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String Sinfonia, June 3, 2019, Program Notes

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String Sinfonia June 3, 2019 Program Notes

By

Mika Armaly

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music in Conducting

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Master's Thesis

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Sinfonia Program Notes

June 3, 2019

Mika Armaly

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Adagio und Fugue, K. 546

Having spent the majority of his childhood traveling to all the main musical centers in Western Europe, Mozart became well-versed in the musical language of his time. His earliest works can attest to the time he spent in Germany, France, England and Italy; even as a young boy, Mozart was demonstrating his ability to take something learned and use it to create his own art.

When Mozart returned to Vienna, he sought dismissal from the court position he had held in Salzburg, which was granted in the summer of 1781. To earn his living, Mozart took on pupils, performed in concerts, often held in the salon setting (performing music in noble or wealthy households), and wrote music to be published. One of Mozart's patrons was Baron Gottfried van Swieten (1733 – 1803), who was a fan of the "antique" and was known to host weekly salons. It was at these salons that Mozart came into contact with the works of J. S. Bach (1685-1750) and G. F. Handel (1685-1759). Having traveled as extensively as he had by this stage in his career, and mastering the styles of each musical city and center he encountered, Mozart's enchantment with the works of J. S. Bach (1685-1750) as well as G. F. Handel (1685-1759) show he was still learning and eager to acquaint himself with all music, even music that was considered outdated. Mozart became a student of the past, and feverishly began to acquaint himself with the works of Handel and Bach.

In April of 1782, Mozart wrote to his father, Leopold Mozart, "Please send me also the six fugues by Handel ... I go to Baron van Swieten's every Sunday at noon, and nothing but Handel and Bach is played there. I'm building a collection of Bach fugues just now, not only Sebastian's but also Emanuel's and Friedemann's. Also of Handel's." Soon after, Mozart arranged five fugues by J. S. Bach for string trio as well as six more for string quartet. Not long after Mozart arranged Bach's works, he wrote the *Fugue in C Major, K. 394*, which Mozart sent to his sister in 1782, and finally the *Fugue in C minor, K. 426* for two pianos, completed in December of 1783. The *Fugue in C minor* ultimately brought Mozart's study of Baroque fugue and counterpoint to a close, though the influence of his time studying the Baroque styles would be seen in future compositions.

If the *Fugue in C Major* for piano is Mozart's tribute to the legacy of Bach's teachings, the *Fugue in C minor* for two pianos is a demonstration of Mozart's particular skills. Mozart had taken the principles of the fugue and, as he so famously does, he made his own art of it. This is evident in the harmonic journey the *C minor* fugue takes, harmonies that were not within the rules of Bach's time. While there is no record of a performance of the *Fugue in C minor* for two pianos, it can be supposed that Mozart

may have used the piece with his students or even as a duet with his future wife Constanze Weber, with whom he often played. It is also unclear why, five years later, Mozart would take time to not only transcribe the fugue for string orchestra but also to add an adagio. One possible reason would be simply to produce compositions to gain income. Another angle to consider is that Mozart spent time arranging this fugue for orchestra during the same summer in which he was busy composing his last symphony, *No. 41 in C Major, K. 551* also known as the *Jupiter Symphony*, which boasts a massive five-voice fugue in the finale. Perhaps this arranging project was a way for Mozart to practice his fugue writing in preparation for the larger symphonic work. It is clear, however, that Mozart valued this piece, as he added the following entry into his 1788 catalogue of his works, "A short Adagio, added to a fugue I wrote a long time ago for two claviers", when several of his other exercises in fugue and counterpoint were left unpublished.

The *Adagio* begins with severe and angular rhythmic figures in counterpoint between the low and high sections of the strings. This harsh and intense music is countered drastically by a softer and more melodic theme, and the two opposing subjects continue to contrast with each other throughout the short *Adagio* before ending gently on the dominant, setting the mood for the coming *Fugue*.

