UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC PRESENTS

NATIONAL FESTIVAL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2013. 8PM

ELSIE & MARVIN DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland

PHOTO BY ALISON HARBUGH
HOLLÓ José / beFORe JOHN

GINASTERA Variaciones concertantes, Op. 23
- Tema per violoncello ed arpa
- Interludio per corde
- Variazione giocosa per flauto
- Variazione in modo di scherzo per clarinetto
- Variazione drammatica per viola
drammatica per viola
- Variazione canonica per oboe e fagotto
- Variazione ritmica per tromba e trombone
- Variazione in modo di moto perpetuo per violino
- Variazione pastorale per corno
- Interludio per fiati
- Ripresa del tema per contrabasso
- Variazione finale in modo di rondo per orchestra

INTERMISSION

WAGNER A Siegfried Idyll

STRAVINSKY Suite from the Ballet Pulcinella
- Sinfonia
- Serenata
- Scherzino – Allegro – Andantino
- Tarantella
- Toccata
- Gavotta (con due variazioni)
- Vivo
- Minuetto – Finale
José / beFORe JOHN5
AURÉL HOLLÓ
Born July 17, 1966, Móra, Hungary
Now living in Göd, Hungary

This piece, the fifth in an ongoing series, was composed in 2000 for the Amadinda Percussion Group, which first performed it on October 22 of that year, in the Budapest Autumn Festival. Four players are required, performing on a marimba, small Polynesian wood, acoustic guitar, woodblock, Sulawesi reed, toy trumpet, water cans, castanets, devil chasers, tambourine, spoons, 3 gongs, 2 crotales, finger cymbals, cajon, and small and large talking drums. Duration, 5 minutes.

During his student years he was a percussionist in several contemporary music ensembles, and in 1988 he joined Tea, a jazz fusion group made up of young and ambitious musicians like himself, which became known throughout Central Europe as an outstanding younger version of such internationally recognized fusion ensembles as Spyro Gyra and Mezzoforte. In 1991 he became a member of the Amadinda Percussion Group, to which he remains actively committed today, as composer, arranger and performer. Since 1996 he has taught at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest.

Amadinda has been recognized over the years with a number of prestigious national honors in Hungary: the Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic (in 1997), the Kossuth Prize (2004), the Pro Urbe Budapest Prize (2006) and the Béla Bartók-Ditta Pásztor Prize (2008). The group, and its individual members, have also given master classes and seminars, and has made numerous recordings. Mr. Holló has composed a number of original works for Amadinda, as well as transcriptions of music by Debussy, Gershwin, Ravel, Mussorgsky and Orlando Gibbons, but his creative activity has not been limited to the percussion medium: he has composed music for Géza Tóth’s animated cartoons, pieces for piano, and for guitar, choral settings of folksong, electronic works and even a work for vibraphone and piano called Winnie the Pooh.

The brief work that opens this evening’s concert, however, is part of a series specifically intended for Amadinda, following general musical and philosophical objectives outlined in a statement issued jointly by Mr. Holló and his Amadinda collaborator Zoltán Váci:

We made a final decision to launch a series of pieces for percussion instruments in 1996. Our goal was to connect traditional percussion cultures to prominent twentieth century movements and to assert, save, assimilate and possibly expand certain results in this.

The man of traditional cultures always thinks responsibly about the instrument, the instrumentalist and the music. The simple reason for this is that he is both the subject and the object of the world surrounding him; he is the instrumentalist and the instrument of everything: the music. These three items are tightly knit, and the lack of any component produces music of no value in a cultural sense. From this perspective, the outstanding results and successful moments of the twentieth century could only derive from the connection of these aspects.

The series beFORe JOHN consists of nine different pieces. Each of them is in a way related to the number, which — in its own time — represented philosophical and mathematical perfection and absolute world order, and was therefore highly respected. This number is 153, which had a very important numerological role in ancient civilizations, and in even earlier traditions. (It may be familiar from Pythagoras and Jesus.)

