Xavier Foley, double bass
Kelly Lin, piano

SUITE NO. 5, IN C MINOR, FOR UNACCOMPANIED CELLO, BWV 1011 [C.1720]
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Prélude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte I & II
Gigue

LATIN PARADISE FOR BASS AND PIANO (2021)
Xavier Foley (b. 1994)

:: INTERMISSION ::

LOST CHILD, FOR SOLO BASS (2021)
Xavier Foley (b. 1994)

ETUDE NO. 11: THE SINGER (2020)
Xavier Foley (b. 1994)

NEW WORK FOR SOLO BASS
Xavier Foley (b. 1994)
World Premiere
Commissioned by Rockport Music and made possible with support by Nina and Gene Doggett

CELLO SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR, RV 47 (1725-6)
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Largo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

FANTASIA ON VERDI’S OPERA LA SONNAMBULA
Giovanni Bottesini (1821-89)

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY MOLLIE AND JOHN BYRNES
We can’t be sure whether Bach designed the six Suites as anything beyond ‘exercises’ (übungen), as there is no evidence to show why or exactly when they were composed. But, by grouping them into a set of six (along with the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, the Brandenburg Concertos, the Violin Sonatas, the French and English Suites), Bach was following what has been referred to as a ‘guiding impulse’ throughout his entire working life – to bring a particular genre to completion and then to turn from it to other things. In these collections, Bach sets out to display the full musical potential of an instrumental genre and to uncover its full technical possibilities.

In the six Cello Suites, Bach’s overriding concern seems to have been one of symmetry. Each suite consists of a sequence of dance movements (Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue) which form the core of the traditional 18th-century suite. In each case, the dances are preceded by a Prélude which offers Bach the opportunity to evoke a different mood for the instrument and provide the maximum amount of contrast from one suite to another. He also adds several more ‘modern’ dances to the suite, grouped into a contrasting pair. The Fifth Suite includes a pair of Gavottes. The suite is unique in that Bach asks for the top string to be tuned down a tone.

Bach’s Cello Suites have been one of the most popular pieces in the repertoire. His solos for violin and cello without strings, an emotionally wide-ranging piece inspired by the 400th anniversary of the first slave ship landing in North America. Two months ago, he premiered his three-movement solo bass concert with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, with a second performance to follow with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

The Singer is a lyrical ballad where Xavier both sings a catchy little song (on his bass) and accompanies himself with stopped chords, bassline accompaniment, arpeggios, ornamentation and a lot of soul.

**CELLO SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR, RV 47 (1725-6), transposed for double bass and piano**

Antonio Vivaldi (b. Venice, March 4, 1678; d. Vienna, Austria, July 27/28, 1741)

Composed 1725-6; 11 minutes

Vivaldi composed 30 of his substantial catalog of 500 concertos for the cello, with a more modest output of 10 cello sonatas. The concertos were for use at the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian institution for young orphaned (or abandoned) girls, while the sonatas were mainly private commissions. The first six cello sonatas were published in 1740, in Paris, unbeknownst to Vivaldi, half a continent away in Venice. The original manuscript from which the publication was made survives in Paris to this day and its penmanship has been tracked to ‘Scribe 9’ who worked with Vivaldi in Venice between 1716 and 1726. The B-flat sonata is written after the Corelli model of ‘church’ sonata, the sonata da chiesa, with a pair of alternating slow-fast movements. The slow movements are elegantly written and left to the performer to ornament according to taste. The quicker movements call for more nimble fingers on both fingerboard and bow.

**ETUDE NO. 11: THE SINGER**

Xavier Foley (b. Marietta, GA, August 9, 1994)

Composed 2020; 4 minutes

Xavier wrote all twelve of his solo pieces during the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic. “I just wrote music,” he says of the months without concerts. Many composers create their pieces at the piano. Xavier does things differently; he creates at the bass. “Some of it starts with improvisation,” he says. “So, I’ll put it all in my memory and then write it down later.” I’ll see what I can do to combine different influences. Even for a concerto, I work it out on the bass, then write it down later.” That’s how he went about composing For Justice and Peace: a double concerto for violin, bass and strings, an emotionally wide-ranging piece inspired by the 400th anniversary of the first slave ship landing in North America. Two months ago, he premiered his three-movement solo bass concert with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, with a second performance to follow with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

**LATIN PARADISE FOR BASS AND PIANO**

Xavier Foley (b. Marietta, GA, August 9, 1994)

Composed 2021; 6 minutes

“I used to live in North Bergen, New Jersey, which is a Latin-American neighborhood,” Xavier says. “All I heard was Latin-American music. So, Latin Paradise shows my classical background and training mixed with my experience in North Bergen.”

