

Chamber Music

Sunday, March 13, 2011 • 3:00 PM
First Free Methodist Church



Members of Orchestra Seattle

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)
Duos for Two Violins, Sz. 98

Bánkódás (Sorrow)
Rutén kolomejka (Ruthenian Dance)
Arab dal (Arabian Song)
*Forgató*s (Rumanian Whirling Dance)
Pizzicato
“Erdélyi” tánc (Transylvanian Dance: “Ardeliana”)

Stephen Provine, violin • **Fritz Klein**, violin

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)
Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano in E \flat Major, Op. 40

Scherzo: Allegro—Molto meno allegro—Allegro

Manchung Ho, violin • **Laurie Heidt**, horn • **Lisa Michele Lewis**, piano

HUGO WOLF (1860–1903)
Intermezzo for String Quartet in E \flat Major

Fritz Klein, violin • **Stephen Provine**, violin • **Katherine McWilliams**, viola • **Matthew Wyant**, cello

—Intermission—

GEORG FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)
Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6, No. 2

Andante larghetto
Allegro
Largo
Allegro ma non troppo

Fritz Klein, violin • **Stephen Provine**, violin • **Matthew Wyant**, cello • **Robert Kechley**, harpsichord
Susan Beals, **Stephen Hegg**, **Manchung Ho**, **Theo Schaad**, **Janet Showalter**, violin • **Katherine McWilliams**,
Genevieve Schaad, **Karoline Vass**, viola • **Katie Sauter Messick**, cello • **Steven Messick**, bass

AMERICAN HANDEL FESTIVAL IN SEATTLE
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WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART (1756–1791)
Serenade in C Minor, K. 388

Allegro
Andante
Menuetto in canone—Trio in canone al rovescio
Allegro

David Barnes, oboe • **John Dimond**, oboe • **Alan Lawrence**, clarinet • **Steven Noffsinger**, clarinet
Barney Blough, horn • **Jim Hendrickson**, horn • **Judith Lawrence**, bassoon • **Jeff Eldridge**, bassoon

Please disable cell phones and other electronics. The use of cameras and recording devices is not permitted during the performance.

Program Notes

Béla Bartók

Duos for Two Violins, Sz. 98

Béla Viktor János Bartók was born in the Hungarian town of Nagyszentmiklós (now part of Romania) on March 25, 1881, and died in New York on September 26, 1945. He composed his 44 Duos for Two Violins in 1931.

In 1931, the German violinist and educator Erich Doflein asked several composers to provide violin duets for *The Doflein Method for Violin*. Doflein must have been very persuasive: he received contributions from Paul Hindemith and Carl Orff as well as from Bartók. Bartók initially sent a “Transylvanian Dance,” but Doflein requested something easier. Bartók kept submitting easier and easier duets until Doflein had what he needed. By September 1931, Bartók had written 44 duets, which he subsequently published in four volumes, arranged in order from easiest to most difficult—generally in the reverse order in which he composed them. While consulting with violinist Zoltán Szekély about the easiest ones, he suggested they play them together. Bartók himself was not a violinist, so he would certainly play like a beginner, but he told Szekély to play holding his violin with his right hand and bowing with his left, so that he too could simulate the playing of a novice.

Although written for pedagogical purposes, these miniature gems are more than worthy of concert performance. Most are quite brief, with many less than a minute in duration. They are greatly influenced by Bartók’s years of research on folk music (42 of the 44 are based on actual folk songs and dances) and demonstrate the composer’s profound mastery of writing for strings, which is so apparent in his six string quartets. The selections on today’s concert were chosen for their variety, including two of the more emotional duets along with some lively dances.

Johannes Brahms

Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano in E♭ Major, Op. 40

Brahms was born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833, and died in Vienna on April 3, 1887. He composed his trio for violin, horn and piano around May 1865. Brahms played piano in the work’s premiere in Zürich on November 28 of that year.

Only a few works exist for the unusual combination of violin, horn and piano—nearly all inspired by Johannes Brahms’ 1865 trio, which stands firmly above the rest. Brahms composed his trio in the immediate aftermath of his mother’s death (an event that affected him deeply, also inspiring *A German Requiem*). The composer’s father had been a horn player, and Brahms had also tried his hand at the instrument as a youngster. He conceived his trio for the natural (valveless) horn, even though the valved version of the instrument was coming into vogue at the time.

While Brahms’ Op. 40 is in four movements, this afternoon we hear the second, a scherzo inspired by the hunting-horn origins of the featured instrument and in part by the German drinking song “Es zogen drei Burschen wohl über den Rhein” (“There Went Three Lads Over the Rhine”). It

begins cheerily in a fast $\frac{3}{4}$ tempo in the work’s home key of E♭ major, with a brief sojourn in the remote harmonic territory of B major. The tempo slows somewhat for a central trio section in the rare key of A♭ minor (with seven flats!) before repeating the scherzo section.

Hugo Wolf

Intermezzo for String Quartet in E♭ Major

Hugo Philipp Jakob Wolf was born in Windischgrätz (in the Austrian province of Lower Styria, now part of Slovenia) on March 13, 1860, and died in Vienna on February 22, 1903. A sketch of the opening theme of his Intermezzo for string quartet is dated June 3, 1882, but the most concentrated period of composition began during April 1886, continuing through a summer holiday in Murau, Austria, with the finished manuscript dated October 1, 1886.

Today Hugo Wolf is remembered largely for his *lieder*, which he composed during bouts of creativity interrupted by extended periods of inactivity—a result of the manic depression that plagued him for most of his relatively short life, leading to a suicide attempt and commitment to a mental institution. His lesser-known compositions include the 1885 tone poem *Penthesilea*, six works for chorus and orchestra, and three operas, only one of which he completed—*Der Corregidor* (1895), based upon the same source material as Manuel de Falla’s *Three-Cornered Hat* ballet.