The *Fugue* begins with each section of the orchestra having a turn to state the primary subject before another section takes over. The serious and almost serpentine character of the primary subject sets the tone for the fugue. Here we see how Mozart played with the rules of the fugue. The opening is quite organized and orderly with each section joining in every three bars with the primary subject, which is almost a relief after the angst of the *Adagio*. However, the further the fugue progresses, the parts begin to intermix, and the music becomes more thickly textured. Mozart continues the play of the fugue subject and its answers, then varies it by inverting the subject, sometimes layered with the fugue subject in its original form. There are even moments when the subject and its inversion move through instances of stretto (having the fugue themes introduced in close succession, interrupting the answer of the subject before the subject is completed). The development of each voice makes it difficult, at times, to follow any one voice, but Mozart cleverly plays with the voicings to bring in brief yet powerful moments of clarity within the texture, only to take them away again. The final section of the *Fugue* has both the subject and its inversion chasing each other over an intense yet satisfying driving line of sixteenth notes before bringing the piece to a close in unison chords, back in the home key of C minor.

John Rutter (b. 1945)
Suite for String Orchestra

John Rutter demonstrated his deep joy for music very early in life. In an effort to improve the quality of the piano and treble voice ruckus coming from their son, Rutter's parents enrolled him in piano lessons at the age of seven. Rutter's piano teacher was the first to encourage the young boy to embrace his vocal and compositional

inclinations, while gently but firmly steering him away from pursuing a career as a pianist. However, it was during Rutter's stay at a boarding school with a strong music program, directed by Edward Chapman, that Rutter really began to embrace composition. Chapman encouraged Rutter, and all of his students, to view composition as a normal facet of being a musician. Eventually, Rutter was put in contact with Oxford University Press, who took an interest in his work even though he was still a student at Cambridge University, and it has been Rutter's publisher ever since.

Known largely for his many choral works, such as his *Requiem* (1985), collections of *Carols for Choirs* (1961), *Gloria* (1974), *Magnificat* (1990), and *Mass of the Children* (2003), Rutter has also produced many instrumental works for orchestra, including the *Suite Antique* (1979) specifically written for the same instrumentation as J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5* and even some arrangements and transcriptions of his and other composers' works for wind band. Rutter's works are quite popular in the U.S. in addition to being well received and respected in his native England. Rutter has enjoyed an unusual degree of fame, including time on *60 Minutes* in 2003, and a commission for the wedding ceremony of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011.

The *Suite for String Orchestra* was composed in 1973, and Rutter's deep choral roots are immediately evident. Not only are the titles of each of the four movements named after old and well-known English folk songs, but also in the voicing of the strings, where precedence of the folk tune is always evident. One can easily hear the theme throughout and feel the pull to sing along.

A-Roving is the first movement and begins with rousing, unison chords. Inviting the listener to fall into the rich voices of the thickly textured chords, Rutter quickly moves the piece into a simple introduction of the first British folk tune, *A-Roving*. The song has been sung in England for hundreds of years and the lyrics tell the cautionary tale of a sailor who had an encounter with a maiden who took advantage of his money, ending with the exclamation of "I'll go no more a-roving!" The jaunty and cheerful tune is passed throughout the orchestra in variations of its original introduction, before moving into a new folk tune "I sowed the seeds of love." The movement ends with breath taking scales across all sections of the orchestra leading to a ringing final chord in D major.

The second movement is titled "*I have a bonnet trimmed with blue*", another old, popular folk tune native to England. As the title suggests, the second movement has a frilly, delicate nature. The second violins provide charming trills throughout, with sparse accompaniment in the lower strings. The first violins perform the delightful yet almost juvenile tune, and the feeling of the movement brings to mind a vision of a young maiden frolicking and preening in her new finery. A brief moment of contemplation is perhaps the most serious passage of the movement, with a solo violin voice singing the song of the young maiden pondering her blue bonnet, before closing the movement as it began – with glitter and frills.

