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Faculty Showcase Concert

Glenn Block Director
Illinois State University

Adriana La Rosa Ransom Cello

Angelo Favis Guitar

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Illinois State University
College of Fine Arts
School of Music

Illinois State University
Chamber Orchestra
Glenn Block, *Music Director*

Faculty Showcase Concert

Featuring

Adriana La Rosa Ransom, *Cello*
Angelo Favis, *Guitar*

Center for the Performing Arts
November 9, 2006
Thursday Evening
8:00 p.m.

This is the fifty-second program of the 2006-2007 season.

Program

Please turn off cell phones and pagers for the duration of the concert. Thank You.

Orchestra Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068 (1720) Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Ouverture
Air
Gavotte
Bourrée
Gigue

Paul Borg, *cembalo*

Concierto de Aranjuez for Guitar and Orchestra (1939) Joaquín Rodrigo
(1901-1999)

Allegro con spirito
Adagio
Allegro gentile

Angelo Favis, *guitar*

Variations on a Rococo Theme in A Major, Op. 33 (1876) Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Moderato quasi Andante
Tema. Moderato semplice
Variazione I: Tempo del Tema
Variazione II: Tempo del Tema
Variazione III: Andante sostenuto
Variazione IV: Andante grazioso
Variazione V: Allegro moderato
Variazione VI: Andante
Variazione VII: Allegro vivo

Adriana LaRosa Rnasom, *cello*

Program Notes

From 1717 to 1723, Bach was director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. His employer, Prince Leopold, was a well-educated man, 24 years old at the time he engaged Bach. (Bach was 32.) Leopold was fond of travel and books and paintings, but his real passion was music. He was an accomplished musician who not only played violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord well enough to join with the professionals in his house orchestra, but also had an exceptional bass voice. He started the court musical establishment in 1707 with three players (his puritanical father had no use for music), and by the time of Bach's appointment, the ensemble had grown to nearly twenty performers equipped with a fine set of instruments. It was for this group that Bach wrote many of his outstanding instrumental works, including the *Brandenburg Concertos*, the *Orchestral Suites*, the *Violin Concertos* and much of his chamber music. Leopold appreciated Bach's genius, and Bach returned the compliment when he said of his Prince, "He loved music, he was well acquainted with it, he understood it." Though the exact dates of Bach's *Orchestral Suites* are uncertain, all four were composed during or immediately after the Cöthen period.

Each of Bach's four suites is scored for a different orchestral ensemble. Three trumpets, two oboes and timpani join the strings and continuo (bass and keyboard) in the *Third Suite*. Each Suite comprises a grandiose Ouverture followed by a series of dances of various characters. The aptly named "French" Overtures are based on the type devised by Lully — a slow, almost pompous opening section filled with snapping rhythmic figures and rich harmony leading without pause to a spirited fugal passage in faster tempo. The majestic character of the opening section returns to round out the Ouverture's form. The chain of movements that follows varies from one suite to the next, though Bach's sense of musical architecture demands that they create a pleasing balance of tempos and moods. The first such movement in the *Third Suite* bears the title *Air*, a general term used during Bach's time for an instrumental piece in slow tempo with a sweet, ingratiating melody in the upper voice. This haunting, bittersweet music is one of Bach's best-loved creations. Next is a pair of Gavottes, a dance of moderate liveliness whose ancestry traces back to French peasant music. The Bourrée, also of French origin, is joyful and diverting in character, and, when danced, was begun with a brisk leap, which is mirrored in Bach's quick upbeat pattern. The Gigue was derived from an English folk dance, and became popular as the model for instrumental compositions by French and Italian musicians when it migrated to the Continent.

- Dr. Richard E. Rodda

Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* is one of the most popular guitar concertos in the orchestra and solo guitar repertoire. The opening movement, *Allegro con spirito*, is based on traditional dances such as the fandango. It is built on a series of alternations: the traditional alternation between the solo instrument and the orchestra, a thematic alternation between the strummed chords of the guitar and the melody introduced by the violins, and a rhythmic alternation between the written time signature of 6/8 and frequent passages in 3/4. The opening demonstrates Rodrigo's ability to balance the quieter guitar against a full orchestra. The guitar enters with a strummed passage, joined by agile counterpoint from the woodwinds that never overpowers the soloist, then the strings enter with quickly bowed chords sounding like a giant guitar. The solo guitar uses techniques from flamenco, as well as contrasting "punteado" (picked ornamentation in flying scale passages) with "rasgueados" (strumming). The movement climaxes with a brisk fandango segment complete with lively brass, and the guitar quiets the piece to a gentle close.

Gentleness becomes longing in the Adagio. The guitar strums quietly while the English horn plays a plaintive melody inspired by the "saeta", an Andalusian lament sung during Holy Week. This lament was sung by a few women as a religious statue was carried through the streets, and their cry would be picked up by the crowd. In this case, the guitar and English horn pass the theme back and forth, and eventually the entire orchestra takes it up, mimicking the keening of the crowds. The lamenting theme has a heartfelt quality inspired, according to a friend of Rodrigo's, not only by the "saeta" but in response to the death of the composer's infant son. Although an extended cadenza by the guitar leads the orchestra to a passionate climax, the movement ends quietly and reflectively.

The final movement, *Allegro gentile*, is a clever combination of Baroque-sounding counterpoint and dancing, folk-like melodies. As in the first movement, this one juxtaposes two time signatures, in this instance 2/4 and 3/4. Various solo instruments and groups pass the final theme back and forth, and after a final grand presentation, the movement and work end delicately, in keeping with Rodrigo's suggestion that the concerto "should only be as strong as a butterfly ... a suggestion of times past."

