Santa Fe
CHAMBER
MUSIC
FESTIVAL

51ST SEASON

Sunday & Monday
6 p.m.

JULY 21 & 22

St. Francis Auditorium in the
New Mexico Museum of Art

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

JULIAN ANDERSON (b. 1967)

The Bearded Lady for Clarinet and Piano (1994)

Julian Anderson is one of the most influential figures in English music. He began composing as a boy, studied privately with John Lambert, and attended London's Royal College of Music. Later, he studied privately with Tristan Murail in Paris and Alexander Goehr in Cambridge. He's served as composer-in-residence for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and London Philharmonic Orchestra, among many other ensembles, and he's held senior professorships at the Royal College of Music and Harvard. Currently, he's a senior professor of composition at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Anderson has won numerous prizes—including the 2023 Grawemeyer Award for outstanding classical composition for his cello concerto, *Litanies*—and his music has had immediate success with audiences throughout Europe and the United States.

Anderson composed *The Bearded Lady* in 1994, and oboist Nicholas Daniel and pianist Julius Drake—who performs at this summer's Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival on August 7, 8 & 14—gave the world premiere at London's Wigmore Hall on October 20, 1994. Clarinetist Stuart Stratford and pianist Richard Ormrod premiered the clarinet version heard on this evening's program on November 23, 1994, at the Cambridge Elgar Festival. In a program note for the work, Anderson wrote:

> *The Bearded Lady* was suggested by a scene in the Auden/Kallman libretto for *The Rake's Progress*: The hero, Tom Rakewell, having been deceived into marrying Baba the Turk (the bearded lady of St Giles' Fair), is trying to have breakfast in their new home; his attempts at conversation are persistently frustrated by [Baba's] endless stream of gossip and semi-nonsensical tittle-tattle. When she realises he is not listening, she flies into a rage, smashing the crockery over him, and a fight ensues. Finally, he throws a wig in her face, which appears to silence her for good. My music does not follow these events but is rather a reflection upon the character of Baba—who, in the opera, is both ridiculous and a devoted wife—and upon the ridicule to which such circus freaks have always been subjected. Although it begins in an offhand, playful manner, the piece is a lament, and it is this latter character which increasingly dominates the music and takes it down rather different paths from those initially implied. The piece exploits the ranges of [the] instruments to the maximum, and there is much polyrhythmic dialogue between them.

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SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)

Sonata in D Major for Flute and Piano, Op. 94 (1943)

During World War II, the Soviet government moved many of its artists away from the fighting in the West to places of relative safety. Prokofiev spent the summer of 1943 in the city of Perm, in the Ural Mountains, about 700 miles east of Moscow. He'd just completed his opera *War and Peace*, and that summer he finished his ballet *Cinderella* and then moved on to a second project. In 1944, he explained that project by saying: "I had long wanted to write music for the flute, an instrument which I felt had been undeservedly neglected. I wanted to write a sonata in delicate, fluid, Classical style." That last note is important, as Prokofiev's Sonata in D Major for Flute and Piano is decidedly Classical in its slow-fast-slow-fast sequence of movements (typical of the sonatas of Handel and Bach) and in its satisfying combination of restraint and poise.

This sonata, however, met a fate the composer hadn't expected. Violinist David Oistrakh was so struck by the piece that he suggested Prokofiev create a version for violin. Prokofiev and Oistrakh worked on that version together, and it became more well known than the original. Both versions play to the strengths and character of their respective instruments. The violin version emphasizes that instrument's flexibility (Prokofiev makes use of violin techniques that are impossible on the flute, such as harmonics, chording, and pizzicatos), while the original emphasizes the flute's agility and glowing sound: the music is full of rhythmic swirls (quintuplets, sextuplets, and so on) that make good sense on the flute but create awkward string crossings for the violinist.

The Flute Sonata is one of Prokofiev's sunniest compositions. There's no hint of the war that was raging in the West, and there's none of the pain that runs through some of Prokofiev's other wartime compositions. This music—full of Prokofiev's characteristically pungent harmonies—is generally serene and seems to be a retreat from the war rather than its mirror.

