

Program Notes and Bios

Handel's Water Music

Friday, May 7, 2010 8 pm

Saturday, May 8, 2010 8 pm

Sunday, May 9, 2010 2:30 pm

Jones Hall

Bernard Labadie, conductor

Robert Atherholt, oboe

Rian Craypo, bassoon

Eric Halen, violin

Brinton Averil Smith, cello

Mozart

Ballet Music from *Idomeneo*, K.367

1. Chaconne: Allegro—Larghetto—Allegro

Haydn

Sinfonia Concertante in B-flat Major for Oboe, Bassoon,
Violin and Cello, Hob.I:105

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Allegro con spirito

INTERMISSION

Handel

Water Music

Suite No. 1 in F major

1. Overture: Largo--Allegro

2. Adagio e staccato

3. [Allegro]

4. Andante

5. [Allegro]

6. Air

7. Minuet

8. Bourrée

9. Hornpipe

10. [Alla Hornpipe]

Suite No. 3 in G major

16. [No tempo indicated]

17. Rigaudon

18. [No tempo indicated]

19. Minuet

20. [No tempo indicated]

21. [No tempo indicated]

22. [No tempo indicated]

Suite No. 2 in D major

11. [No tempo indicated]
12. Alla Hornpipe
13. Minuet
14. Lentement
15. Bourrée

BALLET MUSIC FROM *IDOMENEO*, K.367

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Born: Jan 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

Died: Dec 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Work composed: 1781

Recording: David Zinman conducting the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra (Philips)

Instrumentation: pairs of flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings

The Ballet Music from Mozart's *Idomeneo* heads up the seldom-heard ballet music that follows the joyous reconciliation scene at the end of this opera seria about a troubled Cretan king. Throughout the opera, King Idomeneo was faced with the prospect of having to kill his own son because of an earlier vow to the sea god, Neptune, who saved him from shipwreck.

The piece follows the form of the stage chaconne used primarily in French operas dating back to the time of Jean-Baptiste Lully a century earlier. Rather than being a long series of variations based on a repeated series of chords and/or a bass-line melody, the stage chaconne is a series of interconnected pieces with periodic repetitions of its opening section. Thus, it lends itself to a variety of contrasting dance movements commonly found in ballet performances.

As this major segment of the ballet music will reportedly be performed here, the chaconne opens with a vigorous full-orchestra piece for the full ballet ensemble, followed by more relaxed, lyrical sections for solo or paired dancers with periodic returns of the main theme for the full ballet. A lengthy Larghetto movement for a solo dancer leads to a stirring minor-mode section that comes to a climax with a return of the opening chaconne music.

SINFONIA CONCERTANTE IN B-FLAT MAJOR FOR OBOE, BASSOON, VIOLIN AND CELLO, HOB. I: 105

Joseph Haydn

Born: Mar 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Work composed: 1791

Recording: Sigiswald Kuijken conducting the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (Virgin Classics)

Instrumentation: oboe, bassoon, violin and cello soloists and an orchestra of one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings

When Haydn began his celebrated series of London concerts under the sponsorship of impresario Johann Peter Salomon on February 17, 1792, he found himself slightly upstaged by his old pupil, Ignaz Pleyel, who started a series of concerts on the rival "Professional Series" 10 days later. Included on Pleyel's program was a sinfonia concertante for six solo instruments and orchestra, and the work received glowing reviews. In his exhaustive study of Haydn's life and music, the late,

great Haydn scholar, H. C. Robbins Landon, surmised that Haydn sat down and hastily composed his own Sinfonia Concertante for four soloists (oboe, bassoon, violin and cello) and orchestra, which was promptly performed on March 5 on the Salomon concert series.

Pleyel had gained acquaintance with this hybrid symphony/concerto form involving multiple soloists during his years in Paris, where sinfonia concertante works were very popular during the 1780s. However, Haydn had not written in that specific form for nearly 30 years, since his Symphony No. 8 (subtitled *Le soir*) which employed two solo violins.

