

# Resilience

Saturday, February 5, 2022 • 7:30 p.m.

First Free Methodist Church

**Harmonia Orchestra**

**William White**, conductor



WILLIAM C. WHITE (\*1983)

*Recollected Dances*, Op. 41

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048

*Allegro — Adagio — Allegro*

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Romance in C major, Op. 42

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

Concerto Grosso in A major, Op. 6, No. 11 (HWV 329)

*Andante larghetto e staccato — Allegro*

*Largo e staccato — Andante*

*Allegro*

— **intermission** —

QUINN MASON (\*1996)

*Reflection on a Memorial*

WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART (1756–1791)

Divertimento in B $\flat$  major, K. 137

*Andante*

*Allegro di molto*

*Allegro assai*

OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879–1936)

*Antiche danze ed arie per liuto* Suite No. 3, P. 172

Italiana: *Andantino*

Arie di Corte: *Andante cantabile*

Siciliana: *Andantino*

Passacaglia: *Maestoso*

*Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.*

*Special thanks to Ron Haight for his assistance in producing this concert.*

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William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

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## Maestro's Prelude

Dear Listeners,

Tonight's concert, entitled "Resilience," was originally to have featured music written at the outset of the second World War. The message behind the program was that artists generally — and musicians specifically — find ways to carry on in a world beset by challenges and perils. And although the contents of the program are now entirely different, the message has come to life with surprising vividness.

Just a couple weeks ago, our board wisely decided to reconceive this concert as a strings-only program to avoid having our beloved woodwind and brass colleagues performing on stage (and at rehearsals) unmasked in the midst of this newest, bedeviling wave of the coronavirus.

I was, therefore, called upon to create a new program of music entirely for string orchestra. My goal was not so much to find music that would reflect the original theme of "resilience" — that was baked into the fact that we were performing a concert at all — but rather to select pieces that would help us feel more resilient as we experienced yet another setback during this era of perpetual setbacks.

My guiding principle was to choose music that was fun to play and to listen to. I wanted a mix of familiar chestnuts and pieces that would become fast favorites. In spite of the relative brevity of tonight's program, and the fact that we've got nothing but strings on stage, I think you'll find that we're exploring an immense range of musical expression.

We've got music of dazzling brilliance, with buoyant Baroque masterworks by Bach and Handel practically bursting off the page, as does Mozart's B♭-major "Salzburg symphony," another piece that bubbles over with life.

In contrast, we have two works of a more somber cast: Jean Sibelius' brooding *Romance* and Quinn Mason's poignant *Reflection on a Memorial*. Many of you will remember Quinn from his appearance conducting our orchestra almost exactly two years ago. Quinn is, simply stated, a musical phenom, and I am happy to say that our relationship has only deepened since he was last here. Look out for a major new work from him next season!

Finally, we've got pieces that mix darkness and light: Respighi's *Ancient Airs and Dances* and my own *Recollected Dances*. Coincidentally, both of these works recycle music from previous eras, though on vastly different time scales: Respighi arranged music by 16th-century lutenists, while I re-used a bit of a film score that I wrote in 2012.

I think there's something for everyone, and I hope you'll agree. We thank you for your ongoing support in these unsteady times, and I'm glad you're joining us to experience this quasi-impromptu program, whether you're sitting in a church pew or relaxing on a sofa in front of your television or computer. This too shall pass, and we'll get through it together, resiliently.



## Program Notes

**William C. White**

***Recollected Dances, Op. 41***

*White was born August 16, 1983, in Fairfax, Virginia. He composed this work during September and October 2018, on a commission from the Georgia All-State String Orchestra, which he conducted on March 2, 2019. The piece had had its premiere two months prior by in Mānoa, Hawaii by Joseph Stepec and the Hawaii All-State Orchestra.*

William White is of course familiar to Harmonia audiences as the ensemble's music director (see the program cover for additional biographical details). His *Psalm 46* was featured on this season's opening concert and he is currently writing *The Muses*, a choral-orchestral work to be premiered by Harmonia at Benaroya Hall on April 24.

"The 'Recollected' of the title *Recollected Dances*," says White, "refers to both meanings of the word: the main theme of the piece was originally composed for a film score, and thus has been reused in this work. However, 'recollected' also refers to the fact that the piece evokes the memory of bygone days." The film in question is *Mulligan* (2012), directed by Will Slocombe, which "centers around an emotionally stunted 30-year-old loser, John, who can't get past the fraught relationship he had with his father (now deceased)."

