



REGINA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Gordon Gerrard
Music Director

2021
2022
SEASON

ISSUE ONE

ENCORE

RSO

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN
Chamber At The Cathedral Series

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY
Classics At The Cathedral Series

HANDEL & PURCELL
Baroque Series

WELCOME TO THE 2021-2022 RSO SEASON



Photo: Chris Graham

Welcome back! After a long period of silence, your Regina Symphony Orchestra is thrilled to return to what we do best—making music for you.

Over the past 18 months, we all have largely been deprived of the chance to be in the same room with each other. The connections we forge between us are what make our community stronger, and the RSO cherishes its place in helping to strengthen these connections. Music is the best way we know to create a space for open dialogue, shared conversation, and for the exchange of important ideas. The 2021-22 season has been designed to do just this. We have taken the opportunity to reflect on our traditions, to make some exciting changes and to come back with a renewed sense of purpose. I hope you will find things in this season that reawaken your imagination, inspire your enthusiasm and challenge your ideas of what can be expressed by a symphony orchestra.

This has been a difficult time for the musicians of the RSO, as I'm sure it has been for many of you. I know I speak for all of my colleagues on the stage when I say that we are overjoyed to be able to share with you again. I hope you will take every opportunity you can find to get to know these wonderful musicians. They—along with you—make our community a richer place.

Yours very fondly,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Gordon Gerrard".

Gordon Gerrard

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GORDON GERRARD

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Conductor Gordon Gerrard is among the new generation of music directors changing how orchestras work in Canada. Currently in his sixth season leading the Regina Symphony Orchestra, Gordon has distinguished himself as a leader in innovative and inclusionary programming. Trained first as a pianist and subsequently as a specialist in operatic repertoire, he brings a fresh perspective to the podium that has endeared him to audiences and musicians alike.

After an international search, Gordon was appointed Music Director of the Regina Symphony Orchestra, where he has taken bold steps reimagining the orchestra's programming, including its *Forward Currents Festival* dedicated to social change and community engagement. He was the Associate Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for four seasons and Resident Conductor of Calgary Opera from 2007-2011. He has returned to Calgary Opera to lead productions of *La Bohème*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Lakmé* and the Canadian premiere of Mark Adamo's *Little Women*, which was recorded for

national broadcast on CBC's Saturday Afternoon at the Opera. Last season, Gordon made his debut with Edmonton Opera leading the western Canadian premiere of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. Gordon has made appearances with many of Canada's leading orchestras, including Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Victoria. He has worked regularly with the National Ballet of Canada, and in 2016, he made his European debut at *Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsburg* in Germany.

Gordon is a passionate and gifted educator. He demonstrates his commitment to education through his regular work with the young artists at Calgary Opera, the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal and has spent many seasons working with students at the Banff Centre, Opera Nuova (Edmonton), UBC Opera (Vancouver) and Opera McGill (Montréal) and the Glenn Gould School in Toronto. This season sees Gordon returning to the Victoria Symphony, UBC Opera in Vancouver for Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and to Calgary Opera for *La Traviata*.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The RSO creates, inspires, and educates on Treaty 4 Territory, which is the traditional homeland of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakoda, Lakota and Métis Peoples. In the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, we affirm our relationship and partnership with the First Nations and Métis people who live here.

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Katie Gannon
Maria Guidos-Albert
Carmelle Pretzlaw
Rudolf Sternadel
Elizabeth Stirr
Amanda Contreras
Josias Sanchez

VIOLIN 2

Henghan Hou✿◆
David Johnson•
Beatrice Hodgkins
David Hopkinson
Brian Johnson
Jeff Looyzen
Paulo Pallas
Resa Fiorante

VIOLA

Jonathan Ward✿◆
Megan Zak•
Jonathan Achtzehner
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Amelia Borton•
Catherine Folstad
Joel MacDonald
Catherine McLellan

BASS

Christopher Jones✿◆
Curtis Scheschuk
Brent Gelsinger
Stephen Krueger

FLUTE

Marie-Noelle Berthelet✿◆
Tara Semple•

OBOE

Tamsin Johnston✿◆
Wing-Lok Soo•

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Christopher Kayler◆

- ✿ Regina Symphony Chamber Player
- ◆ Principal
- Assistant Principal



Saturday, September 18, 2021
Holy Rosary Cathedral
2 pm and 7:30 pm

Experience the virtuosity of the Chamber Players with the Canadian debut of the reduction of Brahms V ariations on a Theme of Haydn by Doron Toister. A new way to hear the loving tribute to Haydn.

ON SLOW: String Quintet No. 19, Op. 44
LIGETI: Bagatelles for wind quintet
BRAHMS: Variations on a Theme of Haydn

Photo: Chris Graham



PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN

George Onslow: **STRING QUINTET** **NO. 19, OP.44**

George Onslow was an unusual composer, which is perhaps why he has faded into obscurity. Although he was born into significant wealth in 1784 and reaped the benefits of money all his life, his life was also characterized by displacement and upheaval. This started with his father, Edward, the son of a British Earl who was on track to follow his own father's career in Parliament when knowledge of his romantic attachments to other men became public. He apparently didn't anticipate this being as much of an issue as it was, as the parliamentary papers from the time that he was appointed "Steward of the Manor of East Hendred"—an office whose purpose was solely to resign from the House of Commons—lists the reason for his appointment as the new Steward as having involved public advances at a Royal Academy exhibition. Edward left for France, married a French woman, and settled into Clermont-Ferrand, an ancient French city in the shadow of the Chaîne des Puys volcanoes.

