

## **Ballade No. 1 for Viola and Strings (1938)**

**GODFRY RIDOUT (1918 - 1984)**

Stanley Solomon, former principal violist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the soloist who premiered this work in 1939, once commented that Ridout's Ballade "**is a beautiful work, a magnificent work. It ought to be in every violist's repertoire**". In fact, it was because of the success of this particular composition that he earned a scholarship to study with Healy Willan, who is considered to be the father of Canadian music.

Godfrey Ridout was born in Toronto on May 6, 1918 and died on November 24, 1984. He studied the organ and counterpoint with Charles Peaker, conducting with Ettore Mazzoleni, and piano with Weldon Kilburn. He was a teacher at the Toronto Conservatory of Music from 1940 to 1948 and then became professor of music at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto until his retirement in 1982. Ridout also wrote program notes for the TSO from 1973 until his death in 1984.

This ballade is scored for strings only and the mood of the music is somewhat melancholy. The writing also gives the performer an opportunity to explore **the** entire register of the instrument, a very common practice in viola music writing in the 20th century. Some of Ridout's other notable compositions include the **Fall Fair Overture, Two Etudes for String Orchestra (1951), Music for a Young Prince (1959), Concerto Grosso (1974), Ballade No. 2 for Viola and Orchestra**, numerous film scores, piano pieces and choral works.

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## **Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major, BWV 1066**

**J. S. BACH (1685 - 1750)**

Although Bach was famous for his organ works, church cantatas, **The Well-Tempered Clavier** and numerous sacred compositions such as the **Passions** and the **Mass in B Minor**, he also wrote some very remarkable music for orchestra such as the four orchestral suites and the Brandenburg concertos. It is believed that it was during the time when he was working in Leipzig, Germany, when he wrote the first orchestral suite. However, Bach himself did not complete the present version of the orchestral suites; this was done by scholars after his death.

All four suites begin with a French overture, followed by a number of Baroque dances, also in the French style. Even though they are based on dance forms, it was never intended for the audience to participate during the performance.

Suite No.1 in C Major is scored for two oboes, bassoon, strings and continuo and Bach has written some very challenging passages for the oboes and the bassoon that only virtuoso instrumentalists will dare to attempt. In total, there are seven movements and each one has its very own distinctive characteristics.

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## **"Les Nations" Suite**

**GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681 - 1767)**

Georg Philipp Telemann was born in Magdeburg, Germany, and grew up in an upper-middle class family. But unfortunately, his mother was not supportive of his desire to pursue a career as a musician /composer. In fact, he attended law school for a while before he decided to totally dedicate his life to music. According to music scholars, Telemann was considered to be the most prolific composer of all time with more than a thousand cantatas attributed to him (many more were either lost during World War II or, like the Suite Les Nations, still hidden in library archives in Europe). He was even more popular and in demand as a composer than Bach was, during his lifetime.

Telemann taught himself how to play many different instruments such as the organ, violin, recorder and even the bass trombone. His major compositions include the popular Tafelmusik Viola Concerto in G Major, and numerous orchestral suites and concertos for various instruments.

Les Nations is an orchestral suite that has the same structural scheme as Bach's orchestral suites, i.e. they begin with an overture written in the French style, followed by a number of dance movements. But in Les Nations, Telemann incorporated the musical flavours of various cultures, such as Russian and Portuguese, into his music and created a unique sound in the process. Listen particularly for the sound of bells in the Russian dance!

Tonight's performance is believed to be the Canadian premiere of this particular piece. According to our music director, there is a little story behind this. He discovered a CD of Telemann's suites (Harmonia Mundi HMC 901744) released by the Akademie fur Alte Musik Berlin while he was working as a professor in Louisiana a few years ago. He quickly fell in love with the music and subsequently contacted them asking if he could rent the music for a performance. But to his surprise, they told him that they were actually playing off manuscript photocopies, **as** the music had not yet be published yet. They then agreed that the only way they would allow him to perform this piece was for him to create a professionally finished manuscript for them in return. It is through this collaboration that we can present this

suite in Canada, approximately 290 years after its composition!

## Four Selected Pieces for String Orchestra

EDVARD GRIEG (1843 - 1907)

**Norsk** (Norwegian), Opus 53, No. 1;

**Hjertesar** (Heart's Wound) and **Varen** (Last Spring), Opus 34;

**Kuhreigen & Bauerntanz** (Cow Keeper's tune and Country Dance), Opus 63, No. 2.

Edvard Grieg was born in Bergen, Norway, in 1843 and died there in 1907. He was considered **to be** one of the most popular nationalist composers of the 19th century. Grieg received his early music education from his mother, and on the advice of Ole Bull (a fellow Norwegian violin virtuoso), he went on to study at the Leipzig Conservatory. He became a national figure after the success of his masterpiece Peer Gynt's Suites, music that he set to the poems of Henrik Ibsen, the distinguished Norwegian poet.

Among all the music that Grieg has written, he is probably best known for his ***Piano Concerto in A minor***, the ***Holberg Suite*** and the two ***Peer Gynt Suites***. All four of these pieces are arranged by the composer from his numerous short piano pieces, and while they are less well-known than the pieces named above, they are no less beautiful.

Both Norsk, Opus 53 No. 1 (1891) and his Opus 34 were arrangements of his Twelve Melodies for voice set to Poems by Aasmund Olavson Vinje, Opus 33. Finally, his Cow Keeper's tune and Country Dance, Opus 63 was arranged from a set of twenty five Norwegian folk-dances and folk-songs first published in 1870. The melodies of these pieces are very well-crafted and the supporting writing in the harmony clearly demonstrates a distinctive Norwegian flavour.

Program notes written by E. D. Fahn ©

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