

## PROGRAM NOTES

Adults playing recorders? Believe it! When you think of recorders, you may think of kids playing small soprano recorders, but recorders come in a wide range of sizes and shapes and enable performers to play a broad spectrum of music spanning the centuries. Professional and amateur musicians alike perform solo and ensemble music, some written specifically for recorders and some adapted from vocal music or instrumental music. We open our program with an anonymous *Trotto*, a medieval dance form in duple meter. There are few extant examples of the trotto, but it is considered to be similar to the saltarello – an Italian “jumping dance” of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The Abbey of Santa Maria la Real de Huelgas in northern Spain, founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, is the source of the Codex Las Huelgas, comprising 170 parchment folios of monophonic and polyphonic works from the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is highly organized according to genre, liturgical function and number of voices, and encompasses a wide range of forms and styles. Most of the repertory, settings of Latin texts, was composed for the major feasts of the Virgin Mary. The two works that RONY performs today are motets in three parts. In this form of motet, the lowest line, the slow-moving “tenor”, is often based on portions of particular chants, with two upper lines, each with a different text and melody, written both to fit over the tenor line and with each other. The two three-voice motets *Salve porta* and *Castrum Pudicicie* are examples of this style. A much simpler modern example is the counterpoint song “You’re Just in Love” by Irving Berlin – two melodies performed simultaneously.

*C’est la fins* by Guillaume d’Amiens dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is an example of a secular work composed to a poetic text in “virilal” form, one of the three poetic forms of the time commonly set to music in France. In keeping with current understanding of historical practice, we augment the single line of music with drones at appropriate pitches, and play as well as sing. The composer was a noted trouvère – that is, an aristocratic poet-musician.

Composer and arranger **Claude Gervaise**, active in Paris from 1540 to 1560, is primarily known for his instrumental music. He composed the music of one volume of *Danceries* and edited several others. These books contain numerous ensemble dances, including various types of branle or bransle such as “gay”, “simple.” The *Bransles* we play today include examples of the simple and of the Burgundian forms. The bransle is a group dance with several couples in a circle or line. Visual illustrations of the dance go back to medieval times. Bransle-like dances (line and circle dances) are popular in many cultures.

English composer **William Byrd** is generally considered to be the greatest composer of the Elizabethan age. In spite of the difficult religious conditions under which he lived, that is, the period of conflicts between the newly founded Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic establishment, he remained a devout Catholic. Despite his religious convictions, he remained in favor with the Elizabethan court. His prodigious output of secular music includes numerous fantasias, popular dance forms such as pavans and galliards, and consort music for viols and voices. Byrd’s *Christ Rising Again* is one of his religious works, a verse anthem written for six voices. Byrd and Victoria (see below) used the same text and the same musical idea of matching the textual references to rising to patterns of ascending notes.

Composer **Tomas Luis de Victoria** is considered the greatest Spanish composer of the Renaissance. His musical training as a choirboy at Avila cathedral was followed by studies in Rome. In addition to occupying a variety of musical positions as organist and cantor, he wrote music for church services and served as a priest. He only composed religious music, including masses, motets and other forms of sacred works. His five part motet *O Magnum Mysterium* is perhaps his most frequently performed work in contemporary times. Today we play his *Ascendens Christus in altum* (Christ Rose Up).

**Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck** was a Dutch composer, organist and teacher. Not only a famous organist, he was one of the most influential and sought-after teachers of his time and one of the leading composers of vocal as well as of keyboard music. He, his father and his son held the important position of organist of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, for nearly 100 years. Sweelinck never traveled far from Amsterdam but his reputation as a teacher attracted pupils from Germany, including Scheidt, Scheidemann and many others. One of Sweelinck’s important vocal collections, the *Cantiones sacrae* (1619), includes 37 motets on texts from the Catholic liturgy. The one we perform today is the five part *Gaude et laetare* (Rejoice and be glad).

**Johann Sebastian Bach** is one of the most revered and widely recognized composers of the late baroque period. Much of his music was written in an older, polyphonic style, but his gift for melody, harmonization and sense of structure looked forward towards the classical era. The emotional and dramatic power of his religious music reaches generations down to the present. *Der Hilft unser Schwachheit auf* (The spirit also helpeth our infirmities) BWV 226 is one of six motets written for double choir that were composed for important civic funerals.