Although George Onslow was born in Clermont-Ferrand, he retained ties to the English cultural scene through his grandfather. It is impossible to know exactly when or how, since he did not seem to think it important, but Onslow did later list two London-based

musicians in his short autobiography as his first piano teachers: Jan Ladislav Dussek and Johann Baptist Cramer. He must have studied at least with Cramer in London.

However, it's possible that his period of studying with Dussek took place when the two of them were in Hamburg. Dussek spent much of his life travelling through Europe, including a period in Hamburg where he became famous for his glass harmonica playing. During his travels, Dussek was a favourite of Joseph II of Austria, Catherine the Great (though he had to leave Russia abruptly after joining a plot to assassinate her), and Marie Antoinette, before finally moving to London. In the young Onslow's case, he was in Hamburg because his father was exiled for the second time in his life; this time, he was involved in counter-revolutionary action in the aftermath of the French Revolution. If Hamburg was the lieu of Onslow's tutelage with Dussek, he likely felt encouraged having a teacher who was even more frequently displaced than he.

What emerged in Onslow's music from a family legacy of exile was a kind of rakish disregard for the type of music that, as a nominally French composer, he "ought" to have been composing. Paris was, at the time, the world's leading centre of grand opera, so opera was naturally the highest aspiration of every French composer.



PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN CONTINUED

Although Onslow had a healthy respect for opera and composed three, the vast majority of his output consisted of chamber music. He also held himself at arms-length from the Paris music scene; although he visited Paris often in the winter concert season, he chose to live permanently in the countryside near his hometown of Clermont-Ferrand.

His string quartets and string quintets make up the greatest portion of his musical output: 36 quartets and 34 quintets. The quintets are notable for yet another unusual feature, Onslow's use of the double bass. He first heard the double bassist Domenico Dragonetti step in at the last minute when the cellist couldn't make it for a performance of Onslow's tenth quintet. Although it must have initially seemed an imperfect substitution, Onslow was so won over by Dragonetti's playing that he included the option for double bass in every subsequent quintet, including this Nineteenth. Indeed, the nineteenth quintet is available for three separate configurations: the first involving two celli, the second involving two violas, and the third option involving both cello and bass. The quintet is driving, almost frantic; each movement is slightly more up-tempo than it might be expected to be. The first movement, *Allegro*, leads to a second movement which, although it is theoretically a Minuet, is also marked *allegro impetuoso*; the third movement, instead of a relaxing *andante*, has the

character of a march. The final *Vivace* races to the finish line, providing a portrait of Onslow as a master that a critic at the time called "the *elan* terrible of the French Revolutionary style."

György Ligeti: SIX BAGATELLES FOR WIND QUINTET

In 1944, Hungarian composer György Ligeti was 21 years old and embarking on a career in music. He was studying in Cluj, now located inside of Romanian borders, during the school year, and returning to Budapest in the summers to learn from folkloric composer Pál Kadosa. Then his entire family was arrested. His parents were sent to Auschwitz, his brother to Mauthausen. György escaped the concentration camps only by being conscripted instead into a military labour corps for Jews, supporting front-line Axis troops. But when Germany invaded Hungary, despite already being aligned with the Axis, Ligeti took the opportunity that the chaos presented to escape. After a nearly 500-kilometer journey on foot, evading both the Nazis and the Soviets, he returned home to learn that his entire family, save his mother, was dead.

After the war, he returned to school in Budapest—as an illegal migrant, since the postwar redrawn borders meant that his hometown was newly



PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN CONTINUED

Romanian, and he therefore had no right to attend school in Hungary as a resident. But in the shambles of Budapest, still overrun by soldiers, he found that he could not go back to life or art as it existed before the war. Romanticism—the triumph of feeling over reason, the nationalistic character, and German roots of *sturm und Drang*—was dead. Ligeti was in the wrong place at the wrong time to freely explore the avant-garde. His country turned from one regime to another, and by the time he had graduated from Budapest's Liszt Academy and accepted a teaching position there, Hungary was firmly in the grip of Stalinism.

As in the USSR, the artistic environment in Hungary permitted only music that was acceptable within the political climate of the Soviet bloc. Cheerful, optimistic, and folkloric music was the order of the day. Ligeti, fortunately, was well-suited and not necessarily opposed to that style: his original intention in returning to Budapest had been to study with Béla Bartók, master of the Hungarian folkloric style. But Bartók had died of leukemia in 1945, never making it back to his homeland; and Ligeti had little interest in producing only music intended to be co-opted by totalitarian politics. He yearned for music that existed in realms beyond those he was allowed to inhabit, so he wrote in private.

One such private composition was the *Musica Ricercata*, a piano suite from which Ligeti would later pull six movements to form the *Bagatelles* for wind quintet. *Musica Ricercata* can be viewed as a very literal attempt by the composer to reconstruct his shattered sense of identity from nothing: it consists of eleven movements, with the first movement using only two pitches (A and D), and each movement adding a single pitch into the set used to craft the music. With melody and harmony restricted, Ligeti is forced to rely on contrast in rhythm, dynamics, and contour. The result is a singularly arresting suite of pieces, to the point that Stanley Kubrick chose the second movement, consisting only of the pitches E#, F#, G, as a recurring motif in his 1999 psychosexual mystery *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Ligeti mounted the second daring escape of his life after the failed 1956 Hungarian Revolution: he and his wife (ex-wife at the time, though they later remarried) huddled together underneath sacks of mail on a train headed to Vienna. In West Germany, the music that he had consigned to the bottom drawer of his desk in Budapest could finally emerge. *Musica Ricercata* saw the light, as well as the arrangement of six movements for wind quintet, which was premiered in 1969 in Sweden. In the *Bagatelles* the third, fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth movements of *Musica Ricercata*



PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN CONTINUED

acquire yet another aspect of musicality to work with in the absence of melodic freedom: timbre. In fact, the music makes such engaging and surprising use of its five instruments that anyone who has heard only the *Bagatelles* might find it difficult to believe that it is possible to play this music on a piano; each instrument becomes not just a tone, but a player on a stage, demonstrating the full range of both its capabilities and its limitations.