*Mulligan* opens with a Danny Elfman-esque comic overture (also adapted for the concert hall) and throughout features a "nostalgia" theme associated with the reconciliation between father and son, as well as a search by the main character for buried treasure. These latter cues include a tarantella (a rollicking dance of Italian origin often in  $\frac{12}{8}$  time) that provided the source material for *Recollected Dances*.

"Formally, the piece is a suite of short, interconnected dances," says White. "It is one of the rare works for string orchestra that devotes an extended soli melody to the contrabass section." Jiří Petrdlík and the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra recorded *Recollected Dances* for the Navona label in the summer of 2020.

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

***Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048***

*J.S. Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, on March 21, 1685, and died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750. His six Brandenburg Concerti were assembled and copied in 1720, and dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg on March 24, 1721.*

Between 1703 and 1707 Bach served as a church organist at Arnstadt (where he often confused the parishioners during hymns with his virtuoso improvisations) and from 1708 as court organist for the Duke of Weimar. In 1717, Prince Leopold hired Bach as court organist and director of chamber music at Anhalt-Cöthen. Because the prince was a Calvinist rather than a Lutheran, Bach was not required to prepare music for church services, so instead devoted himself to instrumental composition. Although the prince himself was an accomplished musician, the woman he married in 1720 did not appreciate music and thus Bach, fearful of losing his job, began to seek a new employer.

While on a trip to Berlin in 1719 to take delivery of a new harpsichord, Bach had met the Margrave of Brandenburg, who made a casual request for some concerti from the composer. When looking about for new employment the following year, Bach remembered this incident and collected together a group of six concerti, which he sent off to Brandenburg in March 1721 as a sort of job application, accompanied by a letter in florid French.

Each of the six “Brandenburgs” is a concerto grosso, a piece of music that contrasts a small concertino group with a larger orchestra. Bach utilized a different ensemble for each concerto: the third Brandenburg employs trios of violins, violas and cellos, plus continuo. That this concerto featuring three groups of threes (including many phrases with melodic cells played three times) would be numbered third of among the Brandenburgs is not necessarily a coincidence — Bach’s works are rife with numerical symbolism.

The opening movement of BWV 1048 employs a *ritornello* form, with a recurring melodic passage interspersed between soloistic episodes. In 1729 Bach would recycle this movement (adding wind parts) for the sinfonia of his cantata *Ich liebe den Höchsten von ganzem Gemüte*, BWV 174. The central “slow movement,” as notated by Bach, consists of merely two chords, seemingly inviting one or more of the instrumentalists to contribute an improvisation.

The spirited finale, in  $\frac{12}{8}$  time, is in binary form, with the first section consisting of 12 measures (four groups of three) and the second section three times as long (36 measures). “What matters most of course,” writes British conductor Richard Egarr, “is the superbly scintillating, joyous nature of the interweaving counterpoints, not the maths.”

## Jean Sibelius

### Romance in C major, Op. 42

*Sibelius was born in Tavestehus, Finland, on December 8, 1865, and died at Jävenpää on September 20, 1957. He completed this work for string orchestra in 1904 and conducted the premiere at Turku on March 26 of that year.*

“Sibelius was not merely the most famous composer Finland ever produced,” writes Alex Ross in *The Rest Is Noise*, “but the country’s chief celebrity in any field.” Until Paavo Nurmi (“the flying Finn”) captured two gold medals at the 1920 Olympics, Michael Steinberg notes, “Sibelius was the only Finn whose name was known throughout the world.” Even today, Ross points out, “[w]hen Finns are asked to characterize their culture, they invariably mention, along with such national treasures as the lakeside sauna, Fiskars scissors, and Nokia cell phones, ‘our Sibelius.’”

The son of a Swedish-speaking doctor (who died of typhus before the boy reached age three), Sibelius learned Finnish at prep school, later changing his given name of Janne to the French Jean. He originally sought a career as a celebrated violinist until a disastrous audition for the Vienna Philharmonic shifted his focus to composition. At the turn of the 20th century, his patriotic tone poem *Finlandia*, his 1902 Symphony No. 2 and his violin concerto (1904–1905) solidified Sibelius’ reputation in the hearts of Finns as well as

his position as a major composer on the world stage. Meanwhile, alcoholism threatened his personal relationships and his health, as well as his ability to produce music.

