



SPECTER

DUO ODÉON

THE MUSIC OF
GEORGE ANTHEIL

George Antheil
Sonatina for Violin and Piano

(1945)

To Werner Gebauer

- 1 I. Allegro 4:10
- 2 II. Andante 5:59
- 3 III. Allegro molto 4:25

George Antheil
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

(1946)

(Reduction for violin and piano)

To Werner Gebauer in friendship and admiration

- 4 I. Moderato assai 14:50
- 5 II. Andante 12:31
- 6 III. Presto capriccioso 13:34

George Antheil, arr. Werner Gebauer
Valses from Specter of the Rose

(1947)

- 7 I. Maestoso 1:58
- 8 II. Poco allegretto 2:12
- 9 III. Più vivo — A la valse 2:14

total time 61:59

When George Antheil and his future wife, Boskè Markus, arrived in Paris in the summer of 1923 they moved into a small apartment on rue de l'Odéon above Sylvia Beach's famous bookstore, Shakespeare and Company. The musicians, artists, and literary giants who comprised the shop's clientele steered Antheil

toward his calling as the "Bad Boy of Music." For us, *Odéon* represents our artistic path together, beginning with Antheil's wild early music and sustained through a mutual love for collaboration, experimentation, and discovery. We met during our first year as doctoral students at Arizona State University and

developed a natural collaborative energy when Hannah began writing her dissertation on Antheil's three Parisian violin sonatas. Over the course of six months, we discovered the very limits of our technical and musical skill as we worked through each piece. We thrived on the raw energy and driving aggression of Antheil's early



George Antheil and Werner Gebauer

sonatas, finding beauty in their vivacity and quirky athleticism.

In the fall of 2016, we received an email from our friend in Switzerland, the scholar Mauro Piccinini, informing

us of a newly discovered Antheil work for violin and piano, found amongst the late violinist Werner Gebauer's papers. Marc Gebauer, his son, had unearthed a set of three short waltzes, Valses

from "Specter of the Rose," an arrangement of music from Antheil's 1947 film score for *Specter of the Rose*. As we studied Gebauer's Valses, we learned that Antheil and Gebauer's relationship extended far beyond successful musical collaboration into friendship, mirroring our own musical relationship. Over the course of their collaboration, Antheil composed two works specifically for Gebauer, his 1945 Sonatina

for Violin and Piano and his 1946 Violin Concerto. The Sonatina displays a lighter, humorous side of Antheil, contrasting his earlier style, and tailored to Gebauer's energetic virtuosity. The Violin Concerto follows in this same vein of artistic partnership and collaboration. In the ink of the handwritten manuscript at the Library of Congress, we could see Antheil's borrowed melodies and ideas from earlier works pop out of the page,

transformed for Gebauer's technical brilliance. Schirmer's recent engraving of the concerto for violin and orchestra reflects Gebauer's premiere performance in 1947, including altered violin passages and a number of large cuts made during rehearsals. In our recording we have attempted to remain as close to the handwritten score as possible, taking into account the recording of Gebauer's premiere performance under

Antal Doráti, several copies of the score, and our own musical understanding of Antheil's style and writing.

With these three pieces, we have come to a deeper understanding of the collaboration and friendship between two incredible musicians. Our own friendship and musical partnership have flourished as a result. We hope you enjoy *Specter* as much as we loved creating it for you.

—Duo Odéon

About the music

Trenton-born composer George Antheil (1900-1959) and violinist Werner Gebauer (1918-2013) were both musical prodigies who came to fame for the first time in Berlin and who eventually landed in Hollywood. They became friends after meeting in January 1945 in Washington, D.C. As Gebauer planned his New York debut, he commissioned from Antheil

“something brilliant and sentimental,” which turned out to be a three-movement *Sonatina* (1945) — an engaging whimsical work, typical of Antheil’s post-war tonal modernism, tinged with some Prokofievian angularity but reminiscent also of his own early Parisian period. It opens with an *Allegro* [1] folk-like in its thematic material. The

following *Andante sostenuto* [2] reveals the nocturnal and romantic side of Antheil’s musical palette, while the closing *Allegro Vivace* [3] is a joyful ride with its contagious rhythmic gait, betraying the composer’s state of mind at the end of a long war. “I felt good” — he declared, adding that the movements could be considered as “pretty postcards

of America, [...] all sorts of American things. First, I’m an American, and I live, eat and breathe here. Such things finally are bound to show.”

