HANDEL & HAYDN

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2009 — 3:00 PM
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ORCHESTRA SEATTLE
George Shangrow, conductor

PROGRAM

GEORG FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)
Concerto a due cori in F Major, HWV 334 "*Concerto in Judas Maccabaeus*"
Ouverture
Allegro
Allegro ma non troppo
Adagio
Andante larghetto
Allegro

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
Triple Concerto in a minor, BWV 1044
Allegro
Adagio, ma non tanto, e dolce
Allabreve
Lisa Lewis, harpsichord; Shari Muller-Ho, flute; Stephen Provine, violin

– Intermission –

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)
Symphony No. 87 in A Major "Paris" - 1785
Vivace
Adagio
Menuet & Trio
Finale: Vivace

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Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.

GEORG FRIEDRICH HANDEL
Concerto a due cori in F Major, BWV 334
Concerto in Judas Maccabaeus

Over the course of his remarkable career, George Friedrich Handel wrote hundreds of works for the keyboard, orchestra, chorus, and the stage. In addition to his many oratorios and operas, Handel also made a small but significant contribution to the concerto genre with his three Concerto a due cori (HWV 332, 333, and 334). Frederick Hudson, editor of the Bärenreiter edition, writes that these pieces "are arguably the largest-scale and most varied orchestral works ever written by Handle. They belong to a limited period of his creative genius in which he appears to have been attracted to the greatly enlarged possibilities of the antiphony of choirs of woodwind and brass, together with a choir of strings." Handel composed these concerti in the years 1746 and 1747, to be played at the intermissions of his oratorios, and in response to his British audience's desire for virtuosic display. The third of these concerti, HWV 334 in F major, was inserted into the oratorio Judas Maccabaeus (hence its nickname, "Concerto in Judas Maccabaeus"). Anthony Hicks, in the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, reports that, as in many of his compositions, Handel here incorporates themes from previous works, notably the ground bass that occurs in his Queen Anne Birthday Ode, and which is also incorporated into his Esther of 1732. Despite this borrowing from himself, Hicks notes that the third concerto contains the most original music of the three.

This concerto (as with its two siblings) is in the Baroque model. Rather than showcasing a soloist against an orchestra (as was to become the custom in the Classical Period), the Baroque concerto is more of an ensemble work, often with small groups of soloists set against a larger orchestra (as in Arcangelo Corelli's concerti grossi). In the Baroque period it also was standard for soloists to join the orchestra in tutti passages. The due cori referred to in the title describes the works' format. Handel employs two groups of wind instruments (perhaps originally intended to be used antiphonally), which in turn play alone, interact with one another, or serve as the wind section for the orchestra. In the third concerto, each of the two cori consists of two horns in F, two oboes, and one bassoon. The orchestra consists of strings, with the basso continuo reinforced by bassoon and keyboard (usually harpsichord, organ, or both; in the score of this concerto Handel specifies organ).

The Concerto a due corni No. 3 begins with an overture in solemn dotted rhythms (hearkening to the French style). The solo instruments here double the strings, although the horns have slightly Handel indicates that this brief movement is to be played twice through. In the next movement, marked Allegro, is in lively triple meter. The horns of the two solo groups state the principle theme, an arpeggio figure, with the one group echoing the other. The interplay continues throughout the movement, with plenty of tutti passages to keep the strings occupied. The movement ends with three measures marked Adagio, with unexpected minor chords, played on off-beats, that end on the dominant to prepare the third movement, Allegro ma non troppo. The first part of the movement is given entirely to the two cori, and is an antiphonal exchange throughout. Occasionally the two groups slightly overlap, but the calls and responses are clearly set apart. About two-thirds of the way through, the two soloist groups come together, joined by the strings.

The fourth movement, a brief Adagio, is unique among the six movements in that it neither begins nor ends in F major; rather it is in the melancholy relative D minor. The theme is built on the expressive rising minor sixth, and its entrances are staggered in different voices as though it were a canon. Handel uses more chromaticism (movement by half-step) here than in the rest of the work, notably in the rising bass line. The music modulates to A minor by the end. This haunting episode is followed by an Andante larghetto, again in F major, in which the stately theme is stated by the two soloist groups in turn and then by the entire ensemble. The music then takes fragments of theme and plays with them antiphonally, this time with the orchestra joining in. The middle section of this movement centers on triplet figures for the first oboe of the first group, which is the first instrument in the work thus far allowed an extended solo, cadenced by tutti phrases. The material of the primary theme returns for the remainder of the work, again in the whole ensemble. Handel ends his concerto with a robust finale, the horn call figures of which recall the hunt. The two horns of each of the two groups state the primary theme in succession (as before), and while the entire orchestra joins them subsequently these instruments continue to have a prominent role throughout the movement. This movement is in A B A form, and it is in the B section that Handel explores different key areas, ending in A minor as in the fourth movement. While the minor mode adds depth to the music, however, it does not dispel the gaiety; the A section is played through again, and the piece ends with a flourish.