The composer’s wife, Aino, urged him to move their family from Helsinki to a cottage (eventually called Ainola) near Lake Tuusula. To facilitate its construction, Sibelius participated in several fund-raising concerts, including one he conducted in Turku at the end of March. The all-Sibelius program included the original version of his recently premiered violin concerto, the tone poem *En Saga*, the finale of his second symphony, and the premiere of a work for strings, entitled *Andante* (but later renamed “Romance”) and dedicated to the orchestra’s music director, José Eibenschütz. “The five-minute work conjures a whirlwind of emotions,” notes music historian K. Dawn Grapes, “ranging from tenderness and angst to longing and serenity, words that might also describe the lifelong journey of Jean and Aino.”

## George Frideric Handel

### Concerto Grosso in A major, Op. 6, No. 11 (HWV 329)

*Handel was born in Halle, Germany, on February 23, 1685, and died in London on April 14, 1759. He composed the 12 concerti of his Op. 6 in a single burst of energy during the fall of 1739. Handel completed work on this A major concerto on October 30, scoring it for a concertino group (two violins and cello), string orchestra and continuo.*

At the end of his life, the Italian composer Arcangelo Corelli prepared his classic set of 12 concerti grossi for publication; they appeared in 1714, shortly after Corelli’s death, as his Op. 6. Each of these works was scored for strings, with solo parts for two violins and a cello. In 1739, Handel implicitly paid tribute to Corelli with his own great set of 12 concerti, also Op. 6, which Handel’s publisher sold by subscription for a fee of two guineas, attracting over 100 interested musicians and members of the aristocracy.

While Corelli refined his concerti through years of performances, Handel produced his set in about five weeks: either Handel’s muse was particularly strong, or his creditors especially anxious to be paid! Handel was able to work so quickly in part because he recycled several of the concerto movements from compositions for other forces (and in some cases from music by other composers). This is especially true of HWV 329 (the last of the 12 concerti to be completed), much of which consists of a reworking of an organ concerto (HWV 296) composed in early 1739.

Following Corelli’s example, Handel employed a concertino group of two violins and a cello in the bulk of his own Op. 6 set (the one exception being the seventh concerto). The opening two movements of HWV 329 possess the form of a French *ouverture*, with a slow dotted-rhythm introduction leading to a quick, fugal *Allegro*. (This fast section is the only music original to the concerto grosso, replacing an improvisatory passage from HWV 296.) A six-bar *Largo* section yields to the central *Andante*, which uses a theme from a 1696 sonata by Johann Kuhnau. Both this movement and the concluding *Allegro* feature virtuoso passages for the solo first violinist.

## Quinn Mason

### *Reflection on a Memorial*

Mason was born in March 1996 and currently resides in Dallas, Texas. He composed this work on commission from the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, which gave the first performance on November 11, 2020, under the direction of Lawrence Loh.

Since conducting Orchestra Seattle (now Harmonia) in the premiere of *A Joyous Trilogy* in February 2020, Quinn Mason has been very much a young star on the rise, in spite of the ensuing pandemic-driven decline in concertizing. *A Joyous Trilogy* has subsequently been played by Italy's Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI and this season by the Utah, Mesquite, Amarillo and South Bend Symphonies, plus the Houston Ballet, among others. *In Memory* for solo viola, commissioned by Harmonia, has been performed more than 100 times since its May 2020 YouTube premiere by Harmonia principal violist Grant Hanner.

"*Reflection on a Memorial*," writes its composer, "contemplates the passing of a person or a tragic event and meditates on this idea. In the composition, the listener experiences grief and mourning at first as we ponder and think deeply about events past, and at a brief moment in the climax, an enlightening moment that can be seen as light through darkness and a spark of hope.

"I chose the viola section to begin this piece because of the mournful and singing character of the instrument's sound. Also prominently featured throughout the composition are the voices of the solo violin and cello, which almost take on narrative roles; at the end, a solo cello reprises the viola line heard the beginning as a final mournful statement.

"There are four distinct sections in the piece: a somber, melancholy beginning, then a faster, tragic outburst of grief, followed by a calmer reflective passage, which features hopeful yet intense chords that build up to a light-infused climax. This is all brought together with a coda that is a faint memory of an earlier section of the piece, which becomes distant and fades into the abyss."

Following its Dallas Symphony premiere, *Reflection on a Memorial* has been performed by the San Francisco Symphony, South Bend Symphony (conducted by friend-of-Harmonia Alastair Willis) and numerous other ensembles.

## Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

### *Divertimento in B♭ major, K. 137*

Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He composed this work at Salzburg in early 1772.

