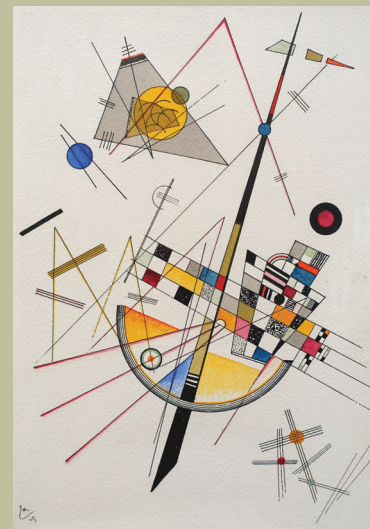
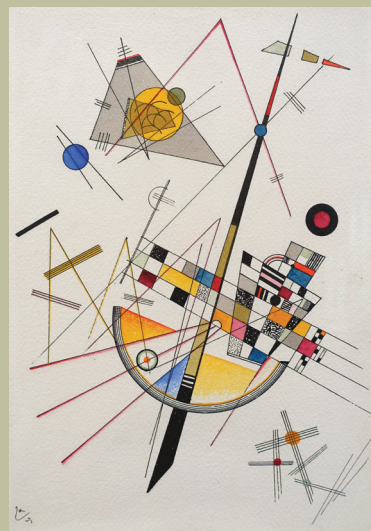
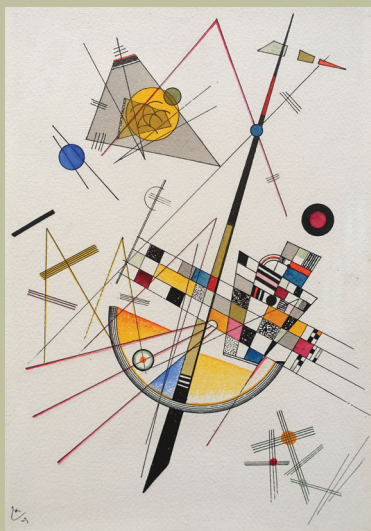


THREESCORE



Laura Sewell
Cello

Paul Schoenfield

Six British Folksongs (1985)

1. Jack Tar 2:25
2. The Basket of Eggs 2:54
3. The Gypsy Laddie 3:27
4. The Parting Kiss 4:02
5. The Lousy Tailor 4:43
6. A Dream of Napoleon 5:38

Laura Sewell, cello; Ivan Konev, piano

Stephen Paulus

Banchetto Musicale:

A Suite for Violoncello and Piano (1980)

7. Intrada 1:37
8. Padouana 5:49
9. Gagliarda 2:15
10. Corrente 2:05
11. Air 3:25
12. Allemande/Tripla 4:10

Laura Sewell, cello; Ora Itkin, piano

David Evan Thomas

13. **From the Land of Song** (2010) 14:21

Let Now the Harp
Over the Stone
The Missing Boat
All Through the Night
Well I Know This Lovely Place

Laura Sewell, cello; Sonja Thompson, piano

Stephen Paulus

14. **Benediction** (2003) 3:57

Laura Sewell, cello; Ora Itkin, piano

>60:51<



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Once the idea was born and all of the music was chosen, I had to find a way to record, distribute, and finance my project. Fortunately, the folks at the Innova recordings label were intrigued with the idea of releasing an album of works for cello and piano by three significant composers with strong Minnesota connections, and the Minnesota State Arts Board deemed the project worthy enough to grant me a 2020 Artist Initiative Grant to help fund the project.

An unexpected factor arose during the making of this recording that played a rather significant role in bringing it to life. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020–21, and the restrictions that became necessary, were professionally disruptive for performing artists of all genres. As it turns out though, making an album of chamber music is actually one of the few musical activities that can still happen amid a pandemic. Increased time at home was an unexpected gift that allowed for many uninterrupted hours of practice time. Playing in a recording studio was relatively safe as well, with my pianists and I masked and spread further apart than usual, and our recording engineer safely distanced in the control room. Indeed, there have been many surprising gifts throughout this entire process, and I am grateful for all of them.

– Laura Sewell, September 2021



Gloria, Fred, and Laura Sewell, 1984



Minnesota native, **Laura Sewell**, was the founder and cellist of the award-winning Lark Quartet. During her tenure in the Lark, the quartet was a top prize winner in the Banff International String Quartet Competition and performed nearly 100 concerts a year in Europe, Asia, Canada, and throughout the United States. Later in her career, she was the cellist of the Artaria String Quartet from 2007–2016.

