

Fandango!

Eugenia Moliner, Flute Desiree Ruhstrat, Violin Denis Azabagic, Guitar David Cunliffe, Cello

Program

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) (arr. Fandango!)
L'Inverno (Winter) from Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons)
Allegro non molto
Largo
Allegro

Alan Thomas (1968-)
Trio Sefardi
Komo Páxaro en su Vuelo
D'un Aire d'una Mujer
Una Matika de Ruda

Miroslav Tadic (1959-)
Three Balkan Pieces
Pajdushka
Zajdi, Zajdi
Gajdarsko Oro

intermission

Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)
Duos for Violin and Cello, Opus 39
Prélude
Berceuse
Etude

Giuseppe Verdi / Alan Thomas (1968-)
Fantasy on Themes from "La Traviata," after Krakamp, Briccialdi and Tarrega
Commissioned by and written for the Cavatina Duo

Carlos Rafael Rivera (1970-)
Plegaria y Kanto (Al Bodre de la Mar)

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) (arr. Fandango!)
Grave assai-Fandango, from Quintet for Guitar and Strings in D major

Program Notes:

VIVALDI:

Almost three centuries ago, Antonio Vivaldi composed his most famous works and the most significant examples of Baroque programmatic music. *The Four Seasons* are the opening works in Opus 8, a set of twelve violin concertos published in 1725. The brilliance and popularity of the first four have generally obscured the remaining works. Such widespread popularity is a double-edged sword: *The Four Seasons*'s ubiquity in popular culture has too often presented as background music a fiendishly inventive work by a composer of terrific originality. (The *Seasons* also established the concerto as a vehicle for instrumental virtuosity—fittingly so, given Vivaldi's stature as one of the finest violinists of his generation.)

Vivaldi chose to publish each concerto with a corresponding sonnet, correlating passages from the sonnets to specific themes in the music. Some scholars believe Vivaldi penned these poems himself, though their authorship remains in doubt.

Winter includes perhaps Vivaldi's most inspired and adored music, and is a fitting conclusion to *The Four Seasons* as a whole.

THOMAS:

Alan Thomas is an American composer and guitarist living in the UK. His compositions draw on a broad range of styles and techniques, ranging from Renaissance polyphony to modern masters (passing via a quasi-obsession with Rachmaninoff along the way!) Other influences include the music of Africa and the Balkans. He creates music that is both rigorously constructed and accessible. His compositions have been performed around the world by artists such as Denis Azabagic, harpist Eleanor Turner, soprano Juliet Fraser, the Cavatina Duo, La Catrina String Quartet, Chicago Symphony String Quartet, Helix Ensemble, Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra and many others, and he has been the featured composer at festivals including "Guitar Art" (Serbia), Calcutta Guitar Festival, Sarajevo Guitar Festival and the Cheltenham Guitar Festival (UK).

Program note by the composer:

Like many other composers, I have often looked to what is called "folk music" for inspiration and musical ideas. I was therefore delighted when the Cavatina Duo commissioned me to write a substantial piece drawing on the music of the Sephardic Jews—the Jewish ethnic group which emerged as a distinct community on the Iberian peninsula around 1000 AD.

Although none of the melodies today known as "Sephardic music" can be traced back to the Jews in Spain prior to their expulsion from that country in 1492, over the subsequent centuries a beautiful repertoire of song has grown from the experience of the Sephardic Jews as they migrated and settled throughout the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Balkans. As they did so, they adapted their Ladino (Judeo-Spanish language) song texts to the musical styles and melodies of their new cultures, and therefore what we know as Sephardic music today is a rich mixture of musical styles found in Morocco, Turkey, the Balkans and many other countries. As with all folk music, the Sephardic repertoire was in a constant state of transformation, and indeed has only become relatively fixed since a number of important transcriptions were published in the 1950's and 60's and the melodies were taken up and recorded by early music and world music performers in recent decades.