Where the Parisian sinfonia concertante was often a casually constructed work, intended merely to feature solo players rather than maintain an organized thematic discussion, Haydn's contribution to the medium showed the keen structural control he had gained after composing some 90 symphonies. The opening sonata movement begins without any slow introduction and its first exposition, with the customary three thematic groups, is given over to the orchestra. The second exposition is taken up by the four soloists, playing either in pairs or as a unified quartet, and it is rounded off by an orchestral codetta. The development, exploring a number of colorfully distant tonalities, is largely awarded to the solo quartet, while the recapitulation is shared between soloists and orchestra, topped off by an elaborate cadenza for the four soloists.

The graceful slow movement is played almost entirely by the four soloists, whose elaborate thematic filigree is lightly accompanied by strings and a few winds. The jolly finale is most ingenious. It deftly blends the idea of thematic presentation and development inherent in sonata form with the solo/tutti alternation common to concertos. It also combines these elements with the free, dramatic principle of an operatic recitative, instrumentally represented by the solo violin. In addition to being Haydn's impresario for the London trip, Salomon was also a talented violinist and he won much praise for his playing of the elaborate violin solos in this movement.

WATER MUSIC

George Frideric Handel

Born: Feb 23, 1685, Halle, Saxony

Died: Apr 14, 1759, London, England

Work composed: 1717 or earlier

Recording: Bernard Labadie leading Les Violons du Roy (Atma classique)

Instrumentation: piccolo, flute, two oboes, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, strings and harpsichord

In the summer of 1717, King George I of England proposed an evening's trip on barges down the Thames to Chelsea, where a dinner was arranged for him at the late Lord Ranelagh's villa. Wanting some entertainment during this boat ride, the king summoned the Swiss-born impresario, John James Heidegger, but he named a price too high to suit the king. So, the king's courtier, Baron von Kielmansegg, approached Handel and ultimately dug down in his pocket to pay for the whole event, including £150 to float 50 musicians down the river.

A Prussian official living in London wrote home to Berlin with the following description: ". . . Next to the King's barge was that of the musicians, about 50 in number, who played on all kinds of instruments, to wit trumpets, horns, hautboys (oboes), bassoons, German flutes, French flutes, violins and basses: but there were no singers. . . His Majesty approved of it so greatly that he caused it to be repeated three times in all, although each performance lasted an hour – namely twice before and once after supper." According to this account, the king arrived at Chelsea at 1 a.m., "left at three o'clock and returned to St. James' about half past four. . ." If that time frame is

correct, one wonders if the players had to read their music by torchlight and if all the working folks living along the Thames lost a night's sleep, thanks to this glorious racket. (Handel scholar Christopher Hogwood suggests a more scientific explanation: the arrival and departure times coincided with the changing direction of the tide on the Thames.)

Handel's autograph manuscript for all this music has been lost, and the performances we hear today have been reconstructed from manuscripts by reliable 18th-century copyists. Essentially, the 22 pieces have been divided into three suites: the first two for brass, winds and strings, the third for flutes and strings. A continuo ensemble – harpsichord and bass-line instrument(s) – accompanies all three suites. There is speculation that the two suites with brass instruments were played on the river, while the flute suite was played during supper at the villa.

The First Suite in F major is the most extensive, opening with a two-part French overture – a starchy slow section followed by a quasi-fugal fast movement. A series of faster and slower dance movements – minuets and trios, airs, a thrice-repeated bourrée and a lively hornpipe – lead to an extended finale pitting the solo winds against the strings.

The D major Suite opens with a lengthy prelude, with trumpets and horns echoing each other's phrases antiphonally. Handel's most popular hornpipe comes next and its lighter trio section is scored without brass. The minuet is again in the formal French style, and it is followed by an untitled dance movement set in dainty, long-short-long dotted rhythms. Handel indicated that the lively closing bourrée should be played three times, as was done in the bourrée of the F major Suite, with varied instrumentation each time.