For us, the importance of the figure lies in the symbolic power of the number 153 that was once a living, everyday reality, a kind of icon of spiritual wealth. In the language of percussion instruments, the beFORe JOHN series attempts to express the abundance of different things that surround us. In these pieces we attempted to transform the world of percussion (a wide range of materials, a multitude of tools) into a “percussion cosmos” (recognized order, regularity).

Those defining individuals who were devoted to passing on their own knowledge (i.e., the cosmic order), while bringing out the pre-existing talent of their students, were once adorned with the name “Master.” As times changed and new role models replaced the old ones, the images of the old masters did not fade within us. On the contrary, as experiences get settled, one after the other inside one’s mind, the result is a “face” that belongs not to one individual but to the many who have inspired us. In this instance, the title name JOHN refers to (symbolizes) the embodiment of many “masters” in one grand image.
The **ars poetica** of the composers of *beFORe JOHN* is: The noblest gem lets light pass through; the clearer it is, the more light it permits through, but does not shine itself.

"and drew the net to land full of great fishes,
and a hundred and fifty and three:
and for all there were so many,
yet was not the net broken."

(St. JOHN 21:11)

153 = the sum of the first seventeen successive numbers (The Pythagoreans called this the “triangle number,” because if 153 points are arranged into a triangle, each side contains the same number of points.)

\[153 = 1 + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 2 \times 3) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5)\]

153 = 1\(^3\) + 5\(^3\) + 3\(^3\)

153 = the sum of the component numbers: 9 (1 + 5 + 3), which is regarded as one of the “holy” numbers

153 = in reversed order also (351), the number of points in the triangle

On the present work from this series, Mr. Holló has given us a more specific background, in a brief statement consonant with the brevity of the piece itself:

The basic idea of my piece José was born when I was listening to the recording *Oriental Bass*, by the ethnic contrabass-player Renaud García-Fons. I wondered many times whether it would be possible to present his fundamentally Spanish style with its Arabic and Gypsy effects in an original composition instead of a simple adaptation. My answer to this question is José.

Besides García-Fons’s recording I also used a theme by [the flamenco guitarist] Paco de Lucía in this composition. The marimba has the lead throughout this brief character piece almost exclusively: two players, standing face-to-face, play complementary motifs of an especially virtuoso nature. Most of these figures are based on the traditional xylophone music of Africa. The players use techniques of amadinda and akadinda (traditional percussion instruments from Uganda), yet the scale they cover is at the same time typical of the flamenco style. In the end these two players sound like a real guitar, with the same technique. This rhythmical-melodic source is enriched by the playing of two other musicians who create many interesting and exciting sounds, such as those of the Spanish *cajón* [a box-shaped wooden drum, originated in Peru], or the favorite instrument of Gypsy folk music, the simple sheet-iron can, and many more.

I dedicate this piece to Josep Vicent, the former artistic leader of the Amsterdam Percussion Group.
Many an orchestral work in variation form turns out to be, to one degree or another, a sort of “concerto for orchestra,” in that the instrumentation changes dramatically from one variation to the next, to spotlight different solo instruments or instrumental choirs. This concept was perfectly suited, for example, to the work Benjamin Britten called The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, and identified in a subtitle as Variations on a Theme by Henry Purcell, with the stated purpose of acquainting young listeners with the modern orchestra and its instruments (originally in a short film, with narration).

Britten’s Argentine contemporary Alberto Ginastera also indicated in his title, Variaciones concertantes, the “concerto-like” concept he had in mind in composing this beautiful and imaginative work — though in this case the composer’s intent was not didactic, but a celebration of sheer virtuosic display, on a most sophisticated level.

Ginastera’s early works represent a certain “nationalist” outlook, evoking a specifically Argentine character in colors, rhythms and occasionally actual themes borrowed from folk material. The composer, in his late thirties when he composed the Variaciones concertantes, was moving toward the somewhat more “cosmopolitan” and more highly personal style that was to characterize the two piano concertos, the Violin Concerto, the works for cello and orchestra, the massive choral work Turbae and the operas Don Rodrigo, Bomarzo and Beatrix Cenci. In these late masterworks, one might say, it was the force of Ginastera’s own personality that imparted the music’s Argentine character, just as Sibelius’s individual personality was the defining factor in what we recognize as the Finnish character in his music.