The opening andante in 3/8 time is clearly double choir (8 parts) in form, but as the work progresses into an allegro in 4/4 time, the two choirs begin to merge and, for the fugue (marked *alla breve*) and chorale sections, the writing is in four parts. The final chorale section is taken from a melody by Martin Luther. The instrumental parts double the vocal lines and we perform it here in a setting for recorders.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** demonstrated a prodigious talent at a very early age. He began composing at age 5 and more than 600 of his works are known and cataloged. His talents as a keyboard virtuoso were developed while very young and his father, himself a musician, took the young Mozart and his sister “on the road” for a series of tours throughout much of Europe. Thus he became familiar with much of the music of his day, absorbing it and improving on it. Mozart wrote a prodigious amount of music in many forms -- opera, symphonies, sonatas, concerti, chamber music, and religious works. We play excerpts from two very late works – the *March of the Priests* from his opera, *The Magic Flute* K. 620, and the fugue *Cum Sanctis Tuis* from the Requiem Mass in D minor, K. 636. Although Mozart did not live to complete the Requiem and some of the music was probably completed by one of his students, it remains one of his most popular and respected works.

**Steve Marshall** lives in Gloucestershire, UK and began writing music for rock bands when in his teens. He’s had many musical interests, and has turned his hand to writing for whatever group he was playing with at the time - choirs, jazz groups, opera groups, etc. In about 2001 he discovered the pleasures of the recorder, and since then has written a great deal of music for recorder ensembles of all sizes. Today we play *The Night* set to a poem by Hilaire Belloc and scored in eight recorder parts plus a reader.

Conductor, composer, author, music lecturer and pianist **Leonard Bernstein** was the first American-born and educated musician to receive world-wide acclaim as a conductor. He is perhaps best known for his long tenure with the New York Philharmonic, which included the acclaimed *Young People's Concerts* series. Well-known for his musical theater works including *West Side Story*, *Candide*, and *On the Town*, Bernstein also had a formidable piano technique and was a highly respected composer. In 1943 he was appointed assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic and in November of that year made a dramatic debut with the orchestra and gained instant fame, replacing an ailing Bruno Walter on short notice. He was the first classical music conductor to make many television appearances, all between 1954 and 1989. Bernstein championed the works of American composers and inspired the careers of a generation of American musicians. He wrote a set of divertimentos as a commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra and *Waltz*, the second movement, is a witty and lilting composition originally for strings. Bernstein surprises us with the waltz, as it is written not in the expected \_ time, but in a wonderfully lop-sided 7/8. He also surprises us with a deliberately dissonant final chord. The eleven part arrangement for recorders is by Eric Haas as adapted by Patsy Rogers.

**Eileen Silcocks**, contemporary British composer, teacher, recorder player and conductor, has written several works for recorder ensemble. We play her five part *Fantasia*, composed for the opening of an exhibition of paintings by Susanne Schnabel in 2008. Silcocks writes “I particularly liked the way that she uses white in her work, and that was the inspiration for this short piece.” A reproduction of one of these paintings is shown on the program cover.

American jazz alto saxophonist **Paul Desmond** studied the clarinet at San Francisco State University and joined the Dave Brubeck Quartet in 1951, remaining with it till its dissolution in 1967. Many commentators have noted that he shared in the success of the group, but never received the full recognition he was due. Desmond was one of the most able representatives of the California style of ‘cool’. His compositions include the very popular *Take Five* written in 5/4 time and recorded on the seminal Brubeck Quartet album *Time Out*. His independent recording with baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, *Two of a Mind* (my personal favorite) does more justice to his remarkable talents, but the tune *Take Five* firmly enshrines him in jazz history

*As Time Goes By* is a song written by Herman Hupfeld for the 1931 Broadway musical, **Everybody's Welcome**. In the original show it was performed by jazz singer, tap dancer and actress Frances Williams. That same year it was recorded by several artists, including Rudy Vallee. The song was re-introduced in 1942 in the film *Casablanca*, sung by Dooley Wilson; a re-issue of Rudy Vallee's 1931 recording then became a major seller. Later the song was voted #2 on the **American Film Institute's -- 100 Songs Special**, commemorating the best songs in film. The song has been performed by several artists, including Billie Holiday, Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Carly Simon, Tony Bennett, and Willie Nelson. Hupfeld was born into a musical family in 1894 and as a child, studied violin in Germany. Later he was a saxophonist in the US Navy Band. In the early '30's he had a string of songwriting successes and later made radio and stage appearances and entertained the troops during WWII.