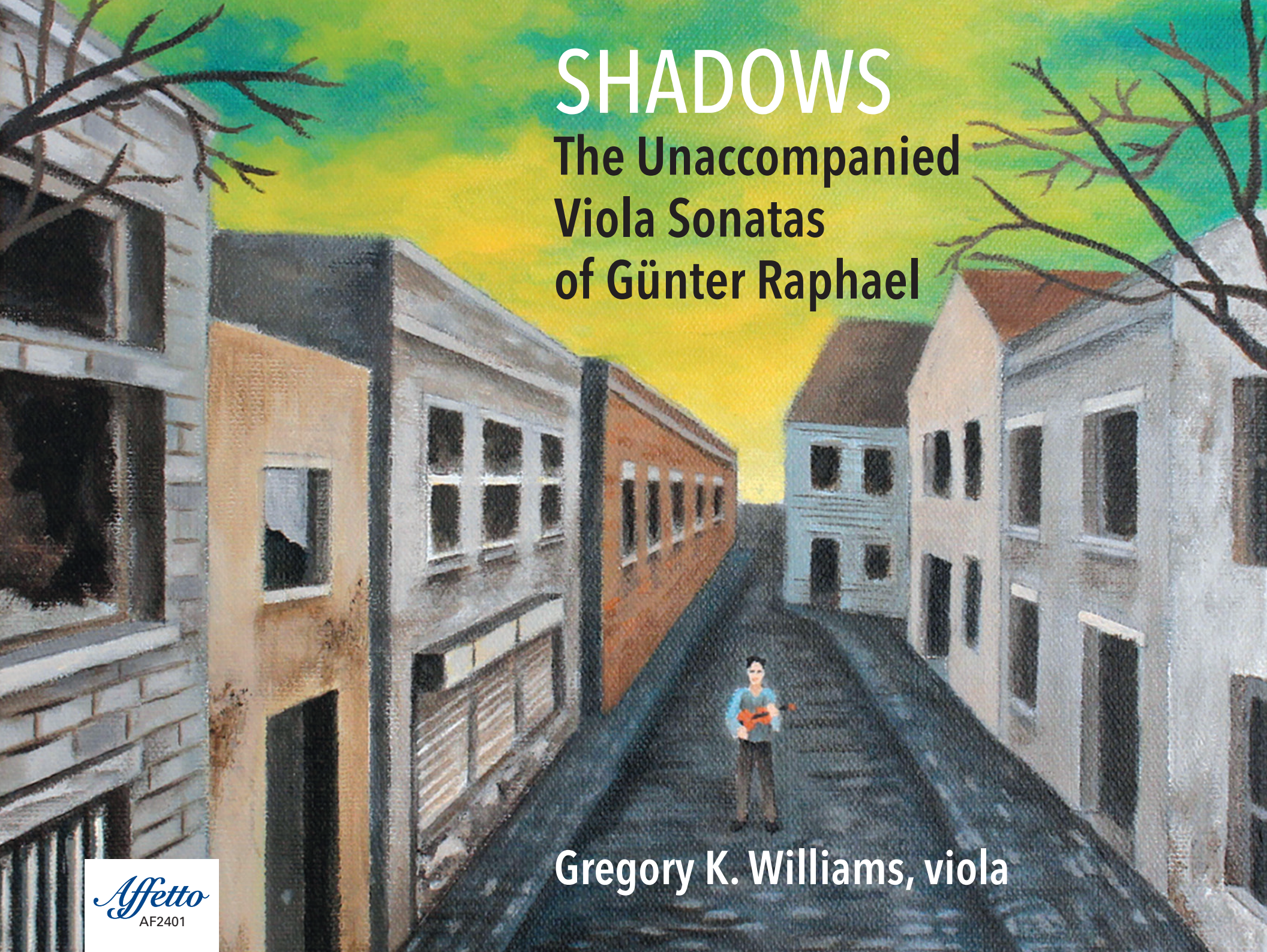
SHADOWS
The Unaccompanied
Viola Sonatas
of Günter Raphael
Gregory K. Williams, viola
Affetto
AF2401

ARTIST'S NOTE

Günter Raphael

Günter Raphael was a prolific and versatile composer, but because his music was banned in his lifetime due to his Jewish ancestry, his music did not gain commensurate recognition to the canon. Though he wrote for viola and other members of the string family, he is better known for his orchestral, choir, and organ works. As a performer, he was an organist, pianist, violist, and violinist.

