

# Araya Duo

Jennifer Jill Araya\* & Arturo Araya, Cello

Master Recital Program

April 25, 2009

7:00 PM

Watson Recital Hall

University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music

Selections from *Ten Duets for Two Cellos*, Op. 53

Duet No. 1: Commodo  
Duet No. 3: Con moto  
Duet No. 6: Energico  
Duet No. 7: Animato  
Duet No. 8: Giocoso  
Duet No. 10: Capriccioso

Reinhold Glière  
(1875-1956)

Nine Duo-Inventions

Moderately fast  
Canon  
Flowing, lyrical  
Slow, expressive  
Moderately fast  
Slow, singing  
Fast  
Solo with Drone  
Very fast, sparkling

Leslie Bassett  
(b. 1923)

Three American Cello Duets

I. Cello Blues: Theme and Variation  
II. The Good High Alaska Boogie  
III. Way Out West

Aaron Minsky  
(b. 1958)

Cello Duo

Robin Connell  
(b. 1951)

Three Sambas for Two Cellos

Sonoroso: Chôro  
Apelo: Samba - Canção  
O Surdo - Samba

Werner Thomas-Mifune  
(b. 1941)

\*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music

# *Program Notes*

## Araya Duo

*Selections from Ten Duets for Two Cellos, Op. 53*

*Reinhold Glière*

Reinhold Moritzevich Glière, the son of a master instrument maker, was born in Kiev and became one of the most prominent composers and composition teachers in Communist Russia. His earliest musical studies were with the renowned violin teacher Otakar Sevcik, and his musical talent was quickly apparent. At the age of nineteen, he moved to Moscow to study composition, violin, and counterpoint at the Moscow Conservatory. While he did not actually study with Rimsky-Korsakov while there, his primary teachers at the conservatory had themselves been students of Rimsky-Korsakov, and Glière's music contains driving rhythms and folk elements that betray Rimsky-Korsakov's influence. Glière graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in 1900, winning the gold medal in composition, the conservatory's highest award. He then took a teaching position at the Moscow Gnesin School of Music, where the young Sergei Prokofiev was one of his students. Glière later taught at both the Kiev and the Moscow Conservatories, and some of his more prominent pupils include Aram Khachaturian, Alexander Davidenko, and Boris Alexandrov.

Glière is perhaps best remembered today for his symphonic works, but during his life, much of his time was devoted to the composition of either large, dramatic works, such as operas and ballets, or to small, intimate chamber pieces. This juxtaposition lends a delicate air to his large works while imbuing his chamber pieces with a flair for the dramatic. Leonid Sabaneyev, a Russian musicologist and critic who was a contemporary of Glière, wrote the following about Glière's chamber works:

"His chamber compositions show him to have been an absolute master of form, and a virtuoso in his control of the resources of musical composition and expression...He excelled as a melodist and his themes often reveal the contours of the Russian style which he understood so well. He had a masterly knowledge of the instruments and of their resonance; hence his chamber works are astonishingly rich and well written."

Ten Duets for Two Cellos, Op. 53, were written in 1911, shortly after Glière returned from a two-year trip to Berlin for further studies in both composition and conducting. The harmonic language of the duets is rich and varied. While their form is predictably either ternary or sonata-like, Glière's approach to these traditional forms is anything but predictable. Though brief, each movement is a study in tuneful melodies and harmonic complexity.

*Nine Duo-Inventions*

*Leslie Bassett*

Leslie Bassett is the University of Michigan's Albert A. Stanley Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Composition. Born in Hanford, California, Bassett's early musical studies gave him intimate familiarity of the piano, trombone, and cello. During World War II, he worked with the 13th Armored Division Band as trombonist, composer, and arranger. After the war, he began graduate study at the University of Michigan and later received a Fulbright fellowship to study composition in Paris with Arthur Honegger and Nadia Boulanger. His compositions are highly regarded, and he has won a multitude of both national and international awards for his work, including the Pulitzer Prize (1966), the Prix de Rome (1961-63), Guggenheim Fellowships (1973, 1980), and many more. His orchestral works have been performed by major orchestras across the world, including those in Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Zurich, and Rome.

Bassett has written well over 100 works, including several works for cello ensembles of 2 to 4 players.

He has also written a great deal of choral and vocal works, in addition to orchestral and chamber pieces. Several of Basset's works exhibit a motivic compositional technique in which a small musical cell is expanded and contracted to form the musical whole. His *Nine Duo-Inventions* is one such work. Each movement takes a rhythmic or melodic motive and develops it, alters it, and at times twists it almost beyond recognition, creating a rhapsodic and quasi-improvised character. While the tonal language is in general quite dissonant, Basset makes careful use of consonant and perfect intervals for important structural moments. The interplay between the two cellos is complex, and each movement presents new musical challenges to audience and performers alike.