--Notes by Andrew Kohler

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
Triple Concerto in a minor, BWV 1044

This "Triple Concerto" was probably composed sometime after 1730 in Leipzig, and is scored for solo flute, violin, and harpsichord with string orchestra and basso continuo.

Johann Sebastian Bach was born into a family that had produced church and town-band musicians for over 150 years. Orphaned at ten, he was raised by an older brother who was an organist, and who taught young Sebastian music. The boy was endlessly curious about every aspect of the art. "I had to work hard," he said; "Anyone who works as hard will get just as far."

Bach began his professional musical career at the age of 18, when he was appointed organist at a church in Arnstadt. At 23, he became court organist and chamber musician to the Duke of Weimar; in this post, which he held from 1708 to 1717, he gained fame as an organ virtuoso and a composer. For the next six years, Bach served the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, producing suites, concertos, sonatas for various instruments, a large amount of keyboard music, and the six wonderful Brandenburg Concertos. Maria Barbara, Bach's wife and the mother of his seven children, died in 1720, and the composer soon married Anna Magdalena, a young singer who proved to be a loyal and supportive wife, and who provided her mate with thirteen more children.

When he was 38, Bach (despite being considered by the town officials to be only a mediocre musician!) obtained the position of Cantor of St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, one of the most important musical posts in Germany. He taught at the choir school, which trained the choristers of the city's chief churches (he had to teach non-musical subjects as well); he also served as music director, composer, choirmaster, and organist of St. Thomas' Church. In this post, which he held for the rest of his life, Bach produced monumental musical masterworks, including the Christmas Oratorio, the St. John and St. Matthew passions, the Mass in B Minor, The Musical Offering, and The Art of the Fugue, though he was occupied by the cares of his large family and circle of friends, the tasks of a very busy professional life, and ongoing struggles with the officials of town, school, and church who never recognized that they were dealing with perhaps the greatest musical genius ever born. Though the composer described himself as living "amidst continual vexation, envy, and persecution . . ." he remained in Leipzig for 27 years. At last, his eyesight failed, and he suffered a stroke followed by a raging fever. He died July 28, 1750, leaving only a very modest material estate, but bequeathing to us a wondrous wealth of musical treasures.

For his Triple Concerto, one of the most unusual of all Baroque concertos, Bach used the same forces as those he deployed in his famous Fifth Brandenburg Concerto to produce one of his most brilliant pieces for a colorful combination of solo instruments. Bach seems to have composed this concerto, based on two of his earlier works, well after he arrived in Leipzig in 1723; it was probably written sometime between approximately 1730 and 1735, for an unknown occasion, perhaps for performance by the Leipzig Collegium Musicum,.

The two outer movements of this work are derived from the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 894, composed in Weimar for a solo keyboard instrument sometime around 1715. The source of the second movement, for the unaccompanied soloists, is the middle movement of his Trio Sonata No. 3 for Organ in D Minor, BWV 527, written in about 1730. The Triple Concerto involves neither straightforward transcription nor obvious arrangement of its "parent works," but is a reworking of existing material that results in a very free and highly ingenious "reinvention" of the music, with entirely new parts for the flute and violin, as well as for the strings,

added to a completely transformed and greatly enlarged and enhanced solo harpsichord part.

The first movement of the concerto, based on the prelude portion of BWV 894, features tumbling triplet figures, energetic dotted rhythms, and sprightly pizzicatos. The harpsichord's music rushes along like a river dancing through a sunlit forest in the early spring, bounding and romping over rocks and rapids, foaming and splashing into pools, and then dashing on its way again while the flute and violin dart and soar and hover about it like birds or butterflies; breezes whirl through the strings as puffs of light and shadow play tag along the river's banks. In the concerto's tranquil middle movement (which is to be played "slowly, but not too much so, and sweetly"), the torrent of harpsichord triplets subsides and its waters widen into a restfully rippling pool above which the violin and flute flutter and sing. A fugue of leaping figures cascades over the closing movement, which is based on BWV 894's fugal section; soon after the counterpoint's initial appearance, however, a freshet of harpsichord music suddenly bubbles out of the forest floor and swirls into triplets once again. Throughout the movement, it continues to break into and drench the fugue as the flute and violin, like playful woodland creatures, cavort among the trees, chasing one another and the harpsichord's sparkling sprays of notes. At last, the harpsichord's cadenza spills like a glittering cataract over an extensive pedal point into the shade of the fugue below the falls as the concerto concludes.