As both a soloist and chamber musician, Ms. Sewell has premiered works by such distinguished composers as Libby Larsen, Stephen Paulus, Paul Schoenfield, Peter Schickele, Steve Heitzeg, Jon Deak, Andrew Waggoner, and Stanislaw Skrowacewski. She has been featured as a soloist and chamber musician on Minnesota Public Radio and in recital on the “Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series” on WFMT in Chicago. Other radio appearances include American Public Media’s “Saint Paul Sunday” and “A Prairie Home Companion.” As a recording artist, Ms. Sewell can be heard on the Centaur, Bridge, and Innova labels.

During the past thirty years Ms. Sewell has performed with many prominent Twin Cities arts organizations including the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Opera, Minnesota Beethoven Festival, Dale Warland Singers, Cantus, and the Guthrie Theatre. She has been a guest chamber musician with the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, the Bakken Trio, and the Musical Offering, and since 2007 has been a member of the Minneapolis-based, Isles Ensemble. She currently serves as Associate Director of the International Cello Institute, a year-round training program based in Minnesota for serious young cellists from around the world.

Ms. Sewell received her Bachelor’s Degree from the Juilliard School where she was a student of Leonard Rose, and her Master’s Degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Alan Harris. She also had the unique opportunity, at the age of 17, to study with legendary cellist, Jacqueline du Pré.

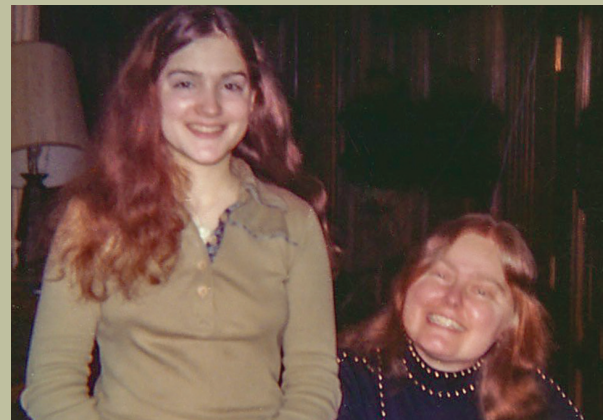
Six British Folksongs was commissioned for me by my parents in 1985. Paul Schoenfield and I performed the world premiere in September of that year at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The piece was dedicated to – and inspired by my time spent in London studying with – the legendary British cellist, Jacqueline duPré. My experience working with her when I was 17 was life-altering in so many ways. DuPré had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis making it necessary for her to retire from her international performing career at the age of 28. When I worked with her four years later, she was confined to a wheelchair and had only limited use of her upper body. Being in the presence of someone coping with such enormous physical challenges with grace and dignity made an enormous impression on me. She was generous with her time and was unfailingly kind and encouraging. In the twenty lessons I had with her I learned a great deal – and not just about playing the cello!

Paul Schoenfield moved to St. Paul in the early 1980s and lived here for about a decade. My mother remembers hearing him perform one of his solo piano works shortly after his arrival and was equally dazzled by both his pianistic and compositional abilities. It occurred to her, on the

spot, that he would be a terrific composer to approach about writing a piece for me in honor of Jacqueline duPré.

As a nod towards duPré's English heritage, Schoenfield decided to compose a set of folksongs using well-known old tunes. The six movements are loosely based on the stages a person might go through while coming to terms with the diagnosis of a serious illness: blissful unawareness, a nagging sense of unease, shocking devastation, grief, anger, and finally acceptance. One can listen to the piece with all of this in mind, or simply marvel at the myriad ways in which Schoenfield reinvents these old familiar folksongs. Either way, the work is deeply moving and affects audiences profoundly.

– Laura Sewell, 2021



Laura Sewell and Jacqueline duPré, 1977

Paul Schoenfield, a native of Detroit, was born in 1947. His compositions are inspired by the whole range of musical experience. Music historian, Joel Sachs, said that “he has achieved the rare fusion of an extremely complex and rigorous compositional mind with an instinct for accessibility.” Schoenfield has received commissions and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Commission, Chamber Music America, the Rockefeller Fund, American Composers Forum, Soli Deo Gloria of Chicago, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Seattle-based Music of Remembrance (MOR), among many other organizations. His “Camp Songs”, commissioned by MOR, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Composition in 2008.