The Variaciones concertantes may be regarded as one of the compositions that marked the beginning of this late period. Ginastera described it as having “a subjective Argentine character,” which he achieved entirely “by the use of original melodies and rhythms,” and borrowing nothing from folk sources. Some of the individual variations, he added, are written in a more or less traditional style, while others “are written in the modern form of metamorphosis which consists of taking motives from the principal theme and constructing out of them a new theme.”

The work is laid out in 12 interconnected sections, in the following sequence:

1. Statement of the theme by cello and harp, the latter providing a foundation based on a persistent motif in the manner of Argentina’s cowboy guitarists, as style known as gauchesco
2. Interlude for strings, expanding on the rather nostalgic, bittersweet character of the opening section
3. Variazione giocosa, for flute with animated orchestral accompaniment, passing all but imperceptibly to
4. Variazione in modo di scherzo, for clarinet
5. Variazione drammatica, for viola, over a rich string background suggesting restlessness suppressed with great effort
6. Variazione canonica, for oboe and bassoon, a lyric passage recalling the general mood of the work’s opening
7. Variazione ritmica, for trumpet and trombone, very brief, exuding an earthy rumbustiousness
8. *Variazione in modo di moto perpetuo*, for violin, also quite brief, and as energetic as its heading would suggest.

9. *Variazione pastorale*, for horn, a ruminative solo with discreet accompaniment, mostly from the strings.

10. Interlude for winds, harking back to the nostalgic vein of the opening sections.

11. Reprise of the theme, now with the harp joined by the double bass instead of the cello.

12. Final variation: a rondo for the entire orchestra, in the most vigorous rhythms of the malambo (a vigorous folk dance native to Buenos Aires Province, which Ginastera made known to the world in his early ballet *Estancia*), initiated by winds against a string background and then building up a head of full orchestral steam, stoked by the drums. There is a brief episode for various wind instruments, but the drums and pulsating strings reactivate the basic rhythm and, with a near-echo of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, the music builds without further restraint to its exultant conclusion.

A *Siegfried Idyll*

**RICHARD WAGNER**

*Born May 22, 1813, Leipzig*

*Died February 13, 1883, Venice*

Wagner composed this work toward the end of 1870 and conducted its first performance on Christmas Day of that year in his home, “Tribschen,” on Lake Lucerne. The score calls for flute, oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet and strings. Duration, 17 minutes.

Because Wagner worked so long on some of his operas, and experienced delays in getting some of them produced, the overtures and other portions of several of them were introduced in concerts before the premieres of the respective stage works themselves. The prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and the Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde* are examples of this (the latter introduced in Vienna by Johann Strauss, the Waltz King, when the Court Opera failed to stage *Tristan*). The well-loved *Siegfried Idyll*, however, was introduced in neither the opera house nor the concert hall, but in the intimate surroundings of Wagner’s home. Wagner in fact conceived this work as a *Tribschen Idyll*, for his family alone, specifically as a “symphonic birthday greeting to his Cosima from her Richard.”

Actually, Cosima’s birthday was December 24, but it was always celebrated on Christmas Day, and for her 33rd Wagner assembled, with the help of the young Hans Richter, who was part of the household at the time and soon to become one of the most respected conductors in Europe, a concert to be given in the house. The first work played was the one composed specifically for that occasion, and it did come as a complete surprise to Cosima when its first quiet phrases awakened her. Wagner conducted an ensemble of about 15 musicians (17, according to some sources, only 13 according to others) positioned on the stairs leading to her bedroom; one of them was Richter, who had taught himself to play the trumpet in order to perform in the dozen bars that involve that instrument.

