



The American Viola Society

Viola Repertoire Guide
Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)
Suite hébraïque
I. Rapsodie
II. Processional
III. Affirmation

Date of Composition: 1950–1951; Orchestral Version completed 1952

Date of First Performance:

Viola and Piano Version: March 3, 1952, Milton Preves (viola) and Helene Brahm (piano), Covenant Club of Illinois, Chicago, USA

Orchestral Version: January 1, 1953, Milton Preves (viola), Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Rafael Kubelik (conductor), Chicago, USA

Duration: 12 minutes

ASTACAP Level: 9

Dedication: To the Covenant Club of Illinois

Genre: Modern (Twentieth Century)

Instrumentation: Viola and piano (later orchestrated)

Orchestral Version: Solo viola, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, timpani, percussion (side drum, cymbals, tamtam), harp, strings

Publisher:

Viola and Piano: • Schirmer, 42892, 1953 (distributed by Hal Leonard; ISBN 9780793551880)
Orchestral Version: • Schirmer, 1953 (rental)

Select Recordings:

- Hong-Mei Xiao (viola), Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV, Mariusz Smolij (conductor): Naxos 8.570829, 2013
- Paul Cortese (viola) and Michel Wagemans (piano): ASV 1094, 2000
- William Primrose (viola) and David Stimer (piano): Capitol P-8355, 1956
- Milton Preves (viola) and Helene Brahm (piano): Covenant Club of Illinois, 1952

Details: Milton Preves, principal violist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performed Bloch's Suite for Viola and Orchestra on November 30 and December 1, 1950, as part of a six-day "Blochfest" honoring the composer's seventieth birthday. In an interview published in the Spring 1989 issue of *JAVS*, Preves indicated that at the festival he "asked [Bloch] if he would consider writing some pieces for viola along the lines of his *Baal Shem* suite for violin." In response to this request and as a token of thanks to the Covenant Club of Illinois, which helped organize the festival, Bloch composed *Five Jewish Pieces*, for viola and piano, comprised of a Meditation, Rhapsodie, and Three Processionals. The Meditation and Processional I were published under the title *Meditation and Processional* by Schirmer in 1951 and dedicated to Preves. Bloch combined the Rhapsodie and Processional II and Processional III (retitled as Affirmation) into the *Suite hébraïque*.

Alternate Versions: Bloch arranged the solo viola part for violin, which has been recorded by Zina Schiff (Naxos 8.557757, in the orchestral version) and by Miriam Kramer (Naxos 8.554460, in the piano version).

