



**The Diablo Regional Arts Association
presents the**

**2004-2005 Season
Program II**

**Thomas Nugent, oboe
John Chisholm, violin
Cathy Down, violin
Nanci Severance, viola
Barbara Andres, cello
Marc Shapiro, piano
Stevan Cavalier, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
Sunday December 19, 2004 3pm**



Hugo Wolf
(1860 – 1903)

Italian Serenade for String Quartet
(1887)

John Chisholm, violin *Cathy Down, violin*
Nanci Severance, viola *Barabara Andres, cello*

Sir Arthur Bliss
(1891 – 1953)

Oboe Quintet
(1927)

I Assai sostenuto – Allegro assai agitato
II Andante con moto
III Vivace

John Chisholm, violin *Cathy Down, violin*
Nanci Severance, viola *Barabara Andres, cello*
Thomas Nugent, oboe

Intermission

Johannes Brahms
(1833 – 1897)

Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn
Op. 56b for Two Pianofortes (1873)

Marc Shapiro, piano *Stevan Cavalier, piano*



"Creative work makes me happy, but the subsequent pauses for rest are all the more painful, for then one begins to think things over, reflection sets to work to shatter the picture built up by imagination, and the cold common sense resumes its pettifogging rights. In fact happiness is not for me, so lets leave it at that..."

Hugo Wolf (1891)¹

Hugo Wolf (1860 – 1903) **Italian Serenade for String Quartet (1887)**

Hugo Wolf is primarily known as a Lied composer, in the twilight of the romantic song tradition started and dominated by Franz Schubert. He also gained some notoriety as a critic and writer on music in Vienna. He was an active partisan in the aesthetic war between the “Wagnerians” and the “Brahmins”.

Wolf had had the bad fortune to be snubbed by both Wagner and Brahms when as a young man he tried to show them his compositions – though it was Franz Liszt, Wagner’s father-in-law, who recognized his talent and encouraged his pursuit of music. However, it was Brahms who received the venom from his pen. For his part, Brahms was merely amused by Wolf’s ravings. He was, after all, a “nobody”, writing in a small paper; a gnat bothering an elephant. Wolf’s colorful, “over the top” writing did make him many enemies among the powerful and influential, which made it even harder for him to get his music heard.

The Italian Serenade was composed between the 2nd and 4th of March 1887. It was originally planned as a work in three movements. However, Wolf later abandoned this plan in favor of a self-contained, one-movement work. The main theme is said to have been based on an old Italian melody played on an obsolete form of oboe called the “piffero”. The work is also related to his Eichendorff Lieder, specifically the song Der Soldat I (The Soldier) to which it is linked thematically. This work can also be heard in an arrangement for small orchestra made by the composer himself. Wolf worked in great bursts of creative activity, unfortunately followed by equally great periods of depression and barrenness. His mind eventually gave way. The story goes that it was Opera Director Gustav Mahler’s withdrawing a promise to



produce Wolf's opera *Der Corregidor* at the Vienna Opera in 1897 that finally sent him over the edge. Things are rarely that simple. Though from age 37 until his death he spent the rest of his wretched life in a lunatic asylum.

1 Hans Gal - *The Musician's World: Great Composers in Their Letters*. Arco Publishing Co. Inc., NY. 1966

"If I were to define my musical goal, it would be to try for an emotion truly and clearly felt, and caught forever in a formal perfection."

Sir Arthur Bliss¹

Sir Arthur Bliss (1891 - 1975)
Oboe Quintet (1927)

The English composer, Arthur Bliss was born in London, the son of an American businessman and his wife. Bliss was educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he received his music degrees. He briefly attended the Royal College of Music in London in the spring of 1914. When the Great War broke out he obtained a commission and served in France with the 13th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, and later with the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards. He was both wounded in the Somme in 1916, and gassed at Cambrai in 1918. After the war he gained a reputation in London as a composer of some highly original works. Perhaps his best known work from the '20s is his *Color Symphony*. During the Twenties, Bliss spent three years living in Santa Barbara, CA. During which time he married.

He then returned to England with his wife. He was commissioned by the British Council to write a piano concerto for the virtuoso Solomon to be premiered at the New York World's Fair of 1939 and dedicated "to the people of the United States".

He served as the Director of Music with the BBC from 1942-44. Bliss was knighted in 1950, and in 1953 became Master of the Queen's Music.

Bliss composed music in all genres; ballets, opera, orchestral works, concertos, choral works, film music, songs, brass band music, piano music, songs and chamber music. In this last category he produced works using



interesting combinations of instruments including voice.

The Oboe Quintet, along with many other great works of 20th century chamber music, was composed as the result of a commission by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge in 1927. It is said to have been inspired by the playing of oboist Léon Goosens. The work was presented by Mrs. Coolidge at a concert in Venice on Sept. 11, 1927. The performers were Léon Goosens, oboe and the Venetian Quartet. It is a truly lovely work of many moods. The last movement includes an Irish fiddle tune, identified by the composer in the score as *Conolly's Jig*.

¹ David Ewen – The Complete Book of Twentieth Century Music. Prentiss-Hall Inc., NJ 1959

“The art of composing without ideas has decidedly found its most worthy representative in Brahms.”