One of Schoenfield’s most well-known compositions, “Café Music” for piano trio, was commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and was inspired by Schoenfield’s experience playing dinner music at Murray’s Steakhouse in Minneapolis during the 1980s. Although he now rarely performs, he studied piano with Rudolf Serkin, and has extensive experience touring and performing as a soloist throughout the United States, Europe, and South America, and with such notable groups as Music from Marlboro. Schoenfield holds a Bachelor of Arts de-

gree from Carnegie–Mellon University, as well as a Doctor of Music Arts from the University of Arizona. A man of many interests, he is also an avid scholar of mathematics and Hebrew. He held his first teaching post in Toledo, Ohio, lived on a kibbutz in Israel, and was a freelance composer and pianist in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area for a number of years. He retired in 2021 as Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and now lives in Jerusalem.

paulschoenfield.org



*Paul Schoenfield.
Used by permission.*

My parents have funded numerous commissions through the years so it wasn't surprising that their birthday present to me when I turned 21 was an original piece for cello and piano. They approached the promising 30-year-old Stephen Paulus to do the honors. Paulus, a recent Ph.D. graduate of the University of Minnesota, was best known at the time for having co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum (still in existence today as the American Composers Forum), along with his U of M classmate, Libby Larsen. He decided to compose a suite of dances, or a "musical banquet" in neo-Baroque style. The result was a charming and delightful piece of music written by an enthusiastic young composer for an even younger aspiring cellist.

I was happy to be the recipient of such a special gift and was relieved when I first saw the finished product. The piece was not only very approachable and musically satisfying to play, but was remarkably well-written for the cello! I was impressed that Paulus, who was not a string player, had clearly done his homework. I have a very vivid memory of playing the piece for him the first time, along with my wonderful pianist colleague, Thelma Hunter. Steve urged us to play the opening movement "as if we had just had a sip of orange juice

in the morning!" Thelma Hunter and I premiered the work in St. Paul in June of 1980.

The six movements are:

Intrada – A piece of instrumental music, which is fanfare-like in character, that introduces a suite of Renaissance or Baroque dances.

Padouana – Also known as a Pavane, is a slow, stately dance, with four beats to a bar. In the 16th century, a Padouana was traditionally paired with a Gagliarda, as in this suite of dances.

Gagliarda – This sprightly dance is the perfect complement to its partner, the Padouana. A Gagliarda is always in a meter of six with five dance steps to a phrase.

Corrente – This popular court dance of the 16th and 17th centuries is characteristically set in a quick triple meter of fast running steps.

Air – A beautiful song or aria.

Allemande: Tripla – The Allemande is an elaborate court dance of moderate tempo always set in duple or quadruple meter. The final Tripla section is in a very fast triple meter which brings the suite to a galloping conclusion.

– Laura Sewell, 2021

Stephen Paulus was a prolific American composer who wrote over 600 works for chorus, orchestra, opera, concert band, chamber ensemble, and numerous instrumental and vocal compositions. Born in New Jersey in 1949, his family moved to Minnesota when he was two. He became a life-long resident of the state and attended the University of Minnesota where he earned a Ph.D. in composition in 1978. While still a student, he co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum (now known as the American Composers Forum) in 1973. In 1983, Paulus became composer-in-residence of the Minnesota Orchestra. Five years later, he was appointed to the same post in Atlanta, where conductor Robert Shaw commissioned many works from him.

He wrote several operas for Opera Theatre of St. Louis, the best-known of which is his 1982 work, “The Postman Always Rings Twice.” He was commissioned by such notable organizations as the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the American Composers Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Dale Warland Singers, the Harvard Glee Club, and the New York Choral Society. His much-loved choral work “Pilgrim’s Hymn” was sung at the funerals of former Presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford.

Paulus was the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation and won the prestigious Kennedy Center Friedheim Prize. Throughout his career his music was nominated several times for Grammy awards, but in 2016 he won (posthumously) two Grammys; one for “Stephen Paulus: Three Places of Enlightenment, Veil of Tears and Grand Concerto” for Best Contemporary Classical Compendium, and the other for his “Prayers and Remembrances” for chorus and orchestra for Best Contemporary Classical Music Composition.