Wolf’s temperament was generally gloomy or angry, but his two short works for string quartet are remarkably cheerful. The better known of these is the sunny *Italian Serenade* of 1887 (later reworked as a piece for small orchestra), but during the previous year he completed the rarely performed *Intermezzo*, which he initially called a *Humorous Intermezzo*.

During these years, Wolf worked as a music critic for Vienna’s *Salonblatt*, in which he regularly praised Richard Wagner to the skies and attacked Johannes Brahms mercilessly. Wolf had been mortally offended some years earlier when he attempted to study composition with Brahms, who had brushed him off with a suggestion that he study with one of Brahms’ students. Wolf’s subsequent criticism is so over-the-top that it remains a source of great amusement: “The retrograde movement of Brahms’ production is striking,” he wrote about the great composer’s Symphony No. 4. “True, he could never rise above the mediocre; but such nothingness, hollowness, such mousy obsequiousness. . . had never yet been revealed so alarmingly.”

Amazingly, Wolf penned that ridiculous outburst while working on the gently humorous *Intermezzo*. The humor is sometimes of the sort that we have come to know from Peter Schickele (in his guise as P.D.Q. Bach): unexpected modulations or dynamic changes, phrases that seem to continue much too long, etc. Of course, these were all techniques Haydn used a century earlier, but humor was not so common in music of the late 19th century. The other aspect of Wolf’s *Intermezzo* worthy of note is its chromaticism: several passages stretch tonality almost to the breaking point, anticipating late Mahler by more than a decade.

Georg Frideric Handel

Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6, No. 2 (HWV 320)

Handel was born in Halle, Germany, on February 23, 1685, and died in London on April 14, 1759. The 12 concerti of his Op. 6 were composed in just over a month, in a single burst of energy during the fall of 1739; Handel completed work on this F major concerto on October 4. The work is scored for a concertino consisting of two violins and cello, string orchestra and continuo.

At the end of his life, the Italian composer Arcangelo Corelli prepared his classic set of 12 concerti grossi for publication; they appeared in 1714, shortly after Corelli's death, as his Op. 6. Each of these works was scored for strings, with solo parts for two violins and a cello. In 1739, Handel implicitly paid tribute to Corelli with his own great set of 12 concerti, also Op. 6. While Corelli refined his concerti through years of performances, Handel produced his set in about five weeks: either Handel's muse was particularly strong, or his creditors especially anxious to be paid!

Handel was able to work so quickly in part because several of the concerto movements were recycled from compositions for other forces (and in some cases from music by other composers). Handel's publisher sold the set of 12 concerti by subscription for a fee of two guineas, attracting over 100 interested musicians and members of the aristocracy.

Following Corelli's example, Handel employed a concertino group of two violins and a cello in the bulk of his own Op. 6 set (the one exception being the seventh concerto). He had originally conceived the F major concerto as a six-movement work, but shifted two of them—the original second movement (a minor-key fugue) and a concluding *gigue*—to other entries in Op. 6; the remaining four alternate slow and fast tempi. The last movement opens with a four-part fugue (derived from the chorus "Now the Proud Insulting Foe" from Handel's 1733 oratorio *Deborah*), followed by a more sedate second theme that returns as counterpoint to the fugue theme to close the work.

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Serenade in C Minor, K. 388

Joannes Chrisostomus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756, and died on December 5, 1791, in Vienna. He began calling himself Wolfgang Amadeo around 1770 and Wolfgang Amadè in 1777. His K. 388 Serenade, scored for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons, dates from late 1782 or early 1783.

Like so many other Viennese composers of his day, Mozart wrote numerous works for *harmonie* ensemble (generally pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons, sometimes augmented by a string bass or contrabassoon). Typically intended as background music for outdoor events, the repertoire for these small wind bands often included arrangements of popular opera and ballet music alongside original works variously dubbed serenades, divertimenti, cassations and partitas (usually consisting of a longer opening movement followed by several short dance movements).

With his K. 388 Serenade, Mozart transcended the origins of the genre, essentially creating a symphony for eight

wind instruments, the musical substance of which rivals his greatest compositions for full orchestra. Unlike Mozart's other two large-scale wind serenades—the "Gran Partita," K. 361, and the Serenade in E♭ Major, K. 375—the Serenade in C Minor is unusual not only for its minor key (rare even among Mozart's symphonies and concerti) but also for the fact that it follows the standard four-movement symphonic structure rather than consisting of the five (or more) movements customary to serenades.

A *Sturm und Drang* opening movement in traditional sonata-allegro form is followed by a gentler *Andante* in $\frac{3}{8}$ and E♭ major. Mozart shows off his contrapuntal skills in the third movement, which recalls the corresponding movement of his stormy Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, composed around the same time: here the minuet (in C minor) sports a canon in which the second voice follows the first by one (quick) bar, and the trio (in C major) is a double reverse canon for oboes and bassoons, with each voice an inversion of the preceding one.

The theme-and-variations finale allows various instruments to shine in turn, largely maintaining the opening minor key until a coda brings the work to a sprightly conclusion in C major.

—Fritz Klein and Jeff Eldridge

OSSCS 2010–2011 Season

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Palm Sunday, April 17, 2011 • 3:00 PM

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Wesley Rogers, Evangelist

Erik Anstine, Jesus

Jessica Robins-Milanese, soprano

Melissa Plagemann, alto

Stephen Wall, tenor

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Columbia Choirs • Steve Stevens, director

J.S. Bach *St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244

Season Finale

Sunday, May 15, 2011 • 3:00 PM

Darko Butorac, conductor

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