THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

INVENTIONS: BACH TO MENDELSSOHN

2020-21 Season Week 4
performance/filming: **November 27-28**, 2020, *at Severance Hall*

In Focus Episode No. 4
broadcast: **December 10 to March 10** *via Adella*

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
Nicholas McGegan, *conductor and harpsichord*

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)
Overture and Pifa Pastorale, from *Messiah*

ARCANGELO CORELLI (1653-1713)
Christmas Concerto (Concerto Grosso Opus 6, No. 8)

1. Vivace — Grave
2. Allegro
3. Adagio — Allegro — Adagio
4. Vivace
5. Allegro
6. Largo: Pastorale (*ad libitum*)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major

1. Allegro
2. Adagio
3. Allegro

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)
String Symphony No. 7 in D minor

1. Allegro
2. Andante amorevole
3. Menuetto — Trio
4. Allegro molto

Special thanks to the Cleveland Museum of Art for the loan of their William Dowd harpsichord for use in these performances.

Please note: During the filming sessions, the pieces are being performed in this order: Mendelssohn, Handel, Corelli, Bach.

CONCERT OVERVIEW

Guest conductor Nicholas McGegan offers a program filled with musical invention and seasonal abundance — surveying a range of works from the late 17th to early 19th centuries.

First comes the popular and well-known overture and shepherd's pastorale movements from Handel's *Messiah*. Followed by Arcangelo Correlli's *Christmas Concerto*, a tuneful work of six varied movements, ending with a finale bearing the inscription "Made for the Night of Christmas."

Continuing in this Baroque vein is Bach's Third Brandenburg Concerto, showing this master's invention and ingenuity with string orchestra.

The concert concludes with one of Felix Mendelssohn's youthful string symphonies, from a group of twelve penned when this child-genius of a composer was not yet 14 years old.

ABOUT THE MUSIC: HANDEL

OVERTURE and PIFA PASTORALE
from MESSIAH
by **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759)

Composed: August and September 1741

Premiered: April 13, 1742

Scored: these two movements are for string orchestra with continuo

Duration: not quite 10 minutes

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HANDEL FIRST CAME to London in 1710. With a few brief returns to his native Germany, he remained there for the rest of his life. Otherwise, he scarcely even left the English capital, with the single exception of a long visit in 1841-42 to Dublin, then, like all of Ireland, within the King's domain.

In Dublin, he was engaged to give a season of concerts in a new concert hall that had just been built, the Great Music Hall, which seated six hundred and survives today only in its white entrance arch. Although he had written *Messiah* at great speed in London a few months before he left, Handel did not include it in his series, but performed three of his other oratorios, twice each.

These were all a huge success, so he was persuaded to give a second set of six concerts. He still did not present *Messiah*, playing instead two of his oratorios twice each and one of his Italian operas (*Imeneo*) twice.

With Dublin audiences by then thoroughly familiar with his music and burning with enthusiasm to hear more, it was time to produce "Mr. Handel's new Grand Oratorio call'd the Messiah." Thus, like the great dramatist he was, and experienced in the art of handling popular acclaim, Handel seems to have kept his powder dry in holding back this masterpiece until it was guaranteed such thunderous ap-

plause as would still ring round the world nearly three centuries later. The choirs of both of Dublin's cathedrals were brought in as reinforcement for the performance.

Since that April day in Dublin in 1742, *Messiah* has never dropped out of sight and hearing. With this single work, Handel broke down the age-old assumption that music belongs to its own time and to its own time only. He brought *Messiah* to London soon after it premiere, and repeated the performance every year until his death — with parallel performances every year at the Foundling Hospital and at the Covent Garden Theater. By the time he died in 1759, Handel had presided over thirty-six performances of *Messiah*, a far greater number than he could have expected when he first composed it.

For these Cleveland Orchestra performances, we hear the two instrumental "symphonies" from Part I of the oratorio. The Overture is presented in the style of a French opera overture, which had been Handel's preferred type when composing Italian operas, though rarely found in his oratorios. The dotted rhythm of the opening section and the fugal form of the *Allegro* are the two distinctive markers of the style.

The "Pifa" is the instrumental movement pastorale that introduces "Shepherds abiding in the field." Here the strings imitate the warbling of shepherds' pipes, with the curious texture resulting from the violas doubling the two sections of violins an octave lower, while cello and basses provide an underlying drone.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

ABOUT THE MUSIC: CORELLI

CHRISTMAS CONCERTO
(Concerto Grosso: Opus 8, No. 6)
by **Arcangelo Corelli** (1653-1713)

Composed: circa 1680s-1690s; the score bears the inscription "Fatto per la notte di Natale" [Made for the Night of Christmas]

Scored: string orchestra (the concerto grosso), with three soloists (the concertino: 2 violins and a cello), along with appropriate harpsichord continuo

Duration: about 15 minutes

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CORELLLI'S LEGACY is almost entirely contained in six opus numbers, which may seem a small output. Yet each opus consists of twelve pieces, so a total of seventy-two works is not so unimpressive as the initial impression might have suggested. In addition, the influence of his music was colossal. Beginning in 1681 with the publication of his first set of twelve trio-sonatas, Corelli's style had an extraordinary effect on music not only in Italy but throughout Europe.