“*O waly, waly*”, also known as “*The water is wide*,” breaks the Suite’s jovial momentum with a more sedate and achingly bittersweet third movement. Lamenting the loss of true love over the inevitable passing of time, the theme and accompaniment of flowing eighth notes brings to mind the slow yet steady movement of a ponderous river. Firmly rooted in the key of G Major, the brief moment of turbulence, or the reluctance to accept the loss of love, comes in an abrupt change to E-flat Major, with the strings emphasizing the feeling of desperation with an intense buildup of volume and frenzied tremolo, before gently fading into acceptance in a duet between solo violin and viola.

The final movement of the Suite introduces the folk tune “*Dashing away*.” Describing a young man admiring his sweetheart who so busily works at her chores or is “dashing away” with her different tasks, depending on the day of the week. The charming and jaunty tune forms the basis of the final movement. Building from a simple introduction by the violins, the movement builds in variations of the main theme, eventually moving into a lovely juxtaposition of the theme with a new folk tune, “The bailiff’s daughter of Islington.” The theme is chased around the orchestra by accompanying fugal themes in bell-like chimes as well as rapid, scalar passages. The final movement is full of motion, and following the theme from one moment to the next, the listener can be distracted by the movement of the accompanying parts. The coda ends as the suite began, with full chords across the orchestra.

Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945)
Rumanian Folk Dances
Arranged for orchestra by Arthur Willner

Based on a collection of seven folk tunes from the Transylvania region of Hungary, Bartók’s *Rumanian Folk Dances* has become a staple of the orchestral repertoire. Originally written for piano and later transcribed for winds and orchestra, the collection of folk dances were an early attempt at providing more “authentic” peasant music than had been previously available.

The early 1900’s brought a sweep of nationalism to Hungary, inspired by the Party of Independence and its leader, Ferenc Kossuth. One of Bartók’s first successful pieces was a symphonic poem titled *Kossuth* (1903), written in honor of the great Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth, who was Ferenc’s father and had led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Austrian Empire in the late nineteenth century. In *Kossuth*, Bartók incorporates Western musical practice with his native folk music, a combination that had already been popularized by the composers Franz Liszt with his *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and also with Johannes Brahms’ *Hungarian Dances*. However, these works were representative of just one Hungarian style, influenced by what was known as the gypsy tradition (known today as Roma) and was heavily romanticized by Brahms, Liszt, and many others.

Bartók and his colleague Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967) travelled extensively, reaching as far as North Africa. They collected, documented and recorded any and all

peasant folk music they came across. Their hope was to locate and document folk music in its most raw and natural form and to bring it to the general public in the form of a large catalogue of their findings as well as in their own compositions. From their travels, Bartók and Kodály heard and learned of music that provided incredible variation in tunes, harmonies, textures and rhythms that were inevitably manifested in their music.

Written and transcribed between 1915-1917, each of the *Rumanian Dances* (arranged here by Arthur Willner for string orchestra) varies slightly in its form, harmonic progressions, rhythmic consistency and almost all of the movements are written to flow from one into the next with only minor pauses between. The seven dances are:

- I *Jocul cu bâță* (Stick Dance, from Mezöszabad, County Maros-Torda)
- II *Brâul* (Sash Dance from Egres County Torontál)
- III *Pe loc* (In One Spot from Egres County Torontál)
- IV *Buciumeana* (Dance from Bucsum, from Bisztra County Torda-Aranyos)
- V *Poarga Românească* (Romanian Polka from Belényes County Bihar)
- VI *Mărunțel* (Fast Dance from Belényes County Bihar)
- VII *Mărunțel* (Fast Dance from Nyagra County Torda-Aranyos)

