

THE YORK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT PROGRAM

THIRD SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT OF THE

SEVENTY-SEVENTH SEASON

*“Sax Appeal”*

Robert Hart Baker, Music Director

John Eaken, Concertmaster

Norman Nunamaker, Assistant Concertmaster and Assistant Conductor

Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center

Saturday, February 20, 2010, at 8:00 PM

Grateful Appreciation to Tonight’s Concert Sponsor:

---

Guest Artist:     BRANFORD MARSALIS, Saxophone

.....

AMBROISE THOMAS     *Mignon Overture*

JACQUES IBERT     *Concertino da Camera*

*I. Allegro ma non troppo*

*II. Larghetto*

*III. Animato molto*

..... Mr. Marsalis

DARIUS MILHAUD     *Scaramouche, Op. 165c*

*I. Vif*

*II. Modéré*

*III. Brasileira*

..... Mr. Marsalis

**--- INTERMISSION ---**

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS     *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 in A*

*I. Aria (Cantilena). Adagio*

*II. Dansa (Martelo). Allegretto*

..... Mr. Marsalis

JOHN WILLIAMS     *Escapades (from the film “Catch Me If You Can”)*

*I. Closing In*

*II. Reflections*

*III. Joy Ride*

..... Mr. Marsalis

JOSEPH HAYDN     *Symphony No. 94 in G major, “Surprise”*

*I. Adagio; Vivace assai*

*II. Andante*

*III. Menuet: Allegro molto*

*IV. Finale: Allegro di molto*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### *Mignon Overture*

Ambroise Thomas  
(1811 – 1896)

Thomas was born in Metz, a small town in the northeastern corner of France. Both of his parents were music teachers and he was given lessons at an early age in piano and violin. By the age of nine he was a capable performer on both instruments. After his father's death in 1828, the family moved to Paris and Ambroise entered the Conservatoire where he studied piano, harmony, and composition. In 1832 he won the Prix de Rome for his composition of a cantata, *Herrmann et Ketty*." After that, he continued to enjoy success with his stage works and completed his best-known work, the opera "*Mignon*," that enjoyed immediate success at its first performance at the Opéra Comique in Paris on November 17 1866. Thomas lived to see the thousandth performance of his opera in 1894 at the theater where it was premiered. On the occasion he was invested with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honor, the first musician ever to have received that distinction.

The libretto was based on Goethe's novel, "Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre." When Mignon, the heroine of the story, was an infant, she was stolen by Gypsies from her home in Italy. In the overture, the first melody, slow and expressive, is played by the horns. It is taken from Mignon's aria in which she tries to describe to the German student, Wilhelm, the memories she has of her native Italy. The second melody, a polonaise, is introduced by the upper woodwinds. It is taken from an aria by Filene, an actress in the opera who sings about her assignment to dance the role of the fairy, Titania, in a performance of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream." *Mignon Overture* demonstrates Thomas's talent for melody and a keen sense of theater.

The work is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, harps, and strings. Dr. Baker and the YSO last performed the work on October 14, 1990.

### *Concertino da Camera*

IV. *Allegro ma non troppo*

V. *Larghetto*

VI. *Animato molto*

Jacques Ibert  
(1890 – 1962)

The French composer Ibert studied under Paul Vidal at the Paris Conservatoire and won the Prix de Rome in 1919 for his cantata *Le poète et la fée*. In 1937 he was director of the French Academy in Rome, and from 1955 to 1957 directed the Paris Opéra-Comique.

Adolphe Sax (1814 – 1894) of Brussels, Belgium, invented the saxophone in 1841 and patented it in 1846. He intended for the saxophone family of instruments to be used in both orchestras and bands. Its distinctive tone puts it somewhere between woodwinds and brass. The virtuoso saxophonist, Sigurd Rascher undertook part of his life's mission to be the establishment of saxophones in their rightful place as a welcome addition to the palette of tone colors available to composers and arrangers. Ibert wrote his *Concertino da Camera* for Sigurd Rascher who premiered the first movement in 1935. A year later Ibert added two more movements thus completing the Concertino. Ibert, himself, conducted the premiere of the complete work in 1936 with another great saxophonist of the time, Marcel Mule, as soloist.