This might be attributed to the fact that he adopted major and minor scales with a firmness that put an end to all remaining suggestions of the ancient modes (the more folk-like sense of scales from earlier times) and firmly created a more defined musical language that proved wonderfully adaptable by European compos-

ers for well over two hundred years.

Corelli also demonstrated that the Italian violin was a world-beating instrument, capable of brilliance and power and endless contrasts. The Concerto Grosso in Corelli's hands makes great play with the alternation of the concertino (solo instruments) and the concerto grosso (the tutti, or "orchestra together").

Some of his concertos are made up of dance movements; others alternate fast and slow movements, as here, being suitable for performance in church. The Christmas Concerto is the most famous of its set of twelve, because it was written to celebrate Christmas and features a final movement that depicts the "Shepherds abiding in the field" — some thirty years before Handel did the same in *Messiah*.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

ABOUT THE MUSIC: BACH

BRANDENBURG CONCERTO NO. 3 in G major
by **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

Composed: circa 1710-21; part of a collection given as a gift in 1721 to the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt

Scored: Concerto No. 3 is scored for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos, and continuo with harpsichord

Duration: about 10 minutes

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BACH WAS ABOVE ALL a practical composer. For him, "practical" meant a willingness to write the sort of music his patrons required, not necessarily what he himself chose to write. Being a devout Lutheran, he was happiest in the service of the church, but when he was employed by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen sacred music was not called for. The Prince was a capable performer himself and supported a group of eighteen musicians, whose duties were to provide music at court, not in church (the Calvinist practice and services of the time required only an organ and organist).

Between 1717 and 1723, Bach wrote instrumental music with amazing facility and invention. These included the first book of the *48 Preludes and Fugues*, the *Brandenburg Concertos*, as well as much other chamber music, keyboard music, and orchestral music, all in profusion.

On one of his trips to Berlin, Bach met the Margrave of Brandenburg, to whom the six Brandenburg Concertos were dedicated. They were composed or at least collected together in 1721 (and possibly begun earlier), but were not ordinary concertos. Each one calls for a different, and unorthodox, combination of soloists, and each gives abundant evidence of the composer's unmatched technique and extraordinary depth of technique.

The Third Brandenburg is one of the most astonishing displays of Bach's ingenuity and fluency. No other composer could approach the achievement of presenting nine solo instruments and keeping all nine of them busily interacting with

one another in a tight web of counterpoint that sounds entirely natural and fluent — and not the tortured tangle that anyone else would have made of it.

Three violins, three violas, and three cellos are supported by the basso continuo and keyboard. And although they slip into unison from time to time, Bach is at pains to vary the texture by treating the soloists as three groups of three, or sometimes as nine separate voices, or sometimes bringing the full sonority together for a cadence. Indeed, it is challenging to know what feature to admire most. It is, at the very least, astonishing that when Bach returns to his home key towards the end of the first movement, he adds a new counterpoint to this already rich texture, a simple rising triad of three notes. Astonishing! More and more, yet fully controlled and proportioned.

In place of a middle movement, Bach simply wrote two cadential chords, as they might appear at the close of a full slow movement. Some performances play them, plainly, simply as they are. Other performers omit them. Some insert another Bach movement in an appropriate key, and some improvise a connecting episode in preparation for the finale. Here, as so often elsewhere in baroque music, there is no definitive solution.

The finale third movement is a whirlwind of feverishly interlocking entries, with a driving energy that only Bach could command. The movement is binary, so each half is repeated, the second "half" being markedly longer than the first. When the first violin finally arrives on his resonant bottom G, it is as though a demonic spirit is finally laid to rest — a good demon, of course.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

ABOUT THE MUSIC: MENDELSSOHN

STRING SYMPHONY NO. 7 in D minor
by **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847)

Composed: 1821-23, when the composer was 12-14 years of age

Scored: string orchestra

Duration: about 20 minutes

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THE SYMPHONY KNOWN TODAY as Mendelssohn's First (in C minor) was originally headed "Sinfonia XIII." Between 1821 and 1823, Mendelssohn composed at least twelve symphonies for strings (some percussion is included with No. 11), displaying the early and vigorous youthful genius that was to burst out a year or two later in the Octet and in the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Music poured out of him at that tender age, with no trace of technical difficulty or doubt.

As a mature composer, Mendelssohn would suffer painfully from self-doubt, but there is no early indication of that when hearing the effortless stream of notes in these early Sinfonias — with No. 7 composed when he was just twelve. Yet there was also no question at the time of performing these in public or of publishing them. These were private works, not made available publicly until the 1960s.

