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KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY 2021/22 CLASSICAL SERIES

ELGAR'S FIRST, PLUS MOZART'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 24

Friday and Saturday, March 4-5, 2022 at 8:00 p.m. Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL FRANCIS, guest conductor MARTINA FILJAK, piano

HENRY PURCELL / trans. BENJAMIN BRITTEN Chacony in G Minor

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART Concerto No. 24 in C Minor for Piano and Orchestra, K. 491

I. Allegro

II. Larghetto

III. Allegretto

Martina Filiak, piano

INTERMISSION

EDWARD ELGAR

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major, op. 55

I. Andante, nobilmente e semplice — Allegro

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

II. Allegro molto

III. Adagio

IV. Lento — Allegro

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PROGRAM NOTES

HENRY PURCELL / TRANS. BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Chacony in G Minor (c. 1678, trans. 1948, rev. 1963) 6 minutes

Strings.

THE STORY

In 1660, when the British monarchy was restored and Charles II reclaimed the throne, a nearly 20-year ban on theatre was lifted, leading to great demand for theatrical entertainment and an explosion of new works. English plays of that time made heavy use of spoken dialogue, and music mostly served an incidental purpose — a soundtrack, with occasional songs or dances written into the narrative. By the time Purcell wrote his chacony, the form of the theatrical suite had been standardized, with an overture and seven dances. Because this suite form was often used for concert performance as well as performances of the play, it is sometimes difficult to match pieces with the plays they were written for, as is the case for this work. Nothing definitive is known about the Chacony's original context, and even its exact date of composition is disputed.

In the 20th century, British composer Benjamin Britten led a revival of interest in Purcell's music, conducting it, preparing new editions for performance and occasionally making his own arrangements. He took Purcell's score for the Chacony, written for viols (bowed instruments like cellos, with frets like guitars), and transcribed it for string orchestra.

THE MUSIC

"Chacony" is a bastardized English version of the French word "chaconne," denoting a piece with a short bass line (often called a "ground bass") that is repeated over and over while the music above it changes. (A popular example of this type of piece is Pachelbel's Canon; while it's called a canon because the violin parts are imitative, underneath the imitation is an eight-note cello line that is repeated literally, without any changes, for the entire length of the piece.) In Purcell's Chacony, the bass line and harmonic progression serves as a theme on which a set of variations is built. Britten described the theme and variations this way:

The theme, first of all in the basses, moves in a stately fashion from a high to a low G. It is repeated many times in the bass with varying textures above. It then starts moving around the orchestra. There is a quaver [8th note] version with heavy chords above it, which provides the material for several repetitions. There are some free and modulating versions of it, and a connecting passage leads to a forceful and rhythmic statement in G minor ... The conclusion of the piece is a pathetic variation, with dropping semi-quavers [16th notes], and repeated "soft" — Purcell's own instruction.

The Chacony's original use as theatrical music seems likely particularly in view of the final variation, marked "soft," heightening the drama of the ending and lending a touch of tragedy to the prevailing melancholy of the piece. **AJH**



HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

- "My heart is inditing," anthem (1685)
- Dido and Aeneas, opera (c. 1688)
- Funeral Sentences and Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary (1695)
- England's greatest composer until the 20th century, Henry Purcell was born in Westminster in 1659, and lived from a very early age just a few hundred yards from Westminster Abbey. His uncle was a musician and arranged for Henry to be admitted to the Chapel Royal as a chorister. Later, he studied under John Blow, a well-regarded composer and organist. Blow was appointed organist of Westminster Abbey in 1669, and 10 years later resigned to allow Purcell to take the position.
- Purcell composed a vast quantity of music, including 177 anthems, hymns and services, nearly 200 songs, incidental music for 43 plays, 7 operas and more than 200 instrumental works.
- Queen Mary II died in 1694, and her funeral was held on March 5, 1695. As one of England's leading composers, with many connections in the court, Purcell composed an anthem and two elegies that were performed at the service. Later that same year, the same music was performed for Purcell's own funeral. Two hundred and seventy-six years later, in 1971, composer Wendy Carlos reworked music from the Funeral Sentences as the title music for Stanley Kubrick's film "A Clockwork Orange." AJH

