

PROGRAM NOTES

***Serenade for Strings in E Minor, Op. 20* Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

England's most prominent Romantic composer Edward Elgar is most recognized for his large-scale orchestral works including *The Enigma Variations*, *The Cello Concerto*, and *the Pomp and Circumstance Marches*. In addition to these larger works, his *Serenade for Strings* remains one of his most frequently performed works and is his earliest composition in the standard repertoire.

Elgar began composing the *Serenade* in March of 1892. This piece is generally believed to be a reworking of an earlier composition entitled *Sketches*, which has not survived. He submitted the score to London publishing company Novello, which rejected the work stating:

We have given your 'Serenade' our attention and think it is very good. We find however that this class of music is practically unsaleable, & we therefore regret to say that we do not see our way to make you and offer for it.

Later published by the German publisher Breitkopf and Härtel, the *Serenade* remained one of Elgar's favorite compositions throughout his life and was among the last works he recorded shortly before his death.

The *Serenade* is a three-movement work that displays both youthful charm and a foreshadowing of Elgar's mature compositional style. The first movement's lilting first theme – marked "piacevole" (Italian for pleasing or agreeable) – is introduced with a gentle insistent motive in the violas. The lyrical second movement is heartfelt and demonstrates Elgar's most mature writing. The final movement is deceptively simple with gentle reminders of the first movement.



Edward Elgar (1857-1934) was born into a musical family with a father who was a church organist. Although he received some training from his father on piano, organ, and violin, Elgar was mostly self-taught. He became a freelance musician at sixteen, and conducted, taught, performed, and composed. By the time of his marriage to Caroline Alice Roberts in 1889, he had achieved limited recognition. After a brief period in London, he and his wife returned to Worcester. Unable to advance his career, Elgar suffered from self-doubt and depression. His first successful work, the *Imperial March*, Op. 32, brought him both recognition and a vital friendship with publisher August Jaeger.

In 1899, Elgar composed one of his best-known works, the *Enigma Variations*, Op. 36, which catapulted him to fame. The work is a tribute to his wife Alice and to the many friends who stood behind the composer in the shaky early days of his career. Conductor Hans Richter proclaimed it a masterpiece, and his performances of the work in Britain and Germany established the composer's lasting success.

Elgar's most fruitful period occurred in the first decade of the 20th century, during which he wrote some of his most noble and expressive music, including the *Symphony No. 1 in A flat major*, Op. 55 and the *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op. 61. His most recognized works from this period, however, are his *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* (1901-1907). The first of these marches, subtitled "Land of Hope and Glory," became an unofficial second national anthem for the British Empire.

The composer suffered a major setback when his friend and confidant Jaeger (the "Nimrod" of the *Enigma Variations*) died in 1909. Elgar's productivity dropped, and the horrors of World War I deepened his despondence. His music became more intimate, even anguished. Yet, some of his best chamber music is from this period, as well as the *Cello Concerto in E minor*, Op. 85 (1919).

After Alice's death in 1920, Elgar composed very little but began a recording project conducting his orchestral compositions. These definitive interpretations of his orchestral music guide the performance of his music to this day. Elgar died in Worcester on February 23, 1934, leaving an unfinished third symphony.

The first English composer to achieve international stature since Henry Purcell (1659–95), Elgar is admired both for his own music and for his role in heralding the 20th-century English musical renaissance.

The Fourth Autumn (Arranged by Hannah Yim)

Ellis Marsalis (1934-2020)

“The Fourth Autumn” by Ellis Marsalis debuted on his recording *Piano in E/Solo Piano*, which was released in 1991 by Rounder Records.

LPO Violinist and Arranger of this piece, Hannah Yim, shared her impressions of “The Fourth Autumn:”

This piece is one that I associate the most with Ellis in-person. Though I was never close to him personally, I have a couple of musician colleagues who became very close to him while living and working here, and I had the privilege of attending more than a few private gatherings with him at which he was asked to play—and sometimes we would hear the Fourth Autumn. I have fond memories of hearing this surrounded by mutual friends and strangers alike, with or without instrumental obbligato weaving between the richly colored and shifting harmonies. You got a sense of deep nostalgia, a slowing of time—and that Ellis was sharing something deeply personal with this piece in that intimate space.

This performance is given in honor of Ellis Marsalis and his many contributions to the city and culture of New Orleans.



