

## *Music That Elevates the Soul: Black Cedar Trio*

Music by J.S. Bach, Durwynne Hsieh, Toru Takemitsu, Haydn, and more

*Kris Palmer*, artistic director and flute

*Steve Lin*, guitar

*Isaac Pastor-Chermak*, cello

Cassation in C Major, Hoboken III:6

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Presto

Menuetto

Adagio

Finale-Presto

Toward the Sea

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)

The Night

Moby Dick

Cape Cod

Sonata in E Minor for Flute and Continuo, BWV 1034

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Adagio Ma Non Tanto

Allegro

Andante

Allegro

Intermission

Fortune My Foe

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Gravely and Vigorously

Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

Grave

Marcato Vigoroso

Flute and Drum at Twilight (1980)

Tan Mi Zi (b. 1936)

Por Una Cabeza (1935)

Carlos Gardel (1890-1935)

Tanti Anni Prima (1984)

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Por Una Cabeza

Carlos Gardel (1890-1935)

Miscellaneous Music (2015)

Durwynne Hsieh (b. 1963)

Möbius Movement

Commissioned by Black Cedar

Introverted Interlude

Five Fun Facts

## **Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)**

Franz Joseph Haydn was one of the most prolific composers of the Classical era of Western art music. Together with Mozart and his pupil Beethoven, these three musical giants, all hailing from Austria, form what is known by musicologists as *The First Viennese School*. Haydn led the musical endeavors at the immensely wealthy Esterházy family estate, allowing him to create and invent new directions in musical composition. This remote country estate isolated Haydn from other composers and trends in music until the later part of his long life. In his own words, he was “*forced to become original*.” The results were new musical forms called the symphony and the string quartet.

A cassation was an informal type of eighteenth-century music originally intended for outdoor performance. It tended to consist of a collection of rather short movements, often including a march of some type. The terminology may have origins in the Italian words *cassa* (drum) or *cassazione* (drumming).

## **Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)**

A 2007 article in *The New Yorker* tells an interesting story about Toru Takemitsu's musical awakening at a perilous point in both his own survival as a human being and Japan's survival as a country:

*“Near the end of the Second World War, soldiers and civilians on the Japanese home front constructed networks of underground bases in anticipation of an invasion that never came. In one of those dugout fortresses, in the mountains west of Tokyo, the future composer Toru Takemitsu was stationed in 1944; he was all of fourteen years old. Although no music aside from patriotic songs was allowed, one day a kindhearted officer ushered the children-soldiers into a back room and played some records for them, using a windup phonograph with a handmade bamboo needle. One disk had Lucienne Boyer singing ‘Parlez-Moi d’Amour.’ Takemitsu listened, he later said, in a state of ‘enormous shock.’ After so much sunless, soulless labor, that winsome chanson opened a world of possibility in his mind. Ever after, Takemitsu honored the moment as the birth of his musical consciousness.”*

After the war, Takemitsu taught himself music with his father's jazz collection; French music by Debussy, Schoenberg, and Messiaen; plus American music on Armed Forces radio and in the re-education libraries during the occupation. He was an avid fan of American cinema, seeing hundreds of films a year, absorbing their accompanying musical soundtracks. When his own compositions adopted the avant-garde style of John Cage, this musical genre came full circle in that Cage's music had been heavily influenced by Japanese music and Japanese thought. Thus, as Alex Ross points out, *“Takemitsu was taking back what his tradition had given to the West.”*

*Toward the Sea* was commissioned in 1981 by Greenpeace to support their Save the Whales campaign. The movement titles refer to Melville's novel *Moby Dick*, or *The Whale*. Takemitsu wanted to emphasize the spiritual dimension of the book, saying, *“meditation and water are wedded together...The music is a homage to the sea which creates all things and a sketch for the sea of tonality.”*

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

Johann Sebastian Bach was not widely known throughout Europe during his lifetime. He considered himself to be a conscientious craftsman merely doing his job to the best of his ability towards the service of his superiors, for the enjoyment of his fellow man, and to the glory of God. Yet, two hundred years after his death, his music holds the highest position in the canon of European art music, and his name is venerated more than that of any other composer. Bach would have never envisioned such accolades since he led a life and career that were confined to a very limited geographical space within Northern Germany. Modern Bach scholars believe Bach wrote this flute sonata sometime during his tenure in Leipzig, beginning in 1724. Evidence suggests a visiting flutist of some skill and proficiency resided in Leipzig during this period, which may have inspired the wonderful flute writing in the works of this period in Bach's life. Until recently, seven flute sonatas were attributed to Bach, but now only four have been authenticated as his own writings, including the *E Minor Sonata*.

### **John Dowland (1563-1626)**

English composer John Dowland was a contemporary of William Shakespeare in Elizabethan England, but his conversion to Roman Catholicism around 1580 may have prevented him from landing a musical post in Elizabeth I's Protestant court, thus permanently limiting his place in English music history.

Ballad tunes such as *Fortune My Foe* were the folk songs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The melody was recognizable by anyone, and the storyline told in the lyrics gradually change over years and decades, often reflecting the current social or political happenings. The earliest version of this ballad's verses begin, *Fortune my foe, why dost thou frown on me? And will thy favours never better me?*

### **Henry Cowell (1897-1965)**

Born in Menlo Park to parents who identified as "*philosophical anarchists*," Cowell grew up primarily in the Bay Area, was home-schooled by his mother, and was discovered by a Stanford professor taken with the boy's huge vocabulary and musical talents, despite any formal education. As a performer he gained notoriety for using his fists and forearms to play tone clusters, or blobs of sound masses at the piano, plus reaching into the piano box to directly pluck the strings. His study of thousands of recordings of world music at the University of Berlin inspired him to be one of the first to popularize the idea of "world music."