I first encountered the viola music of Günter Raphael during the summer of 2012, while I was browsing through a used bookshop in Dresden, Germany. There, I discovered Raphael's first unaccompanied viola sonata, op. 7, no. 1. I spent much of that summer exploring the piece, trying to gain a greater understanding of his unique voice. The fascination I developed for this lesser-known composer inspired me to visit the Günter Raphael archive maintained by Raphael's son-in-law, violinist Fredrik Pachla, on the outskirts of Berlin.

As I explored Raphael's work more extensively, I found that his output for the viola was abundant. Over the course of his career, Raphael wrote three unaccompanied viola sonatas, two romances, two sonatas for viola and piano (opp. 13 and 80), a Concertino for Viola and Chamber Orchestra, and duos for violin and viola as well as for viola and cello. Raphael's works are compelling due to their provocative and wide-ranging harmonic language and their technical complexity. What makes his viola works fascinating is how the styles evoked reflect the works' historical context and at the same time reveal a clear stylistic arc across his compositions. Ever since Raphael's three unaccompanied viola sonatas became the primary focus of my dissertation at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, I have been inspired to record these three works. Additionally, I have presented and performed many of Raphael's works for viola at various festivals hosted by the American Viola Society and the International Viola Society. *Shadows: The Unaccompanied Viola Sonatas of Günter Raphael* is the American premiere recording of these works, as they have only been recorded and released in Germany to date.

I hope that this album helps to further Raphael's music as a newly significant part of the classical canon, as well as inspiring another look towards inclusion in the canon for other composers whose works were banned in their lifetimes, and under-represented composers who have been systematically marginalized by society.

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

Günter Raphael (1903–1960) was born into a musical family. Raphael's mother, Maria Becker Raphael (1878–1952), was a talented violinist, giving him a thorough background in chamber music and string literature. Maria's father, Albert Becker (1834–1899), was also a noteworthy composer. Becker taught composition to Jean Sibelius, Johan Halvorsen, Kaiser Wilhelm I, and to Raphael's father, Georg Raphael. Georg (1865–1904) was an organist and composer who died a year after Raphael was born. Raphael's paternal grandparents were Abraham Raphael, a cloth manufacturer, and Julie Cohn Raphael, who directed a musical and literary salon in Berlin that hosted luminaries such as violinist Joseph Joachim.

Raphael studied composition with Arnold Ebel (a student of Max Bruch) and Robert Kahn, both of whom were followers of Brahms. He also worked with Arnold Mendelssohn (a teacher of Paul Hindemith) in Darmstadt.

When Raphael rose to prominence during Germany's Weimar period, it was his early works that were championed by conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Busch Quartet. Raphael held a prominent post at the Hochschule in Leipzig, and he worked closely with Karl Straube, the cantor of the Thomasschule, at the prestigious Leipzig cathedral where Johann Sebastian Bach was once *Kapellmeister.* In Leipzig in the late 1920s, one of Raphael's students was Hungarian composer and violist Miklos Rozsa, known for his celebrated career in Hollywood and his Academy Award–winning film score for *Ben Hur.*

The rise of the Nazi Party had a significant impact on Raphael's career. Although Raphael personally identified as a Christian, his father was raised in a Reform Jewish household and converted to Christianity as an adult. Classified by the Nazi regime as half-Jewish, Raphael was fired from his Leipzig Hochschule teaching post in 1934, and performances of his compositions remained banned in Germany until the end of World War II. Older, more established composers such as Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Bartok had invitations to teach at American universities. Raphael made several attempts to leave Germany, trying to find work in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Finland, the latter with assistance requested from Jean Sibelius. All these efforts failed. Sibelius claimed that he was unable to help because there was not enough work in Finland to support Raphael. He was nearly successful in moving to England with the help of the publisher Novello & Co., but his plans were thwarted by the birth of his eldest daughter, Dagmar, in 1936. As for his attempts to seek refuge in the United States, the U.S. in the 1930s was isolationist and particularly unwelcoming to Jewish refugees.

