



Program Notes for kids

Ludwig & The Kings
Saturday, October 21, 2017
8:00 p.m.
Michigan Theater

Handel Excerpts from *Solomon*
Bloch *Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody*

Intermission

Ellington *King Solomon* from *Three Black Kings*
Beethoven *Symphony No. 8*

The Kings

Three of the pieces on this concert are about King Solomon. The biblical King Solomon was known for being wise, wealthy and a great writer. As you listen to these three pieces, what do you notice about each composer's portrayal of King Solomon? Are they similar or different? Would you have guessed from listening that all three pieces are about the same person?

Solomon

by George Frideric Handel

About the Music

What kind of piece is it?

Solomon is an *Oratorio*, like Handel's famous *Messiah*. An *oratorio* is like an opera in that it tells a story using singers and an orchestra. But unlike an opera, there are no sets or costumes. And the subject of an oratorio is always religious.

What is it about?

It's about King Solomon from the Bible. It celebrates the king's wisdom (see the Baby story), his accomplishments (building the Temple in Jerusalem), and his love for his wife. But, really it's about King George II who, during Handel's lifetime, wisely led a prosperous and happy England.

About the Composer

George Frideric Handel | Born February 23, 1685 in Halle, Germany | Died April 14, 1759 in London, United Kingdom

Fun Facts

In the advertisements for the first performance of Handel's *Messiah*, women were asked to wear skirts without hoops and men were asked to leave their swords at home so that they could pack more people into the theater for this much-anticipated work by a very popular composer.

Family & Career

Handel was born to a decidedly un-musical family. In fact, Handel's father forbade him to play musical instruments because he wanted his son to focus his attention on studying law. Somehow, Handel snuck a *clavichord* – a small keyboard instrument that is a precursor to the modern piano – into his bedroom. He would only play it when his parents were sleeping. One day Handel, after much secret practice, surprised his father with a performance. This convinced his father that he should be allowed to study music.

Music

Though Handel was German, he spent most of his career in London writing Italian operas. He also wrote a lot of choral music like the oratorio *Messiah*, which is still performed regularly at Christmastime all over the world. Handel was wildly successful in London during his lifetime. He never married and lived a very private life. Yet 3,000 people attended his funeral.



The Baby Story

Solomon's most famous act: Two people came to the King, each claiming a baby as their own. King Solomon suggested that they cut the baby in half and each "parent" gets half a baby! The wise king knew that the real parent would never agree to that plan, and so he identified the imposter.

Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody

by Ernest Bloch

About the Composer

Ernest Bloch | Born July 24, 1880 in Geneva, Switzerland | Died July 15, 1958 in Portland, Oregon

Family & Career

Bloch began playing violin at age 9 in Switzerland, and started composing soon after that. He moved all around the world during his lifetime: he went to college in Belgium then started his career in Germany. At age 36, he moved to the United States, where he taught at prestigious music schools in New York, Ohio and California.

Music

Many of Bloch's works draw heavily on his Jewish heritage. Bloch came from a very religious family. He wrote that composing music that expressed his Jewish identity was "the only way in which I can produce music of vitality and significance."

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

Bloch originally imagined the piece to be for voice and orchestra, but he couldn't decide which language to use. So, he used a cello instead! The cello represents the voice of King Solomon and the orchestra represents the world around him. It is kind of like a *concerto*, in that it is a work for solo cello and orchestra.

What is it about?

It is about King Solomon (Schelomo) rejecting the vanity of the world. The King struggles to focus on being good and wise amidst the many distractions around him.



King Solomon

by Duke Ellington

About the Composer

Edward "Duke" Kennedy Ellington | Born April 29, 1899 in Washington D.C. | Died May 24, 1974 in New York, New York

Family & Career

Both of Ellington's parents were pianists, so they got him started with piano lessons early. But Duke was more interested in baseball. He took pride in the fact that President Teddy Roosevelt would stop by his ball-field while out on horseback to watch Duke and his friends play. Duke's first job was selling peanuts at the Washington Senator's games. Thankfully, his career in baseball never took off. But his music career did.

Music

Ellington is best known as a band leader. His jazz orchestra performed from 1923 until his death fifty years later. Ellington composed over 1,000 pieces of music, much of which cannot be categorized as either "jazz" or "classical."

Fun Facts

Duke Ellington's real name is Edward. He received the nickname "Duke" from friends in elementary school who thought it was a better fit for him since he was well dressed and had a sophisticated personality. He was given his own Hollywood star on the Hollywood "Walk of Fame" in 1960 and it's his nickname "Duke" that is engraved on the star.

About the Music

What is it about?

This piece is one movement from a larger work of Ellington's called *Three Black Kings*, which was originally composed as a ballet. Each movement represents a different "king." The first King is Balthazar, one of the three kings who visited the baby Jesus after his birth. The second King is Solomon, which you will hear tonight. The third movement is a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther *King*, leader of the American civil rights movement.

When was it written?

Three Black Kings was the last major piece Ellington composed. As he lay dying in a hospital bed in 1974, he gave instructions to his son about how to finish it.

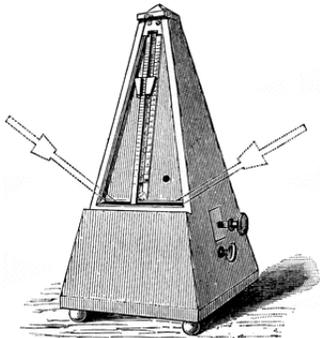
Symphony No. 8

by Ludwig van Beethoven

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

A *Symphony* is a long piece of music containing four movements. These *movements*, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some movements may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more song-like.



A metronome is a device that helps musicians stay in time by producing a steady click or beep. Beethoven's metronome may have looked like this.

What is it about?

The Symphony isn't really about anything, but you might hear something interesting in the second movement. Around the time this piece was written, Beethoven's friend Johann Maelzel invented the *metronome*. In the second movement, the woodwinds play steady, *staccato* (short, separated) 16th notes, mimicking the steady beat of a metronome.

About the Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven | Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany | Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Family

Ludwig van Beethoven's parents were Johann van Beethoven and Maria Magdalena Keverich. Johann was a German musician, teacher, and singer, and was Beethoven's first music teacher. Johann was quite harsh with Ludwig, and neighbors sometimes reported seeing Beethoven standing at the piano in tears.

Music

Beethoven is one of the most important composers of classical music. His best-known compositions include 9 symphonies, 5 concertos for piano, 32 piano sonatas, and 16 string quartets. Because his ninth symphony was so well respected, composers since Beethoven have felt the "curse of the ninth." Many believed that they would die after completing nine symphonies, so they were afraid to reach that landmark.

Fun Facts

Beethoven's talent and powerful personality made him many friends, but he frequently lost friends by insulting them. He once wrote a song called "Praise to the Fat One" for an overweight violinist. Another time he became angry with a prince and told him, "There are and there will be thousands of princes. There is only one Beethoven."