The first movement is playful and very active with orchestral harmonies and rhythms that create a fanciful mood. After an introduction in the strings there is a brief theme in trumpet. The main theme of the movement is then presented by the saxophone. Two shorter subsidiary themes are presented by the saxophone and then the main melody is developed with embellishments.

*Larghetto* features a subdued, wistful, and meditative saxophone melody supported by a delicate and, perhaps, impressionistic (in the style of Ravel) accompaniment with twentieth century harmonies.

The finale is very lively with pungent harmonies that could be interpreted as satire. There is a brief cadenza passage for the saxophone.

The work is scored for solo alto saxophone, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, and strings. This is the first performance of the work by Dr. Baker and the YSO.

### *Scaramouche, Op. 165c*

IV. *Vif*

V. *Modéré*

VI. *Brazileira*

Darius Milhaud  
(1892 – 1974)

Milhaud was a native of Aix-en-Provence in southern France. He often came to the United States, especially to Mills College in Oakland, California, where he taught and worked on his own compositions. His output was prodigious and includes nearly all kinds of compositions in orchestra, operatic, ballet, piano, and chamber works. He responded to nearly every style of music including popular styles. He incorporated several elements of jazz styles into his works. Milhaud was a member of Les Six, a name given by Henri Collet in 1920 to a group of six French composers who shared the aesthetic ideals of Erik Satie to resist the impressionistic movement that aimed to blur distinct formal lines of structure. The other five composers of the group were: Louis Durey (1888 – 1979), Arthur Honegger (1892 – 1955), Germaine Tailleferre (1892 – 1983), George Auric (1899 – 1983), and Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963). Jean Cocteau (1899 – 1963) subsequently became an advocate of this group.

In 1937 Milhaud composed and premiered stage music for Vildrac-Moliere’s “Le medecin volant” (“The Flying Doctor”) that was premiered in the Paris Theatre Scaramouche. He then used themes from that stage music for a three-movement suite that he called *Scaramouche*, the name of a pompous servant, that is a stock character from commedia dell’arte (Italian comedy of the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries). One version of the suite is written for solo alto saxophone with orchestra and another version is written for two pianos.

The first movement is lively and festive.

In the second movement Milhaud subtly mixes a spirit of gracefulness with the sadness of blues. The elegance of style is reminiscent of that of his one-time teacher and fellow French composer, Gabriel Faure.

The final movement is in the style of a dazzling Brazilian samba dance.

The work is scored for solo alto saxophone, piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, snare drum, wood block, tambourine, tam tam, castanets, xylophone, and strings. This is the first performance of the work by Dr. Baker and the YSO.

*Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 in A*  
*I. Aria (Cantilena). Adagio*  
*II. Dansa (Martelo). Allegretto*

Heitor Villa-Lobos  
 (1887 – 1959)

The *Bachianas Brasileiras* are a series of nine suites by the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, written for various combinations of instruments and voices between 1930 and 1945. Each represents a fusion between Brazilian folk and popular music and the style (or spirit) of Johann Sebastian Bach. Most of the movements in each suite have two titles: one "Bachian," such as *Aria* and *Dansa*, the other Brazilian such as *Cantilena* and *Martelo*. No. 5 was originally written for soprano and 8 cellos (1938/45). When listening to this work, one may think of Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos* with their great variety of tonal colors and instrumental combinations. Villa-Lobos called this work a *mindinha*, an art song cultivated in Brazil and Portugal. The first movement was completed in 1938. The second was added in 1945.

The *Aria (Cantilena)* was originally for soprano voice and cellos with Portuguese lyrics by Ruth Valadares Correa. The text describes the beauty of the moon as it makes its appearance through clouds. The singer is preparing herself in beauty of soul by meditating on the beauties of nature surrounding her.

The *Dansa (Martelo)* that was added in 1945 was also for soprano voice and cellos. The lyrics were by the Portuguese poet Manuel Bandeira. The singer describes her love for a bird called *Ireire*, who is to bring songs from the desert of Cariri. It focuses on rhythmic and percussive aspects.