After leaving Leipzig in 1934, Raphael and his family moved to Meiningen, where he was forced to work covertly. As World War II progressed and Raphael's tuberculosis worsened, he relocated to Laubach, a resort town known for treating tuberculosis. Whenever the SS appeared looking for Jews to send to concentration camps, Raphael's doctors would hide him in their morgue and claim that he was already dead.

As a Danish national, Raphael's wife Pauline Raphael-Jessen was able to continue working and taught piano privately. Those who wanted to study composition directly with Raphael had to register under Raphael-Jessen's name. The government-imposed ban did not stop Raphael from composing; in fact, the period of the 1930s and 1940s was one of his most prolific. During this time, he began experimenting with meter and modalities (scale patterns that go beyond major and minor, including various modes as well as octatonic, pentatonic, and whole-tone scale patterns). By the 1940s, however, his work was frequently interrupted by tuberculosis treatments.

Raphael's chronic bouts of tuberculosis in the last few decades of his life prevented him from developing a strong foothold at any one institution in postwar West Germany. Though he did teach at prominent conservatories after the war, the positions were all short-term. His declining health meant frequent visits to sanitariums. At the time, treatments for tuberculosis often involved surgeries to puncture holes in the skin or remove ribs as well as sleeping outdoors in cool air. It is likely that tuberculosis may have had an effect not only on Raphael's breathing, but also on how he approached breathing and meter in some of his compositions.

After his death in 1960, Raphael's strongest advocates were his daughter, violinist Christine Raphael, and her husband, Fredrik Pachla. Christine Raphael devoted a significant portion of her career to promoting and recording the works of her father until her death in 2008. Pachla, a violinist, violist, and scholar, has been continuing her mission. He has worked with leading German scholars to promote Raphael's music and has converted his home in Berlin into a Günter Raphael archive, preserving manuscripts, old recordings, and even furniture and memorabilia of the composer. In addition, a small community of scholars and performers has promoted Raphael's work in recent years, producing a series of recordings, including some performances of his viola works.

RAPHAEL'S COMPOSITIONAL PERIODS

Raphael's opus can be divided into three periods: early (1920–1934), middle (1934–1945), and late (1945–1960). The early works include stylistic elements of late Romanticism reminiscent of both Brahms (in the use of harmonization, hemiolas, and developing variation) and Max Reger (in the use of chromaticism). Raphael's early works were often well received by established performers and conductors.

His middle period (1934–45), which corresponds with his time in hiding while living in Meiningen and Laubach, is considered by scholars to be a time of transition for his compositional style. A majority of the works from this time remained unpublished until after World War II. Compared with his earlier works, Raphael experimented more frequently during these years with the use of unusual meters, rhythmic ostinatos, and sparser textures in his compositions. Several works only include a single number in the time signature, such as a *3* or *4,* rather than the conventional 3/8 or 4/4. Even with these abbreviated meters, the pulse can be identified with relative ease.

Erik Levi describes all six op. 46 sonatas for unaccompanied violin, viola, and cello as similar in style, but there is a stark contrast between the first four (written in 1940) and the last two (written in 1946). Raphael's style within the genre of unaccompanied string sonatas developed significantly in these six years. In fact, the last two sonatas in the series actually fall within the late period of his output. The op. 46 sonatas were grouped together because the unaccompanied sonatas were printed in sets based on instrumentation; op. 46, nos. 3 and 4 were distributed as a set in 1960.

Raphael's final works, written from the end of the war until his death in 1960, are perhaps his most adventurous and expressive. His previously conservative musical approach gave way to an exploration of more modernist ideas. Raphael experimented with what he referred to as a "tonal 12-tone style." His version of the "tonal 12-tone style" used 12-tone rows but was organized within a tonal context, often incorporating the rows into ostinatos. Although this technique was not present in all of these works, he used it frequently in his later compositions.

