

PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto No. 2 in E Major, BWV 1042

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro*

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

Bach along with his first wife (Maria Barbara) and family lived in Köthen in central Germany from December 1717 until May 1723. During this period he was employed by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen as Kapellmeister and composer in residence. Prince Leopold made available to Bach a number of expert musicians. It is likely that Bach composed this concerto (originally for violin) during his tenure at Köthen. Bach played violin and it is believed that it was customary for him to play violin (or harpsichord) while conducting an ensemble.

The structure of the concerto follows the model of Vivaldi's concertos that were popular in Bach's day and which he admired. The first movement begins with three decisive chords establishing the tonality of E major. There is a contrasting middle section based on fragments of the original material and then a return to the first section, achieving the results of a "da capo" formal design.

The slow middle movement begins with an introductory bass line similar to a passacaglia theme. The solo part that follows is in the style of an embellished aria. A contrasting middle section is followed by a return to the beginning of the movement.

The third movement is a rondo with five statements of the rondo theme alternating with contrasting episodes.

The work is scored for solo guitar, harpsichord, and strings. This is the first performance of the work by YSO.

Concierto de Aranjuez

- I. *Allegro con spirito*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro gentile*

Joaquin Rodrigo
(1901 - 1999)

Rodrigo was born in Sagunto, Valencia, and lost much of his eyesight at the age of three after contracting diphtheria. Beginning at age seven, he attended the School for the Blind in the city of Valencia. While there his musical gifts became increasingly apparent and he learned to play violin and piano. He wrote his compositions in braille so that they could be transcribed for publication. He studied under Francisco Antich (1860 - 1926) in Valencia and Paul Dukas (1865 - 1935) in Paris. Following the example of his predecessors Albeniz, de Falla, Granados, and Turina he moved to Paris in 1927. In 1943 he received Spain's National Prize for Orchestra for *Five Children's Pieces*. From 1947 Rodrigo was professor of music history, holding the Manuel de Falla Chair of Music in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at Complutense University in Madrid.

Rodrigo's most famous work, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, was composed in 1939 in Paris. The music was inspired by the gardens at Palacio Real de Aranjuez, a palace with gardens built by King Philip II in the sixteenth century and rebuilt in the eighteenth century by King Ferdinand VI. Rodrigo is quoted as having said, "The *Concierto de Aranjuez* evokes a vast array of colorful imagery and feelings. Being a history lover, especially Spanish history, when I created this concerto, I had in mind the courts of Charles IV, a Bourbon king of eighteenth century Spain, whose summer holiday residence was the palace of Aranjuez. Everything about it is awe-inspiring: its lordly palace; its gardens and fountains; its majestic views."

The first movement makes much use of a rhythmic motive played at the very beginning by solo guitar. This figure is heard in the following lyrical themes, all of which have characteristics of Spanish folk songs. Rodrigo's genius is in composing music that is clearly Spanish by featuring the guitar as the solo instrument. His challenge was to orchestrate the music in such a way as to utilize the tone colors available from the orchestral accompaniment without covering the often delicate sound of the soloist.

The second movement begins with a quiet, dignified melody in English horn accompanied by soft strings and guitar strumming. The guitar soon assumes responsibility for the melody and eventually embellishes it in a cadenza. This movement is probably the best known section of the concerto. Arranged by Gil Evans, it found its way into the jazz trumpet player Miles Davis' album "Sketches of Spain" in 1960. Abridged and arranged for English brass band, it appears as a solo audition piece when Tara Fitzgerald (acting the part of a lovely Gloria Mullins) uses her grandfather's flugelhorn to try out for membership in the Grimethorpe Colliery Band in the 1996 Mark Herman film, "Brassed Off!" Not wanting to risk mispronunciation of the Spanish title, the colliery band members affectionately refer to the piece as the "Orange Juice Concerto."

The soloist introduces the principal melody of the finale. The composer's development of the melodic materials consists of exchanges between and among the considerable variety of tone colors available. Rodrigo's concerto provides listeners with infinite possibilities of musical stimulation and pleasure that are uniquely Spanish in origin.

The work is scored for solo guitar, 2 flutes (one doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes (one doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 French horns, 2 trumpets, and strings. This is the first time that Dr. Baker and the YSO have performed the work.