The *Sonatina* acted as a preparatory study for Antheil’s next big work, his *Violin Concerto*, again a commission from Gebauer. Antheil had already begun writing the concerto in 1923 for the Ohio-born violinist Olga Rudge.



It would be more than twenty years before Antheil began to revise the sketches, pulling material from his *Third Sonata* for the opening movement of the *Concerto*. Therefore, the first movement *Moderato*

assai [4] preserves most of the qualities of Antheil’s early compositions, including dissonant harmonies and frequent metric changes. These aspects endow the movement with a cold, mechanistic

halo. The second movement *Andante* [5] gives a bit of relief with its soothing lyrical atmosphere. The wistful first theme contrasts charmingly with the mischievous second one. The final movement *Presto capriccioso* [6] exudes an almost Mexican flavor, with its syncopated rhythms and the echoes of blues and Latin-American accents. Here Antheil chose to use the orchestra as in the old concerto grosso, in dialogue with the

solo instrument. Gebauer helped with the solo part, enriching its virtuosity to the extreme (also to the extreme of the high register) and lending superbly crafted idiomatic writing to the violin part. The violinist, in fact, visited Antheil in Hollywood from May to July of 1946 to work closely with him on the score. While in Hollywood, Gebauer went to the premiere of Ben Hecht's *Specter of the Rose*, Antheil's latest film score. As

Gebauer himself tells, the film "starred a Bulgarian black-eyed beauty [Viola Essen] who promptly danced herself into my heart." They married a short time later and welcomed their first son in August 1947. Three months earlier Gebauer produced his own arrangement of Antheil's music—Valses from "Specter of The Rose." The first waltz, *Maestoso* [7], is slow and moody, with a lyrical theme in the violin underpinned with traditional waltz



rhythms in the piano. The second, *Poco allegretto* [8] takes on a darker character with crunchy intervals and awkward rhythmic emphasis encouraged by unexpected accents, while the final

waltz *Più vivo* [9] is raucous and exciting, challenging both performers with technical feats. The collaboration between Gebauer and Antheil represents the peak of both men's careers and a period of

rich friendship and music-making. This album paints a picture of the two musicians' work together with each piece a new facet of their collaboration. —Mauro Piccinini



DUO ODÉON

Violinist Hannah Leland and pianist Aimee Fincher formed Duo Odéon in 2014 after meeting in the contemporary music ensemble during their doctoral studies at Arizona State University. The two immediately bonded over a mutual passion for new and unknown classical music. Today, they perform, research, and present the music of the American composer George Antheil along with other little-known twentieth and twenty-first century composers. Their mission is to bring underperformed, often unpublished, music to new audiences in inviting and unconventional environments.

duo-odeon.com

THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our teachers and mentors who shaped our technique, fostered our musicality, and helped us become the musicians we are today. To Mauro Piccinini for his encouragement and guidance on all things Antheil. To Marc Gebauer for allowing us to bring his father's work back to the concert stage. To Charles Amirkhanian and Art McTighe for welcoming us into Antheil's music and history. To the wonderful team at Sono Luminus for guiding us through recording our first album. And finally to our families for putting up with scratchy Twinkles, endlessly repeating piano scales, and hundreds of lessons, recitals, and concerts. Thank you for always encouraging us to keep practicing — without your love, support, and encouragement this album would not have been possible. We are forever grateful.

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SPECTER DUO ODÉON

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