Johannes Brahms: VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF HAYDN

"I shall never write a symphony," Johannes Brahms once said to his friend Hermann Levi. "You have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like *him* behind us." By *him*, Brahms meant Beethoven; though Levi presumably *did* know how Brahms felt, since Levi also began his career as a composer, and never wrote a symphony.

Brahms, of course, eventually did. Before his first symphony in 1876, he wrote several pieces that could be regarded as psychological warm-ups for his first foray into the symphonic genre. The first of these was his *German Requiem*, following the death of both his friend Robert Schumann and Brahms' own mother. Then, in the summer of 1873, he took the summer

months in Tutzing, a popular vacation spot for wealthy Munichers, and wrote another not-quite-symphony: the *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*.

The Haydn Variations, as they are popularly called, are remarkable in several ways. One way is the scope of the "variation" of the material; the music strays so far afield of the original material that they may not even sound like "variations" in any scope of transformation that would be obvious to the casual listener. In addition, the original theme is not by Haydn.

The source of the theme was a divertimento for eight wind instruments titled a "Feldpartitai," probably in reference to the fact that wind instruments were still commonly used for outdoor occasions, such as hunting and military purposes, and carried the rough associations of their outdoor use into their emerging usefulness as an orchestral section. The divertimento was first published in 1782, long before copyright law and by extension the idea of exact authorship having significant meaning made their way into Germany; it was common for works by students to be published under their more famous teacher's name, as is the case here. The divertimento that caught Brahms' attention was not by Haydn, but likely by his student Ignace Pleyel. Pleyel, as well as being a successful composer,

PROGRAM NOTES

BRAHMS THEME OF HAYDN CONTINUED

founded a piano manufacturing company which was the favourite of Chopin, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Ravel, and Stravinsky, among others; the company finally filed for bankruptcy and closed its doors in 2013.

Pleyel's theme, titled "Chorale St. Antoni" in the divertimento style, caught Brahms' attention for good reason. Although it has a serious, almost religious affect, it is slightly off-kilter from the expectations of a religious chorale: instead of operating in units of four bars, the opening phrase of the theme has five. When Brahms first decided to write a set of variations, he in fact wrote it twice: once for two pianos and once for orchestra, produced simultaneously. It was to be his last large-scale work for piano, as the final forty years of his life were focused primarily on orchestral works. The Haydn variations functioned as a sort of bridge between his writing for piano and for orchestra; in the past he had a habit of composing first for piano and then orchestrating, whereas here he produced both at the same time, and with equal confidence.

Although the connections between the original theme and the variations may be difficult to discern on first listening, they are there in complicated and subtle ways that call to mind Brahms' relationship to the legacy of Haydn; whereas he kept a bust of Beethoven overtop of his piano to watch him as he

worked, he kept a bust of Haydn in his bedroom, presiding over the shadowy realm of dreams. The theme is stated first in the oboes and bassoons, referencing the orchestration of the original theme. The first eight variations that follow reference the phrasing and harmonic structure of the original but the ninth variation, the Finale, returns to the most traditional of devices of variation: canons and counterpoint, spun together into a passacaglia that repeats the five-measure foundation twelve times.

The premiere of the work was given quickly, only a few months after Brahms' return home from his productive summer vacation. He conducted it himself with the Vienna Philharmonic, to acclaim and a growing confidence in his own powers as an orchestral composer.

Program Notes by Anna Norris

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY

Gordon Gerrard, conductor
Jonathan Craig Penner, cello

Friday, Oct 1, 2021
Holy Rosary Cathedral
7:30 pm

Saturday, Oct 2, 2021
Holy Rosary Cathedral
2 pm and 7:30 pm

Blast off with this exciting programming featuring Mozart's final symphonic masterpiece, contrasted against the Prokofiev's youthful Symphony No. 1. Jonathan Craig Penner, homegrown cellist will be the featured soloist on the vibrant and invigorating Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No. 1.

JONATHAN CRAIG PENNER

BIOGRAPHY



Jonathan Craig Penner is currently in his third year of studies at McGill university, pursuing a bachelors degree in Cello Performance in the class of Brian Manker. Jonathan grew up in Regina, studying cello with Simon Fryer at the Conservatory of Performing arts and has had the opportunity to participate in masterclasses with Adrian Fung, Andrew Yee, Yuri Hooker, and Tom Weibe among others. Jonathan is thankful to be a recipient of the Regina Gyro String Scholarship, and winner of the 2019 Shurniak Concerto Competition.

Jonathan performs on a J.B. Stensland Cello made in 1997.

PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY

Sergei Prokofiev: CLASSICAL SYMPHONY, OP. 25

In February of 1917, on the streets of what is now St. Petersburg, women lining up for food and industrial workers striking erupted into mass protests against economic and social difficulties leading to food rationing. A week later, the soldiers of the capital took their side, and three days later Tsar Nicolas II abdicated, ending the Russian Empire.