These string symphonies, or Sinfonias, were composed for performance in the Mendelssohns' prosperous home, where concerts were frequent and guests invited from among the leaders of Berlin's cultured society. Young Felix's background when he composed the Sinfonias was based on Bach's fugues and the classical forms of Haydn and Mozart. And, although he would shortly discover Beethoven as the source of a new world of musical expression, this is not evident in Mendelssohn's earliest works.

String Symphony No. 7 was the third of these pieces to be composed in the minor key, which allowed Mendelssohn to open with a gesture of rage immediately answered by a consoling phrase. These two ideas interact busily until it is time for a second subject, consisting here of intertwining lines of longer notes. Bach would strongly have approved his desire to give the cellos and basses as much of the musical interest as the violins, a balance that became so rare in Haydn.

Notable in the slow movement is a tune accompanied at first by one other line only, then, when it returns, with two, and finally with the full ensemble. One might easily imagine words for this tune, as if it were a Schubert song.

The Menuetto third movement, which restores the minor key, brings Haydn to mind. A prominent viola entry at the end of the Menuetto provides the theme for the movement's Trio section, after which Mendelssohn breaks with convention in not returning to the Menuetto and instead allows the Trio's coda to end the movement.

Vigor and bustle return in the finale fourth movement, and it includes a fugue. When it reaches the end, one can sense the boy Felix reaching for the pile of music paper to get going on the next Sinfonia. He probably already knew there would be twelve.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

Hugh Macdonald is Avis H. Blewett Professor Emeritus of Music at Washington University in Saint Louis. He has written books on Beethoven, Berlioz, Bizet, and Scriabin.

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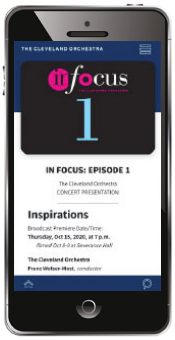
CONDUCTOR: NICHOLAS McGEGAN

In his sixth decade on the podium, British conductor Nicholas McGegan is recognized for his exploration of music from all periods. He served as music director of San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra for over thirty years, stepping down at the end of the 2019-20 season. He also serves as principal guest conductor of the Pasadena Symphony. He first led The Cleveland Orchestra in February 2007 and most recently appeared here in November 2019.

Born in England and educated at Cambridge and Oxford universities, Mr. McGegan's honors include being named an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. He earlier served as artistic director of the International Handel Festival 1991-2011. Among the few Baroque specialists working today who regularly also conduct major orchestras, Nicholas McGegan has led performances across North America and Europe, and in Asia and Australia. In addition to his orchestral concerts, he has led opera performances for major companies on both sides of the Atlantic. His recordings number more than 100, with over half featuring musical works by Handel.

For more information, visit www.nicholasmcgegan.com.



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National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Ohio and Ohio Arts Council, and to the residents of Cuyahoga County through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud of its long-term partnership with Kent State University, made possible in part through generous funding from the State of Ohio.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud to have its home, Severance Hall, located on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, with whom it has a long history of collaboration and partnership.

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

ONE OF THE FEW major American orchestra's founded by a woman, The Cleveland Orchestra's inaugural concert took place in December 1918, at a time of renewed optimism and progressive community ideas. By the middle of the century, with its own concert hall, the decades of growth and sustained effort had turned the ensemble into one of the most-admired around the world. Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, The Cleveland Orchestra has extended its artistry and musical abilities and remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world — year after year setting standards of extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. In recent years, the *New York Times* has it "the best in America" for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion, "virtually flawless," and "one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world)."

The partnership with Franz Welser-Möst, begun in 2002 and entering its 19th year with the 2020-21 season, has earned The Cleveland Orchestra unprecedented residencies in the U.S. and around the world, including one at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra. It also performs regularly at important European summer festivals. The Orchestra's 100th season in 2017-18 featured two international tours, concluding with the presentation on three continents of Welser-Möst's *Prometheus Project* featuring Beethoven Symphonies and overtures; these Beethoven concerts were presented in May and June 2018, at home in Cleveland, in Vienna's Musikverein, and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra has a long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. A series of DVDs (available through Clasart Classics) and CD recordings under the direction of Mr. Welser-Möst continues to add to an extensive and widely praised catalog of audio recordings made during the tenures of the ensemble's earlier music directors. In addition, Cleveland Orchestra concerts are heard in syndication each season on radio stations throughout North America and Europe.

From 2020 forward, a number of new digital media initiatives are being launched to share and extend the ensemble's artistry globally. These include debut releases on the Orchestra's own recording label, an ongoing series of podcasts titled "On A Personal Note," a new digital streaming platform named Adella (after the Orchestra's founder Adella Prentiss Hughes), and a series of premium concert broadcasts created from the 2020-21 season titled *In Focus*.

For more information, visit: *www.clevelandorchestra.com*.