

Gabriel Gordon, conductor, is music director of several orchestras in the tri-state area, including the New Jersey State Youth Orchestra, the Brunswick Orchestra Society, and the Sibelius Academy Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. He is also one of the frequently invited guest conductors of the Orchestra Society of Philadelphia. An accomplished violinist, Mr. Gordon studied with Jascha Brodsky and Eugene Drucker. He is a founding member of the DaPonte String Quartet, and performed with that group for nine years, until 1996.

Bonnie Obel, cello soloist, is sixteen years old. She began studying cello in Springfield, Missouri, with Jacque Trtan of Drury College. Her teachers have included William Stokking, principal cellist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Metta Watts and Orlando Cole, affiliated with Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music. Miss Obel plays with the Philadelphia Youth Chamber Orchestra and the ensemble at her high school, Philadelphia Christian Academy.

John and Elizabeth Collins Cook are both professional singers who have won acclaim for their work in recitals as well as dozens of roles on stage, radio, and television.

John, a lyric baritone, has sung with various regional opera companies and orchestras including the Philadelphia Classical Symphony, Concerto Soloists, The Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburg, the Ohio Light Opera Company, Boston Cecelia, and Boston's Cantata Singers. John is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, Boston University and the Tanglewood Institute.

Elizabeth, a soprano, was a resident artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia from 1994-1998. In the debut work of Eric Stokes' Apollonia's Circus, Elizabeth created the role of Justina. Her concert work includes the Mozart Requiem at Carnegie Hall, and many other works with the Concert Soloists in Philadelphia. Winner of many awards, including scholarships at the regional level of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, Elizabeth also performed in a segment for CBS Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt. She continues to sing professionally with the Philadelphia Singers.

Acknowledgements

The Independence Sinfonia expresses thanks to the Rev. Mark Ainsworth, and the board members of All Hallows Church for their gracious hospitality in providing rehearsal space for the musicians. A special word of gratitude to Rose Davis, organist and choir director, for her cooperation and help in the presentation of today's concert. Thanks also to Kate Johnson, for the design and format of the concert program.

Music for today's concert is on loan from the Edwin Fleisher Collection of Orchestra Music in the Free Library of Philadelphia.

All Hallows Church

Wyncote, Pennsylvania

Presents

The Independence Sinfonia

Gabriel Gordon, Conductor

Bonnie Obel, Cello Soloist

Sunday, May 19, 2002, 3 p.m.

The Independence Sinfonia

VIOLIN

Bill Phillips
Concertmaster
Tom Angell
Linda Baldwin
Kim Dolan
Ursula Elliot
Denise Garrett
Amanda Godshall
Darrin McBride
Gail Miller
John Safian
Valerie Suzawa

VIOLA

Lary Pupkiewicz
Margot Cohn
Karen Noer
Sondra Greenberg

CELLO

Susan Kohn
Julie Wiberg
Tony Gizzi
Lisel Brady
Lou Ann Cunningham

BASS

Alfred Finck
Larry Jones

*Music Librarian: Kim Dolan

*Program Notes: Lila & Alfred Finck

FLUTE

Lisa Davis
Anders Hansen

OBOE

Mary Ellen Corwin
Bill Steffee

CLARINET

William Fullard
Lila Finck

BASSOON

Jay Tinkleman
Judy Frank

HORN

Richard Lendemer
Gene Wieland

TRUMPET

Jim Edwards
Paula Schwartz

TIMPANI

William Priebe

Program

Overture to Prometheus Op. 42 Ludwig Van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra Camille Saint-Saens
A-Minor Op. 33 (1835-1921)

Bonnie Obel, Cello Soloist

Intermission

The Unanswered Question Charles Ives
(1874-1954)

Two Irish Songs Jeffrey Kent Blakley
(1965-1994)

Elizabeth Cook, Soprano John Cook, Baritone
Lisa Davis, Flute Larry Pupkiewicz, Viola Alfred Finck, Guitar

The Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave) Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

trumpet. Ives describes the trumpet's theme as the perennial question of existence, to which the winds respond with confusing, impromptu, and dissonant answers. "Finally," says Ives, "silence is heard in undisturbed solitude."

"Two Irish Songs"

Jeffrey Kent Blakley

While a student at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Blakley developed a reputation at the school for flatly refusing to create what he termed "ugly" contemporary music. After graduation in 1986, he wrote "Sea Chanty Suite," a work commissioned by the U.S. Navy for their 200th Birthday celebration. It was performed by the U.S. Naval band at Annapolis on that occasion. For his inspiration, he often drew on Irish themes, and at the time of his death in 1994, was working on completing an opera based on the life and times of the first king of ancient Ireland.

"Two Irish Songs" are part of a song cycle inspired by the poetry of William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). Blakley set several of the poems to music. "For Anne Gregory" is a whimsical, lyrical rhyme about a young girl's yellow hair. "I Am of Ireland" reflects the Nobel Laureate's dedication to the Irish nationalist movement for independence.

"The Hebrides Overture" (Fingal's Cave)

Felix Mendelssohn

In the 19th Century, it was traditional for wealthy young men to take a "Grand Tour" of Europe to gain knowledge, perspective, and culture. When he was twenty years old, Mendelssohn's European tour included a visit to Scotland and the Hebrides Islands to see the renowned "Finga! Cave." This experience inspired the young composer to write one of his most brilliant and successful overtures. Described as a tone painting, the music depicts giant waves surging and crashing into the strange, cathedral-like cavern. The overture has been described as bringing the perils of nature straight into the concert hall.

Program Notes

Overture to 'Prometheus' Op. 43

Ludwig van Beethoven

Based on the Greek fable of Prometheus, the overture is the introduction to music Beethoven wrote in 1801, for an allegorical ballet. In this version of the fable, Prometheus, the champion of humanity, inspired humankind through his gifts of knowledge and the arts he had stolen from the gods. He is severely punished for his actions, chained to a rock and left to suffer in agony. Finally, he is put to death. Although in chains, Prometheus is lauded as spiritually free, a defiant champion of humanity, one who is a symbol of resistance to arbitrary authority. For some, Prometheus's agony has been compared to the plight of the suffering artist.

Concerto for Cello & Orchestra in A Minor Op. 33

Camille Saint-Saens

The first of two cello concertos written by Saint-Saens, the piece was first performed in 1873, at the Paris Conservatory. It was dedicated to the principal cellist of the conservatory orchestra, August Tolbecque. Written in three continuous movements, the work follows the traditional form found in the concertos of Brahms, Beethoven, and Mozart. However, the movements are woven together so seamlessly, that they sound as one. It is said that with this work, Saint-Saens solved the problem that challenges every composer of cello concertos: the problem of making a low-pitched instrument easily heard over the orchestra.

"The Unanswered Question"

Charles Ives

Charles Ives, born a Connecticut Yankee, was famous for his works of radical musical experimentation. He decided early in life to compose music as a non-conformist. In his day, sharp dissonances and poly-tonal harmonies were unpopular with audiences. Ives realized that in order to achieve his musical independence, he would have to make a living in another profession. Consequently, he went into the insurance business, made a modest fortune, and composed as he pleased.

In the "Unanswered Question," the orchestra is divided in two parts. The strings play softly and slowly in contrast to the sound of a questioning