The full title of this work is listed as *Gravely and Vigorously For Cello Alone in Memory of President John F. Kennedy Nov. 23 '63*. Cowell conceived this hymn and fugue as a memorial to the slain president, with musical references to early-American congregational folk song.

### **Tan Mi Zi (b. 1936)**

The late Roger S. Stevens, former flutist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, received the score of *Flute and Drum at Twilight* from Tan Mi Zi, then a young Beijing flute student, as a gift during Stevens' 1981 sabbatical tour. The flute ornaments the melody, which is an old Chinese folk song, while the percussive effects on the keys of the flute imitate the sounds of a distant drum. Tan is now a prominent Chinese-Canadian composer based in Toronto and has served as Principal Flutist of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and Professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

### **Carlos Gardel (1890-1935)**

By the time of his tragic death in a plane crash at the age of 45, this French Argentine singer, songwriter, composer and actor had become one of the most prominent figures in the history of tango. His movie-star good looks and sonorous baritone voice catapulted him to fame in South America, and his tango ballads were played in nightclubs and Argentinean films throughout the 1920's and 1930's. *Por Una Cabeza* was featured in the movie, *Scent of a Woman*, in the tango scene between Lieutenant Colonel Frank Slade and Donna. The song's title is a reference to gambling and horse racing, where one's horse loses "just by a head." Indeed, gambling is every bit as addicting as love, in the passion, the anticipation, and the dreams. However, when the dust settles, her kisses, as with your tiny fortunes, are all but gone.

### **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)**

Though Argentinean by birth, Piazzolla actually spent the ages of four through fifteen living with his family in New York City. In 1933 he studied with the Hungarian pianist Bela Wilda, a disciple of Rachmaninov, and of whom Astor would later say "With him I learned to love Bach". Back in Argentina in 1936, Piazzolla's love for the tango blossomed into a life-long battle to marry this traditional Argentinean dance with his "serious, concert hall music." His works ruffled the sensitivities of traditional tangueros in Buenos Aires, leading to actual death threats against Piazzolla. Conflicted and convinced of the need to turn his back on his Argentinean tango roots, Piazzolla moved to Paris in 1954 to study composition with Nadia Boulanger, Europe's preeminent composition instructor. Boulanger cautions him against abandoning the tango. "Astor, the true Piazzolla is here in tango, never leave it behind." *Tanti Anni Prima* has quickly achieved folk song status since being composed for the 1985 Marco Bellocchio movie, *Enrico V*.

### **Durwynne Hsieh (b. 1963)**

Black Cedar commissioned Durwynne Hsieh to write *Miscellaneous Music* in 2015. *Möbius Movement* is named after the famous Möbius strip, which is a geometric construct with only one surface, like a paper strip formed into a loop with a half twist. *Introverted Interlude* is a slow, musical portrait of an introvert - often dark, but celebrating an introvert's ability to allow thoughts and ideas to evolve slowly and organically without the necessity to be constantly occupied. *Five Fun Facts* is a collage of disparate elements that are having a good time. Hsieh himself says, "the flapping of arms, the somewhat inappropriate misappropriation of rock and jazz rhythms, and general imbecilic silliness, including a certain effect that has a turkey taking a ride down the front of the cello. Is there a deeper meaning here? Nah, just want to have fun."

## **Musicians**

### **Black Cedar**

As a rare ensemble dedicated to music for flute, cello, and guitar, Black Cedar creates, discovers, and re-imagines works for this combination with almost fifty appearances throughout Northern California over their three-year history. In addition to a recent debut album release, the trio's awards include grants from the Zellerbach Family Foundation and the San Francisco Friends of Chamber Music, plus an invitation to perform at the National Flute Association Convention.

### **Kris Palmer, concert director and flute**

Dr. Kris Palmer's awards include a New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall in 2001 as a winner in the Artists International Competition, a second prize in the National Flute Association's Young Artist Competition, a first prize in the Ruth Burr Awards in Houston, and a first prize in the Carmel Chamber Music Society Competition. Kris holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Rice University in Houston. She has a solo album release and a published book on Baroque ornamentation.

### **Steve Lin, guitar**

Steve Lin was the first prize winner at the 2006 Boston GuitarFest Competition and the 2001 East Carolina University Guitar Competition. In November 2009, Steve premiered *Journey into Desire* by Lei Liang, a commission made possible by support from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and the South Bay Guitar Society. He has two solo album releases, *Eliot Fisk Series Vol. 1* and *Imagen*, and he is currently the guitar professor at San Jose State University. Steve holds a Master of Music from the Yale School of Music.

### **Isaac Pastor-Chermak, cello**

Isaac Pastor-Chermak is a cellist, conductor, and teacher with degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and UC Berkeley. He performs and conducts a repertoire spanning 500 years on instruments ranging from baroque cello, violoncello piccolo and viola da gamba to the most experimental electronic instruments. Isaac is currently principal cellist of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony in Iowa and Portland Opera in Oregon, in addition to holding membership in the Dayton Philharmonic in Ohio, the Monterey Symphony, and the Santa Cruz Symphony. In the summers, he is an orchestra member at the Eisenstadt Classical Music Festival in Austria.