Twenty-six-year-old Sergei Prokofiev did not spend the revolution on the streets, burning monarchist monuments. As bullets flew in the capital, he relaxed in Kislovodsk, a spa city, writing a cantata setting of a Russian translation of a cuneiform inscription.

The cantata, titled *Seven, They Are Seven*, could be interpreted as anti-Bolshevik: "Charity they know not, shame they know not, prayers they heed not, to entreaties they are deaf!" On the other hand, his fellow composer



PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY CONTINUED

Nikolai Nabokov insisted that in his experience, Prokofiev was: continuously repeating that the Revolution for him was an inescapable, positive event of Russia's national history...He believed that the Russian Revolution was teaching a lesson to the West and would ultimately lead to a regeneration of European society.

Nabokov became known for publicly humiliating Shostakovich by asking if he approved of the censorship of Stravinsky's music; with Shostakovich, on a state-sponsored visit to the US, he was forced to reply that he did. It's unlikely that Nabokov would have any motivation to misrepresent Prokofiev's statements as more sympathetic to the USSR than they really were.

So, what did Prokofiev really think? Perhaps the most accurate assessment of Prokofiev's political sentiments is given by British music critic Ian MacDonald: that his grasp of politics was so slight that any conclusions he drew about the political situation at home or abroad was based purely on self-interest. Though unflattering, that certainly explains why the composer spent the year of 1917 immersed in the primitivism of *Seven, They Are Seven* and the deliberate references to Mozart and Haydn in the *Classical Symphony*.

"Out of bravado, I wanted to stir up a hornet's nest," was Prokofiev's explanation for the latter work,

although he could equally have said it about any of his early compositions. Writing his first symphony in deliberate conversation with a bygone era was more than simple mimicry. "I could not approve of adopting the idiom of another man and calling it one's own," he said. "I think the desire which I and many of my fellow composers feel, to attain a more simple and melodic expression, is the inevitable direction of music of the future."

Such a "simple and melodic" expression is on display in the *Classical Symphony* but tempered with just enough of Prokofiev's hornet-stirring style to ensure nobody would ever mistake his version of Classicism with the genuine article. Although he despised neo-classicism, calling Stravinsky's excursions into the genre as "Bach on the wrong notes," there are plenty of "wrong notes" in evidence in the four-movement *Classical Symphony*. Grace notes that would ordinarily be nestled close to their main tones leap around over multiple octaves, themes appear in registers that Haydn would never have considered, recapitulation material begins in the wrong key before finding its way back to the original, and extra beats destabilize the rhythm and place the work squarely in the twentieth century.

PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY CONTINUED

Prokofiev conducted the premiere of the *Classical Symphony* in April 1918, in the midst of a civil war that claimed at least seven million lives. Four months later, he arrived at Angel Island in California, but not without a warning coming to him from an anonymous important figure in the revolution: “You are running away from events, and these events will never forgive you when you return. You will not be understood.”

Thirty-five years later, the prediction was borne out: Prokofiev’s political naïveté convinced him that nothing could go too wrong for him if he returned to the Soviet Union. As soon as he was permanently settled in Moscow, his passport was revoked. He had an affair, filed for divorce, and then, in an odd twist of fate, was actually *required* to divorce his foreign wife, who was immediately arrested for “espionage” and deported to the Vorkuta gulag. Eventually, his music was disparaged by the Composer’s Union so uncompromisingly that musicians found it difficult to play without their fingers shaking in fear of the repercussions of interpreting the work of an Enemy of the People. “My soul hurts,” he whispered to his second wife during her final illness. He finally died, impoverished and broken, fifty-five minutes before the death of Joseph Stalin.

Camille Saint-Saëns: CONCERTO FOR VIOLONCELLO, NO. 1, OP. 33, A MINOR

From mid-September in 1870 to the end of January 1871, the city of Paris was surrounded by opposing forces in the Franco-Prussian War. The commander-in-chief of the city’s defences drafted 350,000 civilians into the National Guard. He hoped that the Prussians would attack quickly, to be defeated by the natural fortifications of the city despite the inexperience of the forces defending it. Instead, the Prussian force settled down to wait. As untrained National Guardsmen tried to prepare themselves to fight, Paris starved. Rats, dogs, cats, and horses were the first to be eaten. When those ran out, citizens turned to zoo animals for food, killing and eating the city’s two elephants. When Paris surrendered after four months of siege, Otto von Bismarck sent trains of food into the city, and Parisians washed the streets afterwards to cleanse the pollution of German entry.

One of the National Guardsmen pressed into service for the siege was composer Camille Saint-Saëns. At thirty-five, Saint-Saëns had already had a long career in music; in fact, he had a long career in quite a few things, being both a musical prodigy and a polymath. “He knows everything, but lacks inexperience,” said Hector Berlioz about him in 1864, upon denying him the Prix de Rome for a second time. It was an unusual thing to



PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY CONTINUED

say about a twenty-nine-year-old, but nevertheless accurate. By that time, Saint-Saëns was not just a musician but also a scholar of Classical languages, theology, mathematics, and astronomy. In the latter subject, he published several papers, which helped to popularize the study of astronomy in France. He was the organist for a parish of 26,000 congregants, and a teacher who scandalized his colleagues by introducing his students to contemporary music. The siege, then, gave him a rare taste of precisely the thing that Berlioz thought he lacked most: inexperience in his situation.