ABOUT BENJAMIN BRITTEN



BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

- The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (1945)
- Peter Grimes, opera (1945)
- · War Requiem (1962)
- The most widely performed 20thcentury British composer, Benjamin Britten studied at the Royal College of Music in London, where his teachers included John Ireland and Ralph Vaughan Williams.
- Serge Koussevitsky, music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, commissioned Britten's opera Peter Grimes, which was premiered in 1945. It was a critical and box-office success, with one reviewer calling it "the first genuinely successful British opera, Gilbert and Sullivan apart, since Purcell."
- Imogen Holst, Gustav Holst's daughter, served as Britten's assistant for 12 years. Prior to her official employment, she worked with him on a new performing version of Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas.
- The War Requiem of 1962 was one of Britten's largest works, for soloists, chorus, chamber ensemble and

- orchestra. It commemorates the dead of both World Wars and is the highest expression of Britten's lifelong pacifism. Dmitri Shostakovich, a friend of Britten's, called it "the greatest work of the twentieth century."
- Britten himself described his goal in composing operas this way: "One of my chief aims is to try to restore to the musical setting of the English Language a brilliance, freedom and vitality that have been curiously rare since the death of Purcell." In addition to creating a revival of interest in Purcell's work through his conducting, Britten revised and arranged a number of Purcell's compositions. The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra is based on theme by Purcell, and Britten's Second String Quartet was written in homage to him. AJH









PROGRAM NOTES

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Concerto No. 24 in C Minor for Piano and Orchestra, K. 491 (1786) 31 minutes

Solo piano, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

Wolfgang Mozart was on a creative roll during the years 1784-86, composing a raft of chamber music, numerous songs, two operas, the "Prague" Symphony and 12 piano concerti. He noted completion of Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, K. 491, on March 24, 1786, just three weeks after finishing No. 23. His next completed work was an opera, The Marriage of Figaro. Clearly, the music was flowing.

Mozart probably premiered K. 491 on April 7, 1786, at the Burgtheater in Vienna, just two weeks after its completion. Documentation is sparse but he did offer a subscription concert on that date, hoping to benefit his personal finances, and premiering a newly composed piano concerto would have been expected.

The concerto has come to hold a special place in the Mozart repertory for a number of reasons. First, it is one of only two piano concerti he wrote in a minor key. He also contemplated a large orchestra from the start, using 16-stave paper for the manuscript rather than the more common 12-stave paper. This is one of just three piano concerti in which he used clarinets and the only one to use both oboes and clarinets. He used triple meter in the opening movement, doing so in only two other piano concerti.

The autograph manuscript of K. 491 has an interesting history. Mozart's widow, Constanze, sold the manuscript to music publisher Johann Anton André in 1799. The manuscript made its way to Johann Baptist Streicher, André's son-in-law, who sold it to Otto Goldschmidt, a German conductor and pianist who was married to soprano Jenny Lind. When Lind and Goldschmidt moved to London in 1858, they auctioned the manuscript and it was purchased by George Donaldson, an art dealer. Lind became the first professor of singing at London's Royal College of Music and Donaldson subsequently donated the manuscript to the RCM in 1894, where it has remained since.

THE MUSIC

The concerto begins quietly, its sotto voce opening immediately followed by a driven declaration before the piano finally enters with an oblique approach to the theme. The minor key storm clouds part to allow more genial rays to suffuse the musical firmament. Mozart's writing for the winds throughout the concerto is especially notable because he takes advantage of each instrument's unique timbre in a solo capacity as well as in the ensemble, making for an especially broad range of textures.

The solo piano introduces the amiable melody that serves as the refrain in the rondo form that Mozart uses for the second movement. Each episode between refrains displays inventiveness and the winds again shine, providing rich contrast for the simple melodic material as the strings supply a velvety accompaniment.