He died in 2014 at the age of 65 from complications of a stroke.

stephenpaulus.com



Stephen Paulus
Photo: Sharolyn B. Hagen

From the Land of Song

Let Now the Harp (Pant Corlan yr Wyn)
Over the Stone (Tros y Garreg)
The Missing Boat (Yn Nyffryn Clwyd)
All Through the Night (Ar hyd y nos)
Well I Know This Lovely Place (Dwfn yw'r môr)

The country of Wales (Cymru), on the west coast of Britain, is a land of rich natural beauty, with snowy mountains, deep green valleys, rugged coastlines and an ancient culture that preceded the Roman occupation 2,000 years ago. Wales is often called the “Land of Song,” and the harp, along with the Red Dragon and the daffodil, is one of its national symbols.

In 2010 my sister Chris asked me to write a suite of Welsh folk songs for cello and piano. I chose five that suggest a journey, commemorate a family tragedy, and take the listener back in time. The songs proceed without pause.

Approaching as a light across the water, the cheerful “Let Now the Harp” is answered by its inverted form, and cello and piano dialogue in sonata style. “Over the Stone” recalls Fauré in its *siciliana* setting. “The Missing Boat” has special significance for the Thomas family. My great-great-grandfather, John Thomas of Aberaeron, was the Master of the clipper-built schooner *Clifton*, which ran aground

in a “mountainous sea” at the entrance to Bideford harbor on the morning of March 12, 1859, drowning Thomas and three of his crew. The Captain’s son, Thomas Bennett, emigrated to the U.S. in 1868 aboard the *SS Minnesota* to found the American branch of the family. “All Through the Night” is perhaps the best-known Welsh folk song. Its first notes are echoed by “Well I Know,” making a smooth bridge to a spirited finale.

Christine Thomas Tsen and pianist Narine Babadjanian recorded *From the Land of Song* in 2010. The work received its concert premiere by Laura Sewell and Sonja Thompson in Saint Paul in November 2019. It was a great pleasure to be present at Laura and Sonja’s recording sessions in August 2020, and I was moved to fine-tune the end of the work, making this the final version.

– David Evan Thomas, 2021

The music of **David Evan Thomas** has been praised for its eloquence, power and craft. A recipient of two McKnight Foundation Artist Fellowships, an Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Möller-A.G.O. Award in Choral Composition, Thomas has received commissions from the Minnesota Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the American Composers Forum and the American Guild of Organists. His music is published by ECS, MorningStar, Augsburg Fortress, Jeanné, Fatrock Ink and Classical Vocal Reprints, Tritone-Tenuto and VocalEssence Press. His varied catalogue includes music for orchestra and wind ensemble, forty chamber works, keyboard pieces large and small, an opera and an oratorio. Vocal music is particularly prominent, with over a dozen song cycles—on subjects ranging from medieval women troubadours to baseball writings of Donald Hall—and some sixty choral works.

David Evan Thomas was the first composer-in-residence for the Schubert Club, which awarded him the An die Musik Award for outstanding service in 2016, and he served Westminster Presbyterian Church (Minneapolis) and the Cathedral of Saint Paul through American Composers Forum FaithPartners residencies. Other

residencies have taken him to the Ucross and Brush Creek Arts Foundations in Wyoming, and to California's Villa Montalvo. Recent honors include the VocalEssence Welcome Christmas Carol Contest and the Renée B. Fisher Composer Awards. In 2018, Thomas was initiated into Sigma Alpha Iota Fraternity as a National Arts Associate.

Born in Rochester, New York in 1958, David Evan Thomas received degrees from Northwestern University, Eastman School and the University of Minnesota. His teachers included Dominick Argento, Samuel Adler and Alan Stout, with further study at the Aspen Festival and with David Diamond at the Atlantic Center for the Arts. Thomas lives in Minneapolis, where he is also active as a program annotator for the Schubert Club.

davidevanthomas.com



David Evan Thomas. Photo: Kathryn Criston

Benediction is a transcription of a piece for voice and piano originally titled “Shall I Compare Thee.” It was commissioned by dear family friends, Jack and Linda Hoeschler, in 2003 for their daughter Kristen’s wedding. Paulus appropriately chose to set Shakespeare’s famous sonnet no. 18 for that special occasion.

After hearing it sung at Kristen’s wedding, it occurred to me that it might sound beautiful on the cello as well. I asked Steve if he would mind me trying it and he immediately agreed to fax me the music. I first performed it at a Christmas party about a month later, with Steve in attendance, and he agreed that it worked very well for cello and piano. Since then, I have performed it many times and it has become something of a “go-to” piece for me. Whenever something touching or poignant is called for, this lovely work seems to perfectly fit the situation.

