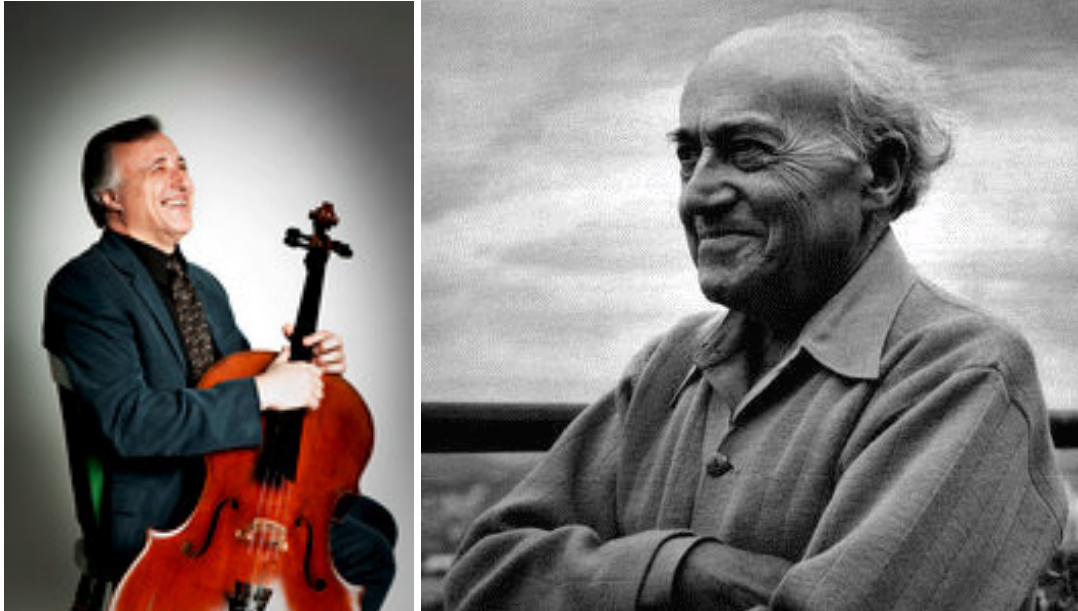


Raphael Wallfisch marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of composer Ernest Bloch with two London performances and a premiere recording



**Wednesday 25 September**

Wigmore Hall

**Bloch** *Suite for viola and piano*

**Thursday 17 October**

Royal Festival Hall

**Bloch** *Schelomo*

**CD release: Bloch** *Symphony for Trombone or Cello*

*(First recording of the cello version)*

A series of performances in autumn 2019, the sixtieth anniversary of his death, will celebrate composer **Ernest Bloch**. Bloch is one of the most original composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his music, whilst sometimes intellectually challenging, remains accessible to a wide audience. Besides ***Schelomo***, one of his best-known symphonic works, the composer also wrote ***Helvetia***, ***America*** and ***Israel*** using traditional materials for each, as well as a piano concerto called ***Concerto Symphonique***. His diverse works in many genres draw on traditional music of many peoples including Chinese, Native Americans, Swiss, American as well as Jewish.

On **17 October**, at the **Royal Festival Hall**, **Raphael Wallfisch** will perform ***Schelomo*** (*King Solomon*). He joins conductor **David Hill** and the **Philharmonia Orchestra** to perform Bloch's mighty 1917 "Hebraic Rhapsody" for cello and orchestra, representing King Solomon through its cello line. This concert, presented by the Bach Choir, also features Delius's *Sea Drift*, Debussy's *La mer*, and the world premiere of Roxanna Panufnik's *Four Choral Seasons*.

Before that, at the **Wigmore Hall** on **25 September**, **Raphael Wallfisch** takes part in a historic concert on the exact 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a dramatic rivalry between Ernest Bloch and the young British composer **Rebecca Clarke**. Both had been encouraged to write viola pieces for a 1919 composition prize organised by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge for her Berkeley Festival. They tied for joint first place in a field of over 70 anonymous entries. With the tie eventually broken by Coolidge herself, Bloch was awarded first place, with reports speculating that "Rebecca Clarke" was in fact a pseudonym for Bloch himself, the idea that a woman could write such a work being socially inconceivable.

Wallfisch performs works by both composers, renewing the spirit of the competition a century later, with pianist John York. Alongside Bloch's *Suite for viola and piano* (in its cello arrangement by Gabor Rejto/Adolph Baller), Wallfisch performs Clarke's *Rhapsody for cello and piano* written only four years after the competition. The programme is completed with songs by Clarke, sung by Ailish Tynan, and works by two further female contemporaries of Clarke: Lili Boulanger and Muriel Herbert.

