

PROGRAM NOTES

The very fact that one of this country's founding fathers (another will be mentioned anon) cultivated such a keen interest in the music we love is a fascinating element in itself. The opportunity to hear music from his personal collection of musical scores delivers a multivalent delight: there is historical interest, some level of patriotism, the musical interests of an admirable intellect, and the sheer quality of the music. The concert begins with music for Jefferson's own favorite instrument.

The young violinist Francesco Geminiani arrived in London in 1714, having left Italy in search of opportunity. By the time he left the English capital 18 years later, he was at the height of his career, both as a concert violinist and a composer. In 1751, the year his treatise *The art of playing on the violin* appeared, he was splitting time between London and Paris. The treatise is oriented towards students of the violin ("all the rules necessary to attain a perfection on that instrument," states the lengthy title). It begins, after some introductory comments and rules, with 24 specific examples. At the back of the treatise there is a group of one-movement pieces for violin and continuo (a "great variety of compositions"), distinguished mostly by number and tempo. The three excerpts on our program are all in B minor.

Francis Hopkinson was born in the English colony of Pennsylvania, in the town of Philadelphia. He graduated from a college there that would some day be known as the University of Pennsylvania. He was a delegate at the Second Continental Congress (representing New Jersey) and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In late 1788, he published his *Seven songs for the harpsichord or forte piano*, and dedicated them to "His Excellency George Washington". The following year he was nominated by the President as a judge for the district court of Pennsylvania. It was the publication of these songs that led Hopkinson to assert, "I cannot, I believe, be refused the Credit of being the first Native of the United States who has produced a Musical Composition." As the collection appeared six months after the ratification of the Federal Constitution, his claim stands. Of these seven songs, three are to be heard this evening.

Claude Balbastre (whose name is often confused with that of his younger brother, who only lived to the age of ten) was a stellar organist in Paris who taught not only the daughters of Mr. Jefferson, but also Marie-Antoinette. His performances were exceedingly popular: his organ playing at Midnight Mass each year drew such a crowd that his appearances had to be discontinued. The entire collection of *Pièces de clavecin* is dedicated to Madame de Caze, identified on the cover as the wife of a wealthy "farmer-general", and the first piece in the collection is named for her (or them). The titles of the other two pieces are more obscure, but the music displays significant compositional competence.

Maria Hadfield Cosway's primary vocation was that of an artist, and she was an accomplished musician and composer as well. She had been born in Florence, the daughter of an English father and an Italian mother. After her father's death, her mother moved with her to England in 1779. She married a fellow painter in 1781, Richard Cosway. In 1786, the pair were introduced in Paris to Jefferson. Mrs. Cosway and the widower Jefferson took a special liking to one another, and the full implications of this relationship are still debated. The two songs on this program are part of a group of seven sent to Jefferson by Mrs. Cosway after the Cosways returned to England in October the same year. The songs suggest that Jefferson had toned down his interest, leaving her unhappy. They continued to exchange letters until his death in 1826.

Following the death of Henry Purcell in 1695, two volumes of his songs were published in 1698 and 1702. Purcell's gift for songwriting was much admired by his contemporaries (which explains the publications). The very title of the collections, *Orpheus Britannicus*, is a significant tribute to the composer. The two songs heard tonight are among the contents, and both come late in his output. Purcell wrote the first for a play by Richard Norton, *Pausanias, the betrayer of his country*. The ambitious Pandora has a rendezvous with Argilius, whom she intends to blackmail. While waiting for him, an attendant sings this song of seduction, intended to put Pandora in the mood for love. The verse is unusually strong for Norton, whose play does not work well. The other song comes from *The comical history of Don Quixote* by Thomas D'Urfey. It is sung by the character Altsidora, who teases the Don by pretending to be mad. The control of the emotional range is particularly impressive. Curtis Price commented, it is "the pure and unguarded expression of an artist who had no time left for artifice." A note in *Orpheus* indicates that *From rosy bow'rs* was Purcell's last song.

Evening hymn makes for an eloquent conclusion to the first part of the program. The full title to this popular religious work is *Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An evening hymn on a ground)*. It first appeared as the opening work in John Playford's 1688 *Harmonia sacra*. Purcell favored repeated bass lines in many of his song settings. This song's text, by William Fuller, Bishop of Lincoln, provides encouraging thoughts for bedtime.

Thomas Arne's musical reputation lies mostly in his songs. This collection begins with one of his most famous, *Where the bee sucks*, written around 1740. It comes from a reworking of *The tempest* Arne undertook around 1740. The strophic song *Celia's complaint*, in G minor, expressing sadness that her beloved has gone off to take up arms for the county (or country?). She pleads for his safe return. Beginning in 1745, Arne's music became part of the entertainment at the Vauxhall Gardens in London. *Chloe* (or *Cloe*) *generous as fair: When Chloe shines serenely gay* was part of *Lyric harmony*, one of the first collections of these songs that was published. *Love and wine in Alliance* (or, *While Phillis is drinking*) was part of a revival of a George Granville's *She gallants*, originating in 1695, and appeared in several collections.

Although the name of Johann Schobert does not get the response that C.P.E. Bach or Joseph Haydn might, these three composers together made strongly persuasive musical arguments in favor of the so-called Sturm-und-Drang style. This D minor sonata forms part of a strategy of rejecting a perceived aesthetic and stylistic paralysis that had taken hold in the mid-18th century. The work also exemplifies a broadening of instrumentation: instruments were added to the keyboard sonata to help enrich the timbre of the instrument, signaling a growing interest in a wider spectrum of sounds.

Finally, three arias bring our perusal of Jefferson's music library to a close. The first is from the English ballad opera, *The beggar's opera*, which premiered in 1728. Johann Christoph Pepusch was the primary composer and arranger for this work, with a libretto by John Gay. Because the piece borrows from so many composers it is not completely clear who wrote what. The entire work remains recognized as Gay's achievement. This excerpt is found in Act I, as Polly defends her love for the criminal Macheath against her parents.

The famous *Batti, batti* is from Mozart's very magnificent *Don Giovanni*. Zerlina, should you not recall, urges her beloved Masetto to punish her for her momentary infidelity. By the end of the aria, after shifting into a beguiling triple meter, she has completely dispersed his jealous anger. *Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen*, from Weber's singspiel *Der Freischütz*, is sung by Agathe's relative Ännchen. Following a traumatic experience, Ännchen is trying to calm Agathe with a diverting song about innocent love.

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