



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY
Classical Series

Sunday, April 11, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Michael Stern, *conductor*

Katherine Siochi, *harp*

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto in E-flat Major for Chamber Orchestra,
"Dumbarton Oaks"

- I. Tempo giusto
- II. Allegretto
- III. Con moto

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Dances sacrée et profane for Harp and Orchestra

- I. Danse sacrée: Très modéré
- II. Danse profane: Modéré

Katherine Siochi, **harp**

Movements performed without pause

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048

- I. [No tempo indicated]
- II. "Amazing Grace" arr. Jennifer Higdon
- III. Allegro

The Willard Martin French double harpsichord used for this work was generously donated by the Community of Christ.

The 2020/21 Season is generously sponsored by

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JASON SEBER, *David T. Beals III Associate Conductor*

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Miller Nichols Chair

Stirling Trent,
Acting Associate Concertmaster

Chiafei Lin,
Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Gregory Sandomirsky‡
Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

Anne-Marie Brown

Betty Chen

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Susan Goldenberg*

Tomoko Iguchi

Dorris Dai Janssen

Vladimir Rykov

Alex Shum*

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Kristin Velicer, *Acting Associate Principal*

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Duke Lee, *Acting Assistant Principal*

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Rung Lee*

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Evan Halloin, *Associate Principal*

Brandon Mason ‡

Caleb Quillen

Richard Ryan

Nash Tomey

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Marylou and John Dodds Turner Chair

Shannon Finney, *Associate Principal*

Kayla Burggraf

PICCOLO

Kayla Burggraf

OBOES

Kristina Fulton, *Principal*

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CLARINETS

Raymond Santos, *Principal*

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John Klinghammer

E-FLAT CLARINET

Silvio Guitian

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John Klinghammer

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Maxwell Pipinich

CONTRABASSOON

Thomas DeWitt

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David Gamble

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Porter Wyatt Henderson,
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Adam Rainey

BASS TROMBONE

Adam Rainey

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Joe LeFevre, *Principal*

Frank Byrne Chair

TIMPANI

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PERCUSSION

Josh Jones^, *Principal*

David Yoon, *Associate Principal*

HARP

Katherine Siochi, *Principal*

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Fabrice Curtis

* Non-Rotating Musician

^ New Member

‡ On Leave of Absence

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto in E-flat Major for Chamber Orchestra, “Dumbarton Oaks” (1937-1938)

15 minutes

One flute, one clarinet, one bassoon, two horns and strings

Music is integral to the milestones of life and Stravinsky’s Concerto in E-flat, “Dumbarton Oaks,” was commissioned by American diplomat Robert Woods Bliss as a gift for his wife Mildred in celebration of their thirtieth wedding anniversary. The 1938 premiere took place in the music room of their 19th-century mansion, Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington, D.C.’s historic Georgetown neighborhood. Legendary music teacher Nadia Boulanger conducted the premiere because Stravinsky was hospitalized then with tuberculosis. “Dumbarton Oaks” delighted Mildred Bliss so much that she immediately commissioned another work from Stravinsky, his Symphony in C. Stravinsky eventually conducted “Dumbarton Oaks” at the estate in 1947 and most happily for the Bliss’ fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1958.

Stravinsky divides the violins and violas into three parts each, a clear parallel with Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. A brief fugato (several lines stating a theme sequentially in imitation, layered in counterpoint) is further evidence of Baroque inspiration. Stravinsky’s recollection of the composition:

“My Concerto in E-flat...was begun almost immediately upon my return to Europe after *Jeux de cartes*, in the spring of 1937. I had moved from Paris to Annemasse in the Haute Savoie to be near my daughter Mika [Ludmila] who, mortally ill with tuberculosis, was confined to a sanatorium there. Annemasse is near Geneva, and [conductor] Ernest Ansermet was therefore a neighbor and also a helpful friend at this, perhaps the most difficult time of my life. [Ludmila died in 1938.] I played Bach regularly during the composition of the Concerto, and was greatly attracted to the “Brandenburg” Concertos. Whether or not the first theme of my [first] movement is a conscious borrowing from the third Brandenburg, however, I do not know. What I can say is that Bach would most certainly have been delighted to loan it to me; to borrow in this way was exactly the sort of thing he liked to do.”

ETW

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

One of the twentieth century’s most conspicuous and original composers, Igor Stravinsky helped provide the impetus for tectonic shifts in classical music. His compositions reflect the facile reinvention of himself to contend with changes in life circumstances across a lengthy career.

