

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) Three Nocturnes (1924)

Andante

Andante quieto

Tempestoso

Bloch was born into a Jewish family in Geneva - the son of a clock-maker. He learned the violin and composition, initially in Geneva, but in his teens he moved to Brussels to study with Eugène Ysaÿe, then to Frankfurt, Munich and Paris. In his mid-twenties he returned to Geneva where he married and entered his father's firm as a bookkeeper and salesman, along with occasional musical activities – composing, conducting and lecturing. His opera *Macbeth* was successfully performed at the Paris Opéra-Comique in 1910. Six years later he went to the United States, initially to conduct a dance company's tour. The tour collapsed, but he secured a job teaching composition at a New York music college and his wife and children joined him there. Performances of new works including some with a Jewish flavour (*Trois poèmes juifs* and *Schelomo*) increased his visibility. His popular association with 'Jewish' music was enhanced by G.Schirmer publishing his works with a characteristic trademark logo – the six-pointed Star of David with the initials E.B. in the centre.

From 1920-5 he served as the founding director of the Cleveland Institute of Music and from 1925–30 as director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. The Conservatory subsidised his return to Switzerland in the 1930s allowing him to compose undisturbed. But with the rise of the Nazis and the need to maintain his American citizenship, in 1939 he returned to a chair at UC Berkeley which he held until his retirement to Agate Bay, Oregon, where he continued to compose widely, took photographs and polished agates.

His Three Nocturnes for Piano Trio of 1924 were only his third published chamber work, preceded by a String Quartet and a Piano Quintet. After his return to the US he wrote another 4 String Quartets and another Piano Quintet.