The Flute Suite in G major is a celebration of French dance forms at their most delicate. It opens with a lovely Minuet highlighted by a downward-leaping figure in the flute melody. The second movement, a light, cantering rigaudon, is set for strings alone, though its minor-mode trio adds oboes or flutes in some manuscript sources. The third movement, a G minor minuet, is set off by a charming trio section featuring a pair of wide-leaping descant recorders. Wide leaps are again the order of the day in the closing pair of country dances: a rustic gigue contrasting the sound of recorders in the opening section with bassoons in the trio.

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Biographies

Bernard Labadie, conductor

Bernard Labadie has established himself as one of the leading conductors of the Baroque and Classical repertoire, a reputation that is closely tied with Les Violons du Roy and La Chapelle de Québec, which he founded and continues to lead as music director. With the two ensembles, he regularly tours Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

Passionate about opera, Labadie has been artistic director of the Quebec Opera and the Montreal Opera. As a guest, he conducted Handel's *Orlando* with Glimmerglass Opera, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at the Mostly Mozart Festival and Mozart's *Lucio Silla* with the Santa Fe Opera, to name a few. September marked his debut with the Metropolitan Opera in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.

Since his triumphant debut with the Minnesota Orchestra in 1999, Labadie has become a sought-after guest conductor with major North American orchestras, including those of Houston, New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, many of them on a regular basis.

Increasingly active outside North America, Labadie debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Academy of Ancient Music, among others.

His extensive discography includes many critically acclaimed recordings on the Dorian, ATMA and Virgin Classics labels, including Handel's *Apollo e Dafne* and his collaboration with Les Violons du Roy and La Chapelle de Québec of Mozart's Requiem, both winning Canada's JUNO Award. A complete recording of C.P.E. Bach's Cello Concertos with Truls Mørk and Les Violons du Roy is soon slated for release, as well as a recording with Ian Bostridge and The English Concert, both for Virgin Classics. For his achievements, the Canadian government honored him with the appointment as "Officer of the Order of Canada" in 2005, and Quebec made him a "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Québec" in 2006.

Robert Atherholt, oboe

Robert Atherholt has been principal oboist of the Houston Symphony for 25 years. His solo appearances and festival residencies have earned him the acclaim of audiences and critics worldwide.

Atherholt received bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School. Only two years after graduation, he achieved his first position as principal oboist with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. He soon moved on to the Opera Orchestra of New York, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He has served as principal of the Santa Fe Opera; as guest principal with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; and as acting principal oboist on the Boston Symphony's European tour 2000.

While holding his present position with the Houston Symphony, he has established himself as a leader in the orchestra's distinguished woodwind section and as a soloist, performing numerous concerti, including the Mozart Oboe Concerto and the world premier of Schumann/Picker's Romances and Interludes. Both were recorded with the orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach. In the summer season, he is principal oboist of the Sun Valley Summer Symphony and the Grand Teton Music Festival.

Atherholt has performed with Spain's Symphony Orchestra of the Principality of Asturias in Oviedo and in Japan's Pacific Music Festival. With the Houston Symphony Chamber Players, he has toured Japan and Europe and recorded Schoenberg's

Woodwind Quintet, Opus 26. As a chamber musician, he appears regularly with Da Camera of Houston and has performed at Marlboro, the Pacific Music Festival, Ravinia, Caramoor, Orcas Island and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

On the faculty of Rice University's Shepherd School of Music as professor of Oboe, he also teaches at Round Top and the Texas Music Festival. He conducts guest clinics across the country, including the National Orchestral Institute and the New World Symphony. His students hold positions in orchestras and universities throughout North and South America, Switzerland and Israel.