Paris' surrender was followed by the short-lived Paris Commune, where working-class soldiers of the National Guard refused to accept the authority of the French government. Instead, they instituted direct democracy in the city. They abolished child labour and interest on debts, excluded religious practice from schools, and required the remittance of all rent owed for the period of the siege—for a little while, before the French army moved in, regained control of the city and mounted mass executions. By that time, Saint-Saëns had enough; when his superior in the Guard was murdered by rebels, he fled to London. By the time some semblance of order returned to Paris, he was supporting himself primarily by playing recitals for the English.

When Saint-Saëns returned to his home city and began to work on a concerto for cello, he had gained experience quite different from any of the previous sorts that Berlioz had seen in him. His city, too, was different. French intellectuals and artists had previously been welcoming to German musical innovation, but the aftermath of the war created an appetite for uniquely and identifiably French art. The Société Nationale de Musique was formed in response. "The proposed purpose of the Society is to aid the production and popularisation of all serious works, whether published or not, by French composers," read the constitution of the society. "To encourage and bring to light, as far as lies within its power, all musical attempts, whatever their form, on condition that they give evidence of lofty artistic aspirations on the part of their author."

Saint-Saëns was a founding member and a significant beneficiary; his music was exactly the type of French music that the Society existed to support. He began to write a concerto for another artist who was ideally positioned to come to the forefront of Parisian artistic life, cellist Auguste Tolbecque. Tolbecque taught at the conservatory in Marseille but moved to Paris around the same time that Saint-Saëns was returning. The concerto is not conventional in form. The cello leaps into the music right from the

PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY CONTINUED

beginning, allowing no orchestral introduction—a bold statement from the newly arrived Tolbecque to the city of Paris, its arms newly open to Gallic artists. It also connects all three movements together with no pause in between, an arrangement of material for which there was no French word to substitute for the German *Concertstück*. It ushered both Saint-Saëns and Tolbecque back into the forefront of artistic life in Paris and has remained perennially more popular of the composer's two cello concerti.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: SYMPHONY NO. 41, K.551, C MAJOR (JUPITER)

When Joseph II became Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria in 1765, he began a program of liberal reforms. He abolished the death penalty, lifted censorship of the press, and equalized land tax such that the rich paid more than the peasants, decreased the power of the Catholic Church, and made elementary education compulsory for children of all genders. He was also a supporter of the arts; when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart first travelled to Vienna with the express goal of meeting the Emperor, all of his wishes were fulfilled when Joseph eventually became a major patron.

By the summer of 1788, however, the sunny ways of Joseph's early rule were drawing to a close. He followed Russia into war with the Ottomans, and the front lines were as marked by disease as by fighting: there were constant outbreaks of malaria, the quarantine stations were stuffed full, and half the army was sick at any given time. Joseph, on the front lines with his men, did not escape; he eventually fell ill and died after returning home.

Meanwhile the home front was, if not equally harrowing, certainly a change from the comfortable life that Mozart and the rest of Vienna's cultural elite had come to expect. Food prices and taxes rose. In fear of having their sons conscripted to the war effort, the families who could afford to do so left Vienna, feeling that Joseph had betrayed their liberal ideals—the very families who were the supporters of such costly events as opera. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Vienna premiere of *Don Giovanni* was received poorly and closed quickly.

Of course, the musicians around him were suffering equally as concerts were cancelled, patrons fled, and bread riots threatened the rule of their benevolent Emperor—and the musicians were the lucky ones compared to the conscripted lower class dying in droves on the frontlines. Mozart, however, had neither the financial nor the psychological



PROGRAM NOTES

MOZART JUPITER SYMPHONY CONTINUED

resources to maintain his composure. He had never been particularly prudent financially, and during the downturn he panicked: he begged his publisher for an advance on future works, tried to sell the original manuscripts of previous works, and finally sent a series of increasingly desperate letters to fellow Freemason Michael von Puchberg.

"Great God! I would not wish my worst enemy to be in my present position," he wrote. "And if you, most beloved friend and brother, forsake me, we are altogether lost, both my unfortunate and blameless self and my poor sick wife and child." Although Mozart was not exaggerating the situation of his family's poor health—his daughter died that summer, though his wife Constanze eventually outlived him—he probably did have other avenues towards financial solvency on the expenses side; he still lived in an expensive apartment and owned a horse and carriage. In any case, Puchberg sent him money. So it was that in the summer of fear, disease, and riots in the streets, when they had little hope of being performed, Mozart wrote his three final symphonies.

The 39th, 40th, and 41st symphonies were all written in a single nine-week period. Even for prolific Mozart, that was a manic rate of output. It may have been driven by the desire to present them at a concert series taking place

at a new casino (magnanimously, he sent Puchberg some free tickets), but there is no evidence of the concert ever happening—and it does seem likely that, had some listener heard these symphonies for the first time in a series, they would have been impressed enough to write about the experience. The three are generally regarded as Mozart's most emotionally expansive orchestral music; it is possible that they may even have been conceived of as a musical unit.

The final symphony, the 41st, lacks what in the classical style would be a "proper" introduction. After two movements in sonata form and a third-movement minuet in the form of an Austrian folk dance, it culminates in a fugue that forms the grandest finale of all of them—and, by extension, the finale of Mozart's entire symphonic career. George Grove, writing a century later, said that "it is for the finale that Mozart has reserved all the resources of his science, and all the power, which no one seems to have possessed to the same degree with himself, of concealing that science, and making it the vehicle for music as pleasing as it is learned. Nowhere has he achieved more."

