Unmatched Elegance

January 30-31, 2010

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	Organ Concerto in C Major, Hob.XVIII:1
	I. Moderato
	II. Largo
	III. Allegro molto
	Carol Wilson, organ
Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)	Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite III
	I. Anonymous: Italiana
	II. Jean-Baptiste Besard: Ari di corte
	III. Anonymous: Siciliana
	IV. Lodovico Roncalli: Passacaglia

INTERMISSION

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	Introduction and Allegro, op. 47
	Veronika String Quartet
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)	Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, op. 11, "1824"
	I. Allegro di molto
	II. Andante
	III. Menuetto: Allegro molto
	IV. Allegro con fuoco

I know that God has bestowed a talent upon me, and I thank Him for it. I think I have done my duty and been of use in my generation by my works. Let others do the same.—Haydn

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was born in the Austrian town of Rohrau, and in 1761, after a conspicuously ordinary early life, was engaged as vice-Kapellmeister by Prince Paul Esterházy, a Hungarian nobleman. He remained exclusively in that family's employment for the next thirty years, working for Prince Paul and then for his son Nikolaus. Unlike Mozart, whose relationships with his patrons were neither easy nor consistent, Haydn lived happily within the confines of his master's world and benefited enormously from seclusion and from having a permanent orchestra with which to work. Haydn later remarked, "There was no one there to confuse me, so I was forced to become original." In 1790, Nikolaus died and the court musicians were dismissed by his successor. Haydn moved to Vienna, but shortly afterward received an invitation to visit England, where he proved incredibly successful in 1791-92. Oxford University even gave Haydn an honorary degree. Having returned from London, he bought a house in Vienna where he taught Beethoven and others, but in 1794 he returned to England, this time with even more success. He returned to Europe again in 1795, returning to employment with the Esterházy family and concentrating all of his time on composing. His health began to fail in 1802, and after a long struggle, Haydn died in 1809. In some ways, Haydn was more radical than Mozart, experimenting with unusual-length phrases and using unconventional forms in his symphonies. Above all, Haydn is the most humane and comforting of composers. In his own words, he wrote music so that "the weary and worn, or the man burdened with affairs, may enjoy a few moments of solace and refreshment."

Before entering the service of the Esterházys, Haydn had written works designed for keyboard—either harpsichord or organ—and a simple string ensemble. The organ pieces might well have served their purpose at a time when Haydn was employed as an organist and church musician in Vienna. An autograph copy of the **Organ Concerto in C major, Hob.XVIII:1**, survives, with the date 1756 added subsequently, scored for organ, two oboes, two trumpets (or horns) and strings. It was played on the occasion of the solemn profession of Therese Keller, Haydn's future sister-in-law, as a nun in the order of Poor Clares in 1756.

Here is an elegant way of writing, in the sense of the rhetoric of another day; a beautiful harmonizing; a splendid method of orchestration; and with these a desire to be agreeable, well-mannered, and respectable at all costs. —Gatti.

As the descendent of a family of professional musicians, **Ottorino Respighi** (1879-1936) inherited a rich talent as part of his birthright. His earliest music lessons were with his father, but he progressed so rapidly that he began his professional training in violin, piano and composition at the age of just thirteen. As a young man, Respighi was torn between ambitions to become a concert violinist or a composer. He got a job as a violist with the orchestra of the St. Petersburg Opera, and took advantage of his time in Russia to study with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, whose brilliant orchestral technique was a lasting influence. He then moved to Berlin to study violin and composition with Max Bruch. Respighi spent the years from 1903 to 1925 primarily in Italy, first as a performer, then as professor of composition, and finally as head of the Saint Cecilia Academy in Rome. He left the Academy in 1925 to devote himself to composition and touring, making four trips to the United States during the next seven years. He died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-six.

Respighi had an abiding interest in the music of the late Renaissance and Baroque eras, and he edited many works by such venerable composers as Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Tartini and Vitali for publication. Speaking against serialism and mechanical/mathematical music that was being

played in some concert halls and chased away audiences, Respighi was one of ten composers who issued a document espousing the hallowed philosophy of music as communication: "We are against art which cannot and does not have any human content and desires to be merely a mechanical demonstration and a cerebral puzzle. A logical chain binds the past and the future—the romanticism of yesterday will again be the romanticism of tomorrow." Given most current trends in composition, they were obviously correct.

Among the most charming of Respighi's works based on old models are the three sets of *Ancient Airs and Dances* (1917, 1924, 1932), arrangements of Italian and French lute and keyboard pieces of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries. Respighi kept the old melodies and harmonies intact while enriching their texture and providing them with brilliant orchestral color.

