

Program Notes

Araya Duo

Augusta Independent School

March 17, 2010

Hymn Variations – Battle Hymn of the Republic

arr. by Arturo & Jennifer Araya

In 2009, Arturo and Jennifer collaborated to compose a set of hymn variations that includes some of their favorite religious tunes, and today's concert opens with one of those variations. Psalm 20:7 reads, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." This verse was surely on the mind of Julia Ward Howe as she penned the words to the incredibly popular *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. While living in New York during the Civil War, Howe was troubled by the soldier's rally song, "John Brown's Body," which recounts the death of a man who was hanged for his efforts to free the slaves. Feeling that the soldiers should have a more appropriate marching tune, she penned the famous words to this hymn. Her poem first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* in 1862, and before long, her new words were united with the old tune in the mind of a nation. Howe's song has long been praised as one of America's finest patriotic songs. The song was one of Abraham Lincoln's favorites, purportedly moving him to tears after it was performed as a solo during a large war rally for which he was in attendance. More recently, the tune was heard at the 1965 funeral services of Sir Winston Churchill and has frequently been played during activities commemorating September 11th. The arrangement of the melody for two cellos draws upon the tune's snappy march rhythm to evoke thoughts of an army marching in the distance.

Medieval Voices

Philip Koplow

An Augusta local, Philip Koplow received degrees from Kent State University and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Beginning in 1976, he served as composer-in-residence at Northern Kentucky University. His music has been performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, the Cincinnati Orchestra, the National Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Northern Kentucky Symphony, the Blue Ash Symphony, the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, and the Columbus Symphony, and his works have been recorded by Poland's Silesian Philharmonic.

Koplow's music is an exciting blend of past and present, and *Medieval Voices*, which is receiving its world premiere at today's concert, is no exception. The work, written for the Araya Duo, is an enchanting blend of medieval tunes and contemporary expression. The piece opens with a solo cello line that expands into Adam de la Halle's 13th century composition *Tant con je vivrai*, which in turn flows seamlessly into an anonymous work of heavenly praise, *Alle psallite*. The opening cello motive then reappears before giving way to yet another anonymous medieval work, *Sumer is icumen in*. Koplow incorporates audience participation into the performance of this final medieval tune, allowing the audience to take part in the performance experience.

Adam de la Halle (1237?-1288), the composer of the first medieval melody in *Medieval Voices*, lived and worked as a *trouvère*, or traveling poet-composer, in northern France during the thirteenth century. He was the most celebrated and widely known *trouvère* of his day, and his employers included some of the wealthiest nobles in all of France. De la Halle is best remembered today for having written the first French secular musical drama, *Jeu de Robin et Marion*, but his many other compositions are equally intriguing. *Tant con je vivrai*, originally written for three voices, is a simple yet elegant song. The piece is in the form of a medieval rondeau, and its lilting triple meter references the form's origin as an accompaniment to dance. De la Halle also incorporated into the song harmonic motion that was quite unusual for his time, and these innovative harmonies prepared the way for centuries of French song composers to follow.

After *Tant con je vivrai*, Koplow turns to the rousing strains of *Alle psalite*. This thirteenth century motet was most likely written in France, but its exact composer and date of composition are unknown. The simple Latin text exhorts all to praise the Lord, and its lively rhythm and energetic feel suggest that it was perhaps used as a processional. *Alle psalite* is followed by the equally spirited *Sumer is icumen in*, which is the oldest surviving example of six-part polyphonic music. The work dates from the mid thirteenth century, and the Middle English text speaks boldly of the coming summer. Koplow's adaptation of this work calls for the audience to sing a ground bass, or repeating vocal line, over which the cello and voice weave a lively tapestry of song.

Tant con je vivrai

Tant con je vivrai
 N'amerai autrui que vous;
 Ja n'en partirai
 Tant con je vivrai,
 Ains vous servirai:
 Loiaument mis m'i sui tous.
 Tant con je vivrai
 N'amerai autrui que vous;

Alle psalite

Alle, psallite cum luya
 alle, concrebando psallite cum luya
 alle, corde voto Deo toto
 psallite cum luya alleluya
 Alleluya

Sumer is icumen in

Sumer is icumen in,
 Lhude sing cuccu!
 Groweþ sed and bloweþ med
 And springþ þe wde nu,
 Sing cuccu!
 Awe bleteþ after lomb,
 Lhouþ after calue cu.
 Bulluc sterteþ, bucke uerteþ,
 Murie sing cuccu!
 Cuccu, cuccu, wel singes þu cuccu;
 Ne swik þu nauer nu.
 Sing cuccu nu. Sing cuccu.