Most of the movements feature one voice within the orchestra (primarily violin) performing the main folk tune, accompanied by the orchestra. This brings to mind the single fiddle or flute featured in the rural villages of Hungary. The simplistic structure of solo voice with accompaniment is made more interesting by the unusual rhythmic structure within each movement. Sometimes the solo voice will emphasize one pulse, only to have the accompanying voices emphasize the pulse one beat later, as in the fourth movement in the Dance from Bucsum. The third movement features an exotic violin solo with irregular pulse emphasis, laid out over steady quarter notes in the accompaniment. Oftentimes the whole orchestra will play with the listener's sense of time by predictably accenting the start of each measure, only to suddenly change the accent to the "weak" beat at the end of the phrase, temporarily providing a feeling of skipping a heartbeat before returning back to a predictable pattern, such as in the fifth and sixth movements. While the themes and accompaniment can sound quite modal at times, the tonal centers are always solid, reinforced by the accompaniment, which was written to mimic the indigenous bagpipes of Hungary.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)
Cello Concerto in C Major, Hob. VIIb:1
Soloist, Corianne Holquinn

Joseph Haydn enjoyed a long and prolific career as music director and composer at the famed Esterházy court. Hired in 1761 as the assistant to the older and ailing music director, Gregor Werner (1693 – 1766), Haydn took on the majority of the musical duties, including leading rehearsals, performing for and with members of the Esterházy court and composing works to be performed by the court orchestra. Later in his career,

he would also compose and direct opera productions. Haydn would eventually become the full director of music at court, a post he would retain for over three decades.

The *Cello Concerto in C Major* was composed sometime during his first years in the Esterházy court, and almost undoubtedly for his friend, the cellist Joseph Weigl. As one of Haydn's primary concerns during his first years at Esterházy was to produce music for the entertainment of the court and his patron, Prince Paul Anton (and later his brother Prince Nikolaus), the concertos were a natural vehicle with which Haydn could display his own talents, as well as the virtuosic abilities of the players he brought into the court orchestra.

While there is no record of a performance of the piece at the Esterházy court, it is very likely the *C Major Cello Concerto* was performed before being put away in the large and impressive Esterházy music library. The date of composition is also in question, and if it weren't for Haydn creating a catalogue of his works in 1765, the piece's authenticity might still remain in question as well. In Haydn's own catalogue, he listed the *Cello Concerto in C* and a segment of its thematic material. Then, the piece disappeared for two hundred years and was thought to be lost entirely. Until 1961, in a moment described by H. C. Robbins Landon, a Haydn researcher, as the "greatest musicological discovery since the Second World War," the parts of the *Concerto* were discovered by an archivist in the National Museum in Prague, who had been sorting through a pile of old documents from a household in Bohemia. Joseph Weigl's signature was on the documents, perhaps as the musician who copied the parts, but thanks to Haydn's own catalogue from 1765, the parts were matched as the missing *Cello Concerto in C*.

As one of Haydn's earliest works, the *Cello Concerto in C* shows a blend of the somewhat outdated Baroque style and the new trends of the Classical. Demonstrating *ritornello* form, in which the orchestra and the soloist trade a theme back and forth, both the orchestra and soloist have ample opportunity to demonstrate virtuosic skills, while still providing a platform for the solo cello. In the first movement, the *Moderato*, the orchestral introduction sets the stage for the robust and triumphant entrance of the soloist. The character of the *Moderato* is quite festive, a feeling that is maintained by the constant activity in both the solo cello and the accompaniment. The growth of the first movement leads to a virtuosic cadenza before the orchestra closes with a final restatement of the theme.

The expansive second movement, the *Adagio*, begins again with the orchestra stating the theme, but unexpectedly, the solo cello blossoms from nothing on a long pedal tone before taking over the theme from the violins' second statement. Sweet and texturally simpler (as Haydn has not included the winds in the second movement), the orchestra and soloist again trade the theme between them, with the orchestra melodiously finishing the movement after the soloist's final cadenza.

The *Allegro molto* (Finale) shows a vivacity and playfulness that foreshadows the style of Haydn's later works. Sudden dynamic changes and constant, almost agitated

motion in the accompaniment and solo lines sets the *Finale* apart from the prior movements, and the soloist's exploration of the higher register of the cello brings the concerto to an impressive close.