



RITZ CHAMBER PLAYERS
OPENING CONCERT 2023-2024 SEASON
FROM STRUGGLE TO TRIUMPH
Terry Concert Hall/Jacksonville University
Saturday, October 28, 2023 | 7:30 PM

PROGRAM NOTES

OPENING CONCERT 2023-2024 SEASON

TERRY CONCERT HALL | Saturday, October 28, 2023 | 7:30p

JONATHAN BAILEY HOLLAND (1974 -)

Piano Trio

Declarative

Relaxed

Agitated

Anyango Yarbo-Davenport – Violin, Khari Joyner – Cello and Kevin Sharpe – Piano

FRED ONOVWERO SUOKE (1960 –)

Ne Nkansu Banda (Central African Republic) “Forest People” Healing Chant

Adura Fun Alafia - Ayo Bankole

Wunya Amane A. - Kwabena Nketia

Alison Buchanan – Soprano and Kevin Sharpe – Piano

ANDRÉ PREVIN (1929 – 2019)

Four Songs for soprano, cello and piano, set to text by Toni Morrison

The Lacemaker

Mercy

Shelter

Stones

Alison Buchanan – Soprano, Khari Joyner – Cello and Kevin Sharpe – Piano

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

Duo for Violin and Cello, Op.7

Allegro serioso, non troppo

Adagio – Andante

Maestoso e largamente, ma non troppo lento – Presto

Anyango Yarbo-Davenport – Violin and Khari Joyner – Cello

INTERMISSION



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ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841 – 1904)

Piano Trio in E Minor, Op. 90 “Dumky”

Lento maestoso — Allegro quasi doppio movimento

Poco Adagio — Vivace non troppo

Andante — Vivace non troppo

Andante moderato — Allegretto scherzando

Allegro — Meno mosso

Lento maestoso — Vivace

Anyango Yarbo-Davenport – Violin, Khari Joyner – Cello and Kevin Sharpe – Piano

JONATHAN BAILEY HOLLAND (1974 -) Piano Trio

Commissioned by the Ritz Chamber Players, on the occasion of the opening of "Flow", an exhibition of works by Radcliffe Bailey at the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art.

Originally from Flint, MI, composer Jonathan Bailey Holland (b. 1974) began studying composition while a student at the Interlochen Arts Academy, where he received a school-wide award for his very first composition. Upon graduation from Interlochen, he continued his composition studies with Ned Rorem at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree. He went on to receive a Ph.D. in Music from Harvard University in 2000, where his primary teachers were Bernard Rands and Mario Davidovsky. He has also studied with Andrew Imbrie, Yehudi Wyner, Robert Saxton, and Robert Sirota. He has recently been named the Jack G. Buncher Head of the School of Music at Carnegie Mellon University. He has served as Chair of Composition, Contemporary Music, and Core Studies at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and was a Founding Faculty member in the low-residency MFA program in Music Composition at Vermont College of Fine Arts, where he also served as Faculty Chair from 2016 until 2019.

Holland's works have been performed and commissioned by numerous organizations, both nationally and internationally. Highlights include: five works commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, including Ode which was premiered during the 2018-19 season when Holland served as composer-in-residence; Stories from Home - commissioned to celebrate the reopening of Music Hall in 2018, and Halcyon Sun - commissioned to celebrate the opening of the Freedom Center National Underground Railroad Museum; El Jaleo, commissioned by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and premiered by the Phoenix chamber orchestra; Primary Movements, a ballet commissioned by the Dallas Symphony and the Dallas Black Dance Theater; Motor City Dance Mix, commissioned by the Detroit Symphony in celebration of the opening of the Max M. Fischer Music Center; Signals, commissioned by



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the National Symphony in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; House of Dreams, commissioned by the Enterprise Foundation for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in memory of the Foundation's founder James Rouse, and many more.

FRED ONOVWEROSUOKE (1960 –)

Born in Ghana to Nigerian parents, multiple award-winning composer Fred Onovwerosuoke grew up in both countries before settling in the United States. “FredO,” as friends call him, has spent time in over thirty African countries researching and analyzing some of Africa’s rich music traditions. “I see hidden across Africa a gold-mine of unlimited musical scales and modes, melodic and harmonic traditions, and, yes, rhythms – abundant yet largely untapped,” says Onovwerosuoke of his dominant influences. He also maintains that “my compositions are informed by my travels around the world, and each piece is harnessed and nurtured by an African sensibility that is unmistakable and genuine.” FredO has also traveled in the American Deep South, the Caribbean and South America for comparative research in what he likes to call “traceable musical Africanisms.” His influences are wide and varied, and is much at home discussing Beethoven, Debussy and Stravinsky as well as foremost exponents of various traditional musics. In 1994 he founded the St. Louis African Chorus to help nurture African choral music as a mainstream repertoire for performance and education in America. Today, the organization’s mission has broadened to include classical/art music by lesser-known composers particularly of African descent and renamed Inter-cultural Music Initiative.