Fingal's Cave Overture, Op. 26 "The Hebrides"

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809 - 1847)

Mendelssohn wrote to his sister, Fanny, that he visited Fingal's Cave on August 7, 1829. The cave, one of several spectacular caverns on one of the Hebrides Islands off the west coast of Scotland, is named for a hero of Scotch and Irish legend. The poet, Carl Klingemann, who visited the cave with Mendelssohn, recalled the experience:

We were put out in boats, and climbed -the hissing sea close beside us - over the pillar stumps to the celebrated Fingal's Cave. A greener roar of waters surely never rushed into a stranger cavern - comparable on account of the many pillars, to the inside of an immense organ, black and resounding, lying there absolutely purposeless in the utter loneliness, the wide gray sea within and without.

Mendelssohn's seascape begins with a recurring theme that suggests the murmuring of waves within the cave. During the overture there is a hint of a storm along with fragments that could easily suggest the sound of seagulls.

The work is scored for: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings. Dr. Baker and the YSO last performed the work on November 14, 1993.

Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 - 1827)

- I. *Adagio molto - Allegro con brio*
- II. *Andante cantabile con moto*
- III. *Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace*
- IV. *Finale: Adagio - Allegro molto e vivace*

Beethoven's first symphony was composed in 1799 and first performed for his own benefit at the Hofburgtheater in Vienna on April 2, 1800. This first performance was a remarkable event in music history when considering the other works on the program: Beethoven's *First Piano Concerto*, a Mozart symphony, and excerpts from Haydn's *Creation*. Works by the three

composers now considered to be the most significant of the period called Classical appeared on the same program. There is every reason to believe that the twenty-nine year old Beethoven was very sure of himself and of his acceptance by the public. His first symphony followed the established eighteenth century symphonic patterns. Its spirit and many of its technical features are clearly rooted in those of Haydn and Mozart. Beethoven's originality is evident in such details as the scherzo character of the third movement, the unusual prominence given to the woodwinds, and especially in the lengthened and increasingly important codas of the first, second, and fourth movements.

There is a slow introduction to the first movement similar to those in Haydn's late symphonies, but with shifting and ambiguous harmonies. Some critics objected to the pairs of chords heard at the opening. The symphony is in the key of C major, but the first chord is a C dominant seventh chord resolving to an F major chord. The second measure begins with a G dominant seventh chord resolving an A minor chord. There is an added novelty to the sound of these chords because the woodwinds and horns sustain their first chord in each pair of chords, but the strings play theirs pizzicato. The first theme is a straightforward Classical sounding melody in the first violins. The second theme appears in fragments passing from oboe to flute to violins. A brief development section focuses almost entirely the first theme. The recapitulation is more forceful and features different combinations of tone colors, concentrating on woodwinds and strings.

Second violins introduce the melodic subject in the lyrical second movement. Later entries occur as fugal entries and harmonized entries. Beethoven's imaginative treatment of this melody exploits several rhythmic devices that enhance listeners' pleasure. About a quarter of the way through the movement the melody is played in triplet sixteenth notes by first violins and flutes. There is a timpani accompaniment for this in a dotted sixteenth followed by thirty-second note pattern. Although the meter of the movement is 3/8, the remaining woodwinds and horns play chords in alternating eighth notes followed by eighth rests resulting in a 2/8 meter pattern accompanying a melody in 3/8 meter. The middle of the movement explores a variety of tonalities including the keys of C minor and D Flat Major before returning to the home key of F Major for the end of the movement.

Beethoven calls his third movement *Menuetto* but it is far removed from the old French court dance. It is clearly a scherzo, perhaps even a somewhat wild one. The range from low to high in pitch and from soft to loud in volume is apparent at the outset. Beethoven retains his fondness slipping into the key of D Flat Major that we heard in the second movement. The Trio is comprised entirely of woodwind chords and scale fragments in the strings.

Beethoven again begins a movement with a slow introduction - this time gradually releasing a scale with humor that could be attributed to either or both Haydn and Mozart. In seven measures he generates enough musical excitement to launch the finale, one full of energy and good humor. The length of the coda suggests that the composer was having such a good time that he did not want to end the work.

The work is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings. Dr. Baker and the YSO last performed the work on November 20, 1983.

Program notes by Jim Mohatt