Program Notes by Anna Norris

2021-2022 SEASON AT A GLANCE

2021

SEPTEMBER

Chamber at the Cathedral 1
Classics 1

Brahms Theme of Haydn
Romeo & Juliet
*Presented by Rod McDonald &
Maureen Hawley*

September 18
September 25

OCTOBER

Classics at the Cathedral 1
Baroque 1
Pops 1
Chamber at Government House 1
Canada Life Family Series 1

Mozart Jupiter Symphony
Handel & Purcell
Jess Moskaluke
Britten & Beethoven
The Adventures of JS Box

October 1 & 2
October 9
October 16
October 23
October 31

NOVEMBER

Classics at the Cathedral 2
Classics 2

Korndorf & Schubert
Adizokan

November 5 & 6
November 27

DECEMBER

Chamber at the Cathedral 2
Special
Special

Prokofiev Quintet
RSO Christmas Special
Handel's Messiah

December 4
December 11
December 17 & 18

2022

JANUARY

Pops 2
Special
Canada Life Family Series 2
Chamber at Government House 2

An Evening of Pink Floyd
Beethoven 9
A Nighttime Story
New Year, New Music

January 15
January 22
January 23
January 29

FEBRUARY

Baroque 2
Pops 3
Classics at the Cathedral 3

Corelli & Telemann
Sarah Slean
Bruch & Beethoven
*Presented by the Bill & Helen Davidson
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February 5
February 12
February 25 & 26

MARCH

Chamber at the Cathedral 3
Classics 3
Pops 4
Baroque 3

Beethoven String Quartet
For Earth and Sky
Orchestral Rock Odyssey
Barocco

March 5
March 12
March 19
March 26

APRIL

Canada Life Family Series 3
Classics at the Cathedral 4
Chamber at Government House 3

Alligator Pie & Mother Goose
Murphy, Haydn & Dvořák
Schubert Octet

April 3
April 8 & 9
April 23

MAY

Pops 5
Classics 4

Thorgy Thor & The Thorchestra
Thus Spake Zarathustra!

May 7
May 14



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HANDEL & PURCELL



Gordon Gerrard, conductor

Saturday, Oct 9, 2021
Holy Rosary Cathedral
2 pm and 7:30 pm

Join the RSO on a trip to 17th and 18th century London to be immersed in the dramatic music of Handel, Purcell and Avison.

HANDEL Instrumental Pieces from
Alceste HWV 45
HANDEL Concerto grosso in D major
Op. 6 No. 5 HWV 323
AVISON Concerto grosso No. 12
in D major
HANDEL Concerto grosso in G minor
Op. 6 No. 6 HWV 324
PURCELL: Suite from The Fairy Queen

Photo: Chris Graham

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL

George Frideric Handel: **ALCESTE**, HWV 45: INSTRUMENTAL PIECES

Euripides' *Alcestis* is an uncategorizable play. When it was first performed at the yearly festival of Dionysus in Athens, the genre expectations of the festival's theatrical competition were fairly rigid. Three finalist playwrights would present four plays each: three tragedies, and one satyr play. The difference between the tragedies and the satyr play was one of tone, certainly—the final play was more comic—but the difference in tone could certainly be attributable to the chorus. Whereas the chorus in a tragic play consisted of masked singers who comment on the action from the perspective of a spectator, the chorus in a satyr play consisted of satyrs: horse-like men with enormous, permanent erections, braying out sexual innuendoes and scatological humour.

When Euripides' final play took the stage in 438, audiences were settling in for some well-earned titillation after watching three tragedies. Instead, they got *Alcestis*, which (perhaps tragically) contains not a single supernatural erection or fart joke. Which is not to say that it is a fourth tragedy; it has a happy ending, the sole domain of comedic plays. However, the path it takes to its conclusion goes through a thorough exploration of duty, love, death, and sacrifice.

The story begins before the action of the play: the god Apollo was exiled from Mount Olympus for a period of a year and a day and took refuge with King Admetus of Thessaly. Apollo repaid Admetus for his hospitality by offering him the kind of double-edged "gift" typical of the Gods: Admetus could be free from Death, so long as he found someone to take his place at the time that Death came for him.

The play opens with that time having come. Admetus, having understandably procrastinated on the task of finding someone to die in his place, has only one taker: his wife Alcestis, who wants to spare her children and herself from losing Admetus. The chorus, made up not of satyrs but of Thessalonian citizens, grieve her impending death and tell of her final day spent embracing her children and husband. On her deathbed, Alcestis asks Admetus to promise that he will never remarry, never let a jealous step-mother take control over their children, and never forget her. Admetus promises that and more: he says that he will lead the rest of his life solemnly, abstaining from the usual merrymaking of his royal household. Satisfied, Alcestis dies.

Just then Hercules shows up at the palace. Being renowned for the hospitality with which he welcomed in Apollo, Admetus chooses not to burden his friend with the news and tells the

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL CONTINUED

staff to entertain him and pretend that nothing is wrong. In doing so, he breaks the promise he has just made to the dead Alcestis to refrain from merrymaking. The servants, forced to wait on the increasingly drunk Hercules, finally snap and tell him what has happened. Hercules is embarrassed, devastated, and furious, and secretly vows to get Alcestis back by doing battle with Death as she is laid to rest.

Later, Hercules comes to the palace again; he brings with him a veiled woman that he gives to Admetus as a new wife. Admetus is reluctant, but eventually does as his friend asks—only to find Alcestis herself under the veil, back from the dead. She is unable to speak for three days, after which she is fully restored to life, and the chorus ends by singing the praises of Hercules.