Duet in G, Hob. XII, 1

Although Joseph Haydn was not from a musical family, his musical training began when he was very young, and he went on to lead one of the most illustrious careers of any 18th century musician. At times, he has been called both the "Father of the Symphony" and the "Father of the String Quartet." While these monikers are not completely accurate, they do reflect the incredible influence Haydn had over both genres. Haydn's early musical training led quickly to further study in Vienna, followed by a court position with the Austrian Count

As long as I live

As long as I live
 I will not love one but you.
 I will not leave you
 As long as I live.
 I will always serve you,
 I have given myself to you.
 As long as I live
 I will not love one but you.

Alle sing

Alle, sing alleluia
 Alle, resounding, loudly sing alleluia
 Alle, with a heart entirely devoted to God,
 sing alleluia
 Alleluia

Summer has come in

Summer has come in,
 Loudly sing, Cuckoo!
 The seed grows and the meadow blooms
 And the wood springs anew,
 Sing, Cuckoo!
 The ewe bleats after the lamb
 The cow lows after the calf.
 The bullock stirs, the stag turns,
 Merrily sing, Cuckoo!
 Cuckoo, cuckoo, well you sing, cuckoo;
 Don't you ever stop now,
 Sing cuckoo now. Sing, Cuckoo.

Joseph Haydn

Morzin. In 1761, Haydn took a position with the Esterhazy family, one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in all of Austria, and he remained in their employment for the rest of his life.

As the chief musician for the Esterhazy family, Haydn was responsible for all aspects of court musical life, including composing orchestral works, leading the court orchestra, writing and playing chamber music for and with his patrons, and overseeing the production of operatic performances. While this was a huge amount of work for one man, Haydn excelled in his position. The Esterhazy family was full of musical connoisseurs who truly appreciated Haydn's musical skills.

The second Esterhazy prince during Haydn's employment, Prince Nikolaus I, was particularly influential on Haydn's musical output. Nikolaus was an accomplished baryton player, and Haydn was frequently asked to write chamber works that included the baryton. He ultimately wrote 175 such works for the baryton and various other instruments. The baryton is a bowed string instrument from the viol family that was in use throughout Europe until the end of the 18th century. It is roughly similar to the modern cello in size and range. However, unlike the cello, the baryton includes between nine and 24 sympathetic wire strings that could be plucked individually or that could vibrate sympathetically with the instrument's six bowed gut strings.

Haydn wrote 25 duets for two barytons, all of which have since been transcribed for two cellos. These works are playfully elegant in nature, and they frequently incorporate elements betraying their origin as works for baryton. Because the baryton contains strings reserved specifically for plucking, the duets contain frequent use of both left and right hand pizzicato. Haydn also often incorporates double stop passages, which enhanced the effect of sympathetic vibrations on this unique instrument. All of Haydn's works for baryton contain a beautiful charm that must have pleased and delighted Prince Nikolaus, and they are no less delightful today.

Three easy duets for two cellos

Elizabeth Maconchy

British composer Elizabeth Maconchy showed an interest in music at an early age, and she began composing at the age of six. She studied piano as well, and when only sixteen, she was admitted to the Royal College of Music in London, where she studied with the renowned composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. Maconchy went on to serve as Chair of the British Composers Guild, and throughout her life, she served as a tireless proponent of contemporary music and contemporary composers.

Today, Maconchy is best remembered for her string quartets, and although simple and brief, her *Three easy duets for two cellos* exemplifies the careful attention she gave to all of her chamber music compositions. She delicately winds the two voices together to create a simple and yet ingenious musical texture, allowing each movement to perfectly portray its title. The first movement, *Mimic*, is characterized by a "copy-cat" canon, in which the first cello progressively becomes more agitated by the second cello's insistent repetition. The first cello eventually gives up, resigned to the copying, and gradually fades away on a low C. *Dialogue* depicts musically the give-and-take of any conversation. When one cello has a moving line, the other patiently listens while resting or while holding a long note. Each musical line feeds off that which has come before, presenting the natural development of ideas and thoughts that result from a lively discussion. "Threnody" is defined as "a poem, speech, or song of lamentation, especially for the dead" and the final movement of Maconchy's brief work exudes sadness and loss. Somber and mournful, the brief movement incorporates chromatic harmonies and a twisting rhythmic motive that give voice to the ache and loss felt by those whose loved ones have died.

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 Rostropovitch. 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.”

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 19th 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 20th 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 20th 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
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