Stravinsky’s father was a bass with the Russian Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg and his mother was an excellent pianist. They often entertained artists and Igor grew up in a refined atmosphere. He began



piano lessons at age 9 and regularly attended performances at the Mariinsky Theatre where his father performed. Despite this emphasis on music, his parents insisted Igor study law.

Among Stravinsky's law school classmates was the son of renowned composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Accepting the invitation for a family visit, Stravinsky met and began studying with Rimsky-Korsakov. Becoming financially independent after the death of his father in 1902 allowed Stravinsky to concentrate on music rather than law. In 1906, he married his cousin, Catherine Nossenko, and they had four children.

Stravinsky's music came to the attention of Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev asked Stravinsky to orchestrate music by Chopin and, impressed by the result, commissioned a ballet inspired by a Russian folktale. Premiering at the Paris Opera in 1910, *The Firebird* was a triumph for the 28-year-old composer and he was enthusiastically welcomed into Parisian artistic circles. This accomplishment was followed immediately by the highly successful 1911 premiere of his second ballet score, *Petrushka*.

The premiere of Stravinsky's third ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, on May 29, 1913 has become the stuff of legend. Unconventional music paired with raw choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky evoked a visceral response from the Paris audience. The extent of the outcry may be a matter of debate but it is incontrovertible that Stravinsky's score is one of the most important compositions of the 20th century.

The outbreak of World War I forced Stravinsky and his family into exile in Switzerland. Losing his property as a result of the Russian Revolution forced Stravinsky to begin building a new life. Other than a brief visit in 1962, he would never return to Russia.

With limited resources now available, Stravinsky began writing for smaller ensembles. Among the works were *L'histoire du soldat* and *Pulcinella*, the latter his adaptation of 18th-century music that embraced the growing neoclassical movement. Moving from Switzerland in 1920, Stravinsky settled in France, becoming a French citizen in 1934. He also began touring as a conductor and piano soloist.

Stravinsky lost his eldest daughter, his wife, and his mother during a particularly difficult time in 1938-39. The outbreak of World War II prompted Stravinsky and his second wife, Vera de Bosset, to move to the United States, settling in Los Angeles with other composer emigres such as Arnold Schoenberg, Erich Korngold, Miklós Rózsa and Max Steiner. He became an American citizen in 1945.

Exploring a wide range of new projects, Stravinsky wrote a neoclassical opera, *The Rake's Progress*, and then began using serial composition techniques in the 1950s. He also embarked on an effort to record the vast majority of his oeuvre. In declining health, he moved to New York in 1969, where he died in 1971. *ETW*



CLAUDE DEBUSSY***Danses sacrée et profane* for Harp and Orchestra (1904)****11 minutes**

Commercial product placement in art is not a new phenomenon. Two enduring French works for harp came about through commissions to demonstrate instruments made by rival harp manufacturers. The Pleyel firm, founded in 1807 and known for making pianos favored by Frédéric Chopin, produced an innovative chromatic harp, which it sought to publicize by commissioning Claude Debussy to compose a work showcasing the instrument's capabilities. Debussy's *Danses sacrée et profane*, completed in 1904, prompted the Érard firm to commission a work from Maurice Ravel to demonstrate the advantages of its double-action harp. Writing rapidly ("a week of continuous work and three sleepless nights"), Ravel completed *Introduction and Allegro* in June 1905.

Debussy's *Danses* premiered in Paris on November 6, 1904, when his life was complicated, to say the least. In the preceding months, he had begun an affair with the mother of one of his students and sent his wife, Lilly, to her parent's home. While staying in Normandy with his lover, Emma Bardac (later his second wife), Debussy wrote to Lilly telling her that their marriage was over but made no mention of Bardac. Upon returning to Paris, Debussy moved to another residence. Lilly despaired and attempted suicide on October 14 but survived the bullet wound. The subsequent scandal made Paris rather inhospitable for Debussy. His life circumstances at the time belie the easy charm of the *Danses*.

The Pleyel harp was challenging to navigate, with its profusion of strings compensating for the lack of pedals used on other harps to change string pitch. Because of this, the unwieldy design never caught on but Debussy's splendid music has remained a staple of the harp repertoire over the past century. Debussy was perhaps the ideal choice for Pleyel's commission since he was riding a wave of international fame following the premiere of his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. His penchant for whole tone scales, pentatonic scales, Javanese gamelan music and highly chromatic harmonies amply displayed the Pleyel harp's musical capabilities despite its technical shortcomings.