The work is scored for solo soprano saxophone and strings. This is the first performance of the work by Dr. Baker and the YSO.

*Escapades (from the film “Catch Me If You Can”)*  
*I. Closing In*  
*II. Reflections*  
*III. Joy Ride*

John Williams  
 (1932 - )

John Williams, whose father was a film studio musician, began his career as composer, arranger, and conductor for film and television. As a child he studied piano, trombone, trumpet, and clarinet. He later studied orchestration with Robert van Epps at Los Angeles City College and composition privately with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. He also studied piano with Rosina Lhevinne at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. He received national attention as the long-time conductor of the Boston Pops. He has achieved considerable

popularity for his many film and television scores. He received Academy Awards for his music in *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977), *E.T.* (1982), and *Schindler's List* (1993).

Preface by composer John Williams to the score of "Escapades" from the DreamWorks film *Catch Me If You Can*, for alto saxophone and orchestra:

The 2002 film *Catch Me If You Can* constituted a delightful departure for director Stephen Spielberg. It tells the story of Frank Abagnale, the teenaged imposter, who baffled FBI agents with his incredible exploits.

The film is set in the now nostalgically tinged 1960's, and so it seemed to me that I might evoke the atmosphere of that time by writing a sort of impressionistic memoir of the progressive jazz movement that was then so popular. The alto saxophone seemed the ideal vehicle for this expression and the three movements of this suite are the result.

In "Closing In," we have music that relates to the often humorous sleuthing which took place in the story, followed by "Reflections," which refers to the fragile relationships in Abagnale's broken family. Finally, in "Joy Ride," we have the music that accompanied Frank's wild flights of fantasy that took him all around the world before the law finally reigned him in.

In recording the soundtrack for this entertaining film, I had the services of saxophonist Dan Higgins, to whom I'm indebted for his virtuosic skill and beautiful sound. My greatest reward would be if other players of this elegant instrument might find some joy in this music. -  
John Williams

The work is scored for solo alto saxophone, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings. This is the first time that Dr. Baker and the YSO have performed the work.

*Symphony No. 94 in G major, "Surprise"*

Joseph Haydn  
(1732 – 1809)

V. *Adagio; Vivace assai*

VI. *Andante*

VII. *Menuet: Allegro molto*

VIII. *Finale: Allegro di molto*

Haydn, born in the tiny Austrian village of Rohrau, had a youthful background in music that could be considered either meager or promising, depending on one's outlook. His earliest musical experiences were folk songs and peasant dances. At age eight he was sent to Vienna to serve as a choirboy in the Cathedral of St. Stephen. When his voice changed, he was dismissed from St. Stephen's and had to fend for himself. He gave music lessons, taught himself composition, and took odd jobs performing. Gradually, aristocratic patrons of music noticed his talent and, in 1761, he entered the service of the Esterhazy family, the richest and most powerful of the Hungarian noble families. For nearly thirty years most of Haydn's output was for performances in the palaces of the Esterhazy family. When the Esterhazy's retired Haydn, the London impresario, Salomon, invited him to come to London and compose music for a series of concerts. Haydn's "*Surprise*" *Symphony*, first performed in London on March 23, 1792, was one of that series of concerts. It was an immediate success, especially the second movement with its simple theme and surprise.

The first movement is one of Haydn's most elegant sonata movements. A slow introduction prepares the listener for a sparkling, dance-like set of themes that are developed and recapitulated. But in recapitulating, Haydn reconsiders and reinvents everything in a fresh way.

Haydn presents a charming and simple melody in the second movement and then creates an inventive set of four variations followed by coda. The variations include rhythmic variation and added counter-melodies.

The third movement is a minuet and trio, both of which undoubtedly reflect Haydn's youthful background in peasant dances.

The finale is a sonata rondo with the very best of Haydn's good-humored energy and wit.

The work is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings. Dr. Baker and the YSO last performed the work on April 26, 1997.

Program notes by Jim Mohatt