

Grand Canyon Music Festival

The 30th Anniversary Season

Program Notes for Saturday, August 24, 2013

JS Bach Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major BWV 1007

More famous in his own time as the organist and Kapellmeister of the Cathedral at Leipzig, Johan Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) has become one of the signature composers of the Late or “High” Baroque Era. Written during the period from 1717-1723, the six suites for unaccompanied cello contain some of Bach’s most recognizable music. During this period Bach was director of music for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. Bach had a falling out with his previous employer in Weimar, and was even jailed when he attempted to return. Things were looking up with Prince Leopold, whose strong Calvinist tendencies frowned upon complex music in the church service. This allowed Bach to expand his musical output, and he composed many famous orchestral and instrumental works during this period. It was also at this time that Bach’s first wife and second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, died. A year later, he married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a much younger soprano in the choir at Köthen. She continued to sing, and also became her husband’s copyist. The cello suites are some of Bach’s compositions that exist in both Johann Sebastian and Anna Magdalena’s handwriting.

Franz Joseph Haydn London Trio No.3 in G Major

Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809) was one of the most influential composers of his time. Born into relative obscurity, his parents were both active folk musicians, and quickly recognized in their young son a musical talent that they could not properly foster on their own. They sent six-year-old Haydn to live and apprentice with relatives in Hainburg, where he sang in the church choir, and learned to play harpsichord and violin. This began a decades-long series of appointments, some better than others, with increasingly wealthy families throughout Austria. When he finally got a “regular” job, he was so excited that he married the sister of the girl he was in love with, instead of the girl herself.

The London Trio No. 3 in G Major was composed during a trip to the titular city in 1794-95, while he was under the patronage of the vast and influential Esterházy family. The trip was a huge success, and further solidified Haydn's role as a father of so many musical forms that we now consider standard, such as the symphony and the string quartet. It was also on the way to London that Haydn met the young Ludwig van Beethoven, who later became Haydn's most famous pupil after W.A. Mozart.

Radamés Gnattali Canção e Dança

Like many of the composers on our concert this evening, Brazilian composer Radamés Gnattali (1906 – 1988) was born into a musical family. They appear to have been Verdi fans; Radamés had a brother named Ernani, and a sister named Aida. At first a violinist and pianist in his hometown of Porto Alegre, Gnattali broadened his musical range to include conducting, composing, and arranging. He was able to compose across styles and genres, incorporating elements of jazz, traditional Brazilian music, and pop music. His influences came largely from his varied experience as both a performer of all of these kinds of music, and as an accompanist and arranger for radio stations in Rio de Janeiro. Written in 1959, the Canção e Dança was likely composed for Edu da Gaita, the harmonica player who toured with Gnattali's sextet in Europe and South America.

Richard Einhorn "Maxwell's Deamon"

Before devoting himself full-time to composition, Richard Einhorn (b. 1952) worked as a record producer for artists such as Meredith Monk and the New York Philharmonic. He also produced the famous Yo-Yo Ma recording of the Bach Cello Suites that won a Grammy for Best Instrumental Performance. Einhorn has written opera, chamber music, film music – you name it. His work is exceptional in modern classical music for its unique ability to reach into the lives of so many people, as well as garner critical and popular acclaim. Maxwell's Deamon No. 4 was created in answer to a musical question the composer posed to himself:

“what does a violin sound like when it’s actually a drum set?”
Choreographer Ulysses Dove heard the piece and created “Red Angels,” a piece that was premiered by the New York City Ballet.

Ernő Dohnányi Serenade for String Trio, Opus 10

Ernő Dohnányi (1877 – 1960) was better known during his lifetime as Ernst von Dohnanyi, the Germanicized version of his Hungarian name. The composer was born in what is today Slovakia, and received his first music lessons from his father, a mathematician and cellist. As he rose in the musical worlds of Budapest and later Prague, Vienna, and Berlin, Dohnányi attracted the attention of composers such as Johannes Brahms. Throughout a romantically and politically stormy life, he maintained his status both as a respected composer, and as a renowned teacher. He ultimately settled in the U.S., and continued to teach until his death. The Serenade for string trio Op. 10, written in 1902, displays what many describe as his “Euro-Germanic” compositional tendencies. Although influenced by the folk music movements swirling around him, he remained more firmly rooted in the traditions of mainstream Germanic music than contemporary Hungarian composers like Béla Bartók.

Program notes by Cabiria Jacobsen