

Guest Artist Recital

2017–2018 Season
121st Concert

Thursday 2 November 2017
Dalton Center Recital Hall
7:30 p.m.

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON, Cello

“Reflecting BACH”

Johann Sebastian Bach
1685–1750

“Suite Sampler” (c.1717–1723)

Prelude from *Suite in G Major* BWV 1007
Allemande from *Suite in D Minor* BWV 1008
Courante from *Suite in C Major* BWV 1009
Sarabande from *Suite in C Minor* BWV 1011
Bourée I and Bourée II from *Suite in E-Flat Major* BWV 1010
Gigue from *Suite in D Major* BWV 1012

Benjamin Britten
1913–1976

Suite for Cello Number 1 Opus 72 (1965)

Canto primo: *Sostenuto e largamente*
I. Fuga: *Andante moderato*
II. Lamento: *Lento rubato*
Canto secondo: *Sostenuto*
III. Serenata: *Allegretto (pizzicato)*
IV. Marcia: *Alla marcia moderato*
Canto terzo: *Sostenuto*
V. Bordone: *Moderato quasi recitativo*
VI. Moto perpetuo e Canto quarto: *Presto*

John Corigliano
b. 1938

Fancy on a Bach Air (1996)

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Originally from Wellington, New Zealand, **CHRISTOPHER HUTTON** is the cellist of the Poinsett Piano Trio and is Associate Professor of Violoncello at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

He has performed widely, including solo and chamber music recitals in his home country, his adopted home of the United States, and in Europe. He has recorded for New Zealand's Concert FM, Germany's SWF Radio, and appears on a disc of contemporary music on Albany Classics. Christopher served as co-principal cellist of the New World Symphony Orchestra under music director Michael Tilson Thomas and has played in the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra as well as other orchestras in the United States. He has enjoyed collaborating with composers, notably New Zealanders Helen Bowater and Christopher Marshall.

Christopher studied at Boston University with Leslie Parnas, and earned Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees with Paul Katz and Steven Doane at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music. While at Eastman he was teaching assistant to Prof. Doane and taught both for the University of Rochester and Eastman's Community Education Division. He later taught at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the University of Delaware, and the Eastern Music Festival before joining the faculty at Furman in 2003.

Program Notes

As hard as it may be to imagine, **Johann Sebastian Bach** was not widely known as a composer when he wrote his six cello suites almost 300 years ago. We know that the Suites were written in Cöthen between 1717-1720, yet it is uncertain who exactly might have first performed them, and in what context. They may have been intended to impress Bach's employer Prince Leopold, who was an enthusiast of the Viola da Gamba. Bach surely never intended this music to be used to accompany actual dancing but his contemporaries enjoyed dance music so much that dance styles were commonly integrated into instrumental music written purely for amusement. This meant that Bach could readily draw upon styles with meters and figuration specific to each kind of dance that were immediately recognizable to his audiences. Each suite consists of an introductory prelude followed by a series of five dances, always appearing in the same order: Allemande (moderate-tempo in 4/4 time), Courante (quicker, in 3/4 time), Sarabande (slow and stately in 3/4, often with a particular emphasis on the second beat), and Gigue (fast, with triple rather than duple rhythmic subdivisions). Between the Sarabande and Gigue each suite has a pair of short dances called Galanteries: Minuets in the first and second suites (moderately quick, 3/4); Bourées in the third and fourth suites (quicker, in 3/4), and Gavottes in the fifth and sixth (relatively quick, in 4/4 time). All seven of these dance styles have their roots in courtly dances that had become standardized in France in the late seventeenth century, and although by 1720 the French court had moved on to newer dances, the older styles were still common in other countries.

Because a performance of all six suites lasts well over two hours, today's program begins with a "Suite Sampler", presenting one movement from each of Bach's Suites, each in a different key. By combining movements from multiple suites one can get an impression both of the musical affect of each suite and of the variety of different movements contained within, perhaps whetting listeners' appetites to seek out the set of six suites as a whole. This set begins with the Prelude of the first, G major Suite, which is almost certainly the single most famous movement of solo cello music ever written. It is remarkably simple, a series of arpeggiated chords that modulate through a number of keys before settling on the dominant (fifth scale degree). Resolution back to tonic is inevitable, but is withheld. The tension inherent in that delayed gratification builds until the chords of the opening measures return in a cathartic moment of rapture. This is followed by the usual series of dances with the contrasts between each style heightened by the different keys and character reflective of each suite: the introspective Allemande in D minor, the fleet-footed Courante from the sunny C-major suite, the melancholy and extraordinarily sparse Sarabande from the C minor suite, the playful Bourées from the otherwise grandiose E-flat Suite, wrapped up with the brilliant and thrilling Gigue of the D major suite.

Benjamin Britten wrote three suites for solo cello, not as a set, but rather among a series of five works written between 1960 and 1974 for and dedicated to the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (1927–2007). The first suite was written in 1964 and premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1965. Inspired by Rostropovich's playing of Bach suites rather than Bach's music itself, it still has aspects that clearly echo Bach. Both the Canto which recurs in different guises throughout the Suite (much like the Promenade of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition) and the Lamento relate quite strongly to Bach's Sarabande in C minor in the way they explore the dissonant interval of a half-step (semitone). The Fuga channels the contrapuntal writing of Bach's fugues, and here Britten comes up with the ingenious idea of including silences in his theme which allows him more leeway in giving the impression of multiple voices (allowing voices in other registers to fill in the gaps).

Rather than imitate the typical kinds of dance movements found in a Baroque suite, the later movements are distinctly Britten. The serenade is played pizzicato throughout, with strings plucked by both the left and right hands. The sarcastic march (perhaps echoing Shostakovich, another composer who collaborated with Rostropovich) has trumpet and drum effects which gradually draw closer and then further away. The fifth movement, Bordone, alternates between higher, scurrying themes played with the bow contrasted with lower and slower notes plucked by the left hand, all layered with a sustained drone D. Later in the movement the quick motive dissolves into the drone itself which then accompanies a plaintive melody first above and then below. In the finale Moto perpetuo the scurrying theme of the Bordone is further developed, culminating in a return of the Canto refrain. The Canto that has been haunting the suite is finally exorcised and at the end of the movement the last note is a dyad of the dissonant half-step of F# and G which resolves to G alone as the open string rings longer. The piece is a real tour-de-force both of composition and as a showcase for the abundant talent of its dedicatee.

John Corigliano's *Fancy on a Bach Air* is an introspective single-movement piece inspired not by any of Bach's cello music, but rather the Aria of the "Goldberg" Variations for harpsichord. It was written in memory of one Robert Goldberg who had commissioned a number of composers to write a series of variations for the 25th anniversary of his wedding to his wife Judy. The set of pieces was to be performed by Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax, but before the commission could be fulfilled Robert died of cancer leaving the variations to stand in memorium rather than their original, celebratory purpose. The long-breathed phrases of Bach's original air are imitated here in long, legato lines, written without notated rhythms to suggest a sense of freedom. It seems an appropriate way to bring this program to a close.