Mozart uses a theme with eight variations for the final movement. The music is gnarled and chromatic with only two brief excursions in major away from the pervasive minor key. A darkly rollicking variation in 6/8 concludes this unique masterwork. ETW

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

- Requiem (1791)
- The Magic Flute, opera (1791)
- Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter" (1788)
- Born in Salzburg, Austria, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart grew up on the road. His violinist father, Leopold, sought to advance the family's prospects by touring with the musical wunderkind Wolfgang and his older sister Maria Anna (Nannerl), a talented pianist in her own right. A violin and piano prodigy, Wolfgang began composing at age 5 and wrote his first opera at age 11. As the Mozart family visited the capitals and great courts of Europe, Wolfgang learned from the composers in residence, thus constituting a very broad musical education in addition to his father's tutelage.
- Wolfgang enjoyed his time in Europe's cosmopolitan cities and set out on tour with his mother in 1777, looking for a suitable position. His mother fell ill and died while they were in Paris, a devastating blow for the young composer. Upon returning to Salzburg, he was appointed court organist, a position he held until 1781 when a dispute with the ruling prince-archbishop resulted in his abrupt dismissal from court. He then decided to settle in Vienna.
- Once in Vienna, Mozart taught, composed and played concerts for his living. Although busy, he found time for romance and married Constanze Weber against Leopold's wishes. Those early days in Vienna were among the most successful of Mozart's life. His operas and symphonies were popular and he had many triumphs as a pianist-composer.

- · His achievements were noted by the renowned composer Joseph Haydn, who said to Wolfgang's father, "I tell you before God, and as an honest man, your son is the greatest composer known to me by person and repute; he has taste and what is more the greatest skill in composition."
- · The public, as ever, was fickle and Mozart's popularity eventually waned. This, coupled with an extravagant lifestyle, led to chronic financial problems. Against this backdrop of difficulty, his health became precarious. He continued working frantically despite illness, succumbing to a fever on December 5, 1791.
- Mozart was a prolific correspondent — 371 letters survive and a surprising number include coarse comments and immature jokes.
- · It is uncertain whether Mozart and Beethoven ever met. Beethoven went to Vienna in early 1787. There is some indication the 16-year-old Beethoven was hoping to study with Mozart but the only anecdotal account of their meeting is of rather dubious provenance and lacks any corroboration at all.
- Mozart composed more than 600 works, including 41 symphonies, 27 piano concertos, 5 violin concertos, 23 string quartets, 36 violin sonatas, 21 operas, and 18 masses — plus the famous Requiem unfinished at his death. ETW









ABOUT EDWARD ELGAR

EDWARD ELGAR

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major, op. 55 (1898-1908) 52 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, soprano snare drum, 2 harps and strings.

THE STORY

While composing his "Enigma Variations" in 1898, Edward Elgar contemplated the possibility of writing a symphony. It was such a daunting prospect, it took him 10 years to bring his first symphony to completion. Initially, he thought of writing a symphony inspired by the illustrious life of General Charles Gordon. The forty-something composer had yet to achieve renown and money was tight so he directed his efforts instead toward paying commissions within his wheelhouse.

Time passed and there were stuttered attempts to work on a symphony. Elgar's 50th birthday may have provided the impetus to overcome his compositional inertia. Just a few weeks later, he played for his family the melody that would serve as the symphony's touchstone. Elgar described the opening theme as, "simple &, in intention, noble & elevating ... the sort of ideal call (in the sense of persuasion, not coercion or command) & something above everyday & sordid things." The thematic connection to General Gordon went by the wayside and Elgar finished the sprawling symphony just over a year later. He wrote to a friend about the symphony: "There is no programme beyond a wide experience of human life with a great charity (love) & a massive hope in the future."

Hans Richter and the Hallé Orchestra premiered the symphony in Manchester on December 3, 1908, and the acclaim was so great that Elgar was called to the stage for bows after the third movement. The London premiere four days later was similarly successful. In the following year, the symphony received 82 performances worldwide. Richter called it "the greatest symphony of modern times, written by the greatest modern composer, and not only in this country."