Rian Craypo, bassoon

Principal bassoonist Rian Craypo is currently in her third season with the Houston Symphony. Born in Virginia, but raised in Texas, Craypo grew up in a small community east of Austin. After studying at the University of Texas at Austin with Kristin Wolfe Jensen and the University for Music in Würzburg, Germany with Albrecht Holder, she received her master's degree in bassoon at Rice University, studying with the former principal bassoonist of the Houston Symphony, Benjamin Kamins.

Craypo's versatility as a performer has led to appearances in a variety of roles. She was awarded a Federation of German-American Clubs Scholarship in 2001, which led to study and performances in Germany and Norway, and was a finalist in the Gillet-Fox International Competition for Bassoon in both 2004 and 2006. She and her composer/firefighter husband, Sean, have one daughter, Amelia Jane.

Eric Halen, violin

Recognized by the *Houston Chronicle* as a Houston favorite, Houston Symphony Acting Concertmaster Eric Halen's violin playing has been described by critics as "sterling," and "tenderly expressive and dramatic."

Halen joined the Houston Symphony as assistant concertmaster in 1987, became associate concertmaster in 1997 and served as acting concertmaster for the 2005-2006 season.

He grew up in a family of violinists. His parents were both professionals, and his brother, David, is concertmaster of the Saint Louis Symphony. After earning his bachelor's degree at Central Missouri State University, where he studied with his father, Walter Halen, he received his master's degree at age 20 from the University of Illinois, while studying with Sergiu Luca. At age 23, he became artist-teacher of Violin at Texas Christian University.

As a chamber musician, Halen has collaborated with pre-eminent artists; has made frequent guest appearances with Da Camera of Houston and Music in Context; and has performed at summer music festivals, including the Aspen Music Festival, the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and Oregon's Cascade Head Music Festival.

With the Houston Symphony Chamber Players, he has toured the U.S., Japan and Europe and made recordings for Koch International, including Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time" and Alban Berg's Adagio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano from the Chamber Concerto. Halen has performed as soloist many times with the Houston Symphony on subscription concerts, including a performance of Prokofiev's Concerto in G minor with Christoph Eschenbach conducting, and, at Carnegie Hall, the Mozart Duet Aria "Non Temer Amato Bene" with soprano Barbara Bonney and Hans Graf conducting. In 2006, he was invited by the Nashville Symphony and Leonard Slatkin to serve as guest concertmaster to open its hall, the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. The concert was broadcast nationally on PBS as a special titled *One Symphony Place*.

Eric Halen plays a violin made in 1616 by Antonio and Hieronymus Amati.

Brinton Averil Smith, cello

Houston Symphony principal cellist Brinton Averil Smith's performances have won rave reviews throughout the world.

His debut recording of Miklós Rózsa's Cello Concerto with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for Koch Classics received international critical acclaim. His recording of Fauré's Piano Trio and *Après un Rêve* with Gil Shaham for Vanguard Classics was selected as one of BBC Music magazine's best albums of the year.

Smith has appeared regularly as a soloist with the Houston Symphony since joining the orchestra in 2005. He has been a member of the New York Philharmonic and the principal cellist of the San Diego Symphony and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. He is a faculty member of Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and gives masterclasses throughout the United States. He co-founded and serves as artistic director of Restoration Chamber Music, a festival that pairs historic Galveston buildings with classical concerts to benefit the island's preservation efforts.

An active chamber musician, Smith collaborates with leading musicians and performs in some of the nation's top venues and festivals. He was a prize winner in the Leonard Rose International Cello Competition and in several Juilliard and Aspen Music Festival concerto competitions. He received Juilliard's Melini Award for excellence in performance. His performances have been broadcast on CBS' *Sunday Morning* and on NPR's *Performance Today*.

The son of a mathematician and a pianist, Smith began his musical studies at age 5. At age 10, he was admitted to Arizona State University and by age 17, completed a B.A. in mathematics. At the University of Southern California, he worked as a mathematics teaching assistant and completed an M.A. in mathematics at age 19. He received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The Juilliard School. He and his wife, pianist Evelyn Chen, have one daughter, Calista.