Tchaikovsky wrote the *Variations on a Rococo Theme* for the cellist, Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who played a major role in the final shape of the piece. (He even changed the order of the variations and made some cuts in the version that is almost always played today.) Tchaikovsky wrote the piece more or less as a way of escaping a string of bad reviews of his latest opera, *Vakula the Smith*, in St. Petersburg and of his orchestral tone poem *Romeo and Juliet* in Paris and Vienna. This visit to the style of a past century let him capture a light-hearted mood that reveals little of his depression.

Though the theme of Opus 33 is original and has no particular Mozartean character, the Variations did achieve an early success, unlike so much of Tchaikovsky's music, which he thought of as failures until the day he died. When Franz Liszt—generally regarded as an apostle of Modernism in his day—first heard the work at a festival in Wiesbaden in 1879, his reaction was highly gratifying to the self-doubting composer: "At last, music again!"

- Steven Ledbetter

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Biographies

Glenn Block has served as the Director of Orchestras and Opera and Professor of Conducting at Illinois State University since 1990. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City since 1983. Prior to his appointment at Illinois State in the fall of 1990, Dr. Block served for 15 years as Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri - Kansas City and Music Director of the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, Dr. Block was educated at the Eastman School of Music. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego.

A frequent guest conductor, he has appeared in over 42 states with all-state and professional orchestras. Foreign guest conducting have included concerts and master classes at the Fountainebleau Conservatoire in France, and concerts in Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia. He has served on the Boards of Directors for both the Conductors Guild and the Youth Orchestra Division of the American Symphony Orchestra League. The Youth Symphony of Kansas City and Dr. Block made their Carnegie Hall debut in June, 1997.

Dr. Block has served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen as Resident Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy as Visiting Conductor. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Summer Festival Orchestra at the Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado.

In the summer of 2000, Dr. Block and the Youth Symphony of Kansas City were featured as the Festival Orchestra at the Western Slopes Music Festival in Crested Butte, Colorado and at festivals in northern Italy and Tuscany. He has conducted on tour with the Youth Symphony of Kansas City to Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic in the summer of 2003, and traveled with the same orchestra to Italy to perform for a series of festivals in the summer of 2006.

Angelo L. Favis, is an Associate Professor of Guitar at Illinois State University and co-founder of the Linden Flute & Guitar Duo with Kimberly M. Risinger. He earned both his B.M. and M.M. degrees in Guitar Performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Manhattan School of Music. A prizewinner in many competitions, most notably the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition and the Eighth International Solo Competition sponsored by the Guitar Foundation of America, Dr. Favis has been an active performer of solo and chamber music in the U.S. and abroad. He was featured at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center with the Little Orchestra Society of New York, and was one of six performers chosen to play in a special masterclass taught by Julian Bream in New York City. An advocate of new music for guitar, Dr. Favis has given the world premieres of several works, including Stephen Taylor's *Seven Microworlds for Flute, Guitar & Electronics*, Laura Schwendinger's *Petit Morceau*, and David Vayo's *Fantasia Lirica*. He has taught masterclasses at the University of Akron, Ohio University, the University of the Philippines, Roosevelt University, Harper College, Grand Rapids Community College, and was the featured artist at the Lake Guntersville Guitar Symposium in Alabama. Dr. Favis has also been a juror in several competitions, such as the GFA International Solo Competition, Illinois ASTA Statewide Competition and the Society of American Musicians Competition. His debut CD, *Philippine Treasures: Vol. 1* is available worldwide, and Volume 2 is set for release in the fall of 2006.

Dr. Favis is Graduate Coordinator for the School of Music. That office phone number is 309-438-8960 and the email address is musgrad@ilstu.edu

Adriana La Rosa Ransom is Assistant Professor of Cello and Director of String Project at Illinois State University. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Missouri where she studied with Nina Gordon. She earned Master and Doctorate degrees from the University of Minnesota where she studied cello with Tanya Remenikova and chamber music with Jorja Fleezanis and Lydia Artymiw. As a soloist, Dr. La Rosa Ransom is the recipient of numerous awards, including winning top prizes at the WAMSO Young Artist Competition, the Naftzger Young Artist Competition, the Schubert Club Young Artist Competition, and the Thursday Musical Society Competition. She has appeared as a guest artist on notable solo and chamber music recital series, including the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series in Chicago. She has performed with many professional orchestras and ensembles, including the Minnesota Opera Orchestra, the Kansas City Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, the European Musical Festival Orchestra, and New Ear Contemporary Ensemble. Dr. La Rosa Ransom has served on the faculty at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Cloud State University, and the MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis, and continues to teach at the Illinois Wesleyan University Cello Camp.

Illinois State University
Chamber Orchestra
Glenn Block, *Music Director*

Violin I

Emily Morgan, *concertmaster*
Katelyn Eldridge
Arcadia Kust

Violin II

Jennifer Kluchenek, *principal*
Taylor Nix
Charlyn Renolds
David Victor

Viola

Colleen Doyle, *principal*
Matthew Harper

Cello

Shannon Schultze, *principal*
Kim Wedesky
Ruth-Anne Yang

Bass

Dorian Jackman, *principal*
Chris Griffith

Flute

Stefanie Lindsay, *principal*
Erin Lacob
Rachel Wiersbe

Oboe

Laura Israelsen, *principal*
Anna Keehan

Clarinet

Jessica Boese, *co-principal*
Christina Quatrini, *co-principal*

Bassoon

Brian Cooley, *principal*
Michelle Sawyer

Horn

Janie Berg, *principal*
Danielle Fisher

Trumpet

Joel Adair, *principal*
Kyle Berens
Laura Hall

Timpani

Douglas Ford, *principal*

Staff

Jennifer Kluchenek, *tour manager,*
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