--Notes by Lorelette Knowles

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN
"Paris" Symphony No. 87 in A Major

By the year 1785, Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was already a celebrated composer. He had been the Kapelmeister and composer for the Esterházy court since 1761, and was to remain in that position until 1790, during which time he wrote an impressive number of masterpieces. Fortunately, Haydn's compositional activities during this time were not limited to the court alone. Among the works Haydn wrote outside his courtly duties were the six symphonies, Nos. 82-87, commissioned by the Court d'Ogny in 1785 for performance in Paris at a Masonic organization, the Concert de la Loge Olympique. The last of the six "Paris Symphonies", as they came to be called, Symphony No. 87, is in A major, and follows the classical four-movement paradigm: fast first movement in sonata form, slow movement, minuet, and fast finale (here also in sonata form). The work is scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings, although in its original performance the wind instruments were likely at least doubled to balance the large string orchestra of the Parisian orchestra.

The opening movement is marked Vivace, or "lively," which implies a fast tempo. Throughout the movement Haydn uses almost constant eighth notes in at least one of the voices, sometimes quietly, thereby sustaining the rhythmic energy. While Haydn writes within the conventions of the classical period, using mostly even phrase lengths and traditional harmonic progressions, he subtly subverts the listener's expectations with his famous wit, sometimes through unexpected harmonic shifts. The quiet ending of the exposition is one such example, as it provides no transition either back to the beginning for the exposition repeat or to the development section after the second time through.

The development section is the most interesting part of the movement. The exposition has made the expected modulation to E major, the dominant key, which sets up the return to A major at the repeat. In the development, Haydn begins just as in the exposition, only this time the mode is minor. The music wanders through several keys, occasionally punctuated by the mild-mannered closing theme of the exposition, which consists of a simple scalar figure. The music comes to rest on a G-sharp major chord, which is almost as far away as one could get from the A major in which the recapitulation is supposed to open. After two measures of rest, the harmony becomes E major, a seemingly unrelated chord, but in fact separated from G-sharp major only by one half step, between D-sharp and E. The dominant thus regained, the closing theme appears to usher in the recapitulation, which begins with an unexpected subito forte, an indication meaning "suddenly loud". While Haydn does not write the subito in the score, it is implied by the sudden appearance of the forte marking, following a quiet section. The recapitulation ends as the exposition did, only this time two loud chords are added so as to conclude with a flourish. As typical for sonata form movements of this time, Haydn includes an indication to repeat from the development and recapitulation sections. While its surprises have been given away, the twists and turns of the development are no less delightful on second hearing.

The slow movement, in the key of D major, is marked Adagio and is in triple meter. It is in sonata form without a development section, although, as generally is the case with slow movements, the form is somewhat free. It begins with a stately chorale in the string section, accompanied by repeated notes in the two horns. Haydn disrupts the traditional harmonic progression about halfway through with an unexpected chromaticism, a simple gesture that is nonetheless highly expressive. He repeats the chorale with elegant countermelodies in the woodwinds, and brings the exposition (perhaps better called the first strophe) to a close with a trio of the flute and oboes alone. The recapitulation, or second strophe, begins as the first but this time in the dominant key of A major, to which the music has modulated. For the second iteration, Haydn alters his chorale with new and enriched harmony. The movement ends with a brief coda that echoes the chorale, with the remarkable addition of scales in the flute's upper register, set against the lowest register of the second horn.

The Minuet, in the home key of A major, is a classic example of Haydn's humor. The "dancers" seem to be stumbling here, judging by the accents and rhythmic figures which occur on several of the downbeats, made up of two thirty-second notes scooping up to a dotted sixteenth, as though the music is having a hard time remembering which final note it is heading for. The form of the movement is rounded binary, or "A B A," in which both A and B A (which together form the second section) are repeated. Haydn extends the second section by following the reprise of A with an echo, replete with horn calls. The Trio, that is, the contrasting section, also in rounded binary form, is a playful oboe solo with accompaniment from the string section, at one point wandering up into its highest register. While the Trio is usually in a contrasting key area, here Haydn keeps it in A major. A restatement of the Minuet follows.

The final movement is, like the first, in sonata form and marked Vivace, although it is shorter than the opening movement. In Haydn's time, it was standard for final movements to be relatively light and brief; this would change with Beethoven. As in the first movement, Haydn keeps a steady pulse, here of quarter notes, so that the energy rarely flags. The moments at which the music does pause are thus especially striking. The exposition ends quietly, again as in the first movement, and this time Haydn ends on a dominant seventh chord in order even more strongly to pull the music back to A major for the exposition's repeat. The second time through, however, this dominant chord does not resolve. Instead, the music becomes suddenly loud as all the strings and woodwinds spell out the dominant of F-sharp minor (the relative of A major). The opening theme is heard in this new minor key. The development is characterized by highly energized harmonic progressions, moving through different tonal areas, with syncopations that did not occur in the exposition. The beginning of the recapitulation is difficult to discern. Haydn cleverly transitions between the two sections with continuous composition. Near the end of the recapitulation there is an emphatic evaded cadence, followed by a brief coda that begins as the exposition did, perhaps to compensate for the denial of a clear restatement of the primary theme in the recapitulation itself. Haydn brings the symphony to a close with a final statement of the theme and an almost Beethoven-like fanfare culminating in three grand A Major chords.

--Notes by Andrew Kohler

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