The subject matter for the later compositions is more varied than in his earlier works, as Raphael drew his materials from international sources, especially for his vocal compositions. For instance, the ballet suite *Jabonah* (1946) was composed using Mongolian themes, and *Von der grossen Weisheit* (Of Great Wisdom), for solo alto and baritone, choir, and orchestra (1955), borrowed texts from the *Tao Te Ching* by the Chinese philosopher Laozi. Raphael also borrowed musical material from Swedish and Finnish songs and chorale melodies, as in the *Fünf Motetten über schwedische Choräle a capella* (Five a Cappella Motets on a Swedish Chorale, 1947) and the *Sieben Orgelchoräle über finnische Choräle* (Seven Organ Chorales on Finnish Chorales, 1949). These works were likely inspired by Raphael's time in Sweden in the late 1940s.

Conscious of the burgeoning civil rights movement in the United States and keenly aware of the continuous violations of his own civil rights during the Nazi regime, Raphael set texts by the African-American poet Langston Hughes in *My Dark Hands,* for baritone, piano, percussion, and bass (1959). This work had a limited publication run, but a copy is preserved at the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek in Frankfurt. This is the only work composed by Raphael with texts in English.

During his later years, Raphael was inspired by other writers, artists, and composers who suffered from tuberculosis, including the German poet and author Christian Morganstern (1871–1914). This is evident in his *Palmström Sonata,* op. 69, for tenor, clarinet, violin, percussion, and piano (1950), as well as his *Sechs Galgenlieder nach Texten von Christian Morganstern* (Six Gallows Songs After Texts by Christian Morganstern), written in 1953.

German-born Swiss author Hermann Hesse also became an inspiration for Raphael, as shown by his work for high voice and piano, *Acht Gedichte von Hermann Hesse für hohe Stimme und Klavier* (Eight Poems by Hermann Hesse for High Voice and Piano), op. 72. Although Hesse was born in an earlier generation, he was a Romanticist who absorbed the ideals of Nietzsche and Freud as well as international influences such as Eastern philosophy.

RAPHAEL'S SONATAS FOR SOLO VIOLA

The **Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 7, no. 1,** from 1924 (tracks 1–6), was Raphael's first published work for a solo string instrument. Following the trends of several composers from the early 1920s, this virtuosic sonata is modeled on a Baroque suite, with six movements marked *Praeludium, Fuga, Gavotte, Andante mit Variationen, Menuett,* and *Gigue*. The piece received its premiere on January 16, 1927, in Berlin and was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1925.

At the time he wrote this unaccompanied viola sonata, Raphael had already completed his Two Romances for Viola and Piano a year earlier. It is very likely that Raphael was aware of contemporaneous composers who had modeled their unaccompanied works on Johann Sebastian Bach's unaccompanied sonatas, partitas, and suites. Among the suites that likely inspired Raphael were the three suites for solo viola composed by Max Reger (1915); Paul Hindemith's three unaccompanied viola sonatas (op. 11, no. 5 in 1919; op. 25, no. 1 in 1922; and op. 31, no. 4 in 1923); and Eugène Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas for Violin, op. 27, also completed in 1923.

Raphael's **Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 46, no. 3,** written in 1940 (tracks 7–9), reflects a maturing composer who was comfortable thinking outside the box. The piece was completed during a particularly fruitful period. At this time, Raphael's life was often in peril due to frequent emergency surgeries for tuberculosis and continued harassment by the SS. Perhaps writing a bright and engaging piece served as a source of hope and a means of escape from this dismal reality. The piece is dedicated to Ernst Hoenisch, a prominent German violist who studied at the Hochschule in Leipzig in the late 1920s while Raphael was teaching there. It was premiered in Weimar on April 29, 1946, and finally published in 1960 by Willy Müller and the Süddeutscher Musikverlag in Heidelberg.

