

## **Canon and Gigue**

## **Johann Pachelbel (1653 – 1706)**

Even though Johann Pachelbel was a prolific composer who has written hundreds of compositions, he is most remembered as the composer who wrote the famous Canon in D Major, arguably one of the most performed pieces in the classical repertoire. Johann Pachelbel, son of Johann Sr. and Anna Maria Mair, was born in 1653 and demonstrated exceptional abilities in music at a very young age. Unfortunately, he was not able to finish his studies at the University of Altdorf due to financial difficulties. Fortunately, in 1670, he was able to obtain a scholarship at the Gymnasium Poeticum in Regensburg and continued his study in music there.

During Pachelbel's lifetime, he was recognized as an outstanding organ music composer and a sought after kapellmeister. He wrote no fewer than two hundred pieces for the instrument, both sacred and secular. He has also written many vocal pieces and keyboard music such as chorales, fugues, chaconnes and variations, toccatas, fantasias and preludes.

Pachelbel married twice and had eight children. His first wife and their only child died during a plague in October, 1683. He later married Judith Drommer on August 24, 1684 and they had five sons and two daughters. Two of his sons, Wilhelm Hieronymus and Charles Theodore also became composers of organ music. Johann Michael, another son, was an instrument maker in Nuremberg and one of the daughters, Amalia was a successful painter and engraver. Johann Pachelbel died in March of 1706 at the age of 52 and was buried in the St. Rochus Cemetery.

The famous Canon in D was originally scored for three violins and a bassoon continuo and paired with a gigue (a Baroque dance form). Although it is called a canon, its musical structure is actually resembled more of a chaconne or passacaglia due to the repeating bass line throughout the entire piece. (There are, in total, 28 variations among the three violin parts.) The gigue is in strict fugal form and music has a very distinct dance flavour. This piece became very popular in the early 1970's and is now the most requested music for weddings in North America.

## **Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 7**

## **Arcangelo Corelli (1653 – 1713)**

**"Founder of Modern Violin Techniques", the "World's First Great Violinist", and the "Father of the Concerto Grosso." (A. Corelli)**

Italian violinist Arcangelo Corelli was born in Italy on February 17, 1653 and died in Rome on January 8, 1713. Corelli died a rich man, a rarity for many musicians. He left his fortune to his benefactor and friend, who generously passed on the money to Corelli's relatives. Although we have little knowledge about his early years, we do know that he studied the violin with Giovanni Battista Bassani, a violin virtuoso at the time, and composition with Matteo Simonelli, a famed singer of the pope's chapel. Corelli studied in Bologna and later gained initial success in Paris in 1672. He later worked in many European cities in his career such as Germany where he was employed by the electoral prince of Bavaria and spent some with violinist/composer Cristiano Farinelli. Due to his early success, he had no trouble securing support from a number of influential patrons.

Even though Corelli's output as a composer was limited, his music was revered by composers such as J.S. Bach, G. F. Handel and Antonio Vivaldi. As a performer,

Corelli was considered as the Paganini of his time and was known to possess a very beautiful singing tone in his playing. He was also a pioneer of violin techniques where his writing on the subject was the first of its kind.

His Concerto Grosso, Op. 6 is probably his most important and influential work because he set the standard for this particular genre for composers such as J. S. Bach and A. Vivaldi. The main feature of the concerto grosso is that the music is performed by two contrasting group of musicians. The smaller group consists of two violins and a cello, while a chamber orchestra completes the ensemble. The first eight concerti of Op.6 are called church sonatas or *concerti da chiesa* (music that has a more serious character) and the final four are called chamber sonatas or *concerti da camera*. Since Corelli spent a lot of time writing and revising his compositions, he never allowed his music to be published in his lifetime.

### **Castor and Pollux (Selections)**

### **Jean Philippe Rameau (1683 - 1764)**

Castor et Pollux is the second "*tragédie en musique*" opera written by Jean-Philippe Rameau and the libretto was penned by Pierre-Joseph Justin Bernard, a French poet. It was premiered on October 24, 1737 at the Académie royale de musique in Paris with great success. This orchestral suite is arranged by F. A. Gevaert and has eight movements. It is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, two French horns, a snare drum and strings.