While motifs in this work relate to the eponymous music drama, the dramatic changes in Wagner’s personal life during the period in which he completed *Die Meistersinger* had more to do with the creation of the *Siegfried Idyll* in its family context. Early in 1862, after completing the *Meistersinger* libretto in Paris, Wagner was granted an amnesty by the King of Saxony and allowed to return to Germany for the first time since his banishment for political activity in 1849. At the same time, his break with his first wife, Minna Planer, became final, and in November 1863 Wagner and Cosima von Bülow declared their love for each other.
Cosima, the daughter of Franz Liszt (who referred to her as “ma terrible fille”) and the Comtesse d’Agoult, was at that time married to Hans von Bülow, the famous pianist and conductor who had been one of the most ardent champions of Wagner’s operas. For various reasons, she did not divorce Bülow when she joined Wagner, to whom she bore the first of their three children on April 10, 1865, a daughter they named Isolde. Two months later Bülow conducted the premiere of Tristan und Isolde in Munich, and 16 months after that, by which time his wife had given birth to Wagner’s second daughter, Eva, Bülow conducted the premiere of Die Meistersinger, whose heroine bore that name. It was not until the birth of Siegfried Wagner, in June 1869, that Bülow finally instituted divorce proceedings against Cosima, who married Wagner in August 1870.

Minna had died in Dresden four years earlier. Wagner and his new family (which included Cosima’s two daughters by Bülow) had moved into Tribschen at about the same time. The house is a Wagner museum today, and it is not at all difficult for visitors to imagine how the Siegfried Idyll came into being — and to understand Wagner’s determination to withhold this intimate gesture from the public. It was not until 1878 that, pressed for funds, the composer expanded the instrumentation to 35 players, changed his original title to the one we know today and made the work available for public performance by selling it to the publisher B. Schott.

The original full title was “Tribschen Idyll, with Fidi’s Bird-Song and Orange Sunrise,” Fidi being a nickname for the 18-month-old Siegfried Wagner, and the “orange sunrise” being the effect made by the morning sun striking the orange wallpaper in Cosima’s bedroom. The music could not have been better described than by the designation Idyll: it begins and ends as a caressing lullaby, framing what might be described as a sequence of dream-pictures. Among these are several motifs associated with the character of Siegfried in the music drama so titled that Wagner had completed at about the time of his son’s birth the previous year.

The principal theme, though, stated at the outset, was actually created by Wagner as a gift for Cosima before he gave it to Brünnhilde in the opera’s final scene. In 1863, the year in which they pledged their love for each other, Wagner noted this theme among the sketches he made for a string quartet he intended as a present for Cosima. In addition to the material borrowed from the opera, prominent reference is made to the old lullaby Schlaf, Kindchen, schlafe, which happens to be another element Wagner had planned to use in an earlier work that he never got round to writing: before his son was born he entered this tune in his diary for use in a piece for his second daughter, Eva.

Sentimental and musical interrelationships abound in this music, tying together Wagner’s creative work, his love for Cosima and their children, and their home itself. No wonder that, according to Cosima’s diary, she wept when Wagner found it necessary to sell this intimate family document.
Stravinsky made use of tunes by earlier composers in several of his works — a waltz by Joseph Lanner, for example, in *Petrushka*; a theme from his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *Mlada* in *The Firebird*; an entire ballet score, *The Fairy’s Kiss*, on themes from various works of Tchaikovsky, and another, *Pulcinella*, on pieces identified with Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. His critics frequently cited his “borrowings” of this sort, and from folk sources, as evidence of his inability to create his own tunes; his practice, though, may more realistically be classified under the heading “homage to the past.” Composers have drawn freely on the existing pool of composed and anonymous music for centuries, after all, but few have achieved anything like Stravinsky’s brilliant success in “translating” music of the past into his own personal language.

Some years after the premiere of the ballet *Pulcinella* (Paris, May 15, 1920) it became apparent that quite a few of the works attributed to Pergolesi (1710-1736) were in fact written by other composers, and about 40 years later the German musicologist Helmut Hücke was able to sort out the sources of *Pulcinella*, showing that more than half of the material was composed by such forgotten figures as Domenico Gallo and Alessandro Parisotti. The most familiar of all the instrumental works attributed to Pergolesi, the six concertinos (or *Concerti armonici*) for string orchestra, have been credited by various researchers to Carlo Ricciotti, Johann Adam Birkenstock, Willem de Fesch, even Handel and Vivaldi; Prof. Hücke’s cautious guess was “probably Domenico Chelleri.” This particular puzzlement was cleared up a little more than 30 years ago by Hücke’s Dutch colleague Albert Dunning, who established the authorship of Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer (1692-1766), a Dutch count and talented musical amateur.