The work's duality of "sacred and profane" evokes more a sense of ethereal and corporeal existence than religious connotations. "Danse sacrée" begins with the accompanying strings in unison intoning a simple phrase. Responding to this velvety texture, the harp's dulcet tones begin weaving their magic. Just a few measures later, Debussy boldly ventures into chromaticism, roundly delivering on the premise of the commission. A series of falling notes signals a transition to the "Danse profane." A gently lilting waltz, the "Danse profane" is filled with a multitude of swirling notes on its sweetly melodic journey. *ETW*

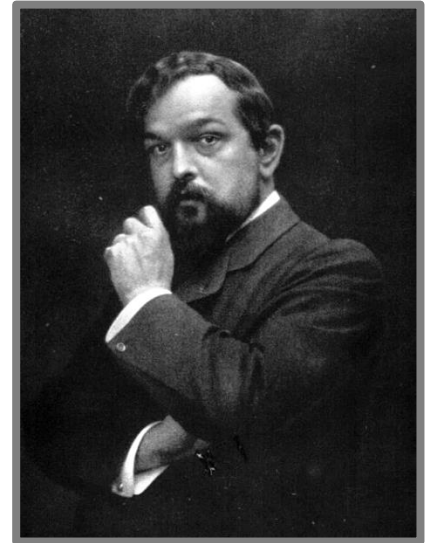
We must agree that the beauty of a work of art will always remain a mystery [...] we can never be absolutely sure "how it's made." We must at all costs preserve this magic which is peculiar to music and to which music, by its nature, is of all the arts the most receptive.

Claude Debussy



CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

Claude Debussy was the eldest of five children born to Victorine and Manuel-Achille Debussy. His mother was a seamstress and his father worked in a printing factory following an unsuccessful venture running a china shop. Victorine took the children to Cannes in 1870 to escape the depredations Paris suffered as it was besieged during the Franco-Prussian war. It was in Cannes that the 7-year-old Debussy had his first piano lessons. He made exceptional progress and was admitted to the Conservatoire de Paris in 1872 where he would study for the next 11 years. Extremely talented, Debussy was a casual student, prone to skip classes and rather careless about his responsibilities. He was an excellent pianist but not inclined to pursue a career as a performer. Disqualified from further piano studies, he continued classes in harmony and composition.



In 1880, Debussy obtained a job as pianist in the retinue of Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky's patroness. He travelled with her family across France, Switzerland and Italy, and to her home in Moscow, another aspect of his less-than-conventional education. His compositions also began to flaunt orthodoxy for which he incurred disapproval from the Conservatoire's faculty. Despite this censure, Debussy won the prestigious Prix de Rome and spent two years in Rome. He was not enamored with Italian music and found the Roman sojourn more stifling than inspiring. He composed the works required by the prize but his unique style began to emerge and the academicians reproached him for writing music that was "bizarre, incomprehensible, and unperformable."

Upon returning to Paris in 1887, Debussy heard a portion of Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* and he found inspiration in its brilliant harmonies. The Paris Exposition of 1889 offered another discovery for the composer: Javanese gamelan music. Its scales and textural possibilities appealed to Debussy and he began incorporating its sensibilities in his music. His String Quartet debuted in 1893 and his revolutionary *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun) premiered in 1894. At the time, he was working on his operatic masterpiece, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Its premiere in 1902 brought Debussy great acclaim in France and internationally. He was appointed a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in 1903 and eventually became a member of the governing council of the Conservatoire.

Paris was a heady place for the arts and Debussy's circle of friends and acquaintances included Erik Satie, Ernest Chausson, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Manuel de Falla, Serge Diaghilev and Paul Dukas. Over the years, many would disown Debussy for his cavalier treatment of spouses and lovers. He had one child, a beloved daughter nicknamed "Chouchou," to whom the *Children's Corner* Suite is dedicated. She died in the diphtheria epidemic of 1919, 16 months after her father's death.

Debussy had largely abandoned chamber music following the success of his String Quartet in 1893. His publisher, Jacques Durand, encouraged Debussy to return to the genre in 1914 and a set of six sonatas for various instruments was envisioned, paying homage to 18th century French composers. Debussy completed three sonatas before succumbing to colorectal cancer in 1918 while World War I was still raging.

