

# Something OLD

## Program Notes & Translations

### **Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**

Russian composer, pianist, and conductor Sergei Rachmaninoff was considered to be one of the greatest pianists of his time. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was an important mentor to Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff's compositional output features the piano prominently. His skills as a pianist made it possible for him to completely explore the expressive possibilities of the instrument. Once living in the United States, Rachmaninoff's compositions were put on a hiatus due to his extensive performance career. Rachmaninoff died of advanced melanoma in 1943.

Rachmaninoff wrote two major unaccompanied choral works, *The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* and *the Vespers (All-Night Vigil)*. The latter consists of settings of texts taken from the Russian Orthodox All-night vigil ceremony. Ten of the fifteen sections were based on chants because of requirements by the Russian Orthodox Church. *Bogoroditse Djevo* (Hail Mary or Ave Maria) was one of the five original sections that was heavily influenced by chant that Rachmaninoff called "conscious counterfeits".

Rejoice, O Virgin mother of God, Mary full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee: blessed are thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,  
for thou hast born the savior of our souls.

### **Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Felix Mendelssohn was a composer, pianist, organist, and conductor of the early Romantic period. Mendelssohn was considered to be a musical prodigy. His compositions include symphonies, concertos, oratorios, choral works, piano, and chamber music. Interest in J.S. Bach's music was revived because of Mendelssohn, who was known to disapprove of the works of his contemporaries. He died at the young age of 38 from several strokes.

Mendelssohn's most popular oratorio, *Elijah*, was written for soloist, chorus, and orchestra. More smaller-scale sacred works were written by Mendelssohn for unaccompanied choir; choir with organ; and soloist(s), choir, and organ. The most well-known is his *'Hear My Prayer'*, with its second half containing *'O for the Wings of a Dove'* - usually performed separately. This beautiful choral work is written for full choir, organ, and a treble or soprano soloist. The soloist has a series of challenging and extended solo passages. This work is considered to be a favorite for boys choirs in churches and cathedrals.

## George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Baroque composer, G.F. Handel was born in Halle of German-British descent. Handel is extremely famous for his operas, oratorios, and concertos. Composers of the Italian Baroque and the middle-German polyphonic Choral Tradition greatly influenced Handel's techniques. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are among the many composers that have a vast knowledge of Handel's music. Handel died at the age of 74 after a series of unfortunate events. His last concert attendance was his own performance of *The Messiah*.

*Tolomeo* is an opera in three acts with libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym. It's adapted from Carlo Sigismondo Capece's *Tolomeo et Alessandro*. The opera takes place at the time of Ptolomey IX (Tolomeo). It was he who was deposed by his mother and joint ruler of Egypt Cleopatra III in favor of his younger brother Ptolemy X (Alessandro). The theme of this opera revolves around revenge, lust, lost love, devotion, and reconciliation.

### Stille Amare:

Inhumane brother, barbaric mother,  
unjust Araspe, ruthless Elisa,

Gods, or furies of Heaven,  
enemy of the sky, implacable fate,  
tyranny of fate, everybody, everybody, I invite you  
to enjoy the pleasure of my death.

But you, consort my love, do not weep,  
while my spirit, when he exits from the sen, he sends a sigh.

But you, beloved wife, no do not weep,  
while the happy breath;  
enough to meet my soul,  
when it comes out from the breast, send a sigh of relief.

Ready to love, to feel you in my breast, death calls;  
to already feel you to dampen the torment ;  
I feel your return to me to make happy.

## Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602 - c. 1678)

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani was a sister at the musically famous convent of Santa Radegonda, located in the seventeenth century across the street from Milan Cathedral. Santa Radegonda was famous for its sisters' music-making on such feast-days, as visitors from all over Europe crowded into the half on its church open to the public (the *chiesa esteriore*), where they could hear the voices of nuns while the monastic singers remained invisible in their half of the church (*chiesa interiore*), separated by a three-quarters-high wall. For the celebration of Mass, which unlike the services of the Divine Office, requires the participation of a priest, the celebrant and any attending clergy would likewise have remained in the exterior church.