My *Trío Sefardí* for flute, cello and guitar is in three movements, with each movement employing one melody from the Sephardic repertoire for its musical material. The first movement, whose title means "Like a Bird in Flight," is based on the song "Ya viene el kativo" ("Here comes the slave"). Its lyrics involve a slave girl's lament in memory of her homeland. Apart from the emotional content of the lyrics, what particularly attracted me to this song was the symmetrical intervallic properties of the song's opening melody, which consists of three chromatic notes surrounded by a minor third on both sides. I am fascinated by such symmetries in music, and by the possibilities they open up for development in different harmonic contexts and in permutations of the intervallic pattern (inverted, reversed, re-ordered, expanded/contracted etc.). While this movement might best be described as a set of linked and continuous variations, several main formal sections can be delineated: slow and lyrical in the initial presentation and variation of the Sephardic melody, leading to an energetic scherzo, following which the theme is modified in a slow major key version and finally a fast fugue.

The second movement uses the melody "Yo m'enamori d'un aire d'una mujer," which might be best translated as "I fell in love with the scent of a woman." The lyrics of the song speak of intoxicating emotions and the dangers of a moonlit encounter with a beautiful woman, and the title put me immediately in mind of the Al Pacino film "The Scent of a Woman" and the tango danced in that film. With this tango connection in mind, converting the melody from 3/4 time to 4/4 and setting it for the sultry voice of the alto flute seemed the ideal way to approach this beautiful Sephardic song.

The third movement is based on the melody "Una matika de ruda"—in English "A Sprig of Rue" ("rue" is an herb native to the Balkan peninsula as well as being a synonym for "regret"). In addition to being attracted to these multiple meanings, I was immediately drawn to the song's lyrics, which take the form of a dialogue between a mother and daughter. The daughter tells her mother that a young man is in love with her and has given her a bouquet of rue. The mother warns the daughter not to sacrifice her virtue to young love, and that a bad husband is better than a new lover. It is the daughter's perfect and poetic reply though that makes the song: "A bad husband, my mother? There is nothing worse. But a new lover, my mother? The apple and sweet lemon."

The song "Una matika de ruda" is known in two different versions—one playful and rhythmic, the other simple and lyrical—which together perfectly capture for me the dual emotional character of the song's lyrics. In my third movement the two different versions serve as first and second themes in a quasi-sonata form.

"Trío Sefardí" was commissioned by Thomas Baron and Mark Cavalenes through grants to Cedille Chicago, NFP, and the work is gratefully dedicated to them as well as to my dear friends Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic.

TADIC:

Macedonia has a rich cultural heritage in art, architecture, poetry, and music. Miroslav Tadic, a classically trained guitarist and composer from former Yugoslavia, captures the essence of its folklore in these pieces. This music brings together a mixture of multiple styles, from Turkish music, Albanian music, Roma ("Gypsy") music and other ethnic Balkan music idioms. Local dances are called "oro."

Macedonian folk songs are often historical in nature; lyrics detailing great heroes and warriors, love songs, shepherd songs such as *Zajdi Zajdi*, are common. The music of Eastern Europe is known for complex rhythms, and Macedonian music exemplifies this trait, using odd meters such as 5/4, and 7/8, and non-traditional scales like the Phrygian dominant.

These pieces are from a set of four published by Tadic. "Pajdushka" is a generic name for a dance in 5/8. "Zajdi, Zajdi" is about a shepherdess lamenting the passing of her youth. "Gajde" means bagpipe and "oro" is a circle dance.

GLIERE:

Reinhold Glière was born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1875. He studied composition in Kiev and at the Moscow Conservatory, where he later taught. His students included Prokofiev, Miaskovsky, and Khachaturian. Glière's musical life spanned the period from late Romanticism to Modernism, although his own music has more in common with the former. His best-known works are the ballets "The Red Poppy" and "The Bronze Horseman," although his Third Symphony, "Ilya Murometz," is considered by many to be his greatest work.

Glière's rarely performed Opus 39 set of eight duos for violin and cello was composed in 1909. They are an assortment of miniatures ranging from the playful to the tender. The three performed at tonight's concert include a serious Prelude, a sweet Berceuse or Lullaby, and a skittering Etude.