Hugo Wolf¹

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)
Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn Op. 56b (1873)
for Two Pianofortes

“I sometimes ponder on variation form and it seems to me it ought to be more restrained, purer. Composers in the old days used to keep strictly to the base of the theme, as their real subject. Beethoven varies the melody, harmony and rhythms so beautifully. But it seems to me that a great many moderns (including both of us) are more inclined – I don't know how to put it – to fuss about the theme. We cling nervously to the melody, but we don't handle it freely, we don't really make anything new out of it, we merely overload it. And so the melody becomes quite unrecognizable.”

Brahms to violinist and composer Joseph Joachim (1856)²

Music for two pianos or one piano 4 hands (Ravel composed a work for one piano 5 hands), played a special role in the pre-audio recording era. This medium made the orchestral works of the great composers available to music



lovers who would otherwise have to wait for a performance by their local orchestras – if that happened. After all, in the 19th century much of this music was contemporary music! This medium also played an important part in the ballet and opera, for the purpose of rehearsal. It was in the two piano version that the Diaghilev entourage and Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel first heard Stravinsky's revolutionary *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring).

However, for Brahms the two piano medium had other purposes. Dr. Hans Gal, musicologist and composer writes of Brahms. "With uncanny insight into the most elusive secrets of great music and a resulting consciousness of the almost insoluble problems of creating a truly great work, Brahms' tendency to an almost hypochondriac mistrust in his own music, became more and more accentuated and he was unable to speak of his work without deliberate understatement, even contempt. With a less elementary exuberant, creative gift, such an attitude would have been a grave danger to his productivity. What he incessantly demanded from his expert friends was a critical response, and his greatest happiness was a confirmation that once more, he had succeeded."

Possibly overstated, but our concern is that the two piano medium enabled Brahms to present his works to his valued musical confidantes; among them Clara Schumann, one of the finest pianist of her time, and Joseph Joachim, the great violinist, before releasing them to the world at large. Brahms First Piano Concerto, though originally conceived as a symphony, had an incarnation as a Sonata for Two Pianos, before arriving at its final form. His Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34 also had an incarnation as a Sonata for Two Pianos. All of his symphonies were prepared in versions for two pianos for private previews, or to be sent to musician friends for critique.

The Variations on a Theme of Haydn is a work that is most familiar in its orchestral version. It was his first large work for symphony orchestra, predating his symphonies. The theme is the so-called "St. Anthony Chorale" (Chorale Sancti Antoni), a pilgrim's hymn for the feast day of Saint Anthony. It was found by Brahms in the second movement of a "Feldpartie" or Divertimento for Wind Instruments in B Flat, attributed to Franz Joseph Haydn.

The work consists of the theme with eight variations plus a finale in the form of a chaconne. Here we have variations within variations as the chaconne itself is a form of variation, where a bass figure is repeated, in this case 17



times, while the voices above it vary with each repetition of the figure, building to a great climax. Incidentally, in his book *Dvorak to Ellington: A Conductor Explores America's Music and Its African American Roots*, distinguished conductor and teacher Maurice Peress relates that one of his teachers, famed musicologist Kurt Sachs discovered that “the stately court dances the sarabande and the chaconne could be traced back to Africa via sixteenth century dances of New Spain and the Caribbean. According to Sachs, the ‘lewd, lascivious’ Creole/African zarabanda, a dance so beguiling it was outlawed by the church, metamorphosed over time into the slow, stately sarabande. But ‘even more than the sarabanda’, the African-derived chacona, also known as the chacona mulata, was sensuous and wild, the ‘most passionate and unbridled of all dances.’”³

Today it’s called The Freak. We respectfully ask that well-meaning members of the audience not demonstrate this dance to their less informed friends and neighbors here in the church.

Thank you.

Anyway, the “Haydn Variations”, as they have come to be called were played frequently by Brahms himself with Clara Schumann. It is not known for certain which version actually came first, the orchestral or the version for two pianos.

1 Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians 5th Edition Eric Blom Ed. St. Martin’s Press, N.Y., 1954

2 Hans Gal - The Musician’s World: Great Composers in Their Letters. Arco Publishing Co. Inc., NY 1966

3 Maurice Peress – Dvorák to Ellington: A Conductor Explores America’s Music and Its African American Roots. Oxford University Press, NY. 2004

Program Notes by Joseph Way

The Musicians

Thomas Nugent, oboe, graduated from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where he studied with Marc Lifschey. Mr. Nugent is currently principal oboe with the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra, a founding member of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and is a member of the Pacific Arts Woodwind Quintet. He has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and many other



Bay Area ensembles. Mr. Nugent is on the faculty of The University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music and at Mills College in Oakland.

John Chisholm, violin, has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony for the last two years. After receiving a BA and Performance Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, he played with the Rochester Philharmonic as a first violinist. He has also served as Associate Concertmaster of the Louisville Symphony.