During the Classical period, works variously dubbed serenades, divertimenti, cassations and partitas (usually consisting of a long opening movement followed by several short dances) were employed as background music for social events, often with wind instruments used for outdoor gatherings and string ensembles for indoor occasions.

Mozart wrote more than three dozen works that fit this category, ranging from delightful yet utilitarian to profound (such as the Serenade in C minor for wind instruments, K. 388). In early 1772, the 16-year-old Mozart composed three

works in his native Salzburg dubbed "divertimenti" on their manuscripts (but not in the composer's hand). While a divertimento almost always consisted of at least five movements with at least one minuet (but often two), these three works (K. 136, 137 and 138) each consist of only three movements with nary a minuet to be found among them. Scored for four-part strings, they are often played by string quartets.

The B♭-major K. 137 is even more unusual in that it begins with a slow movement, followed by two fast ones. Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein theorized that these three works were in fact intended as symphonies. (Indeed, they are sometimes known as Mozart's "Salzburg symphonies.") "I believe that Mozart wrote them in preparation for [an upcoming] Italian journey," Einstein hypothesized, "in order not to be disturbed during the composition of [his opera] *Lucio Silla* if symphonies should have been demanded of him, and that he would then have added wind-instruments to the outer movements on the spot in Milan."

Jan Swafford, in his recent (and brilliant) biography *Mozart: The Reign of Love*, wonders why these pieces for four-part strings (which he posits were written as *Hausmusik*, intended for performance in homes or at private social gatherings) "should be more sure-handed and original than the string quartets he would be writing" around this time. "Perhaps writing for a quartet of strings not exactly in the genre of string quartet, he was less distracted by influences."

Swafford even suggests that "these divertimentos are, perhaps, the first pieces Mozart wrote to make a claim on immortality, though he would hardly have thought of them in such grand terms. He would have thought of them as pieces of work that were fun and, come to think of it, turned out pretty well. Mozart as a teenager was accomplished at producing things facile and attractive in fashionable styles, but in these divertimentos, there is a kind of effortless perfection so easily worn that they seem almost to have written themselves. And they are fresh, incomparably his own."

## Ottorino Respighi

### *Antiche danze ed arie per liuto Suite No. 3, P. 172*

Respighi was born on July 9, 1879, in Bologna, and died on April 18, 1936, in Rome. He composed this work in 1931 and conducted the first performance in January 1932 at the Sala Verdi of the Milan Conservatory.

Ottorino Respighi is perhaps most widely known for a trilogy of large-scale orchestral works (the tone poems *Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*). An orchestration student of Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Respighi also took an interest in adapting "early" music for modern performance, making a particular study of Gregorian chant and composing several works inspired by that style.

Another product of this interest in music from earlier eras were three suites of *Antiche danze ed arie per liuto* ("ancient dances and airs for lute"). The first, for chamber orchestra, dates from 1917; the second, for a larger ensemble, was composed in 1923 and premiered by Fritz Reiner and the Cincinnati Symphony the following year; the third, written in 1931, is for strings alone.

The modern-notation transcriptions of 16th-century Italian lute music by musicologist Oscar Chilesotti (1848–1916) had first begun to appear in print when Respighi was enrolled at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. These provided the source material for all three of Respighi’s suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*.

Respighi calls the first movement of the third suite—in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time and E $\flat$  major—an “Italiana” (perhaps indicating that it is “in the Italian style”); although Respighi lists his source as “anonymous,” subsequent scholarship has identified the author of the original material as lutenist and composer Santino Garsi da Parma (1542–1604).

Next comes a suite of six “courtly airs” taken from *arie di corte* of another lutenist-composer, Jean-Baptiste Besard (born in Besançon, now in France, around 1567), with the first of the six repeated at the end. The *siciliana* that follows (from a still-anonymous source) begins in pastoral fashion, with the accompaniment growing more and more vigorous before subsiding into a quiet coda. The finale is a passacaglia drawn from the ninth suite of *Harmonic Caprices for the Spanish Guitar* (1692) by guitarist Lodovico Roncalli. A 24-bar *maestoso* introduction yields to an animated central section, followed by a *Largo* finale.

— Jeff Eldridge

#### Violin

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Dean Drescher  
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Manchung Ho  
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Pam Kummert  
Mark Lutz  
Gregor Nitsche\*  
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Theo Schaad  
Kenna Smith-Shangrow  
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#### Theorbo

Daniel Frizzell

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Maryann Tagney  
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Matthew Tracy  
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Amy Vandergon  
Jamie Walter  
Frances Walton  
Coleman White  
Jay V. White  
Nancy White  
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