The name Claude Debussy is invariably coupled with the term “Impressionism,” a facile borrowing of the description used for late 19th-century painting (typically French) in which the emphasis is on an overall impression rather than pictorial fidelity. Debussy objected to that description of his music but its evocative nature has inspired widespread use of the term for Debussy as well as many other composers of the era. Regardless of terminology, Debussy’s music is vivid, enchanting, imaginative, and filled with delicious ambiguities. *ETW*



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 (1711-21)

10 minutes

One of Johann Sebastian Bach’s most famous works, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 has been arranged for countless different ensembles and is frequently heard today at weddings, receptions and other festive occasions. It was not always so popular.

The music’s backstory is rather more complicated than the lively melodies that populate the work. In the late 1710s, Bach was working for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen and it was a very happy situation; the prince was a musician himself and appreciated Bach’s talents. Bach was paid well and had a great deal of compositional freedom since the Calvinist prince required no sacred music. With a fine group of musicians at court to perform his music, Bach was in a sweet spot.

In 1719, Bach went to buy a new harpsichord in Berlin where he encountered Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, the younger brother of King Frederick I of Prussia. He played for the margrave who was suitably impressed and suggested that Bach send him some music. Such royal requests could be quite lucrative but Bach did not immediately fulfill the request and life intervened. Bach’s wife, Maria Barbara, died very unexpectedly in the summer of 1720, leaving the distraught composer caring for their four children. The following year, Prince Leopold married and the new princess was reputedly devoid of any musical interest at all, resenting her husband’s devotion to the art. In the interest of marital harmony, the prince distanced himself from musical endeavors. Bach began considering new job opportunities.

The concerto was bundled into a set of six (a common number in 18th century sets of music) and sent to the margrave with Bach's rather obsequious dedication as a soft employment inquiry.

As I had the good fortune a few years ago to be heard by Your Royal Highness, at Your Highness' commands, and as I noticed then that Your Highness took some pleasure in the little talents which Heaven has given me for Music, and as in taking Leave of Your Royal Highness, Your Highness deigned to honor me with the command to send Your Highness some pieces of my Composition: I have in accordance with Your Highness' most gracious orders taken the liberty of rendering my most humble duty to Your Royal Highness with the present Concertos, which I have adapted to several instruments; begging Your Highness most humbly not to judge their imperfection with the rigor of that fine and delicate taste that the whole world knows Your Highness has for musical works, but rather to take into benign Consideration the profound respect and the most humble obedience that I try to show Your Highness therewith.

The margrave had somewhat modest financial and musical resources so the six concertos were likely never performed at the Brandenburg court. Bach never received any payment from the margrave and the scores moldered away in the margrave's library until 1734 when they were sold for a pittance. The works remained obscure until 1849 when they surfaced in the Prussian royal library and were finally published for the first time in 1850, a century after Bach's death. In 1873, Bach biographer Phillip Spitta gave them the name "Brandenburg Concertos" by which they have been known ever since.

Thus, instead of going to work for the margrave, Bach married Anna Magdalena Wilcken and they moved to Leipzig, remaining there for the rest of their lives.

The basic idea of a concerto is that a solo instrument or combination of solo instruments will have a conversation with the ensemble. Each of the six Brandenburgs was written for a somewhat different group of instruments and the degree of solo expression varies widely in the concertos. The Third Brandenburg Concerto was written for strings only, with the solo and ensemble roles largely merged.

Bach's interest in the significance of numbers extends to the Third Brandenburg Concerto. The third of the set, it calls for three families of instruments comprised of three violins, three violas, and three cellos (plus continuo, essentially harpsichord and bass). It has three movements although the second only consists of a pair of chords over which an improvised melody would have been expected, or perhaps another work interpolated as in the case of today's performance. The melodic figure permeating the first movement consists of three notes. Many of the musical sequences are in groups of three and the subdivided pulse of the last movement is an unmistakable three. The concerto is ingratiating and its cheerful demeanor is good reason for its popularity today, 300 years following Bach's hopeful dedication of the set to Christian Ludwig on March 24, 1721. *ETW*



Bach's original handwritten manuscript of Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. See lines for the three violins, three violas, three cellos, and the combined bottom line for the bass and harpsichord.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