Onovwerosuoke’s works have been featured in audio recordings, films, documentaries and radio, including Robert De Niro’s film, *The Good Shepherd*, William-Chapman Nyaho’s CD, *ASA* and Hymes/Hollister’s CD, *African Art Music for Flute*, Hudson/Henderson’s CD, *Libera*, to mention a few. His numerous awards include multiple ASCAP Awards, American Music Center Award, Meet-The-Composer Award, and Brannen-Cooper Brothers Award. His book, *Songs of Africa: 22 Pieces for Mixed Voices* published by Oxford University Press quickly became a favorite among choral directors across the globe, leading to the recent publications for upper voices *Songs of Africa for Upper Voices Set 1* and *Songs of Africa for Upper Voices Set 2*. Onovwerosuoke’s *Twenty-four Studies in African Rhythms* (AM Publishers), in two volumes) is one of the most-demanded African-rhythm influenced piano studies known. His *Twelve African Songs for Solo Voice & Piano* and *Afro Caribbean Mass for Mixed Voices & Piano* (distributed by AM Publishers) also set a similar pace, globally. Fred Onovwerosuoke serves on the boards of various professional bodies and maintains an active schedule as composer-in-residence, guest conductor or speaker on the subject of art music by African descent composers.



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FOUR SONGS BY ANDRÉ PREVIN

André Previn, a renowned composer, conductor, and pianist, left an indelible mark on the world of music. His Four Songs for soprano, cello, and piano, set to the poignant and evocative texts by Toni Morrison, showcase his exceptional ability to blend diverse musical elements with profound emotional depth.

Each of the four songs in this cycle presents a unique musical landscape, capturing the essence of Morrison's words and bringing them to life. Previn's sensitive and nuanced composition style allows the music to serve as a powerful medium for storytelling, amplifying the emotional impact of the text.

The first song, "Dreaming," unfolds with delicate piano arpeggios that create a dreamlike atmosphere. The soprano's ethereal melodies float above the cello's gentle, lyrical lines, painting a vivid picture of the inner world of the protagonist. Previn's use of chromatic harmonies and subtle shifts in tonality adds a layer of complexity to the music, reflecting the intricate emotions expressed in Morrison's words.

In the second song, "Solitude," the cello takes on a more prominent role, its mournful and introspective melodies intertwining with the soprano's heartfelt expressions. Previn's composition skillfully captures the sense of isolation and longing conveyed in the text, with the piano providing a rich harmonic foundation that supports and enhances the emotional depth of the music.

The third song, "The Loss," explores themes of grief and sorrow. Previn's masterful use of dissonance and unexpected harmonic progressions creates a sense of tension and unease, mirroring the emotional turmoil experienced by the protagonist. The interplay between the soprano, cello, and piano is particularly striking in this movement, as they engage in a musical dialogue that reflects the complex emotions expressed in Morrison's words.

The final song, "The Evening," brings the cycle to a contemplative and introspective close. Previn's gentle and lyrical melodies, combined with the cello's warm and expressive tones, evoke a sense of tranquility and acceptance. The soprano's soaring lines soar above the texture, conveying a sense of hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

André Previn's Four Songs for soprano, cello, and piano, set to Toni Morrison's texts, are a testament to the power of music to illuminate the human experience. Through his sensitive and evocative composition, Previn invites the listener on a journey of introspection, empathy, and profound emotional connection. This cycle stands as a tribute to the remarkable talents of both Previn and Morrison, leaving a lasting impression on all who encounter its beauty and depth.



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ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882 – 1967) DUO FOR VIOLIN AND CELLO, OPUS 7

In addition to music, the great Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodály also earned advanced degrees in modern languages and a Ph.D. in philosophy and linguistics. Kodaly's pioneering work in the study and collection of ethnic music - no one had catalogued and collected them so methodically before - involved visiting remote villages, often with close friend Bela Bartok, and recording folk songs by convincing the locals, none too skeptical of these two intense and nerdy guys, to sing into huge funnels designed for collecting sound on immense wax cylinders. This could not have been easy.