The **Third Suite** is scored for string orchestra. The first movement, *Italiana*, is an anonymous song of the 16th century with a beguiling lilt and a fetching simplicity. The second movement, a miniature suite based on several songs by Jean-Baptiste Besard, opens with a doleful lament (*It is sad to be in love with you*), which is followed by two brighter melodies (*Farewell forever, shepherdess* and *Lovely eyes that see clearly*). Three other brief sections (*The Skiff of Love, What divinity touches my soul,* and *If it is for my innocence that you love me*) are heard before the return of the sorrowful opening strain. A gently swaying Siciliana of unknown origin occupies the third movement. The finale is a Passacaglia by Lodovico Roncalli from 1692.

From the point of view of one person or another I understand all my music has been a crime: "Cockaigne," the "Coronation Ode," and the "Imperial March." Yes, I believe there are a good many people who have objected to them. But I like to look on the composer's vocation as the old troubadours or bards did. In those days it was no disgrace for a man to be turned on to step in front of an army and inspire them with a song. For my part, I know that there are a lot of people who like to celebrate events with music. To these people I have given tunes. Is that wrong? Why should I write a fugue or something that won't appeal to anyone, when the people yearn for things which can stir them?—Edward Elgar.

Edward Elgar was born at Broadheath, near Worcester, on June 2, 1857. In his early musical career, he worked as a violinist and band director, but during the 1880s his compositions began to be performed in London. It was his Enigma Variations, 1898-99, which brought Elgar to wide international acclaim, the first composer to gain such recognition in 200 years. Elgar was knighted in 1904 and appointed professor of music at Birmingham University in 1905. He went on to conduct the London Symphony in 1911-12. His wife's death in 1920 virtually stopped his compositional output. Elgar himself died at Worcester on February 23, 1934.

Elgar's first reference to the **Introduction and Allegro, op. 47** is in an excited letter to August Jaeger, his music editor at Novello's dated January 26, 1905: "I'm doing that string thing in time for the [London] Sym: Orch. concert. Intro: & Allegro—no working out part, but a devil of a fugue." The subsidiary theme is in a more reflective mood. After both themes have been briefly restated, the solo viola announces the famous Welsh melody. A further appearance of the forceful opening material and a final nostalgically reflective version of the Welsh theme conclude the Introduction. The allegro follows without a break, beginning with the second idea from the Introduction, played faster and transformed from minor to major. The solo quartet then announces a new idea of tremendous forward energy and vigor, unmistakable in its rapid repeated note figuration. This builds toward a pair of climaxes, both based on the work's opening material. Then follows the "devil of a fugue" referred to in Elgar's letter, which despite the composer's natural aversion to strict counterpoint, displays a breathtaking mastery of texture. After winding down with the assistance of the repeated note theme, a slightly abbreviated restatement of the Allegro's opening

material follows. This builds inexorably toward a grand final statement off the Welsh theme, followed by a lively coda.

To the Noble Artist, who, surrounded by the Baal-like worship of debased art, has been able, by his genius and science, to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the worship of true art, and once more accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty, frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony: to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements. –Inscribed in grateful remembrance of Mendelssohn by Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace on April 24, 1847.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was shockingly gifted as a child. He painted with skill, wrote flowing poetry, succeeded in sports, spoke several languages, played several instruments, and completed one of the great chamber works of the nineteenth century—his *Octet for Strings*—at the age of only sixteen. He was born into a wealthy Jewish-German family, and his talents were encouraged by his parents and, most of all, by his sister, with whom Felix would maintain the closest of friendships throughout his life. He made his concert debut in 1818, met and befriended Goethe when he was only 12, and in 1826 (a year after the *Octet*) composed his overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which established his reputation internationally. Despite all that success, it was *after* three years of study at Berlin University that he finally decided upon a career in music!

At the age of 20, Mendelssohn became a champion of the music of Bach, which had passed into obscurity throughout Europe. He led the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* since the composer's death in 1750. Near the end of the year, he made his first visit to England, where he was widely lauded as both pianist and composer. After touring in Scotland, he returned to the European mainland to spend two years touring Germany, Austria and Italy. He visited England again in 1832 and 1833 and became a popular guest with what would become the London Philharmonic. In 1835, he took the conducting post with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. In 1843, he established a music conservatory in Leipzig, assisted by Robert Schumann. In 1847, he made his tenth and final visit to England, where he befriended Queen Victoria and taught piano to Prince Albert. In May of that year, his beloved sister Fanny died and the shock if this loss, together with the pressure of severe overwork, led to his own death six months later.

Mendelssohn completed twelve string symphonies, even orchestrating the eighth for full orchestra, before he felt ready to compose a complete symphony for full orchestra. The result was his **Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, op. 11**, completed on March 31, 1824, when Mendelssohn was fifteen years old. The strong influence of Weber (particularly *Der Freischütz)* pervades the piece, along with a hint of Haydn's *The Creation* in the introduction. Some sources reference a performance on February 1, 1827, in Leipzig, but this hasn't been firmly established. Its official was May 25, 1829. Mendelssohn himself conducted the Royal Philharmonic (London) and dedicated the symphony to the orchestra.