Jazz pianist and music educator **Ellis Louis Marsalis, Jr.**, was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 14, 1934. From the age of eleven, he studied the clarinet at Xavier University's Junior School of Music, a preparatory course for the university. He would later ask his mother to get him a tenor saxophone so he could begin playing Rhythm & Blues, the popular music of the day. He added piano to his studies while still in high school.

In 1951, Marsalis entered Dillard University, where he earned his B.A. degree in Music Education. For the next year he worked as an assistant manager in his father's motel business while continuing to freelance with the American Jazz Quintet.

After two years in the U.S. Marine Corps, he returned to New Orleans and married Delores Ferdinand. Eventually, the two would have six sons: Brandford, Wynton, Ellis III, Delfeayo, Miboya and Jason.

In 1964, Marsalis moved his wife and family to the small town of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana where he served as the band and choral director of Carver High School. In 1966, Marsalis returned to New Orleans and from 1967-1970 had the piano chair in Al Hirt's Dixieland group.

In 1974, Marsalis joined the staff at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts High School (NOCCA), where he worked for the next twelve years. There, he would influence the careers of countless musicians, including trumpeter Terence Blanchard, pianist Harry Connick Jr., saxophonist Donlad Harrison, and his four musician sons, Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo and Jason. In 1986, Marsalis earned his M.M. degree from Loyola University New Orleans.

From 1986 to 1989, Marsalis taught at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, where he spent two years as coordinator of Jazz Studies. In 1989, he received an Honorary Doctorate degree from his alma mater, Dillard University, and that same year joined the faculty of the University of New Orleans. Marsalis served as Director of Jazz Studies until his retirement in 2001. He would be the recipient of honorary degrees from Tulane University (2007), The Juilliard School, Ball State, and Virginia Commonwealth University in 2010. Marsalis has served as panelist, grant evaluator and board member for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Southern Arts Federation. On December 7, 2008, Marsalis was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. On April 1, 2020 at the age of 85, Ellis Marsalis died as a result of complications from COVID-19.

Concerto No. 1 In A Minor for Violin and String Orchestra, BWV 1041 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Although J.S. Bach was primarily celebrated during his lifetime as a keyboard virtuoso, he was also an accomplished violinist. In fact, Johann Sebastian's first professional appointment was as a violinist at Weimar in 1703. His son Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach would later state:

From his youth up to a fairly old age he played the violin purely and with a penetrating tone and thus kept the orchestra in top form, much better than he could have from the harpsichord. He completely understood the possibilities of all stringed instruments

Bach provided violinists with a plethora of masterpieces including six unaccompanied works, eight sonatas with harpsichord, and two solo and double concerti. The violin also has a prominent role in three of his *Brandenburg* concerti as well as the Triple Concerto for Flute, Violin, and Harpsichord.

While the exact date of the Violin Concerto in A Minor is uncertain, scholars believe that Bach composed it during his time as Kapellmeister in Cöthen between 1717 and 1723. During this time, Bach composed many of his instrumental works including the Cello Suites and Book One of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The first surviving manuscript dates from 1730, soon after he became the music director of the Collegium Musicum (a society of university students, amateur, and a few professional musicians who met to perform music for their own pleasure) in Leipzig. With this group, Bach often had a need for concerto repertoire and would pull his previous works often revising them to highlight individuals in the Collegium. In 1738, Bach would once again refashion the 1730 version of the Violin Concerto in A Minor into his Harpsichord Concerto No. 7 in G Minor, BWV 1058 in 1738.

This concerto has become a cornerstone in the violin repertoire, combining the style and form of Vivaldi's violin concerti with Bach's harmonic language and rich contrapuntal textures. Each movement is crafted in a ritornello form-- a main "theme" or idea is first stated in the orchestra and then alternates with passages featuring the soloist. Every measure of a movement is based on part of the ritornello. Frequently, the soloist is developing one fragment of the ritornello while the orchestra accompanies with another. This type of writing creates a great sense of unity, and remains a model for modern composers.

The Violin Concerto in A Minor has fast and fiery outer movements which surround a more introspective middle movement. In this middle movement, the emotional tension is built on the simple yet profound bass line with its steady pulses and long silences that leave the soloist with only the delicate support of the violins and violas. The finale has a rolling triplet pulse similar to the gigue, a French dance style that Bach used to complete many of his instrumental suites.