THOMAS:

Atlanta native Alan Thomas moved to England in 1997, quickly establishing himself as one of Europe's foremost new music guitarists and ensemble players following his first-prize win at the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition in Holland (the only guitarist ever to take the top prize). His music has been performed worldwide.

One of the most widely used forms of instrumental music in the 19th-century was the operatic fantasia—a virtuoso piece based on themes from a popular opera. Generally composed by virtuoso performers (with Liszt's many outstanding fantasias being examples by a great performer *and* composer), these "salon" pieces combined well-known tunes from favorite operas with a healthy dose of instrumental "showing off."

Alan Thomas writes: My Fantasy on themes from Verdi's opera is based on 19th-century fantasias for flute by Emanuele Krakamp and Giulio Briccialdi as well as Francisco Tárrega's solo guitar version. Many of *La Traviata's* most well-known

melodies are there, including “Ah, fors’è lui,” “Parigi, o cara,” “Sempre libera” and the famous “drinking song.” —Alan Thomas

RIVERA:

Carlos Rafael Rivera is an award-winning composer whose career has spanned multiple genres in the music industry. His music has been acclaimed by the Miami Herald, the San Francisco Examiner, and the LA Times, helping establish him as a composer with the unique ability to incorporate a wide diversity of musical influences into his captivating compositions, which reflect his multicultural upbringing in Central America and the United States. His soundtrack for Universal Pictures’ *A Walk Among the Tombstones*, starring Liam Neeson, is now available through Varèse-Sarabande Records.

His works have been performed by some of the most prominent ensembles and soloists, including Arturo Sandoval, Colin Currie, Chanticleer, Cavatina Duo, the American Composers Orchestra, the New England Philharmonic, and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet; commissioned by the Simon Bolivar Youth Symphony, the Miami Symphony Orchestra, and the American Wind Symphony; recorded by Warner, Sony, Naxos, and Cedille labels; published by Mel-Bay, and Doberman Editions; and awarded by the ACO, the Herb Alpert Foundation, the Guitar Foundation of America, BMI, and ASCAP.

Program note by the composer:

About a year ago, Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic approached David Leisner, Clarice Assad, Allan Thomas, Joseph Williams, and myself to write chamber works for what would be a collaboration between the Cavatina Duo and members of the Lincoln Trio Desiree Ruhstrat and David Cunliffe.

The register of the violin—along with its near infinite *sostenuto* (sustained sound)—was a welcome addition to the now familiar flute and guitar combination. It became clear that rather than compete with the violin’s range, a better choice was to use (mostly) the alto flute for its wonderful and grounded color, allowing the guitar to live comfortably in its own register. Most importantly, the melodies that were to inform this piece were of Sephardic origin. My knowledge about the music itself was scant, but Eugenia and Denis’ passion for it was contagious. So I began to investigate, and learned for the first time about the troubled history of the Sephardic Jews in Spain . . . and then I fell into their poetry, and music.

The first poem/song to grab me was “Ven Kerida”:

Ven kerida, ven amada
Ven al bodre de la mar
Amán, amán
Ven te kontaré mis males
Ke te metas a yorar
Amán, amán
Guérfano de padre i de madre
Yo no tengo onde arrimar
Amán, amán
Estira la tuya pierna um poko m’arrimaré
Azeré un buen esuenyo
En tus brazos muereré

It loosely translates to: “Come, my love / to the edge of the sea / I will tell you of my sufferings / They will make you cry / An orphan, without father or mother / I have nowhere to rest / Stretch out your leg a bit so I may rest / I will have a beautiful dream / In your arms I will die.”

It was this poem and gorgeous melody that formed the pillar of the piece I composed. Throughout the writing process, I had a recurring vision of a proud yet helpless soul approaching the edge of the coastal town of Burriana in Eastern Spain, pleading her misery as an affront to the Ocean. After a silence, she hears a song. She joins in, perhaps comforted, and tells her story. It is a story wrought with sadness, yet hopeful—and to me perfectly encapsulates the Sephardic peoples’ plight.