Like her sister, aunt and nieces, Cozzolani took her vows at the house in 1620, while in her late teens. She had been born into a well-off family in Milan, and might have received her early musical training from members of the well-known Rognoni family, instrumental and vocal teachers in the city. She entered a foundation, however, whose nun musicians had already been praised for a generation, and whose population (around 100 sisters) provided a large pool of young women who could be trained as singers and instrumentalists.

Her four musical publications appeared between 1649 and 1650; later, she served as prioress and abbess at Santa Radegonda. She helped guide the house through more difficult times in the 1660's, when it came under attack by the strict Archbishop Alfonso Litta, who was concerned to limit the nuns' practice of music and other "irregular" contact with the outside world. She disappears from the convent's membership lists between 1676 and 1678, and thus we may presume she died in her mid-seventies.

Of Cozzolani's four publications, only two survive complete. *O dulcis Jesu* is drawn from the first of these two extant collections entitled *Concerti sacri* and published in Venice in 1642 with a dedication to Prince Matthias de'Medici (a cadet member of the ruling family of Florence.) -Notes by Robert Kendrick

O sweet Jesus, You are the source of devotion,  
You are the source of goodness, and the source of love,  
and in You is the source of life, O sweet Jesus.

So, let my soul drink only from You, let it seek refuge only  
in You, let it cry to You day and night; for in You alone is  
true rest, true sweetness, and true peace and life.

Most beloved Jesus, grant me your sweetest light; lovingly  
infuse, most pleasant Lord, infuse the ray of Your light  
into my soul, so that, thus illuminated and radiant, it may  
be worthy to see You, to love You, to enjoy You in love, to  
possess You in enjoyment with your saints forever.

O sweet Jesus.

*Flavio* is an opera in three acts with libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym ifrom Matteo Noris' *Il Flavio Cuniberto*. Flavio was considered to be Handel's fourth full-length opera for the Royal Academy of Music. Set in Lombardy, Handel originally had the idea to entitle the opera after the operatic character of Emilia. King Flavio rules both Lombardy and England with two counselors, Ugone and Lotario. Ugone's son, Guido, is set to marry Lothario's daughter, Emilia. Ugone also has a daughter, Teodata. He wants her to seek a position as a lady-in-waiting at the court in order "to avoid the bitter solitude of her maiden years". He does not know that she already has a secret lover, Vitige, the King's adjutant.

Rompo i Lacci:

Still lacking my beloved beauty?  
But Phoebus state covers the sky,  
from my rage and revenge scorned the honor, my father.

Break the bonds, and defeat the darts  
Throw love to my breast.  
But then without my idol.  
How, O God! Can I live?  
Break the bonds, and defeat the darts

But then without my idol;  
Oh God!

## **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

J.S. Bach was a German born composer considered to be the father of the Baroque era. His area of expertise was as a composer, organist, harpsichordist, violist, and violinist. Bach's compositions included, but were not limited to, sacred and secular works for choir, orchestra, and solo instruments. Bach introduced a more robust contrapuntal technique, a more controlled sense of harmonic and motivic organization. His dedication to composition allowed him to bring a new sense of rhythms, forms and textures particularly from Italy and France. Bach died in 1750 after a period of poor health.

### **Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not** *from Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*

This mournful yet triumphant cantata begins by a Sinfonia very similar to Bach's other cantata Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, BWV 12, possibly the slow movement of a concerto for oboe and violin. A motet style is used in the choral movements. The words from the Bible are used in a prominent way throughout the choral movements.

The cantata is filled with themes of deep suffering, pain, and mourning. This theme dominated the first half of the work. A sighing motif, the picture of a storm of tears, and the flood image conjured by the upwelling music characterizes the dark and oppressive feeling in the first part. The mood is changed in the second part of the cantata giving the listener a more peaceful ending. This happens by the trust the sinners have in the grace of God. The transformation morphs into joy, with a strong hymn of praise forming in the final movement.

