

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

### **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685 – 1750)**

**"a master comparable in greatness of stature with Aristotle in philosophy and Leonardo da Vinci in art." (Nicolas Slonimsky, musicologist)**

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Saxe-Eisenach in March 1685 to family of musicians. His father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was the director of the town musicians and his uncles were all professional musicians. His father gave him lessons on the violin and harpsichord; one of his uncles, Johann Christoph Bach introduced him to the organ. Unfortunately, Bach was orphaned at the age of 10 and was raised by his oldest brother. Even though Bach was discouraged from studying music by his own brothers, he was exposed to the music of established composers of the day such Johann Pachelbel, Frenchman Jean Baptiste Lully and Italian Girolamo Frescobaldi. During this same period, Bach also had the opportunity to study Theology and learn foreign languages such as French, Greek and Latin.

In 1699, Bach was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the famous St. Michael's School in Lüneburg. It was during this period that Bach mastered his skills on the organ. Bach married Maria Barbara Bach, his second cousin in 1706, and of the seven children that they had, only two of his sons became accomplished composers: Wilhem Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. While Bach was working for the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, his wife Maria Barbara, suddenly passed away in July of 1720. He later met and married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a young, highly gifted soprano 17 years his junior. Together they had thirteen children.

Johann Sebastian Bach passed away on July 28, 1750 in Leipzig. Contemporary scholars suspected that he died of a stroke complicated by pneumonia. He was buried in an unmarked grave and it was not until 1894 that his coffin was found. He is now permanently interred at Leipzig's Church of St. Thomas.

During Bach's lifetime, he has written numerous pieces for the harpsichord and the organ. Other major works include three violin concertos, Six Brandenburg Concertos, St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion, Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, Six Solo Cello Suites and the Mass in B Minor. Unfortunately, Bach's music was totally forgotten after his death. It was not until the mid 19th. century that his music was revived by Felix Mendelssohn and received renewed appreciation.

#### **Violin Concerto No. 2 in E Major, BWV 1042**

Bach has written numerous violin concertos during his life time but only three have survived – Violin Concertos in A Minor, BWV 1041; in E Major, BWV 1042 and Double Violin Concerto in D Minor. They were all written while Bach was working for the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen (1717 – 1723). The musical structure follows the standard Italian style, i.e. fast-slow-fast and it has obvious elements of a concerto grosso rather than the modern concertos of Beethoven and Brahms. This concerto is scored for strings and continuo.

### **Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068**

It is believed that Bach wrote his orchestral suites while he was working in Leipzig, Germany. However, it was completed and edited by musicologists after his death. All four suites begin with a French overture, followed by a number of Baroque dances. Even though they are based on dance forms, they were never intended for the audience to participate during the performance.

The music is scored for two oboes, three trumpets, timpani, strings and continuo; and has six movements including the most famous movement "**Air**". This was later transcribed into a violin show piece by August Wilhelmj in the 19th. century where violinists can play the entire piece on the G string. An excellent performance can be found in the 1946 movie "**Magic Bow**", a story about the 19th. century virtuoso violinist Niccolò Paganini.

### **FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732 – 1809)**

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Austria, a village near the border of Hungary. His father Mathias Haydn was a wheelwright and his mother, the former Maria Koller, had previously worked as a cook in the palace of Count Harrach, the presiding aristocrat of Rohrau. Although neither parent was a musician, Mathias was extremely interested in folk musician/music and had taught himself to play the harp. During his adult life, Haydn spent much of his career as a court musician for the wealthy Hungarian Esterházy family on their remote estate. Haydn passed away on May 31, 1809 and on June 15, 1809, a memorial service was held in the Schottenkirche, a Catholic church in Vienna.

Since Haydn was born toward the end of the Baroque period, his musical style clearly demonstrates the influences of the music of C.P.E. Bach. He was also considered as the "**Father**" of the modern symphony.

During his lifetime, Haydn has written a total of 104 symphonies, the two famous oratorios "The Creation" and "The Seasons", Lord Nelson Mass, several string quartets, and his two famous cello concerti, plus numerous works for the keyboard.

### **Symphony No. 45 ("Farewell") in F-sharp Minor, Hob. 1:45**

Haydn wrote the "Farewell" symphony in 1772 while he was employed by Prince Esterházy of Hungary. It is a standard classical symphony but with a twist. It is believed that the Prince has kept the musicians from their families for an extended period of time and had forgotten to give them a vacation. So, Haydn decided to use the Adagio section of the final movement to convey the musicians' request. Here, individual musicians would snuffed out their candles and depart from the stage one by one, even the conductor. And by the end of the symphony, only two violinists are left. When the Prince witnessed this, he immediately granted them a vacation. The symphony has four movements and is scored for 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 French horns, strings and continuo.