

Araya Duo

Arturo & Jennifer Araya

Community Christmas Concert
Presented by The Augusta Art Guild

December 13, 2009, 4:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church, 400 E. Fourth Street, Augusta, Kentucky

Simple Gifts arr. for Yo Yo Ma & Alison Krauss

Sonata, K. 292 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Allegro (1756-1791)
Andante
Rondo

Selections from *Ten Duets for Two Cellos, Op. 53* Reinhold Glière
Duet No. 1: Commodo (1875-1956)
Duet No. 6: Energico
Duet No. 7: Animato

Cello Duo Robin Connell
(b. 1951)

Selections from *Nine Duo-Inventions* Leslie Bassett
Flowing, lyrical (b. 1923)
Slow, expressive
Fast
Very fast, sparkling

INTERMISSION

Three American Cello Duets Aaron Minsky
I. Cello Blues: Theme and Variation (b. 1958)
II. The Good High Alaska Boogie
III. Way Out West

Christmas Meditations arr. by Jennifer Araya

Winter Tunes Sherri Porterfield (b. 1958)
Winter Carol arr. by Arturo Araya
Hark, the Herald Angels Sing! arr. by Jennifer Araya
I Wonder as I Wander

Silent Night arr. by Arturo Araya
followed by a community sing-along

Program Notes

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Simple Gifts

arr. for Alison Krauss & Yo-Yo Ma

The delicate tune for *Simple Gifts* was written by the Shaker minister Elder Joseph Brackett in 1848, but it was largely unknown until Aaron Copland incorporated the melody into his 1944 ballet *Appalachian Spring*. It has since gone on to become one of the most widely recognized American folk tunes. This particular arrangement of *Simple Gifts* for soprano and cello was originally performed by Alison Krauss and Yo Yo Ma.

Sonata in B flat, K. 292

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Sonata in B flat, K. 292 was originally written for bassoon and cello, and its unusual orchestration has caused some scholars to consider the work spurious. However, the elegance of the lines and the graceful interplay between the parts belie any claim that Mozart was not the composer. Other scholars claim that the work was originally intended to be played by two bassoons, but the contrast in writing between the two parts contradicts this assertion as well. The upper part was clearly written with a bassoon's melodious voice in mind, while the lower employs idiomatic writing for the cello. Since it was first published in 1800, the sonata has been arranged for a wide variety of instrumentations, including bassoon and piano, two bassoons, and even two trombones. Today, the Araya Duo will be performing an arrangement of the work for two cellos.

The sonata was most likely written early in 1775, when the 19-year-old Mozart was residing in Munich and overseeing the premiere production of his opera *La finta giardiniera*. While in Munich, Mozart was also working on clavier sonatas that would become his earliest surviving solo keyboard sonatas, K. 279-283. These early keyboard works are full of harmonic freedom, dynamic contrasts, and smooth melodic lines, and this same description can be applied to Mozart's Sonata K. 292.

In 1774, Mozart met Salzburg aristocrat Freiherr Thaddäus von Dürnitz, an enthusiastic amateur musician who commissioned the Sonata K. 292 from Mozart. Mozart's bassoon sonata and his only surviving bassoon concerto were also written for Dürnitz, and according to Mozart's correspondence with his father, Leopold Mozart, Dürnitz was the patron for three additional bassoon concertos that have since been lost. Additionally, the last of Mozart's early piano sonatas, K. 283, was written with Dürnitz in mind. However, later letters between Leopold Mozart and his son indicate that Mozart was never paid for any of these works.

While Dürnitz apparently failed to fully appreciate Mozart's sonata for bassoon and cello, the Sonata K. 292 is certainly a charming piece, worthy of attention. The melodic upper voice is elegant and graceful, and the supportive lower voice is given freedom to comment and contribute to the musical development. The outer movements are lively, light-hearted, and energetic in classic Mozart fashion, while the inner *Andante* is gently lyrical. Even though Mozart never received the payment that was his due for composing this piece, it contains some of his most endearing melodies and is truly an enchanting work.

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. Though 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.

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.

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 Bassett'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, Bassett 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. His career, however, 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."

Christmas Meditations

arr. by Jennifer Araya

The carols Jennifer chose for this medley arrangement are some of her favorite Christmas tunes. Originally written for string orchestra, the work was premiered by the Bridgeport High School String Orchestra when Jennifer was a senior in high school. Jennifer arranged the medley for two cellos in preparation for today's Christmas celebration.

