

TOKEN CREEK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL 2014

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Season

PROGRAM I: American Spring

Saturday August 23rd at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday August 24th at 4:00 p.m.

Works of J.S. Bach, C.P.E. Bach, Haydn, Harbison & Stanek

It would be inarticulate to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of CPE Bach without the music of J.S. Bach and Joseph Haydn, both his origins and in some sense his destiny. Let's not kid ourselves, these anchors have more weight than the ship we are launching. But CPE's virtues are made clearest by posing his cheeky, mischievous, iconoclastic imagination against the stabilizing, normative, and finally more clear-minded music of his father precursor and his successor "heir." It could be said that CPE's task was to dismantle some of his father's synthesis, and Haydn's was to reassemble, balance, and clarify the brilliant musical vistas glimpsed by CPE. *Songs America Sings* proposes to adapt J.S. Bach's chorale prelude principle, his inclusion of familiar melodies as tugboats through unfamiliar musical waters, into a modern setting, the tune supposedly widely and currently familiar, the compositional terrain complicated by canons, re-harmonizations, and diversions.

J.S. BACH	Partita in E Major (selections)
HAYDN	Trio in D major for violin, cello, and piano, Hob XV:24
STANEK	The Direction in Which the Wind Moves (commissioned for TCF's 25 th) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano
C.P.E. BACH	Sonata V in E minor for piano, violin, and cello, Wq 89, no. 5
HARBISON	Songs America Loves to Sing (Midwest Premiere) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano

Dawn Lawler, flute

Joe Morris, clarinet

Laura Burns, violin

Rose Mary Harbison, violin

Karl Lavine, cello

John Harbison, piano

Jeffrey Stanek, commissioned composer

PROGRAM II: Many Happy Returns

Wednesday August 27th at 8:00 p.m.

Works of C.P.E. Bach, Scarlatti, Chopin, Beethoven

What can we say about a composer who winds up composing entirely, or at the least primarily, for one medium? Chopin and Scarlatti both found that restriction to the keyboard, rather than limiting their resources, freed their imaginations. By immersing themselves in the sound and attach of a single instrument they each became more peculiar, un-imitable, and irresistible. In small forms they found snowflake variety.

Anchoring the program, Beethoven, a universal large-scale composer whose *Sonata in F* somehow acquired the title "Spring." If spring, it is the changeable, difficult weather, more showers than flowers.

Program:

Scarlatti - selected keyboard sonatas
Keyboard sonatas of Scarlatti,
Chopin - selected Preludes, for piano,
CPE Bach - *Arioso* with Variations in A, for keyboard and violin, Wq 79,
Beethoven - Violin Sonata in F major, Op. 24 ("Spring")

Judith Gordon, piano

Rose Mary Harbison, violin

PROGRAM III: The Perennial Avant Garde

Saturday August 30th at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday August 31st at 4:00 p.m.

Works of C.P.E. Bach, Schubert, Ravel, Debussy

Occasionally, not always, composers decide to take it further, to write a piece with absurd levels of discontinuity (CPE Bach's *Fantasy*), radical conciseness and semaphoric, sketchy formal outline (Debussy's *Sonata*), over the top nostalgia and apocalyptic prediction (Ravel's *La Valse*), and form and scope too big for its medium (Schubert's *Grand Duo*, for one piano, two players). A program of extremes: in the service of liberty - no vice.

C.P.E. BACH Fantasia in F-sharp minor for Keyboard, Wq 67
DEBUSSY Sonata for Violin and Piano
C.P.E. BACH Sonata in C Minor for Keyboard and Violin, Wq 78
RAVEL La Valse (arranged for piano by Ya-Fei Chuang)

SCHUBERT Grand Duo, for one piano four hands

Robert Levin, piano

Ya-Fei Chuang, piano

Rose Mary Harbison, violin

New Beginnings at Token Creek

When the Token Creek Festival began, twenty-five years ago, we had many ideas, many ideals, but none of our plans involved growth. The reason for that was at first practical. We wanted to perform in a converted barn, the very space where we already practiced and played. The space and its surroundings is welcoming, but able to seat, optimally, no more than eighty people. We had no stage, no lights, and no parking plan. We were our own maintenance and groundskeeping staff.

We also had ideas about the music we would like to present. We had participated in various summer festivals, and were not too interested in the concept of "summer" music. Along with our founding colleagues, Jorja Fleezanis and Michael Steinberg, we came up with some initial programs—Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, Schoenberg's *Ode to Napolen*, recent pieces by Helps and Harbison, thinking of music we wouldn't likely be asked to prepare at other festivals, in late August.

In the official re-opening season (1994) there were three concerts: all Bach, all Mozart, all Schoenberg. Single composer concerts have since been rare at Token Creek, but we have instead done series: many Haydn trios, the complete Mozart concertos for which he made chamber music arrangements, the 'esoteric' final period of Bach, including generous selections from *The Art of Fugue*, and *The Musical Offering* in two different orderings and instrumentations.

