was transported to Newport by Judy Buffo, Ernie's partner. It is now in the Lincoln County Historical Society's possession. Fortunately, we were able to locate a photo showing Ernest Bloch wearing the cape in the presence of daughter, Suzanne Bloch; who, in the photo, is also carrying her

lute. You will be able to see more of this story and see pictures of the Cape and of Bloch wearing it on the Ernest Bloch legacy website soon.

Oliver Margulies, Switzerland www.ernestbloch.ch

In May 2019 Oliver wrote, 'Association BloCH member (and Bloch scholar) Jacques Tchamkerten has published an article on **Ernest Bloch's symphonic poem 'Helvetia'**. The open access article can be retrieved from the following link: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/67681>. With the dissolution of the stock of Dijon/Lewinski's four-volume biography on Ernest Bloch (Edition Slatkine), the Association BloCH has received authorised digital copies of the books. Along with a set of physical copies of the book, the digital versions of the book have been integrated in the Zurich University of the Arts' catalogue system and are accessible internationally. The pdf documents can be used for research by use of the full-text search function (**nb: read-only**). recherche.nebis.ch, type in keywords 'Dijon' and 'Lewinski' to access the digital copies. When accessing the documentation, the duration until the documents become available on the computer screen will vary depending on the respective computer's technical specifications.

Akinori ITOH, Nagoya, Japan akinori_itoh@yahoo.co.jp

Akinori contacted us in May to say: 'Unexpectedly, this year in Japan, Bloch's music is performed many times. Especially, SCHELOMO will be performed 5 times in 2019! In April, Poème Mystique is performed in our city NAGOYA. Last week, Violin Concerto has been performed in YOKOHAMA. It was really great performance and the audience's responses on the net are really really great! <<https://www.kanaphil.or.jp/en/concert/537/>> I updated concert information on my site. <<http://bloch.music.cocan.jp/index.htm>>'

We were very pleased to be in contact again with Akinori ITOH and also to feature his wonderful dedicated website to Ernest Bloch called 'A Young Person's Guide to ERNEST BLOCH'. It can be found here: <http://bloch.music.cocan.jp/>

Norman Solomon steps down from IEBS committee



As **Norman Solomon** steps down from the Executive Committee of International Ernest Bloch Society we have the opportunity of looking at, and thanking him for, the absolutely pivotal role he has played in its formation and in its well-being.

Norman and his family have a close

connection with Ernest Bloch. As a teenager and keen student of violin in 1949, his late wife Devora was taken to hear Bloch conduct a concert of his music in London and was introduced to the composer. This was an inspiring meeting always remembered. So when Alexander Knapp a Bloch scholar and the then Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music, SOAS, University of London, expressed the idea in 2006 of resurrecting the Ernest Bloch Society in time for the 50th anniversary of his death (2009) it was to Norman that we turned for his blessing and support.

With his usual practicality and farsightedness, Norman suggested an **international conference on Ernest Bloch – the Man and his Music** to kick off with. And from the picture above of Norman (right) and Alex (left) being punted down the Cam, you can gather that this took place in Cambridge. Alex, under Norman's benevolent and encouraging eye, brought the finest Bloch scholars from around the world, internationally renowned musicians, and many members of the Bloch family together at Fitzwilliam College for a few days of distinguished talk, music making and fun. You can read a report and see more pictures here

<http://ernestblochsociety.org/index.php?id=bloch-jubilee-international-conference>

The following year, under Norman's guidance and with the help of the Society's Secretary the late and much valued **Audrey Ellison** (tribute to Audrey was paid in IEBS Newsletter no 2 here <http://ernestblochsociety.org/data/uploads/news2iebsaugust2018.pdf>) the Society built a strong committee and **added distinguished scholars**, musicians and heads of music colleges as Vice Presidents. Sir Charles Mackerras AC CH CBE agreed to be the President.

The revived **International Ernest Bloch Society** was **officially launched in 2008**, with a musical event in Mayfair attended by amongst others Bloch Society international partners **Frank Geltner** from Portland, **Oliver Margulies** from Geneva and **Dalia Atlas** from Tel Aviv. In the pictures below we see **Iosef feigelson**, cello and **Malcolm Miller** at the piano and the audience at the launch. You can read a full report on the launch here: <http://ernestblochsociety.org/index.php?id=launch-of-the-international-ernest-bloch-society>



Norman has nurtured and supported the International Ernest Bloch Society every step of the way. In the **international festival of 2009**, marking the 50th year since Bloch's death, Norman sponsored **two outstanding Bloch chamber music concerts at the Wigmore Hall** with distinguished artists, **Piers Lane** piano, The Golder Quartet and **Jack Liebeck** violin. Read about the Goldner Quartet/Piers Lane [Chamber Concert Wigmore Hall](#)

Rabbi Doctor Norman, a great scholar and writer, also worked closely with **Alexander Knapp** to co-edit the book that arose from the Cambridge Conference. In 2016 **Ernest Bloch Studies** was finally published by Cambridge University Press, adding an important volume to the international study and appreciation of the music of Ernest Bloch.

Norman has not only been the **Treasurer** of the International Ernest Bloch Society since its inception, but it is he has made sure that funds were available for the promotion of the music of Ernest Bloch. He also sponsored the prizes for the annual and effective **Ernest Bloch Music Competition** run for several years by Sagi Hartov.

This year for the 60th anniversary of his death, and next year, commemorating the 140th anniversary of his birth, the NorDev Trust, founded by Norman and Devora in 1983, is sponsoring the Society's anniversary programme, including promotion of **major concerts** and **masterclasses** run by our **associate musicians**, to encourage young players to take Bloch into their repertoires.