Enjoy Xavier’s rhapsodic sequence of variations on a minor key lyrical melody with a melancholy edge. In it, double bass and piano frequently chase one another in a contrapuntal dialogue. Eventually, the music slows to a meditation on elements of the theme during which the bass insists on a brilliant tango outcome – a souvenir from the place known as ‘Havana on the Hudson.’

**LOST CHILD, FOR SOLO BASS**

Xavier Foley (b. Marietta, GA, August 9, 1994)

Composed 2021; 3 minutes

This is an attractive, blues-colored etude, combining a haunting lyrical melody with complex double and triple-stopped chords. “A lost child is a scary thing,” Xavier says. “The piece is not beautiful; it’s not sad. It’s kind of in the middle... anxious.”

**FANTASIA ON VERDI’S OPERA LA SONNAMBULA**, arr. double bass and piano

Giovanni Bottesini (b. Crema, Italy, December 22, 1821; d. Parma, July 7, 1889)

Composed c. 1845; 8 minutes

At 14, faced with competing for one of two scholarships, it came down to a choice between bassoon and double bass. The young Giovanni Bottesini played neither. But the violin student from Crema in Northern Italy had already proved himself a quick study with his vocal skill and his ability to play timpani in various local theaters. So, Bottesini quickly found his way around the double bass and, within a few weeks, won a scholarship to the Milan Conservatory. There, he excelled, graduated at 18 and put his conservatory prize money towards a fine three-string bass by Carlo Testore. He was to keep this 1716 instrument throughout a long career which was launched with his concert début at the Teatro Comunale, Crema, in 1840. By now he was tuning the instrument a tone (or more) higher than usual for his solo work. [That’s standard practice among solo bass players to this day]. By 1846, he was in Cuba as principal bass at the Teatro de Tacón, giving recitals and conducting the première of Cristoforo Colombo, the first of 14 operas he would compose.
Bottesini played with the overhand (French-style) bow grip which he popularized, as opposed to the underhand (German) grip. He soon became known as the ‘Paganini of the double bass.’ Although an international career as bass soloist, composer and conductor took Bottesini throughout Europe, to North, Central and South America, and even Egypt (at the invitation of his friend Verdi, to direct the 1871 premiere of Aida to mark the opening of the Suez Canal), it is for his legendary contribution to the technique of the double bass that he is best remembered.

Bottesini’s Fantasia on Verdi’s opera La Sonnambula falls agreeably somewhere between opera house and concert hall and, as with much Bottesini, proves that the double bass need not play second fiddle to violin as a vehicle for virtuosity. Appropriately, perhaps, Bottesini is buried close to Paganini in Parma’s Villetta cemetery.

— Program notes © 2022 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

XAVIER FOLEY, double bass

Winner of the 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2016 Young Concert Artists Competition and the 2014 Sphinx Competition, Xavier Foley is known for communicating his virtuosity and passion for music on the double bass. Recently recognized on New York WQXR’s “19 for 19” Artists to Watch list, Foley has played as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Sphinx Orchestra and the Nashville Symphony. He made his Carnegie Hall solo debut with the Sphinx Virtuosi, with which he was also soloist on East and West Coast tours. Also a composer, Mr. Foley was co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and the Sphinx Organization for a new work entitled “For Justice and Peace” for violin, bass and string orchestra, which was recently performed at venues including Carnegie Hall as part of a program designed to promote social justice. A native of Georgia, Xavier Foley is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program, and earned his Bachelor of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music working with Edgar Meyer and Hal Robinson. His double bass was crafted by Rumano Solano.

KELLY LIN, piano

Kelly Lin is an active and sought-after collaborative pianist, who began her musical studies at an early age on the piano, violin, viola and er-hu. Soon after, she began winning national competitions and awards on all four instruments in her native Taiwan. Lin has served on the jury of the Steinway Society Competition and has been staff accompanist at Rutgers University. She is currently a collaborative pianist at The Juilliard School, Mannes/New School, Manhattan School of Music and Columbia University.