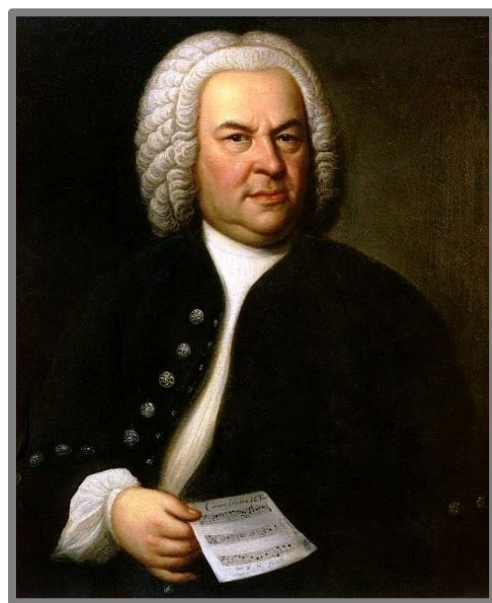
So much has been written about this extraordinary man who occupies pride of place in the pantheon of great composers. This multitude of worthy praise would seem disingenuous for a lesser individual but Johann Sebastian Bach wore the mantle lightly, noting: "I was obliged to be industrious. Whoever is equally industrious will succeed equally well."

The basic contours of his life are well known. Born to a musical family in Eisenach, Thuringia (now part of Germany), on March 21, 1685 (Old Style), Bach was orphaned by age 10 and subsequently raised by his eldest brother, Johann Christoph, an organist. While the details of his musical education are scarce, Bach developed proficiency at singing, string playing and the keyboard. He was appointed organist in Arnstadt at age 18 and became obsessed with keyboard music, famously walking more than 200 miles to Lübeck, near the Baltic coast, in order to hear Dietrich Buxtehude play his spectacular organ compositions.

Bach's next post was in Muhlhausen, where he settled down and married his cousin, Maria Barbara. Although he only stayed there for a year, he remained on friendly terms and is supposed to have inaugurated their new organ in 1709.

He then moved to Weimar, serving as court organist and a member of the orchestra. During these years, his compositional style began to mature, synthesizing the many disparate strands of Baroque music, including Italian opera, into his own inimitable approach. Passed over for a promotion, Bach sought a new position and was appointed Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. Unfortunately, Weimar's Duke Wilhelm was loathe to relinquish such a fine musician and when Bach pressed his case too vigorously, the duke imprisoned him for a month. Eventually, the duke relented and Bach began his tenure in Köthen.

The Köthen years were highly productive for creating purely instrumental music as Bach had few responsibilities for composition of church music due to the prince's Calvinist religious practice. The prince loved music, played viola da gamba, and reveled in Bach's inventive compositions. Tragedy struck in 1720 when Maria Barbara died unexpectedly, leaving Bach a widower. Just over a year later, he married Anna Magdalena Wilcken, a singer who had caught his ear — and eye. They would go on to have 13 children together, of the 20 that Bach sired. While this marriage was quite felicitous, Prince Leopold also married just a week later and the new princess proved hostile to the music that occupied her husband's attention. Bach began looking for a new job.



In 1723, Leipzig was looking for a new cantor and wanted only the best. They offered the job to Georg Philipp Telemann, who turned it down. Next up was Christoph Graupner, who encountered difficulty leaving his position in Darmstadt and used the job offer to leverage more favorable terms there. That left Bach.

His new position was demanding. He had to provide music and service guidance for four churches and form choirs for these churches from students at the school of St. Thomas. His duties also included leadership of the town's orchestra and maintenance of its instruments. He was expected to compose cantatas and various other music for worship. All was accomplished prolifically. His sometimes daunting personality occasionally brought him into conflict with the city fathers over matters of salary and the quality of musicians available to him. Indeed, at one point he wrote a friend describing the authorities as "odd, and little interested in music, with the result that I must live in almost constant vexation, envy and harassment. I shall be compelled, with help from the Most High, to seek my fortune elsewhere." Despite the clashes, he stayed in Leipzig the rest of his life, supplementing modest wages with income from private teaching, guest performances, organ consulting and direction of the Collegium Musicum.