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048

In March of 2019, Bach travelled to Berlin to pick up a new harpsichord made for Cöthen. During his trip, he had the opportunity to perform for Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg. As a result of the meeting, the Margrave invited Bach to send some compositions. Two years would pass before Bach would complete and send his “Six concertos with several instruments” to the Margrave with the following letter:

As I had a couple of years ago the pleasure of appearing before your Royal Highness...and as I noticed then that Your Highness took some pleasure in the small talents that Heaven has given me for Music, and as in taking leave of Your Royal Highness, Your Highness deigned to honor me with the command to send Your Highness some pieces of my Composition; I have then in accordance with Your Highness's most gracious orders taken the liberty of rendering my most humble duty to Your Royal Highness with the present Concertos, which I have adapted to several instruments; begging Your Highness most humbly not to judge their imperfection with the rigor of that discriminating and sensitive taste, which everyone knows Him to have for musical works, but rather to take into benign Consternation the profound respect and the most humble obedience which I thus attempt to show Him.

There is no record that the Margrave of Brandenburg acknowledged the receipt of Bach's music or that he ever thanked, sent payment, or made an offer of employment to Bach. Scholars have long suspected that the Margrave's lack of communication was due to the fact that the instrumental resources at his court were less than those available to Bach in Cöthen or Weimar, rendering (to the Margrave's embarrassment) the works unplayable.

The manuscripts remained in the Margrave's library until his death in 1734, and eventually became the property of Berlin's state library and remained unpublished until the nineteenth century's Bach revival. The original manuscripts were nearly destroyed during World War II, when their evacuation train came under attack and the librarian carrying the scores escaped with them hidden in his coat.

Bach modelled the *Brandenburgs* on the Italian concerto grosso form which showcases a small group of soloists (the concertino) versus the orchestral accompaniment (ripieno). The essence of this form is the relationship between the concertino and the ripieno. Bach composed the concerti for a wide variety of instruments, most likely to highlight the talent of the musicians with whom he worked in Cöthen. The Concerto No. 3 in G Major is scored for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and basso continuo. Some Bach scholars have suggested that Bach was referencing the Trinity by setting his third Concerto around the number three. The all string ensemble acts as both concertino and ripieno, exchanging material while emerging and retreating as solo and accompaniment. The first and third movements are based on a ritornello (recurring refrain). The second movement consists of a one measure that contains two unresolved chords, out of which the harpsichordist (Bach himself) might have improvised.



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born into a musical family and began his musical instruction on violin and harpsichord with his father, Johann Ambrosius, who was a court musician for the Duke of Eisenach. He was not yet ten when he was orphaned and taken in by his recently married oldest brother Johann Christoff. In 1700, he acquired a position in the choir at the Michaelis monastery in Lüneberg. Although his voice soon changed, he continued as there an instrumentalist.

He secured his first professional post in Weimar in 1703 as a violinist, and became organist at the Neue Kirche in Arnstadt from 1703-1707. His relationship with his employer was precarious, as the young musician often avoided his responsibilities, preferring to practice the organ.

In June of 1707, Bach became the organist at St. Blasius in Mühlhausen and that fall married his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach. While in Mühlhausen, Bach composed his famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565, and his first cantatas. He next took a post for the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar in 1708 as court organist and orchestra violinist, eventually becoming its leader in 1714. He wrote many organ compositions during this period, including his *Orgelbüchlein*.

Due to politics between the Duke and his officials, Bach left Weimar and secured a post in December 1717 as Kapellmeister at Cöthen. In 1720, Bach's wife suddenly died, leaving him with four surviving children (three others had died in infancy). A short while later, he married his second wife, soprano Anna Magdalena Wilcke, who would bear 13 children (only 5 survived childhood). The six *Brandenburg* Concertos, among many other secular works, date from his Cöthen years.

Bach became Kantor of the Thomas School in Leipzig in May 1723, a post which he held until his death. It was in Leipzig that he composed the bulk of his religious and secular cantatas. Dissatisfied with this post due to inadequate compensation, time-consuming duties, and poor facilities Bach sought additional projects including directorship of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum, an ensemble of professional and amateur musicians who gave weekly concerts. In 1736, he also became music director at the Dresden Court in the service of Frederick Augustus II. Bach began making trips to Berlin in the 1740s, where his son Carl Philip Emmanuel served as a court musician. In May 1747, the composer was warmly received by King Frederick II of Prussia, for whom he wrote the *Musical Offering*, BWV 1079. Suffering from diabetes, he died on July 28, 1750.

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