I hope that Norman feels proud of his association with IEBS. We thank him enormously for **his foresight, attention to detail, and for his generosity**. We hope that he can feel that Devora's inspiration from Bloch has been transmitted to future generations who will also be stimulated by his music, and that her legacy has been effective.

Come and Sing - Ernest Bloch's Sacred Service – in a day

The Zemel Choir, conducted by Benjamin Wolf, 17 March 2019

A report by Judy Obrart

Back in 1995 the B'nai B'rith Jewish Music Festival in collaboration with the Council of Christians and Jews, put on a performance of Ernest Bloch's *Sacred Service* at **St Paul's Cathedral** conducted by **Yehudi Menuhin** which I helped to organise. It was a very special event with Lord Menuhin conducting and the composer's daughter, **Suzanne Bloch** as well as **HRH Prince Philip**, as special guests.

I had been learning the music with my choir the **Alyth Choral Society**, who joined **The Zemel Choir** on that occasion. but realised there was no way I could sing as well as help with organising. So, when the Zemel Choir invited people to 'Come and Sing' it in a day of workshops and a concert, my immediate thought was that finally I could get to sing the Sacred Service in a performance.

The morning session was in the auditorium at the Royal Free Hospital. **Ben Wolf** took us through the score concentrating on the more difficult choral sections. The music is certainly not easy and especially for amateur singers like me desperately trying to remember something I learnt over twenty years ago. Some had sung the Bloch before, which was a tremendous help. Concentration paid off though and despite the limited time available Ben managed to make sure we were pretty secure.

In the afternoon we shifted to Belsize Square Synagogue for another long session, this time with soloist, cantor **Ben Seifert**. **Franklin Gellnick** provided the organ accompaniment. Learning the notes is one thing but fitting the whole musical puzzle together for a performance with meaning and intensity is another.

Our evening performance started with Bloch specialist, and International Ernest Bloch Society Consultant, **Dr Alexander Knapp** introducing the Sacred Service and putting the piece in perspective for all of us. The performance went well. The structure and wholeness of the piece revealed itself, hearing it right through without the rehearsal stops and starts. The Cantor's part was sung beautifully by Ben Seifert and the choir's sections and responses moulded the piece together with Ben Wolf, the cement. My own favourite section remains Yihyu Lerotzon. I think this is one of the most beautiful settings ever and I look forward to hearing it in synagogue as part of the Sabbath Morning Service one day.

Judy Obrart, London, March 2019

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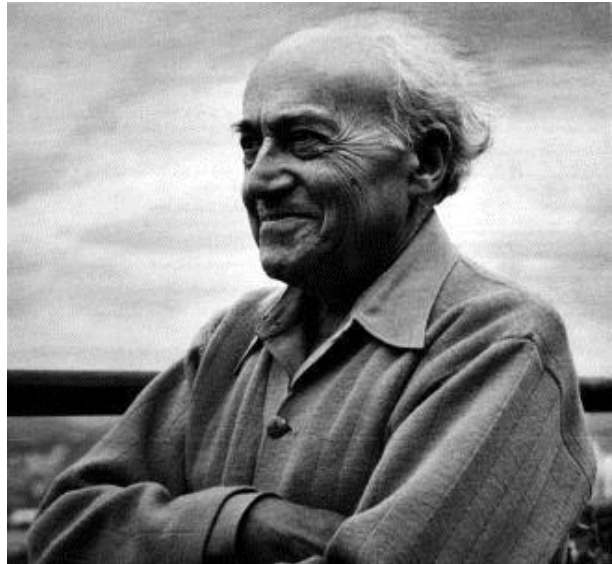
is compiled by **Geraldine Auerbach** MBE. Secretary IEBS info@ernestblochsociety.org

If you know someone who may be interested in receiving this occasional News Sheet, please either pass on their details to me or invite them to join our mailing list as follows: send an email to 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). (If you have any queries or difficulties send an email to events@ernestblochsociety.org and we will try to help).

If you no longer wish to receive these occasional Ernest Bloch Newsletters, please let me know and I will remove your name from our list.

Short Biography of Ernest Bloch

Ernest Bloch was so admired in his heyday that many considered him the fourth 'B' after Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. He was one of the most original composers of the 20th century whose music, whilst intellectually challenging, was accessible to a wide audience. His works were regularly performed from the 1920s to the 1950s, particularly in the USA, UK and Italy.



Now, around the time of the 60th Anniversary of his death in Portland, Oregon in 1959, and the 140th of his birth in Geneva in 1880, it is time to rejoice in the wide range of his oeuvre and hear again the well and lesser-known orchestral, choral, chamber, instrumental, and vocal works. There will also be an exploration of his hitherto unpublished music.

Bloch has often been referred to as a 'Jewish composer' because of the substantial number of his works that carry Jewish titles. Yet his repertoire incorporates a variety of influences such as Renaissance, neo-Classical, neo-Romantic, Swiss, Native American, Chinese, and Gregorian Chant. Although he never founded a 'school' of composition, many of the most prominent American composers of the 20th century were his students.

He visited Britain in the 1930s, where concerts of his chamber music were presented. In 1949 his Concerto Symphonique for piano and orchestra was premiered at the Edinburgh Festival; in the same year, he also conducted a major concert at the Royal Albert Hall, including Schelomo with cellist Zara Nelsova and The Sacred Service with baritone Aron Rothmüller and the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. Following the founding of the American Ernest Bloch Society in 1937, an Ernest Bloch Society was founded in London later in the same year, with Albert Einstein, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir Arnold Bax, and Sir John Barbirolli, among others, as honorary officers. Amongst his many other attributes, Bloch was an accomplished photographer, a lover of mushrooms, a collector and polisher of agates, and a prolific letter writer.