



**St. Francis of Assisi Parish  
Derwood, Maryland**

**Virtual Haiti Benefit Concert**

**November 21, 2020**

**Stephen Czarkowski, cello**

**Janet Pate, piano**

Sonata for Viola da Gamba in D Major (BWV 1028)	J.S. Bach
I. Adagio	(1685 – 1750)
II. Allegro	
Prelude from Suite No. 1 in G Major	J. S. Bach
Intermezzo in A Major, Opus 118. No. 2	Johannes Brahms
	(1833 – 1897)
Allegro Appassionato	Camille Saint-Saëns
	(1835 – 1921)
Libertango	Astor Piazzolla
	(1921 – 1992)

**Program Notes**

Johann Sebastian Bach was a German Baroque composer who lived during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. At this point in history, the modern cello and piano had not been invented. Bach was famous for his virtuosic keyboard skills as both an organist and as a harpsichordist. The harpsichord was a popular keyboard instrument which produced sound by means of a plectrum that plucked the strings, unlike the modern-day piano whose strings are struck by hammers. The viola da gamba is likewise the precursor of the modern-day cello. Bach wrote three sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord when he lived in Leipzig during the latter part of his life. Not only did he work at the St. Thomas Church and School in Leipzig, which allowed him to support his large family, but he also was the Director of the Collegium Musicum. This was a chamber music society that put on weekly concerts of secular music. He likely was involved with the Collegium Musicum for pure pleasure.

Although usually the harpsichord was regarded as an accompanying instrument more than a solo instrument, Bach treated the viola da gamba and the harpsichord as equal partners in these sonatas. Indeed, these sonatas are more like trio sonatas with melodic lines heard in the viola da gamba part and the right hand of the harpsichord part, while the bass line is heard in the left hand of the harpsichord part.

Bach likely composed the solo suites for viola da gamba earlier in his career when he worked as Kapellmeister, or Music Director, in the court of Leopold, prince and ruler of the German principality of Anhalt-Cöthen. Because Leopold was a Calvinist, and the Calvinist liturgy allowed little if any instrumental music, Bach composed mostly secular, instrumental music during this time in his life. Always the innovator, Bach went against the norm, composing for solo viola da gamba, an instrument which usually was thought of as having a purpose of playing the bass line and thus providing a harmonic foundation for an ensemble. The Baroque dance suite was a collection of dances of various national origins, preceded by a prelude. Dance suites had long been quite popular during the Baroque period; originally dance suites were heard at elaborate balls given by nobility. Later on, as is the case for the Bach cello suites, the dance suite was not always intended as music to be danced to, but rather was used as a compositional genre.

Johannes Brahms was a 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer of the Romantic era. The Intermezzo in A major was composed toward the end of his life, in 1893. He dedicated the piece to Clara Schumann, a fabulous concert pianist and the wife of the famous composer Robert Schumann. He first met the Schumanns when he was only twenty years old, and he shortly thereafter began studying with Robert Schumann. Several months after Brahms met the couple, Robert Schumann, who suffered from mental illness, was confined to a mental institution after a suicide attempt and passed away a couple years later. Clara suddenly found herself needing to support her family of seven children. She did so by performing concerts, and Brahms was there to offer support, even serving sometimes as a babysitter when

she was away. She wrote in a letter, “He came like a true friend, to share all my sorrow. He strengthened the heart that threatened to break; he uplifted my mind, and he cheered my spirit whenever and wherever he could. In short, he was my friend in the fullest sense of the word.” Although Brahms never married, it seems clear that he loved Clara dearly. The two maintained a close friendship throughout their lives, and Clara also premiered a number of his works in public. This Intermezzo seems like a reflection by Brahms of how grateful he must have been to have known Clara for so many years and an expression of his love for her.

The French composer Camille Saint-Saëns lived during the same time period as Brahms. He was known in his youth as a child prodigy pianist, and the composer Franz Liszt with whom he had a friendship, regarded him as the “greatest organist in the world.” He composed the Allegro Appassionato in 1873 for cello and piano, and three years later orchestrated the work. It is believed that he may have intended the piece to be used as an encore. Saint-Saëns was a Renaissance man, being an expert in mathematics and keenly interested in science as well. He is known to have enjoyed discussions with Europe’s finest scientists and wrote numerous academic articles on the science of acoustics.

Astor Piazzolla was a 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentinian composer. The son of Italian immigrant parents, he spent some of his youth also living in New York City where he was exposed to jazz and the music of J. S. Bach at an early age. He revolutionized tango music, incorporating both elements of jazz and classical music into traditional tango compositions. The title “Libertango” is made up of two words: the Spanish word “Libertad” meaning liberty and “tango.” A virtuoso bandoneon (or square-shaped button accordion) player, he first recorded this piece in 1974.

*St. Francis of Assisi has had a twinning relationship with St. Paul’s Parish in Haiti since the 1980’s. St. Paul is in Léon, a remote, mountainous region of southwestern Haiti. For most people in our sister parish, access to quality health care is essentially non-existent. During normal times, together with our partners St. Francis leads six week-long medical mission teams throughout the year. These teams consist of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other support staff. On average, the mission assists between three and four thousand poor Haitians per year.*

*Over the years, the mission has developed relationships with several Haitian medical professionals including nurses, pharmacists, and dentists within the community of our sister parish. The medical mission provides an opportunity for these Haitians to grow as medical professionals and earn some income in the process. In this way, the Haitians themselves are taking greater ownership of the medical clinic, a sign of real progress.*

*During the coronavirus pandemic, it was not possible for St. Francis to send any medical teams into Haiti. However, using our network of local Haitian professionals and other contacts in Haiti, St. Francis and our partners were able to ship certain medications into Haiti and have them delivered to our clinic in Leon. So far, the local Haitian professionals were able to put on two “limited clinics” whereby known patients could receive medication refills for their chronic conditions. This is a great example of how St. Francis is helping our sister parish to become more self-sufficient in managing their own needs.*

*On behalf of the Haitian community of St. Paul’s Parish, thank you so much for your generous and ongoing support of our medical mission. Your generosity is truly life-changing for thousands of poor Haitians in our sister parish.*



**Special thanks to  
the St. Francis  
Communications  
Ministry for filming,  
compiling and  
promoting this  
virtual concert.**

Alvaro Calabria, Video Producer  
Alex Scaltrito, Video Producer  
Melissa Egan,  
Communications Coordinator