THE MUSIC

The first movement is notable for its rhythmic fluidity. The hymn-like theme is expansive, sustained across barlines, creating a spacious feeling. After this generous introduction, the symphony launches into a dense development offering substantial harmonic exploration and almost constant tension between duple and triple meters.

An impish rush of notes from the violins opens the second movement, soon leading to a stentorian march theme bandied about the orchestra. A playful second theme offers welcome contrast and the two musical ideas alternate throughout the rest of the movement, eventually receding into the distance and beginning the noble third movement where Elgar's sentimentality is especially evident. His close friend and publisher, August Jaegar, wrote to Elgar, "My dear friend, that is not only one of the very greatest slow movements since Beethoven, but I consider it worthy of that master ... The music was written by a good pure man."

The dreamy opening of the fourth movement gives way to agitated thematic material that Elgar uses to explore a chromatic harmonic palette at length. At last, the symphony's opening theme returns in full grandeur and glory. ETW

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

- "Enigma Variations" (1899)
- Cello Concerto (1919)
- · Military March No. 1 from Pomp and Circumstance (1901)
- The son of an organist and music dealer, Edward Elgar received his musical education at home, studying piano and violin. His formal schooling ended at age 15 and he went to work as a clerk in a lawyer's office. Elgar did not enjoy the job and soon left, teaching piano and violin to earn a living and occasionally working at his father's music shop.
- A fine violinist and able bassoonist, Elgar played in various orchestras and served as a bandmaster, learning instrumental colors and capabilities firsthand. He had no formal training in composition. Thus saved from the confines of academic music, Elgar developed a unique style that led the renaissance of English music.
- · Elgar's path to acclaim was slow, unlike that of a youthful prodigy such as Mozart. His breakthrough piece, at age 42, was the "Enigma Variations." The 14 variations are musical portraits of Elgar's friends, including a self-portrait.
- "Enigma" was followed in 1900 by The Dream of Gerontius, an oratorio that many people consider his masterpiece and earned Elgar praise from the composer Richard Strauss.
- · The most famous work in his substantial portfolio is the Military March No. 1 from Pomp and Circumstance, composed in 1901 and known to ardent fans as

- "Land of Hope and Glory" or more colloquially as the tune played so often at graduation ceremonies and Britain's annual Last Night of the Proms concert. As he described it to a friend, "I've got a tune that will knock 'em — knock 'em flat!" The work was first performed at a graduation when Elgar was awarded an honorary doctorate by Yale University in 1905 and the piece was played as a recessional in his honor.
- · After receiving a knighthood and an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University, Elgar turned his attention to composing symphonic works. His Symphony No. 1 premiered in 1908 and was followed in 1910 by the superb Violin Concerto, commissioned and premiered by Fritz Kreisler, to whom the piece is dedicated.
- · Elgar was deeply depressed by World War I and the tremendous losses incurred, writing the profound and contemplative Cello Concerto (1919) in response. He was devastated by the death of his wife Alice in 1920 and greatly curtailed his composition. With the advent of new recording technology in the 1920s, Elgar began conducting recordings of his own works. Encouraged by renewed interest in his music, he began several new compositions, leaving more than a few pieces unfinished at his death in 1934. ETW







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ABOUT MARTINA FILJAK ABOUT MICHAEL FRANCIS



MARTINA FILJAK, PIANO

The Croatian pianist Martina Filjak has made a name for herself in the international concert world with her passionate playing and brilliant technical mastery of her instrument. She delights audiences and the press with her charismatic personality and magnetic stage presence.

After training at the Music Academy in Zagreb, Filjak continued her studies at the Vienna Conservatory, the Piano Academy in Como and the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media. She earned broad renown by winning first prize and the Beethoven prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 2009. Since then, she has worked with distinguished orchestras in the United States, Germany, Italy and Eastern Europe. Her recital appearances include performances

at New York's Carnegie Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin, Musikverein Vienna, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Palau de la Música Catalana, Sala Verdi and Auditorio in Milan, Teatro San Carlo Naples and Salle Gaveau Paris.