Handel's setting of *Alcestis* is— or was, since Handel's planned performance of it was cancelled — unique in his output. Instead of a full opera, with the major roles consisting of sung material, *Alceste* was incidental music for a play, with some material being sung by supporting characters and instrumental music to introduce the work. The reason behind its cancellation is not entirely clear, but one possibility is that the music was too difficult for the cast; another is that the large forces required were too

costly. A third possibility is that the play, surprising in 438, was still deemed by the businessman bankrolling the venture in 1750 to have too uncertain a reception over two thousand years later. In any case, Handel carved up the music and used it in other works, including two also involving the character of Hercules. The music intended for *Alceste* remains still in its original form, despite the version of the play (reworked from the Euripides by Tobias Smollett) having been lost; enigmatic music for an unconventional story.

George Frideric Handel: **CONCERTO GROSSO, OP. 6, NO. 5,** **HWV 323, D MAJOR and** **CONCERTO GROSSO, OP. 6, NO. 6,** **HWV 324, G MINOR**

Although the landscape of classical music in 2021 may present all sorts of challenges to orchestras, here's one challenge we generally don't have to worry about: a rival band starting up in your city, intentionally and aggressively poaching performers, wooing audience members, and generally trying to put you out of business. That was, however, precisely the challenge faced by George Frideric Handel as a music director.

Handel had himself created the craze among Londoners for Italian opera, and as a result had been appointed

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL CONTINUED

director of the Royal Academy of Music (no relation to the conservatory in London that still bears that name), an organization intended to provide a steady stream of it to wealthy subscribers. The Academy had the money to back up its goal; it imported the best singers from Italy (and paid them much more than Handel received) to sing both Handel's operas and oratorios, and commissions from other leading composers. The halls were packed.

It must have appeared quite a lucrative market. The Academy was backed by George II; his estranged son Frederick, Prince of Wales, swooped in to create a rival. Fortunately Frederick, Handel had his final falling-out (of many) with Senesino, his longtime star castrato. Frederick's group scooped him up and hired the famous castrato Farinelli, whom legend has it was so effective in his role as a captive hero onstage that Senesino broke character in his role as the tyrant to embrace him during a performance. The new company named itself the Opera of the Nobility, presumably angling to capture the patronage of those who wished to be seen as a member or adjacent to said Nobility. To add insult to the injury of the poached singers, the first opera mounted by the Opera of the Nobility was a new work by their music director, Nicola Porpora, on the subject of Ariadne, the princess of Greek mythology— in direct competition with the new opera on the same subject that Handel was putting on.

The scene was heating up. Although it would have been impossible to mount more or better operas and oratorios than they were already doing, Handel began to conceive of other ways to make his concerts more attractive than those of his rival. One of those ways was to offer concerti incorporated into performances of his oratorios; making himself, the composer-performer, into a star to rival the Opera of the Nobility's castrati. Many of these were organ concertos intended to be played by Handel himself, which turned out to sell like hotcakes as soon as they were published. Handel's publisher, who had also had conspicuous success with his edition of Corelli's concerti grossi (concerti for a group of musicians, instead of a single soloist), encouraged him to make a foray into the genre, so Handel composed an entire set of twelve to be performed in the intermissions during the 1739-1740 masque and oratorio season.

By this time the Opera of the Nobility had gone bust, but not before forcing Handel's Academy into bankruptcy too— a musical war of mutually assured destruction that left Handel composing his concerti for performance at Lisle's Tennis Court, a building occasionally converted into a theatre, but whose hopes of being one permanently were dashed by the strict political censorship of plays starting in 1737. Handel produced twelve concerti over the course of only five weeks.

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL CONTINUED

The set that resulted is both an obvious allusion to Corelli's concerti, and wholly original to Handel, and the fifth and sixth works in the set are very different from each other. The fifth concerto is bright and full of allusions: the first, second and sixth movements rework Handel's own Ode for St. Cecelia's Day, and the fifth movement references material that the Italian Domenico Scarlatti had just published in his collection of harpsichord études. The sixth concerto, meanwhile, is much more somber. The third of its five movements, *a musette*— a genre that references a bagpipe-like instrument of that name— Handel would later end up often performing separately during breaks in oratorios.

Handel wrote so much music and it was published in such disparate forms and times, and borrowed from himself so liberally, that it is difficult to make a statement on the reception of a particular concerto in its original form. The concerti grossi as a group, however, seem to have served their purpose admirably: Handel's contemporary, music critic Charles Burney, wrote about them that "If the epithet grand, instead of implying, as it usually does, many parts, or a Concerto requiring a great band or Orchestra, had been here intended to express sublimity and dignity, it might have been used with the utmost propriety."

More importantly—as Handel would probably think—his rival at the Opera of the Nobility, Porpora, died in poverty and is rarely performed today, while Handel's name and music live on.

Charles Avison: CONCERTO NO. 12

"Mr. Avison: an ingenious, polite, and cultivated man," wrote the Gentleman's Magazine in its July 1808 issue. "Avison, from being an agreeable, well-informed, and gentlemanlike man of the world, directed the musical opinions of his circle to his own taste, and in some instances, prejudices."