Also this autumn, CPO is releasing the **first recording** of Bloch's ***Symphony for Trombone or Cello***. Raphael Wallfisch performs the cello version with the **BBC National Orchestra of Wales** under conductor **Łukasz Borowicz**. This unusual 1954 work was written for eminent trombonist Davis Shuman. The solo instrument rises out of the orchestral texture in three movements, the first and last serving as an introduction and conclusion to the expanded middle movement full of skilful counterpoint.

Wallfisch has long championed works by Bloch through performances and recordings: his ***Voices in the Wilderness: Cello Concertos by Exiled Jewish Composers*** recording series is named after Bloch's composition of the same name, recorded previously by Wallfisch alongside an acclaimed recording of *Schelomo*.

Next year, 2020, marks the **140th anniversary** of Bloch's birth in Geneva. **The International Ernest Bloch Society** is planning to hold an Ernest Bloch study day – **Ernest Bloch and his Universe** – of talks, interviews, masterclasses, and a concert exploring the diversity of his compositions. This day will feature exceptional artists who love and perform Bloch's music such as Rivka Golani, Natalie Klein, Danny Driver and Raphael Wallfisch, as well as Bloch scholar and writer Alexander Knapp.

## Ernest Bloch

*"He was the musician as Old Testament prophet, whose speech was thunder and whose glance lightning."*

– Yehudi Menuhin, friend and admirer of Bloch



Born in Switzerland in 1880, **Ernest Bloch** was so admired in his heyday that many considered him the fourth 'B' after Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. He first studied violin and composition in Geneva, then at the Brussels Conservatoire, where his teachers included the celebrated Belgian violinist and composer, **Eugène Ysaÿe**. He later studied composition in Germany and France.



The composer left his native Switzerland for the USA in 1916, teaching in New York, Cleveland and San Francisco. He returned to Europe in the 1930s but went back to the United States before the outbreak of the Second World War. Although he never founded a 'school' of composition, many of the most prominent American composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were his students, including **Roger Sessions** and **Randall Thompson**. His move to America culminated in an academic position at the **University of California, Berkeley**, where he became Professor Emeritus in 1952.

His only opera **Macbeth**, was completed in Geneva in 1909 and performed in Paris later that year. It was revived in Naples in 1938, and the first complete American performance took place in 1960. In the UK, it was given a concert performance at the Royal Festival Hall in 1975, broadcast by the BBC. The UK stage premiere took place in 2009 during a festival commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

Bloch has often been referred to as a 'Jewish' composer because a substantial number of his works carry Jewish titles, however, his repertoire incorporates a variety of influences such as Renaissance, neo-Classical, neo-Romantic, Swiss, Native American, Chinese, and Gregorian Chant. His works were regularly performed from the 1920s to the 1950s, particularly in the USA, UK and Italy.

As well as being a composer, Ernest Bloch was a prolific photographer, and his work inspired his daughter Lucienne, a muralist who worked with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.



## Listings

### CD release: autumn

CPO

**Bloch** *Symphony for Trombone or Cello* **FIRST CELLO RECORDING**

**Raphael Wallfisch** cello  
**BBC National Orchestra of Wales**  
**Łukasz Borowicz** conductor

**Wednesday 25 September,**  
**7:30pm**

Wigmore Hall

Programme includes:

**Ernest Bloch** *Suite for viola and piano*

**Rebecca Clarke** *Rhapsody for cello and piano*

**Raphael Wallfisch** cello  
**Ailish Tynan** soprano  
**John York** piano

**Thursday 17 October, 7:30pm**  
Royal Festival Hall

Programme includes:  
**Bloch** *Schelomo*

**Raphael Wallfisch** cello  
**Philharmonia Orchestra**  
**David Hill** conductor

## **The International Ernest Bloch Society (IEBS)**

The **Ernest Bloch Society** was originally founded in 1937, with Vice-Presidents including Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Henry Wood and Ralph Vaughan Williams alongside Hon. President Albert Einstein. The new **International Ernest Bloch Society** was established in London in July 2008 with Sir Charles Mackerras AC CH CBE as President, in time to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ernest Bloch's death in July 1959. The current president is **Steven Isserlis CBE**.

The Society's aim is to promote greater awareness and appreciation of the man and his music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, encouraging performances, recordings, and cultural events. It brings together Bloch enthusiasts throughout the world – as far afield as China and Israel – and encourages scholarly research on the composer.

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