The first movement, marked *In sanfter Bewegung* ("in gentle motion"), deviates from the tonality found in earlier works by incorporating octatonic and Hungarian minor scales, as well as metrical dissonance. Its harmonic ambiguity may be a comment on a society that lacked moral leadership, had been deprived of its leading musicians, and where a sizable portion of the population was being sent away to be exterminated. Moments of clarity and consistency in true harmonic consonance are rare in this movement, and they serve as an oasis from the unstable elements of the music. The second movement, *Menuett-Trio,* is unusual because of the dronelike chromatic pattern in the minuet and because the fast-paced trio in one feels more like a scherzo. The ornamentation is more folksy than Germanic, possibly referencing Roma and Klezmer traditions. This can be heard through the addition of grace notes and moments that are imitative of bagpipes. The third movement, marked *Frisch und Lebendig* ("fresh and lively"), evokes Baroque *sonata da chiesa* form, with characteristically mid-20th century chromaticism and articulation superimposed on the older structure. The opening mimics the style of Telemann, recollecting a more harmonious time in German history.

The **Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 46, no. 4** of 1946 (tracks 10–13) represents another significant transformation in the composer's musical style. Transfigured and scarred by World War II, Raphael composed this work using a dark palette of musical colors, including various modes, octatonic and whole-tone scale patterns, and elements of serialism that might have reflected Raphael's dismal environment and his chronic health conditions. The sonata was dedicated to violist Heinz Freudenthal.

Compared with Raphael's earlier unaccompanied sonatas for viola, this sonata is less confined by conventions of time and key signatures. The tonality of this piece, also called *Sonata No. 2 (E) für Bratsche-Solo,* is often ambiguous, as it is not firmly established in either E major or E minor. In a significant departure from Raphael's previous sonatas, all four movements are completely unmetered. Although the movements in this sonata are shorter than the movements in sonatas op. 7, no. 1 and op. 46, no. 3, they are far more challenging for the performer, both interpretively and technically. It is within this last sonata that Raphael's most original writing is revealed. This work was composed as Raphael and his family were trying to recover from the catastrophes of war and cope with his chronic tuberculosis.

The first movement, marked *Sehr beseelt und bewegt* ("very animated and moving"), is clearly tonal, despite a fusion of serial techniques with tonal, quartal, whole-tone, octatonic, and modal scales. The second movement, marked *Äußerst lebhaft, rauschend* ("extremely lively and rushing"), and the third movement, marked *Schlicht und einfach* ("plain and simple"), are paired in a manner similar to a scherzo and trio (tracks 11–12). In contrast to the second movement, the third movement recalls the calm and poignancy of a Bach chorale or a folk melody. The capricious and virtuosic final movement, marked *Lebendig* ("lively") (track 13), is a fast-flowing and complex work that sometimes splits the music into two staves. The tonal centers of this movement are constantly in flux.

Op. 46, no. 4 foreshadows the evolution in Raphael's compositional style in the last fifteen years of his life (1945–1960). The use of modes and modified octatonic and whole-tone scale passages here serves as a transition toward the "tonal 12-tone" style that would appear in Raphael's later compositions, including his Sonata No. 2 for Viola and Piano, op. 80, composed in 1957.