Agreeable, cultivated, man of the world, prejudiced— clearly, the reputation held by Charles Avison among his contemporaries was of someone who might today be called a "character." Indeed, everything on record about him suggests a forceful personality. He was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne around 1710, at the time one of the world's major centres of shipbuilding. Although he may have left for a short time to study in Italy with Francesco Geminiani, but he seems to have been attached to his hometown; he returned quickly and remained there for the rest of his life, meaning that the epitaph "man of the world" is presumably chiefly metaphorical. Although he had something of a steady income as a

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL CONTINUED

church organist, he also taught students, composed, put on concerts. Since many of the concerts were performed for the musicians at no cost and with the proceeds going to charity, we can assume that he was persuasive to his musician friends and was himself a generous person. In addition to financing the other aspects of his charity concerts himself, he also offered a hundred pounds to repair the organ in his own church, with his own salary from the church amounting to only twenty pounds. He also engaged in the hobby by which his prickly reputation was chiefly earned, and from which we now know the most about him: criticism.

As a critic, Avison espoused, vehemently, some opinions and preferences which have put him, if not on the wrong side of history, at least on the wrong side of the eventual classical canon. He had chosen his teacher carefully and stood by Geminiani and everything he stood for. Indeed, he constructed an entire hierarchy of composers of his time and before, based on their ability to balance melody and harmony in their music, and his ranking was provocative both in his time and in ours. On the bottom, he placed Vivaldi, Tessarini, Locatelli, and Alberti, whom he considered to be composers whose music was ideally suitable for children. A slight, to be sure— and yet who can deny that Vivaldi has had much of his

enduring popularity fame in the form of his music being perennially popular with, and appropriate for, younger audiences? Slightly better than the children's' composers, he places Hasse, Porpora, Terradellas and Pergolesi, whom he criticized but with the admission that his faults were frequently lost amidst his excellencies. Critical acclaim for Pergolesi's music was slow in coming, but the critical establishment is coming around to Avison's point of view. Finally, at the top of the hierarchy he placed his own teacher Geminiani, who has now fallen into ill-deserved obscurity, as well as Palestrina, Rameau, Purcell, and Corelli; all men whom time has vindicated Avison's high opinion.

Where he ran into trouble, however, was with Handel. Although he praised Handel quite a bit, much of his praise came in reaction to the horrified objections at his daring to criticize him. Unlike Avison's favourites, such as his carefully chosen teacher Geminiani, Handel was sometimes too busy (or perhaps too inspired by genius) to carefully fill in every detail of his music. Avison interpreted such carelessness as a lack of craft, which is perhaps fair; genius and meticulous craft can be viewed as opposing qualities that most artists receive, or develop, a full measure of only one. "Mr. Handel is in music, what Dryden was in poetry," Avison remarked. "Nervous, exalted and harmonious; but

PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL & PURCELL CONTINUED

voluminous, and, consequently, not always correct. Their abilities equal to everything; their execution frequently inferior.” Although it caused him grief, it’s not an unfair assessment.

Against such meticulously high standards, Avison’s music must seem ripe for judgement— and indeed, many commentators have pointed out that Avison’s own music is intelligent, well-organized, and pleasant— but not terrible inventive. However, the set of

concerti that he adapted from the keyboard concerti by Scarlatti, of which this concerto no. 12 in D major is the final of the set, therefore contain the best of both worlds: Scarlatti’s inventiveness born of the influence of Spanish and Portuguese folk music on him, married with Avison’s meticulousness and strong sense of sonority.

Program Notes by Anna Norris

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A Message from Holy Rosary Cathedral



The cathedral under construction in August, 1913, with trolley tracks and a wooden sidewalk in front.

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we welcome the Regina Symphony Orchestra to present their 2021-2022 concert season in our church. This partnership brings together two cultural icons, two heritage treasures of the city of Regina, which have been in existence for more than a century. For our parish, it is an opportunity to open our doors to many who have not seen the inside of our beautiful building, and for us to serve the community in some way. It makes it possible for the RSO not to be silenced through the pandemic, a chance for the orchestra to continue playing the music that so many cherish, for musicians to do what they do best.

The history of our church, the mother-church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina, is closely aligned with the growth of the city. Construction of the building started in June 1912, shortly after the infamous cyclone that hit the city, and was completed in 1917. Designed by Joseph Fortin of Montreal (who had designed the Saskatchewan Legislative Building, and would later design the cathedral in Gravelbourg), the building is in the Romanesque-revival style, topped by two graceful 161-foot spires.

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The Regina Symphony is a registered charity sharing orchestral music experiences in Regina and beyond. Donations from our community are an important piece of our financial stability. All gifts have a significant impact on our ability to continue to hire professional musicians, to offer incredible live music experiences, and provide high-quality education opportunities. Thank you for your support!

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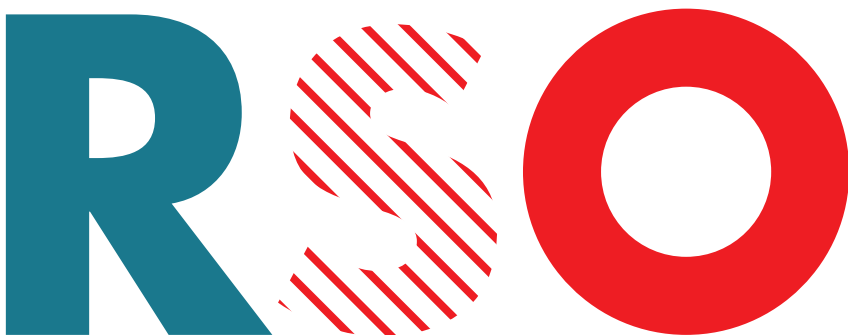
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