Jean-Philippe Rameau was born on September 25, 1683 and died on September 12, 1764. He was considered as one of the more influential French Baroque composers and also a leading harpsichordist of his time. Little is known about his early years; it was not until the 1720's that he gained some notoriety when he published his ***Treatis on Harmony***. Rameau's father was an organist in several churches around Dijon, France and his mother was a woman from the French high society. Originally, he intended to study to become a lawyer but he soon realized that his real desire was to be a musician. Rameau was married to 19 year-old Marie-Louise Mangot and had four children: two sons and two daughters.

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The basic plot of the opera is a story of the brotherly love. "Castor, who is mortal, and Pollux, who is immortal. Castor is killed defending his beloved Télite (who, in the original 1737 version of the opera, is also loved by Pollux) from an abduction attempt. Pollux then resolves to give up his immortality and take Castor's place in the Underworld. After extended debate over who will live and who will die, the brothers are eternally united by being transformed into the constellation Gemini." (George Loomis - *New York Times*)

## **INTERMISSION**

## **Baroque Diversions, Op. 56**

**Michael Conway Baker (1937 - )**

***"I tried the twelve-tone approach in some of my music and, for me, it just didn't work. I think you have to believe in the music you write."***

Michael Conway Baker was born in West Beach, Florida, U.S.A. in 1937 and became a naturalized Canadian citizen in 1970. He taught himself basic music theory as a child and began his formal piano training when he was nineteen years old. Baker studied music composition at the University of British Columbia with Canadian composer Jean Coulthard and Elliot Weisgarder, and graduated there in 1966. He later earned a Masters of Music from Washington University in 1972.

Baker is a prolific composer and has written many film scores and over 150 orchestral works to date. He has received many awards including three **Genie Awards**, one **Juno Award** for Classical Composition of the Year for (Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra, 1992); and an **ACTRA Gemini Award** for best score for a T.V. Series (David Suzuki's A Planet for the Taking). He was also awarded the **Order of British Columbia** (1997); received the **Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal** in 2003 and was inducted into the **British Columbia Entertainment Hall of Fame** (2006).

In terms of musical style, Baker chooses to write expressive melodic lines rather than follows the more contemporary approaches such the twelve-tones technique pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg. Baker once said, *"I had, and still have, definite leanings towards composers whose music seems to be an outgrowth of past practices ..... I like music which has a certain quality of bridging the old with the new."*

**"Baroque Diversions** was commissioned, many years ago, by the City of Mannheim, Germany to celebrate the musical relationship between Canada and Germany. When I asked what kind of composition they would like me to provide, the German Attache thought I should try to mix contemporary styles with earlier periods of music. So, indeed, there is quite a mix of styles from previous musical periods with some 'contemporary' effects. However, the predominant style is very much Baroque in approach. There is a good deal of counterpoint with the major themes being juxtaposed as the music progresses. Even though there are "effects" (cluster harmonies") the music is predominantly tonal, the tonality being mostly in A minor. There are a lot of mixed meters with changes of duple and triple rhythms. Needless to say, the musicians (and particularly the conductor) have to count! My great love of J.S. Bach shines through almost every bar! The premiere was given in the Castle in Mannheim where Mozart performed many of his greatest work." **(Michael Conway Baker)**

## **Pulcinella Suite (1949 Version)**

**Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971)**

Pulcinella Suite was written by Igor Stravinsky in 1921 and it is based a on a ballet of the same name. Considered as one of the most influential composers of the 20th. century, Stravinsky has written many compositions that were regarded as revolutionary as such The Rite of Spring. In fact, at its premiere, a riot broke out in the audience because they found the harmony and musical styles unacceptable. It

took some time for the house to restore order and eventually complete the performance.

Igor Stravinsky was born in Russia in 1882, became a naturalized American citizen in 1946 and died on April 6, 1971. Stravinsky achieved international recognition through the performances of his three famous ballets – *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*. He began piano lessons at a very age and later studied law at the University of St. Petersburg for a brief period of time. In 1902, he dropped out of university and went to study composition with the famed Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. He married his cousin Katerina Nossenko in 1906 and had two children Fyodor (1907) and Ludmilla (1908).

Stravinsky began writing music in the neoclassical style in the 1920's. These works tended to employ traditional forms such as concerto grosso, fugue and 'classical' symphony and often demonstrated composition techniques of J. S. Bach and Tchaikovsky. According to Stravinsky, *'Pulcinella 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 it was a look in the mirror, too.'* Pulcinella Suite consists of eight movements and is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, and 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, string quartet and strings. It was premiered on December 20, 1922 in Boston, Mass.

**Program notes written by Eric D. Fahn ©**