GREGORY K. WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Gregory K. Williams is a multifaceted artist who performs as a solo artist, and as an orchestral and chamber musician. He has performed with ensembles such as American Ballet Theatre, American Symphony Orchestra, Parlando, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and in Broadway pits for *Sweeney Todd* and *The Phantom of the Opera.* Recording credits include the concept album for the musical *Goodbye New York.* He is on the faculty of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, CUNY, and teaches viola to college and advanced high school students He also performs with the Golden Williams Duo, a viola-cello duo committed to performing new music written by under-represented composers. For more information, please visit https://gregorykwilliamsviolist.com/.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Concetta Abbate
Anthony Allel
Esme Allen-Creighton
Joanne Anderson
Clarissa Baquiran
Christen Blanton
David Bertrand & Flora Sutherland
William Bissell & Laura Mongan
Yeagi Kim Broadwell
David Bynog
Norman Carey
Lisa Casal-Galietta & David Galietta
Junah Chung
Robert Corbino (& the St. Francis Prep Music Department)
Patricia Corey
Peggy DeFrisco & Gus Kontos
Victoria DeFrisco
Donna Doyle
Theodore & Phyllis Dubinsky
Kwasi Enin
Leonor Falcón Pasquali & Juanma Trujillo
Adrienne Fournier & Michael Budd
Ryan Furrer
The Gamboa Family
Cindy Gerstl & Mark Lex
Andrew Golden & Lindsey Musen
Carrie Golden & Mauricio Urueña
Diana Golden
Ellen Golden
Louis Golden & Elizabeth Frawley
William & Adele Golden
Holly Grabowski
Michael Hall
Richard Hawkins
Dan Heck
Jen Herman
Margrèt Hjaltested
Alysha & Martin Horstman
Sylvia Kahan
Stanley & Catherine Karayean
Dan Keene & Fang-Yi Chu
Julian Kerins
Edward Klorman
Michael Lee
Joan Luberto
Noah Luft-Weissberg
Frank Marotta
Bonnie McAlvin
Scott McGovern
Susan McMahon
William McNally
Flora Metrick & Bill Jones
Jessica Meyer
Roberta Michel
Beth Moll
Anthony Nicosia
Kristin & Sokol Nikaj
Yumi Oshima
Fredrik Pachla
Denise & Joseph Poli
Bianca Popko
Wendy Ratner
Nick Revel & Nora Krohn
Wendy Richman
Karen Ritscher
Betty Rourke
Jiliane Russo
Zsaz Rutkowski
Veronica Salas
Irene SanPietro
Kerrick Sasaki
Susan Seligman
Linda Sinanian & Jeff Forden
Serafim Smigelskiy & Sierra Prasada
Jeanette Smith
Frazier Stevenson
Edith Stratton
Joseph N. Straus
Muneyoshi Takahashi
Matthew Tobin
Helen Tuckey
Jennifer Elton Turbes
Chloe Vanderpoel
Kevin Virgilio & Jennifer Girone-Virgilio
Caspar Graf von Rex
Benjamin Weber
Adam Whiting
Chris Whittaker
Jeffrey & Louise Williams
Michael & Lisa Williams
Patrick Williams
Sara Bennett Wolfe
Ami Zahajko
Paul Zambrotta Jr.
Lynn Zummo
10 Anonymous Donors

SHADOWS The Unaccompanied Viola Sonatas of Günter Raphael

Gregory K. Williams, viola

Sonata, op. 7, no. 1 (1923)

1. Praeludium (4:12)
2. Fuga (3:38)
3. Gavotte (3:25)
4. Andante mit Variationen (6:16)
5. Menuett (5:48)
6. Gigue (3:58)

Sonata, op. 46, no. 3 (1940)

7. In Sanfter Bewegung (In Gentle Motion) (3:53)
8. Menuett-Trio (5:58)
9. Frisch und Lebendig (Fresh and Lively) (4:04)

Sonata, op. 46, no. 4 (1946)

10. Sehr Beseelt und Bewegt (Very Animated and Moving) (4:19)
11. Äußerst Lebhaft, Rauschend (Extremely Lively and Rushing) (1:47)
12. Schlicht und Einfach (Plain and Simple) (3:26)
13. Lebendig (Lively) (2:27)

Total: 53:11

Recorded October 25, 2018, July 19-22, 2019, September 15, 2019, October 25, 2020
Performer: Gregory K. Williams, viola | Audio engineering, editing, mixing, and mastering: Ryan Streber, www.oktavenaudio.com | Producer: Gregory K. Williams | Studio Producer: Diana Golden | Graphic design: Jana DeWitt | Album artwork: Jerri A. Castillo (acrylic on canvas) | Liner notes: Gregory K. Williams | Liner notes editing: Diana Golden and Peter Borten
Photography: Matt Dine | Photo of Günter Raphael: Used with permission.
Executive Producer: John C. Baker

Affetto

Affetto Recordings, LLC
P.O. Box 502, Princeton NJ 08542 USA

distributed by
NAXOS OF AMERICA INC

1 95269 26291 4