In the 2021/22 season, Filjak's U.S. appearances include concerts with the Kansas City Symphony, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in Ohio and the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. She will also perform with the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, Norddeutsche Philharmonie Rostock, Sinfonieorchester Liechtenstein and the Croatian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

As a soloist, Filjak has appeared in recent seasons with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, Bremen Philharmonie, Staatskapelle Weimar, Staatskapelle Halle, Norddeutsche Philharmonie Rostock and the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, among others. Chamber music concerts with horn player Felix Klieser and violinist Andrej Bielow have taken her to Freiburg, St. Gallen, Villingen-Schwenningen, Ingolstadt and the Brahmstagen Baden-Baden.

Recent season highlights include concerts with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogota, Orchestra La Verdi Milano, Cleveland Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires at the Teatro Colon, Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, Japan Century Orchestra, Israel Chamber Orchestra and Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. She also performed with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir in Zagreb, Royal Camerata at the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest and Orquesta Filarmónica de Santiago at the Teatro Municipal Santiago de Chile.

Filjak's recordings have earned critical accolades for technical prowess and mesmerizing interpretations. Her latest recording featuring works by Liszt, "Light and Darkness," was released on the Hänssler Classic label. Her discography includes an album of works by Bach, Schumann and Scriabin on the Solo Musica label (distributed by Sony Music), a chamber music recording with Jan Vogler and Christian Poltéra and her debut CD showcasing sonatas by Antonio Soler.

Filjak's extensive repertoire ranges from Bach to Berio and includes more than 30 piano concertos. She is dedicated to exploring lesser-known piano literature and various concert formats. Her particular passion for chamber music is evident in her collaborations with top-class partners such as the Szymanowski Quartet, Amaryllis Quartet and Ensemble Berlin, as well as Dmitry Sinkovsky, Radovan Vlatkovic, Felix Klieser and Tatjana Vassiljeva.

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The artist lives in her adopted home of Berlin, loves to travel and speaks seven languages.



MICHAEL FRANCIS, GUEST CONDUCTOR

Michael Francis has quickly established himself as one of the leading international conductors of today. Appointed music director of the Florida Orchestra in the fall of 2014, he is now entering his seventh season with a contract extension through the 2024/25 season. His role in building a wide variety of transformative community engagement initiatives has significantly grown the organization. Since 2014 as music director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, California with a contract renewal through the summer of 2023, he continues his ambitious multi-year exploration of Mozart's life. Now in his third season, Francis continues as chief conductor of Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-

Pfalz. Previously, he was chief conductor and artistic advisor of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra from 2012 to 2016.

Previous and upcoming highlights include North American performances with the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Rochester Philharmonic, the symphony orchestras of Cincinnati, St. Louis, San Diego, Houston, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Pacific, Montreal and Toronto and the National Arts Centre (Ottawa). In Europe, he has conducted the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio, Dresden Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE Madrid, Mariinsky Orchestra, London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Scottish Symphony. In Asia, Francis has worked with the NHK Symphony and National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan as well as the philharmonic orchestras of Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Seoul.

Francis has collaborated with notable soloists such as Lang Lang, Arcadi Volodos, Itzhak Perlman, Christian Tetzlaff, Vadim Gluzman, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Nicola Benedetti, Javier Perianes, Jamie Barton, Truls Mørk, Håkan Hardenberger, Maximilian Hornung, Miloš, Benjamin Grosvenor, Emanuel Ax, Ian Bostridge, James Ehnes, Sting, Rufus Wainwright and many others.

Educational outreach with young musicians is of utmost priority for Francis. He regularly works with young musicians in Florida as part of the orchestra's community engagement initiative. He has also enjoyed collaborations with the New World Symphony, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

Francis' discography includes the Rachmaninoff piano concertos with Valentina Lisitsa and the London Symphony Orchestra, Wolfgang Rihm's *Lichtes Spiel* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the New York Philharmonic, and Ravel and Gershwin piano concertos with Ian Parker.

A former double bass player in the London Symphony Orchestra, Francis came to prominence as a conductor in January of 2007 stepping in for Valery Gergiev and John Adams with the LSO.

Francis makes his home in Tampa, Florida with his wife Cindy and 6-year-old daughter Annabella.