



“BETTER TOGETHER” SHOW NOTES

Cape Symphony presents “Better Together” on Saturday, April 6, 2024 at 7:30 PM, and Sunday, April 7 at 3:00 PM at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center.

Cape Symphony

[Francisco Noya](#), Guest Conductor
[Cape Symphony Musicians](#)

Guest Artists

[Christina and Michelle Naughton](#), Pianists

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About Today's Program

"These pieces were written to showcase musicians: the great orchestra, the virtuosity of the pianists," says guest conductor Francisco Noya about today's concert program.

Sit back and enjoy.

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984)

I. The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies

II. The Three Ravens

III. Begone, Dull Care

IV. Early One Morning

Gordon Jacob was an English composer and conductor, and a professor of music theory, composition, and orchestration at the Royal Conservatory of Music. He is said to have begun writing music as a prisoner of war in WWI, having read a harmony textbook in the prison camp library and composing for whatever instruments the prisoners could muster. After military service, he studied composition at the RCM, and took a faculty position there shortly after graduating. Jacob became a prominent and popular composer known for the refined style, craftsmanship, and clarity of his music. He was commissioned to write for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

Old Wine in New Bottles is one of Jacob's most well-loved compositions. It was written in 1959 for the St. Bees Festival of Music (St. Bees is an English coastal town near the Lake District) and premiered to glowing reviews. Based on familiar folk melodies (the "old wine"), it is a charming, lighthearted chamber suite for woodwinds, horns, and trumpets.

Demonstrating Jacob's special affinity for composing for wind ensembles, this piece is a showcase for each of these instruments. You'll hear how each player's intonation, precision and style are critical to the performance as a whole.

CONCERTO FOR TWO PIANOS Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo*
- II. Larghetto*
- III. Finale*

French composer and gifted pianist Francis Poulenc was known for warmth, wit, and charm. He had piano lessons from early childhood, but was disallowed from studying music in school, as he was expected to join his father's manufacturing business. Poulenc's parents died when he was a teenager, and a considerable inheritance made it possible for him to dedicate his life to music even without that formal education.

Poulenc's early compositions are characterized by high-spirited irreverence and wit, and humor is a defining attribute of his work. In the mid-1930s, after some unhappy love affairs and a friend's death in a terrible automobile accident, he returned to his lapsed Catholicism and a more serious and religious side emerged in his work.

Composed in the summer of 1932, "Concerto for Two Pianos" is said to represent the climax of Poulenc's early period, when his work was most flippant and purely entertaining. It was commissioned by and dedicated to the Princess Edmond de Polignac, an American patron of the arts whose Paris salon was a gathering place for composers and musicians, and premiered to high acclaim in Venice at the Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music.

"Concerto for Two Pianos" is cheerful, engaging, and fun. Poulenc was proud of it: "You will see for yourself what an enormous step forward it is from my previous work, and that I am really entering my great period," he wrote to a friend.

The concerto pays homage to Poulenc's classical forbears, notably Mozart. The scintillating first movement is "gay and direct," as Poulenc described his own work. Of the second, he wrote "I allowed myself, for the first theme, to return to Mozart, for I cherish the melodic line and I prefer Mozart to all other musicians. If the movement begins alla Mozart, it quickly veers, at the entrance of the second piano, toward a style that was standard for me at the time." The finale, with its energetic rhythms and delightful patter, earned this comment from biographer Henri Hell: "the finale flirts with one of those deliberately vulgar themes never far from the composer's heart."

Two pianists play in a nearly continuous dramatic dialogue throughout this concerto. The Naughton sisters have called it "a delight to share with audiences."

~Intermission~

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

- I. Introduzione
- II. Giuoco Delle Coppie ("Game of the Couples")
- III. Elegia
- IV. Intermezzo Interrotto
- V. Finale

Béla Bartók was one of the 20th century's great composers, and an esteemed musicologist. Traveling extensively in the Hungarian countryside, he documented the music rural people were playing on the violin. "A genuine peasant melody of our land is a musical example of perfected art," he wrote. Bartók incorporated those themes and melodies into his own compositions, innovating and modernizing in his music. "Bartok has a very special musical language, his own way of shaping music, contemporary but accessible," says guest conductor Francisco Noya.

Boston Symphony Orchestra cellist Mischa Nieland (1912-2000) was a mentor to Francisco Noya when Noya was a student at Boston University, and relayed this story about Concerto for Orchestra to him:

Bartók had been a highly respected composer in Europe before emigrating to the United States in 1940 to avoid the horrors of WWII. His work was not as much in demand in the U.S.

When Bartók was hospitalized and in financial difficulty, his Hungarian compatriots had a word with Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor Serge Koussevitzky. Koussevitzky visited Bartók with a commission offer for which Bartók was to be paid half up front, and half on completion of the piece. Sadly, it was not clear whether the great composer would live to finish it.

Bartók got out of bed and finished Concerto for Orchestra in five weeks.

He attended its rehearsals, making such frequent suggestions that at one break, it was suggested in gentle good humor that the orchestra and conductor be left to it.

The electricity on the Boston Symphony Orchestra stage at the 1944 premiere of Concerto for Orchestra, with the musicians fully understanding it had been created just for them, was incredible.

The piece was a great success and has been regularly performed ever since. It is one of Bartók's most popular, well-known and accessible works.

Please note the program is subject to change.

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Tickets for “Better Together”

Join Cape Symphony for “Better Together” at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center, 744 West Main Street, Hyannis on Saturday, April 6 at 7:30 PM, and Sunday, April 7, at 3:00 PM.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit capesymphony.org, call the Box Office at 508.362.1111, email tickets@capesymphony.org, or visit 2235 Lyannough Road in West Barnstable, MA. The Box Office is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Once box office operations move to the concert venue for the weekend, we can only be reached by email.

Only tickets purchased on Cape Symphony’s secure website or through the Cape Symphony Box Office are legitimate and guaranteed. Exchanges or credits will only be honored for tickets purchased on the Cape Symphony website or through the Cape Symphony Box Office.

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