Cathy Down, violin, attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, studying with Zaven Melikian. Her desire for travel led her to move to Europe where she played as Second Concertmaster with the Baden-Baden Orchestra in Germany for one year and as Associate Concertmaster of the National Orchestra of Belgium for 3 years. In September 1993 Cathy moved back to the Bay Area and played with the New Century Chamber Orchestra and Sacramento Symphony until joining the San Francisco Symphony as an acting member in 1994. She became a member of that orchestra in September of 2001.

Nanci Severance, viola, has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1982. Before coming to San Francisco, Nanci studied with Denes Koromzay at Oberlin College and Bernard Zaslav at Northern Illinois University. Ms. Severance is very active in the Bay Area chamber music scene. She has performed with the Stanford String Quartet, The San Francisco Contemporary Players, Chamber Music Sundaes and the San Francisco Symphony chamber music series as well as Chamber Music West and MarinFest.

Barbara Andres, cello, is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Lynn Harrell and Stephen Geber. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1977. She was cello performance coach for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra for four years and since 1999 has performed the same role as mentor and coach for young performers at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is active as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the Bay Area, and has appeared as Principal Cellist of the Sierra Chamber Society for the last twelve seasons.



Marc Shapiro, piano, is accompanist of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. He has been a featured soloist in *Les Noces*, *Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals*, and *James P. Johnson's Yamekraw* with the San Francisco Symphony, as well as annual concerts with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Mr. Shapiro plays principal keyboard with the California Symphony and performs with other ensembles such as *Composer's Inc.*, *San Francisco Choral Artists*, *San Francisco Chamber Orchestra*, and on *Chamber Music Sundae*, *San Francisco Symphony Chamber Music Series* and *The Mohonk Festival of the Arts* in New York.

Stevan Cavalier, piano, studied with Maryan Filar, himself a pupil of Walter Giesecking, at the Settlement School in Philadelphia, as well as with harpsichordist Lori Wollfisch and pianist Robert Miller. He has attended the Interlochen Summer Music Festival, and appeared in chamber ensembles in many Bay Area venues, including Davies Symphony Hall. Dr. Cavalier is Director of the Sierra Chamber Society.

The Mazmanian Family. Violinist-dad Greg is a Juilliard grad who has performed as soloist in the United States, Canada, and Asia. He has also performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet orchestras and as backup artist for Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, and Tony Bennett among many others. Son, Eddy and daughter, Rose are both highly accomplished violinists in their own right, while their sister, Ida, is an award-winning pianist who has taught keyboard since she was 12 years old.

Their numerous appearances in California include many live performances and they have been featured on several television news broadcasts and have been profiled in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Contra Costa Times* and other publications. Their CD recording entitled "It's the Mazmanians!" features folk-inspired classics from around the world, including song and dance tunes from their own Armenian heritage.

In addition to his duties as dad and leader of the group, Greg is also a dedicated teacher. As the rare recipient of the *Eminence Credential* from the State of California, he directs the music program at Orinda Intermediate School in the family's hometown near San Francisco, conducts the regional *Contra Costa Youth Orchestra*, and maintains a very active private teaching studio. Greg is also the hard working Executive Director of the Sierra Chamber Society



**Acknowledgment of a Special Gift to the Sierra Chamber Society
from John and Vera S. Hopkins**

Vera Somers Hopkins died October 10, 2004 after a long, active life of ninety four years. She and her deceased husband, John Selden Hopkins, were instrumental in the formation of Pacifica Foundation and KPFA Radio. During their 63 years of marriage, Vera and John enjoyed attending concerts, and supported many professional musical groups in California, including the Sierra Chamber Society. A violinist herself, at age 92, Vera attended her last performance of the Sierra Chamber Society in 2002. She sat in a wheel chair in the front row, totally entranced by the music.

Vera and John were kind enough to include the Sierra Chamber Society in a generous bequest. Her engaged and appreciative presence in our audience will be missed.

**Sierra Chamber Society 2004-2005 Season
All concerts at 3PM**

February 6, 2005

Haydn - String Quartet Op. 33, No. 5
Khatchaturian - Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano
Brahms - Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115

April 10, 2005 3pm

Paul Juon - Trio-Miniaturen
Schubert and Mahler - Songs
Beethoven - String Quartet in C, Op.59 No.3

May 15, 2005 3pm

Arnold Bax - String Quartet No. 1
Ernst Bloch - Concertino for Flute, Viola and Piano
Dvorak - Piano Quartet in E flat, Op.87

The Sierra Chamber Society:
Stevan Cavalier, General Director
Greg Mazmanian, Executive Director
Joseph Way, Artistic Director
Richard A. Gylgayton, Program Editor

Sierra Chamber Society
PO Box 4485
Walnut Creek CA 94596
925-932-1731
<http://www.fuguemasters.com/scs.html>



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We are deeply indebted to our donors whose additional
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The Sierra Chamber Society is also proud to acknowledge the assistance of the **Diablo Regional Arts Association** who has provided invaluable support for sixteen seasons.



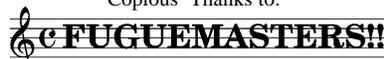
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For the Twist, Frug, Mashed Potato, Boogaloo, Funky Chicken, Charleston and Hokie Pokie Lessons.

www.fuguemasters.com/scs.html