### ***Three American Cello Duets***

***Aaron Minsky***

Aaron Minsky, a New York City native, is a classically trained musician who studied at Juilliard and graduated from the Manhattan School of Music. However, his career has been devoted to playing the cello in remarkable and unusual ways. He is most known by his stage name "Von Cello," as the lead for the Von Cello rock band. As a rock musician, Minsky has performed with the likes of David Bowie, Patti Smith, and Tony Bennet, but he has also collaborated with prominent classical musicians, including Lukas Foss, Birgit Nilsson, and the late Mstislav Rostropovich. As a composer, Minsky's music crosses the classical-pop barrier, drawing upon a multitude of musical styles and languages. He is the lead writer for his rock band, but he has also written a huge amount of music for the concert cellist that is garnering well-deserved praise and performances.

In the forward to his *Three American Cello Duets*, Minsky wrote the following:

"The *Three American Cello Duets* are rooted in the tradition of cello duets written by performing cellists: Dotzauer, Romberg, Lee, Klengel, and Popper come to mind. Though I have based them on classical technique and on that tradition, these duets view the cello as a popular instrument. As in my *Ten American Cello Études*, I am seeking to expand cello technique to encompass such American popular music forms as the blues and country music. The writing is influenced by a style natural to guitar players, who take turns 'playing rhythm' and 'taking leads.'

#### ***I. Cello Blues***

There are blues for everyone else and now also for the cello! In this guide to blues improvisation, Cello I takes progressively more difficult solos, while Cello II acts like a sympathetic bass.

#### ***II. The Good High Alaska Boogie***

While walking through the mountains in Alaskan grizzly bear country, I sang this melody and my fear vanished. I hope the bears enjoyed this good-time boogie with a Native American touch.

#### ***III. Way Out West***

Inspired by cowboys and the great western expanse, this playful piece reflects that part of America 'where seldom is heard a discouraging word' and the cellists are happy all day."

### ***Cello Duo***

***Robin Connell***

Dr. Robin Connell teaches music theory at Grand Rapids Community College and jazz studies at the Interlochen Arts Camp, both in Michigan. Her commissions include pieces for jazz band, wind ensemble, string quartet arrangements, a film score, and Orff pieces for the Illinois State University Lab School. Connell's multiple awards include a one-year jazz composition study grant and a one-year jazz residency fellowship (both from the National Endowment for the Arts), two composition grants from the Colorado Arts Council, and one from the Michigan Council of Arts and Humanities. Her Doctorate of Arts is from the University of Northern Colorado.

Although short, Robin Connell's *Cello Duo* is full of driving energy, intricate rhythms, and complex interplay between the cello voices. Connell writes that, with this piece, she was "experimenting with rhythm,

rather than exploring the lyrical qualities of the cello.” The work opens with fiery block chords tossed back and forth between the two cellos, and this momentum, created at the very beginning, is sustained throughout the entire work. Connell wrote this piece in the mid 1990s while a graduate student at the University of Northern Colorado. The piece has not yet been published, and it is being performed today through gracious permission from the composer.

### *Three Sambas for Two Cellos*

*Werner Thomas-Mifune*

The samba, an iconic Brazilian Carnival dance, might seem an odd genre for the cello, but Werner Thomas-Mifune’s arrangement of *Three Sambas for Two Cellos* handles the translation to cello with remarkable skill and clarity. The first cello consistently carries the melodic material, soaring in the upper register, while the second cello provides rhythmic and harmonic support. The result is a set of works that truly captures a Latin feel.

*Three Sambas for Two Cellos* traces the development of the samba throughout the last two centuries. The first movement, *Sonoroso*, is actually not a samba at all but is instead a *chôro* (literally “lament”), a Brazilian style of instrumental music from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *chôro* is one of the earliest examples of popular music in modern Brazil, and despite its name, the *chôro* is usually characterized by a fast and joyous rhythm with a great deal of improvisation and virtuosic display. The *chôro* fell out of favor in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the samba, a derivation of the *chôro* form, gained in popularity and developed its own individual style. The *chôro* that opens this work is an excellent example of the genre. The writing for first cello is quite virtuosic, and the rapidly flowing rhythmic pulse underneath gives the movement a lively energy and forward drive.

The second movement, *Apelo*, continues the tour of the samba’s history. This movement is a *samba-canção*, a type of samba that emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and that later contributed to the development of bossa nova. The *samba-canção* is a slow, melancholy type of samba that exhibits many characteristics of today’s bossa nova. While extremely rhythmically complex, the rhythmic emphasis falls predictably on the downbeats, which generally contain the bass notes. The *samba-canção* often incorporates a classical guitar that is plucked with the fingers rather than with a pick, and in imitation of this playing technique, the second cello part is marked *sempre pizzicato*. The first cello line is delicate, floating, and quite mournful, in true *samba-canção* style.

With the third movement, *O Surdo*, we finally find a true samba. The samba, a Brazilian musical style of African origin, is a lively dance in 2/4 time with persistent melodic syncopations coupled with a steady beat in the accompaniment. The most frequent form of rhythmic accompaniment for the samba is the surdo, a large Brazilian bass drum that is found in a variety of Brazilian musical styles but which is most often associated with the samba. In this samba, the second cello imitates the surdo accompaniment style by playing percussive chords on each downbeat, while the first cello plays an energetic, syncopated line that could not be mistaken for anything other than a classic samba melody.

*program notes written by  
Jennifer Jill Araya*