For years I simply listed it as “Song” on printed programs because the original title just didn’t seem to make sense without the famous Shakespeare words being sung. When I decided to include it on this album, and especially to place it at the end of all of the music I recorded, the title of “Benediction” seemed very fitting. Although I can’t be certain what Steve would

think of this new name, I do believe that the word perfectly captures the sense of peaceful acceptance that is so beautifully depicted in the music.

—Laura Sewell, 2021

Stephen Paulus and Laura, 1980



CREDITS

Photos of Laura Sewell by Kristi Clinton

Mastered by Erdem Helvacioğlu

Designed by Philip Blackburn

Cover: Wassily Kandinsky, *Delicate Tension* (1923), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Used by permission.

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Chris Campbell, Director of Recordings
Tim Igel, Manager of Recordings
innova.mu

THANK YOU TO:

The folks at Innova for being enthusiastic about this project!

Thank you to Philip Blackburn for wisely shepherding me through this entire process. His years of experience, honest feedback, and great ears were invaluable.

Steve Kaul for his encouraging and calm demeanor at all recording sessions, and for his incredible attention to artistic details.

Paul Schoenfield for his inspired composition, helpful communication from a distance, and years of friendship.

David Evan Thomas for his beautiful composition, his good ears at rehearsals, recording, and editing sessions, for providing some Welsh word research and thoughtfully-written program notes, and for his sincere and heartfelt friendship.

The late Stephen Paulus for his wonderful early composition, as well as his friendly rapport and collegiality through the years.

My three fabulous pianists; Ivan, Ora, and Sonja. I value each of them as artists, musical collaborators, and friends.

Evan Pechacek for his expert page-turning and skillful whistling.

My husband, Peter, for his belief in and encouragement to do this recording project, and for cheerfully listening to hours of cello practice!

My daughter, Jackie, for researching the

acquisition of the Kandinsky image.

Most importantly, my parents, Fred and Gloria Sewell. For threescore (and some) years I have had two extraordinary examples of kindness, generosity, integrity, and artistic and intellectual curiosity. My musical aspirations were not only encouraged and supported, but were allowed to thrive. Words cannot express how grateful I am.

All recording sessions took place at Wild Sound Recording Studio, Minneapolis, MN. The recording engineer was Steve Kaul.

“From the Land of Song” was recorded on August 10, 2020

“Six British Folksongs” was recorded on November 5 and 6, 2020

“Banchetto Musicale” and “Benediction” were recorded on April 17, 2021

Laura Sewell was a fiscal year 2020 recipient of an Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This recording project was made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Many thanks to the Paulus family and Paulus Publications for additional funding for this recording.



Ivan Konev
Photo: Leslie Crane

Ivan Konev was born in Ukraine and educated in Moscow. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, he came to the United States to study and in 2010 received his Doctoral Degree in Piano Performance from the University of Minnesota. As a soloist, Dr. Konev has won prizes in a number of international competitions, including the Andorra International Piano Competition and the Corpus Christi International Piano Competition. He appears regularly in solo and chamber music concerts in the United States and Europe, performing not only standard repertoire, but also newly composed or rarely played masterpieces. Dr. Konev is on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin/ River Falls (UWRF) and is a Founder and Artistic Director of the UWRF Piano Festival & Competition. ivankonevpiano.com

Russian-born pianist, **Ora Itkin**, began her piano studies at age four under the guidance of her father, Igor Itkin, who became known as one of the pioneers of subversive Russian jazz. She is a graduate of the Russian Academy of Music in Moscow, Tel-Aviv University, and Rubin Academy of Music at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As an active concert pianist and chamber musician, Ms. Itkin performs in the Twin Cities as well as internationally in Eastern and Central Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. She is a faculty member at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul and the MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis, and is a founder of Reprise School of Piano and Musicianship.



Ora Itkin. Photo used
by permission

Sonja Thompson
Photo: Isabelle Thompson



Sonja Thompson is a collaborative pianist specializing in art song and chamber music. In addition, she has extensive experience in music theater, higher education, and liturgical music settings. She served as repetiteur for the Minnesota Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and the Minnesota Orchestra, and worked with Garrison Keillor on "A Prairie Home Companion." Ms. Thompson regularly appears in recital with instrumentalists from the Minnesota Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, as well as with many notable singers from around the country. She received her Bachelor of Music Degree in Theory and Composition from the University of Minnesota, and her Master's Degree in Accompanying from the Juilliard School.