While it is of course important to have questions of original authorship resolved, what is more to the point in this case is the genuineness of Stravinsky’s own distinctive imprint on every bar of *Pulcinella*. This work, in its complete staged version labeled “Ballet in One Act for Small Orchestra and Three Solo Voices, Based on Music of Pergolesi,” has been cited as marking the beginning of Stravinsky’s “neo-classical” period; to Stravinsky himself, it was “my discovery of the past, the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible. It was a backward look, of course — the first of many love affairs in that direction — but was a look in the mirror, too.”

It was the ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev who directed Stravinsky’s attention to Pergolesi. Diaghilev was intrigued by the idea of creating new ballet scores using material from the past. In 1919, when he approached Stravinsky with this project, he had Ottorino Respighi at work turning some piano pieces and songs by Rossini into *La Boutique fantasque*, and had already introduced *The Good Humoured Ladies*, with a score fashioned by Vincenzo Tommasini out of keyboard sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti. The scenario for *Pulcinella* was devised jointly by Diaghilev, Stravinsky and Léonide Massine, who also designed the choreography and danced the title role. The ballet is peopled by *commedia dell’arte* characters and is set in Naples, since it is there that the figure of *Pulcinella* has always been most popular, while Arlecchino, Scaramuccio and other such “heroes” prevailed in other parts of Italy.

While Diaghilev originally envisioned an elegant little period piece, Stravinsky seems to have viewed *Pulcinella* as an earlier and more assertive counterpart to the hero of his earlier ballet *Petrushka*. He recalled a *commedia dell’arte* performance in Naples in which “the Pulcinella was a great drunken lout, and every one of his actions, presumably
every word if I understood it, was obscene.” The ballet
does not reflect that level of coarseness, but the music has
an engaging bumptiousness about it in some of its 18
numbers, several of which involve singers in solos, duets
or trios. For the concert suite he prepared in 1922,
Stravinsky extracted 11 of these sections to form eight
movements, reassigning vocal lines to instruments, while
retaining the same instrumental forces as in the ballet. He
subsequently arranged this material as a Suite italienne for
violin and piano, and also for cello and piano.

The specific action of the ballet need not concern us in
listening to the suite, but it may be of interest to identify
the sources of the respective sections:

1. SINFONIA: First movement of the Trio Sonata
   No. 1 in G Major, from a collection of 14 such
   works actually composed by Domenico Gallo
2. SERENATA: Tenor aria from Act I of Pergolesi’s
   opera Flaminio
3. SCHEIZINO: Allegro from first movement of Gallo’s
   Trio Sonata No. 2 in B-flat; trio from an aria in
   Act III of Flaminio
3a. ALLEGRO: Third movement of Gallo’s Trio Sonata
   No. 2
3b. ANDANTINO: First movement of Gallo’s Trio
   Sonata No. 8 in B-flat
4. TARANTELLA: Fourth movement of Concertino
   No. 2 in B-flat by Wassenaer (To add to the
   confusion over the Concerti armonici, there are two
different systems of enumeration for them: No. 2
   in one system is known as No. 6 in the other.)
5. TOCCATA: Rondo from Suite No. 1 in E Major for
   harpsichord, by an unidentified composer
6. GAVOTTA CON DUE VARIAZIONI: A movement from
   Suite No. 3 in D Major in the same collection
7. Vivo: Fourth movement of Pergolesi’s Sonata in
   F Major for cello and continuo
8. MINUETTO: Aria from Act I of Pergolesi’s opera
   Le frate ’nnamorato
8a. FINALE: Third movement of Gallo’s Trio Sonata
   No. 12 in E Major

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