BOCCHERINI:

The Italian-born Boccherini was a court musician in Vienna as a young man. He moved to Spain and served in the Royal Court in Madrid, enthusiastically adopting Spain sounds and rhythms.

The "Fandango" Guitar Quintet was written for the Duke of Benavente, a guitar enthusiast. It is a transcription of movements from earlier Boccherini string quintets. In the quintet's final movement, a melancholy and halting "Grave assai" (serious enough) leads to the traditional Spanish couples' dance, the Fandango. It is here that the guitar truly takes the lead, playing the assertive and accented rhythms we associate with the world of Spanish music. The work swirls and relaxes, finishing with mounting intensity from the strumming guitar and a resounding flourish from the whole ensemble.

(adapted from a note by Fran Rosenthal)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

FANDANGO!

The most exciting new group on Chicago's musical scene, **FANDANGO!** is a toe-tappingly spicy mix of Latin, Spanish, Sephardic, Balkan, and classical sounds founded by four multi-award-winning, globe-trotting virtuosi who hail from Spain, the USA, former Yugoslavia, and the UK, and who have played, separately and together, on the world's most prestigious stages. This season FANDANGO! makes its Washington DC debut on the illustrious Dumbarton Oaks series, and will appear at the Bermuda International Festival and at venues across the USA.

More info available at www.fandango4.com.

Eugenia Moliner and **Denis Azabagic** are a husband-and-wife team acclaimed worldwide as the Cavatina Duo. They have captivated audiences with their electrifying performances in such major venues and festivals as Ravinia (Chicago), Da Camera Society (Los Angeles), Aix-en-Provence Summer Festival (France), the National Concert Hall of Taipei (Taiwan), National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing (China), National Flute Convention Gala Concert (USA), the Harris Theater (Chicago), Kolkata International Guitar Festival (India), Palau de la Musica (Spain), among many others. "If there is a finer flute and guitar duo in the world than Cavatina Duo, I have not heard them" raved Soundboard Magazine in June 2015.

Flutist **Eugenia Moliner**, a native of Spain, has been acclaimed as "brilliant" by the British Flute Society magazine. She has performed with principal musicians from the Chicago Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony orchestras and appeared with many renowned ensembles including the Chicago Chamber Musicians. Eugenia has been featured on radio and television programs in Europe, Asia and the USA. Her discography includes seven CDs.

Prizewinner in twenty-four international competitions, Bosnian guitarist **Denis Azabagic** has been described as a "virtuoso with flawless technique" by Soundboard Magazine. He has appeared as soloist with orchestras such as the Chicago and Madrid Symphonies, among many others. His discography includes eleven CDs and two DVDs.

Also a married couple, violinist **Desirée Ruhstrat** and cellist **David Cunliffe** are both members of the Lincoln Trio, winner of the 2008 Masterplayers International Competition in Venice, Italy. Praised for their "joy of sheer technical ability, unanimity of phrasing and beautiful blended tone," the trio has become one of Chicago's most celebrated chamber ensembles. They have performed at Alice Tully Hall (Lincoln Center, NYC), Ravinia, across the United States as well as Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

The artistry of American violinist **Desirée Ruhstrat** has captivated audiences throughout Europe and the Americas. Desirée has won numerous awards including First Prize at the National Young Musicians Debut Competition in Los Angeles, where she was also lauded with a special award for a young performer of extraordinary talent. She was the youngest prizewinner at Switzerland's Tibor Varga International Competition, where she also won the award for best interpretation of a contemporary composition. She won top prizes at the Carl Flesch, Julius Stulberg, and Mozart Festival Violin Competitions.

British cellist **David Cunliffe** has served as principal cello in performances with BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish and Royal Scottish Symphony Orchestras. As a member of the Balanescu Quartet, he toured Australia, Europe and the United States. In England, David was a recipient of the Terrance Weill and Leonard Hirsch Quartet Prizes and the Lady Barbirolli Chamber Music Award. David has appeared frequently on radio and TV, including NPR and the BBC, and is a founding member of the Virtuosi Chicago Chamber Orchestra.