Sighing, crying, sorrow, need,  
Anxious yearning, fear and death  
Gnaw at this my anguished heart,  
I am filled with grieving, hurt.

## **Flößt, mein Heiland** from *Weihnachts-Oratorium (Part IV)*

The Christmas-Oratorio is portioned into six parts. This work is often presented as a whole or split into two equal parts. Each part represents one of the major feast days of the Christmas season. The first part, Christmas Day, reveals the Birth of Jesus, the second, for December 26, presents the annunciation to the shepherds, the third, for December 27, tells of the adoration of the shepherds, the fourth, for New Year's Day, informs us of the circumcision and naming of baby Jesus, the fifth, for the first Sunday after New Year, takes us through the journey of the Magi, and finally the sixth part, for Epiphany, is dedicated to the adoration of the Magi. Total running time for the entire oratorio is close to three hours.

A happy, hopeful, and uplifting chorale begins part four of the oratorio with a moderate tempo. The only soprano aria in this section gives us patience, peace, comfort, doubt, order, and emotional support. The soprano voice unfolds gracefully and the oboe obbligato supports the vocal phrases with its own beautiful lines. The echoes heard throughout the aria gives strength to the singer's doubts about the divinity of the infant or the extent of the infant's powers.

O my Savior, does your name  
instill even the very tiniest seed  
of that powerful terror?  
No, You Yourself say no. (No!)

Shall I shun death now?  
No, Your sweet word is there!  
Or shall I rejoice?  
Yes, o Savior, You Yourself say yes. (Yes!)

## **Mein gläubiges Herze** from *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt*

Completed in 1725, *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt* (God so Loved the World), was composed for Whit-Monday (the day after Pentecost). Bach wrote the cantata during his tenure as the cantor for the School of Saint Thomas in Leipzig. The cantata is part of the second cycle of cantatas that Bach wrote while at latter school. This short cantata includes a chorus, aria, recitative, aria, and chorus. The texts come from an assortment of sources, including poet Christiane Mariane von Ziegler. Ziegler's texts are used in nine of Bach's cantatas; prominently in this one.

This well-known soprano aria occurs as a second movement in the cantata. The aria is light, cheerful, and uplifting. The voice and cello are both paired well in the aria; the cello answers the voice throughout. The aria concludes, sans voice, with a joint partnership between the oboe, violin, and violincello featured earlier in the cantata.

My faithful heart,  
rejoice, sing, be merry,  
your Jesus is here!  
Away with sorrow, away with lamentation  
I shall just say to you:  
my Jesus is close.

## **Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)**

### **Grosses “Grand” Quintet B-dur Op. 34**

Carl Maria von Weber's *Grosses Quintet* for clarinet and strings typifies the strong German romanticism and operatic writing for which Weber is most famous. Written between 1811-1815 for Heinrich Baermann, noted clarinet virtuoso, close friend of Carl Maria von Weber, and for whom Weber's clarinet concerti, concertino, and grand duo concertant were written, the *Grosses “Grand” Quintet* is a four movement work- Allegro, Fantasia: ma non troppo, Menuetto: Capriccio Presto, and Rondo: Allegro giojoso- that expresses Weber's deepest yearning for operatic reform and his ardent desire to create a German operatic tradition. In the Quintet, Weber showcases the dexterity and brilliance of the clarinet in a sparkling display of clarinet pyrotechnics and virtuosic exhibitionism. In context, the clarinet line weaves in and out of the intricately locked string writing creating a deeply stitched tapestry of timbral colors and shading.

With a solemn and ruminating entrance in the strings, the first movement launches into a jaunty and whimsical sonata allegro form. The Fantasia harkens back to the earlier written second movement from his Clarinet Concert No. 2 and slow movement of Weber's Grand Duo Concertante for clarinet and piano through its opera seria style aria. The Menuetto is a light, whimsical jest that seems to forget to bring the movement to a close. The Rondo is a fast paced gallop with a perky returning theme that ends in a dazzling flourish of notes and punchy articulation.