The *Moderato* opens with a beautiful melody for the flute—a theme of Classical purity and poise. The flute also has the dotted second theme, and a vigorous development leads to a quiet close on a very high restatement of the opening idea. The *Scherzo* movement is in the Classical scherzo-and-trio pattern, with two blazing themes in the scherzo and a wistful little tune in the trio. The fiery conclusion of this movement (Prokofiev marks it *Con brio*) is particularly effective.

The mood changes sharply at the *Andante*, which is a continuous flow of melody on the opening theme. The music becomes more elaborate as the movement progresses—much of it is built on long chains of quietly swirling triplets—but the quiet close returns to the mood of the beginning.

The finale, marked *Allegro con brio*, is full of snap and drive. At the center of this movement, over steady piano accompaniment, Prokofiev gives the flute one of those bittersweet themes so characteristic of his best music. The music quickens and returns to the opening tempo, and the sonata flies to its brilliant conclusion.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

String Sextet in A Major, Op. 48 (1878)

Dvořák dated his manuscripts very carefully, so we know that he wrote his String Sextet over the course of 14 days, from May 14 to May 27, 1878. That was a crucial point in Dvořák's life. After a long and trying apprenticeship, the 36-year-old composer found himself suddenly famous when his Slavonic Dances created an international sensation. (The orchestral version of the Slavonic Dances, which Dvořák originally composed for piano four-hands, was premiered on May 16, 1878, in Prague.) Some of the finest musicians of that era had already been aware of Dvořák's talent, and chief among them was Brahms, who'd offered the unknown Czech composer his friendship, found him a publisher, and introduced him to his inner circle.

The importance of that connection to Brahms can hardly be overstated, as it led to Dvořák's works being performed by key figures. The String Sextet, for example, had a private performance at the Berlin home of Brahms's good friend Joseph Joachim, the renowned violinist. Dvořák, the son of a small-town butcher, was flabbergasted by his good fortune and wrote to a friend: "After being here [in Berlin] for only a few hours, I had spent so many enjoyable moments among the foremost artists that they will certainly remain in my memory for the rest of my life."

Music for a string sextet—two violins, two violas, and two cellos—is comparatively rare. Dvořák certainly knew of the two sextets Brahms had composed during the previous decade, but the two other famous sextets—Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence* and Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*—were yet to be written. In his own sextet, Dvořák made use of the resources available with six players, but he took care to keep textures clear throughout.

Longest of the four movements, the opening, sonata-form *Allegro moderato* contrasts its flowing first melody with a rhythmically sprung second idea in the unexpected key of C-sharp Minor. The development makes ingenious use of bits of rhythm from both of these ideas before this amiable movement fades out on a broad restatement of the opening theme.

The second movement, which Dvořák marks *Dumka*, is the real gem of this sextet. A dumka is derived from Ukrainian folk music; it's elegiac in character and often features sections at quite different tempos. The main theme of Dvořák's *Dumka* is full of dark flashings in its melodic turns and key shifts, and two distinct, contrasting episodes preserve the movement's somber character.

Dvořák marks the third movement *Furiant*, but numerous commentators have noted that it lacks the cross-rhythms and changing meters that define that old Bohemian dance form. In any case, the movement, which returns to the home key of A Major, offers sparkling outer sections and a busy trio.

The *Finale* is in theme-and-variation form. Lower strings present the somber theme, and six variations follow. The final variation, in fact, forms an exuberant (and lengthy) coda that makes its way back to A Major only in the final bars.

ERIC BROMBERGER earned his doctorate in American literature at UCLA and for 10 years taught literature and writing courses at Bates College and San Diego State University. Then he quit teaching to devote himself to his first love, music. Bromberger, a violinist, writes program notes for the San Diego Symphony, the La Jolla Music Society, San Francisco Performances, the University of Chicago Presents, Washington Performing Arts at The Kennedy Center, and many other organizations. He was a pre-concert lecturer for the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 seasons.