Of course Kodaly also received excellent formal training in Paris where he was, in particular, influenced by the music of Debussy who, in turn, was influenced by Indonesian music and American jazz. The manner in which Kodaly synthesized these disparate influences – the driving and asymmetrical ethnic music of Hungary and Bohemia and the Classical and Romantic traditions of Western masters - combined with his virtuosic skill in the craft of composition and his thinking-outside-the-box understanding of the technical limits of instruments makes Kodaly a unique voice in the history of music.

He wrote the Duo in 1914 at the start of World War I and it is a case study in the fusion of classical forms with folk melodies and rhythm. Listen to how the players seem to be speaking to each other; whereas Italian and French music is concerned with the concept of lyricism - singing melodies – Kodaly seems to be more interested in a dialogue. I don't think it is a great stretch to imagine this may have had something to do with his background in language and linguistics. Either way, you'll hear an ongoing conversation - and sometimes not necessarily the most friendly one, either. This is apparent right from the start - the cello enters and the violin dances around it, trying to get a word in edgewise. Then the violin gets a chance with the same melody but in a completely different tone: back and forth the themes go punctuated by a rare unison of agreement. The second movement begins with a prayer which, traveling through a period of intense agitation, ends as a shadow of itself (played with distant harmonics in the cello). The violin gets another chance in the last movement, starting with an extended soliloquy. The cello joins eventually and, after circling one another the two explode in a riot of sound becoming faster and faster until the music cannot sustain itself any longer.



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ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

PIANO TRIO IN E MINOR, OP. 90 DUMKY (1890-91)

In 1892, Dvořák, now world famous as a composer, accepted an invitation to become the director of the new National Conservatory of Music in New York. As things turned out, he became acutely homesick, and after three years he resigned and returned home to Prague. At the time of his departure, however, he fully expected to settle permanently in the United States, and he undertook a “farewell” 40-concert tour of Bohemia and Moravia, accompanied by two colleagues from the Prague conservatory, violinist Ferdinand Lachner and cellist Hanus Wihan.

As the centerpiece for the tour, Dvořák chose the work in which he most poignantly expressed his love for his motherland and its musical culture – his “Dumky” Trio. Completed in February, 1891, the work had been premiered at a concert in April, 1891, celebrating Dvořák’s honorary doctorate from Prague’s Charles University. It was then published in 1894 while Dvořák was in the United States, with his friend Brahms taking time out from his own work to read and correct the proofs.

Dumky is the plural of dumka, a Slavonic word with a long etymological history. Originally it meant to meditate or brood. In the Ukraine, the term took on the additional meaning of a “lament” or pensive folk ballad about deeds of heroism in bygone days. Still later, a dumka became a sorrowful instrumental work, often followed by a wildly joyful dance called a furiant. This pairing of two sharply contrasting moods spread throughout central Europe, becoming particularly characteristic of folk music in Poland and Bohemia.

Dvořák used the term dumka for the blending of such contrasting melancholy and joyful elements within one piece, thus providing a vehicle for his emotionally complex temperament. In this sense, he composed a number of dumky, both as short pieces in themselves or as movements in a longer work. Examples include his Slavonic Dance No. 2 and the slow movements of his String Quartet, Op. 51, and Piano Quintet, Op. 81.

In his “Dumky” Trio, Dvořák went further, writing a piece consisting entirely of dumky. There are, in fact, six of them, each in a different key and with its own distinct individuality and tonal coloring. The first, second, third and sixth dumky follow the traditional pattern of a slow, melancholy or pensive section followed by a fast, exuberant one. In the fourth and fifth dumky, the contrasts come between the two movements.

This unique format made it impossible for Dvořák to follow the convention established by Haydn of using traditional sonata form, with its emphasis on thematic development, for at least one movement. The trio as a whole, however, has a structural unity roughly like a conventional four-movement composition.



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The first three dumky are linked together without pause, and are thus parallel to a conventional first movement. The fourth dumka is dominated by a slow melancholy melody presented by the cello over a piano ostinato figure, and is like a slow movement. The fifth dumka is more energetic and playful, like a scherzo. The final dumka, after a somber introduction, is alternatively wild and quietly expressive, not unlike a traditional rondo, bringing this remarkable piece to a brilliant whirling close.