Georg Philipp Telemann founded the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig in 1701 comprised largely of enthusiastic university students who played weekly in ratskellers (taverns) or coffee houses. Bach's arrival in Leipzig coincided with the Collegium's affiliation with Gottfried Zimmermann's Coffee House, where they played regularly until Zimmerman's death in 1741. Bach officially accepted directorship of the group in 1729 and spent the next decade leading

weekly programs of varied repertoire in a somewhat casual atmosphere, complementing his formal duties as cantor. He often played viola on these programs, relishing the inner voice and its central place in the counterpoint of his compositions. The Collegium offered Bach a wonderful avenue of musical expression and also provided a source of musicians for his sacred compositions. The ensemble was among the forebears of today's Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, founded in 1743 and later led by Felix Mendelssohn, who is credited with reviving Bach's reputation as a composer.

Four of Bach's children became composers, each noted in their own right. Wilhelm Friedemann, Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Christoph Friedrich, and Johann Christian Bach had varied careers, carrying on the Bach family musical reputation.

Late in life as Bach's health failed, he suffered from declining vision and underwent eye surgery by an "oculist" named John Taylor. The surgery was a dismal failure and Bach died a few months later, probably from a post-operative infection. Taylor, described by distinguished ophthalmologist Daniel Albert as "the poster child for eighteenth century quackery," also operated on Georg Frideric Handel, resulting in Handel's blindness.

Two composers renowned in their own right held Bach in highest regard. Ludwig van Beethoven said, "Bach is the immortal God of Harmony." And Johannes Brahms advised, "Study Bach. There you will find everything." Well put. *ETW*



"Amazing Grace" (arranged by Jennifer Higdon) (1998)

Text by John Newton

Tune adapted by William Walker

7 minutes

Jennifer Higdon originally arranged "Amazing Grace" as the final movement of her larger choral work "Southern Grace." The Ying Quartet asked Higdon to arrange it for string quartet and its subsequent popularity resulted in her arrangements of the piece for viola quartet and string orchestra about a decade later. Higdon has noted that "Amazing Grace" was composed in the wake of her younger brother's untimely death from cancer and that it holds both solace and grief for her.

"New Britain," the hymn tune associated with "Amazing Grace," was adapted by William Walker from a tune called "Harmony Grove." The earliest pairing of John Newton's "Amazing Grace" text written in 1772 and the now-familiar hymn tune "New Britain" was in *The Southern Harmony*, published in 1835.

In Higdon's arrangement, after presenting the melody in rather unadorned fashion, she embarks on a set of variations that balance individual lines with the ensemble. While largely consonant, the piece doesn't shy away from the occasional dissonance that lends greater poignancy to the work.

The practice of inserting an unrelated piece within a larger work was quite common in the 18th century and even later. Adding Higdon's "Amazing Grace" to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 is entirely consistent with historical practice. The beauty of the work and its resonance today is a suitable companion for Bach's beloved concerto. *ETW*

JENNIFER HIGDON, arranger
(b. 1962)

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. She is a major figure in contemporary Classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 GRAMMY® for her Percussion Concerto, a 2018 GRAMMY® for her Viola Concerto, and a 2020 GRAMMY® for her Harp Concerto. Most recently, Higdon received the Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, given to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is one of today's most performed contemporary orchestral works, with more than 650 performances worldwide. Her works have been recorded on more than sixty CDs, and her Percussion Concerto recording was recently inducted into the Library of Congress National Recording Registry. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere. She holds the Rock Chair in Composition at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.



Jennifer Higdon

Photo by J. Henry Fair

Program notes written by AJ Harbison (AJH) and Eric T. Williams (ETW).



KATHERINE SIOCHI
Principal Harp

Praised by the New York Times as “excellent,” Katherine Siochi is an internationally acclaimed harp soloist and principal harp of the Kansas City Symphony. From 2017 to 2019, she served as principal harp of the Sarasota Orchestra. Siochi won the gold medal at the 10th USA International Harp Competition in 2016, one of the world’s most prestigious harp contests, and she is only the second American to win the prize since 1989. She has received numerous awards in national harp competitions as well, including first prize in the American Harp Society’s Advanced and Young Professional divisions. From 2015 to 2017, she was a concert artist for the American Harp Society, presenting recitals and masterclasses in 23 U.S. cities. As an orchestral musician, she has appeared in Carnegie Hall, David Geffen Hall and Alice Tully Hall, and she substitutes frequently with the New York Philharmonic. As a soloist, she has performed extensively across the United States and in Hong Kong, China and Israel. In addition to the harp, Katherine studied piano at the Juilliard School during her undergraduate years. Her background as a pianist has contributed to her interest in transcribing piano works for the harp and her unique attention to voicing on the harp. Siochi holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in harp performance from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Nancy Allen.