The medley begins with "One Small Child," a Christmas tune popularized by Christian singer Rebecca St. James' 1997 album *Christmas*. This beautiful tune was written by Christian composer David Meece in 1971, and it has been a Christmas favorite ever since. *Christmas Meditations* also includes fragments of "What Child is This?" and "We Three Kings." The lyrics to "What Child is This?" were written in 1865 by William Chatterton Dix, who originally titled his text "The Manger Throne." Dix set his lyrics to the English folk tune "Greensleeves." This melody, which was first published in 1652, has been associated with numerous lyrics throughout the centuries, most of which turn the tune into a drinking song. Dix's adaptation of the tune has endeared the haunting melody to generations of Christians. The melody and text of "We Three Kings" also date from the mid nineteenth century. Rev. John Hopkins, Jr. composed the song for a Christmas pageant, and the text refers to the Magi who brought gifts to the infant Christ. *Christmas Meditations* closes with an energetic presentation of "The First Noel," a sixteenth-century Christmas carol of Cornish origins. This carol was traditionally sung by English peasants while lighting the Yule log, and the joy of that festive occasion is still a part of the melody today.

Winter Tunes

Sherri Porterfield, Arturo & Jennifer Araya

Winter Tunes is a collection of Christmas favorites chosen by Arturo and Jennifer for today's performance. "Winter Carol," the first selection, is a brief but haunting interpretation of the popular Christmas hymn "In the Bleak Midwinter," composed by Sherri Porterfield. Porterfield is a choral conductor for Frontier Trail Junior High School in Olathe, Kansas, and she is an active composer as well. She has published more than 150 choral compositions, and she has twice been the recipient of the ASCAP Award for Writing Excellence. The text for "In the Bleak Midwinter" was written by English poet Christina Rossetti in 1872, and the renowned English composer Gustav Holst set the text to music for the 1906 publication of *The English Hymnal*. However, for her interpretation of the carol, Porterfield draws upon an original melody and incorporates only select verses from Rossetti's original text. The result is a haunting work that speaks to the true meaning of Christmas.

"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!" first appeared in 1739 in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. The text is authored by Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley, who was the founder of the Methodist movement. The tune Wesley chose for his work is based on Mendelssohn's *Festegesang*, or "Festive Song," and Wesley also used this melody for his popular Easter hymn "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." By using the same tune to speak of both Christ's birth and Christ's resurrection, Wesley inextricably ties the two events together. "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!" has been popular since its composition, and it is known as one of the Great Four Anglican Hymns, a title given by Rev. James King in the nineteenth century.

Folklorist John Jacob Niles pieced together the Christmas carol "I Wonder as I Wander" after attending a church fundraising service in Murphy, North Carolina, deep in the Appalachian Mountains. In his unpublished biography, he spoke of first hearing the tune:

"A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievably dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down in long skeins.... But, best of all, she was beautiful, and in her untutored way, she could sing. She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song."

From this experience, Niles was able to collect "three lines of verse, a garbled fragment of melodic material—and a magnificent idea," from which he composed the full text and music of "I Wonder as I Wander."

Since its completion in 1933, the melody and text have been arranged and adapted by numerous prominent composers, including Benjamin Britten, Carl Rütti, and Luciano Berio.

Silent Night

arr. by Arturo Araya

“Silent Night” is perhaps the best-known and most beloved of all Christmas carols. The work, with a tune by Austrian headmaster Franz Xaver Gruber and text by Austrian priest Joseph Mohr, was first heard on Christmas Eve in 1818, and it became instantly popular. While the exact impetus for its composition is unclear, the most popular legend is that Gruber discovered that the church organ was broken shortly before the start of the Christmas Eve service. Mohr, the church priest, supplied Gruber with a text he had written some years before, and Gruber began to compose a tune for voice and guitar, which we know today as “Silent Night.” Since its composition, “Silent Night” has been translated into 44 languages and recorded by over 300 musicians and musical groups worldwide. Perhaps the most touching moment in this famous carol’s history came on Christmas day in 1914, when the English and German troops sang the song together during the 1914 Christmas Truce of World War I.

Arturo and Jennifer would like to invite you to join them by singing this favorite Christmas hymn.

*program notes written by
Jennifer Jill Araya*