Our guests have been friends who we have come to know in our various travels. We were once told by a possible patron that he would fund the festival for two seasons if we would bring X, a conductor with whom we were in close partnership. But this is not the way we have chosen to construct our seasons—independence in programming and staffing has remained our most precious freedom.

We have presented what interests us, and the varying audience sizes, from sold-out to modest, reflects that determination. Thirty excited, involved listeners provide a sufficient presence, in our small barn, for an unforgettable occasion, like Leonard Stein's lecture-demonstration on Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata.

Ten years ago we expanded into jazz, eventually composer-focused, with an idea that some of the players would play in both, and we would encourage an audience to embrace the whole series. In the early years we stressed themes and issues shared by both forms. (An audience survey later revealed that in fact the crossover audience is very small, we were surprised.) The jazz became popular, and began in certain ways to drive the festival, especially logistically (a night-club set up, an eventual two-concerts-per-day schedule). Part of our effort to recapture the original spirit of the festival involves letting go of the jazz for this year, becoming smaller and more thoughtful again.

One of our best colleagues, a performer, has a brother, a violinist, who started a European festival. It grew, it added things on, his responsibilities changed. Is he happy with the growth, we asked. "Well of course, it's a success, but he is pretty sad. . .he no longer plays the violin."

Every musician is challenged, at every point in their development, to try to remember why they went into music, to recapture the basic impulse. Sometimes that requires going back to a starting point, and either starting over, or summarizing what has happened. Institutions, like individuals, always challenged to grow, to go forward, to move on, must occasionally reconstruct themselves, at the risk of not fitting expectations, dreams, or the economic model.

With the hope of encountering their best instincts and reconnecting with like souls, the natural constituency,

Rose Mary Harbison

CPE Bach, an anniversary (1714-1788)

One of the many privileges of co-directing a music festival is study, a chance to pause over music that might go by too fast, a chance, even, to make a connection with music that has remained alien too long. For many years I cherished a suspicion of, close to an aversion to CPE Bach's music. This was based on a large number of keyboard pieces I heard in the '60s played by the eminent harpsichordist Louis Bagger. The pieces had a pronounced WOW factor, they were calculated to immediate effect, they asked provocative questions, then shirked answering. The non-sequiturs, as in many of today's novelties, seemed mere posturing, the work of a gadfly without a message.

Tied to this was an impression that CPE was an ingenious person. In spite of his good stewardship of the materials left to him from his father, he seemed self-servingly willing to promote J.S. Bach's teacher reputation, a prescription which stemmed from the competition between them.

I now believe many of these impressions were wrong, or at best uninformed. CPE Bach is a complicated case, and needs a much more attentive examination.

He was J.S. Bach's second son. The first, Friedmann, was more talented, but less industrious. Friedmann's best pieces seem to have a naturalness and pure musicality unavailable to CPE, but they lack a strategy to fully separate from his father.

Such a strategy does CPE deploy, with a vengeance. This took courage and an investigative mind. It seems clear that the son's valuation of his father's music grew during the course of his career. Together with his vast experience as a composer came an appreciation of the foundation he had received from his only teacher, together with a perception of the enormity of that teacher's artistic achievement.

Carl Philip Emmanuel was too good a musician not to notice something: In spite of being the most famous and highly regarded composer in the world by the 1740s (J.S. Bach was still alive), he was not in the same league with the old man. He becomes, instead, avatar of the new, often at his best while disturbing the logic, proportion, and density which was his father's hallmark.

Much has been said about the manner, the tone of much of his music, which says: this need not always be so serious, this need not be so responsible, this is apprehendable right away. These are things worth stating, periodically, and can be expressed, as in CPE's music, by a kind of nervousness, hurry, irresponsibility—winning qualities in his best pieces.

But the main agent of change in CPE can be very simply described: He dismantles his father's bass-line—radically clears it out, reduces it much of the time to skeletal support, thus placing new emphasis on the charm, buoyancy, and unpredictability of the melodies.

J.S. Bach's music, in asserting that the bass possesses a profile very like the upper parts in activity and articulateness (and often surpasses them in importance) draws on very old principles carried forward from Renaissance polyphony. In reducing and domesticating the bass, CPE achieves a new intelligibility and friendliness of texture and cuts his hereditary umbilical cord.

Still he retains a lot of J.S. in his ability, when he chooses, to develop and vary motives, to spin out large phrases, and to create drama and propulsion.

In this 300th anniversary year there is an added fascination: A scholarly filling out of his canon. A great proportion of his output is being made available for the first time in published form. There are many surprises, especially in the form of vocal and instrumental chamber music.

“Premieres” are being offered, around the world, and the music, which has always been valued as a necessary historical moment, is now being valued for itself.

We can hear not only the way he both holds and breaks with his father, we can also hear why Joseph Haydn was so taken with this music. It has its own surprises, quirks, and above all a burning energy, singular, bold, drawing our attention, chastening our misconceptions.