

REJOICE WITH MUSIC

Program Notes:

First Half:

Dance of the Blessed Spirits: is a song taken from the opera by the German composer Gluck, Orfeo and Euridice, first performed in 1762. It is based on the story from Greek mythology in which Orpheus loses his beloved Euridice (woman) after she is bitten by a snake. Heartbroken, he decides to descend to Hades to beg the god of the underworld to give him back his beloved. Hades agrees on one condition, that Orpheus does not look back at his loved one until she is brought back to the world of men. Orpheus fails and she is taken back to Hades. This song is a lament song played by the flute in the ballet.

Allegretto from Sonata for piano Four hands: This sonata for piano 4 hands in C major consists of 3 movements composed by Mozart in 1787. It was his last complete piano duet sonata for 4 hands. This sonata consists of three movements, of which we're performing the last movement: Allegretto. It is in a Rondo form, where you hear a very lively and almost naive theme, repeated multiple times alternated by different moods, and more dramatic sections. The Cadenzas (improvised sections) were composed by Holly and Lama.

Polonaise op. 26, #1 in C sharp minor: Chopin wrote about 23 polonaises including polonaise fantasies. Chopin thought of the polonaises as an homage to his homeland Poland. They are like Mazurkas and waltzes in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter but Chopin took basic rhythms and melodic style and developed them into more serious works. They are heroic in style with a driving rhythm throughout and a beautiful melodic relaxed section in the middle.

Spanish Dance #1 from "La vida Breve": It was composed by the famous Spanish composer Manuel De Falla in 1905. It was an opera for 2 acts composed in 1907, De Falla moved to Paris to meet the famous composers, Dukas and Debussy. Along with Albeniz, the composers encouraged him to draw more from his Southern Spanish Heritage. This famous composition along with "The Three-Cornered Hat" and "Nights in the Garden of Spain" are one of his well-known compositions. Tonight's performance is a combination of the transcription for violin and solo piano by Sarasate, and the piano duet version by Samazeuil. It was put together by Bassam, Holly and Lama.

Danse Macabre by the French composer Saint-Saëns in 1874: is based on the legend that Death packs a fiddle and comes to play at midnight on Halloween, causing the skeletons in the cemetery to crawl out of the ground for their annual graveyard dance party.

Second Half:

Mi a ou from Dolly Suite, op. 56: Named after the daughter of Emma Bardac, one of Faure's lovers. Her daughter, nicknamed (Dolly), was the inspiration for this collection of 6 short pieces written by the French composer Gabriel Faure for piano four hands between 1893-1896. Mi -a-ou, the second piece in this set is written as a playful but humorous fast waltz. The melody is short and full of surprising accents which interrupts the flow of the phrase and gives it a playful and unique character.

Pas Espagnol (Spanish Dance) from Dolly Suite: a fast dance with repeated short chords, colorful harmonies, combined with syncopated rhythms that interrupt the flow of the phrase. All these elements combined make the dance exotic, joyful and festive. This piece is considered one of the most famous works for piano four hands by this composer.

Romanza Andaluza: When composing his Spanish Dances, the composer and violin virtuoso Sarasate united existing material – folk songs and songs by well-known composers – with his own uniquely charming musical language. The two Dances op. 22, "Romanza Andaluza" and "Jota Navarra", were completed in 1878 during Sarasate's first concert tour through Scandinavia. After their initial performances, the lyrical "Romanza" soon outstripped its brilliant sister piece in popularity, and thereafter it was one of Sarasate's compositions that he played most often himself.

Traditional Middle Eastern Songs by Fairuz:

Composed by the Lebanese Legend Singer (Fairuz), which means Turquoise in Arabic. Born in 1935, this famous singer is among the most widely admired and respected singers in the Arab world. She was known as "Ambassador to the stars" because of the numerous international festivals she participated in. Born from a Syriac Orthodox family, Nouhad Haddad (Fairuz), married the famous composer: Assi Rahbani, who helped shape her music career, and is mother to Ziad Rahbani, a famous singer and composer. Mostly known for creating the genre of Musical theater (more than 25 musicals).

#1 Lamma Bada Yatathana: Is one of the famous Muwashah songs (genre for Middle Eastern Songs that have Spanish influence): It is in the Nahawand maqam (minor scale). This love poem is considered one of the most famous Arabic pieces of its era. It is unique and uncommon meter polyrhythmic meter of ($\frac{7}{8}$).

#2 Nassam Alay Alhawa: This song sung by Fairuz is a traditional Arabic song that expresses homesickness and longing to go back to the motherland. The air breezed upon us from the spirit of the valley, Oh breeze, for love's sake, take me home.

#3 Kan Anna Tahoun: is a love song about two lovers that met on a windmill and the beautiful nights they spent together: Here are some excerpts of the lyrics: "The wind used to wait for us and you came to meet me, and it took us far away. The roar of the water and the night. We used to have a mill on a (water) spring, and fields planted in front of it, and my grandfather would mill for the neighborhood wheat and flowers."

Asturias: named (Leyenda) by the composer himself, is the first movement of Albéniz's Chants d' Espagne. It is probably most famous as part of the classical guitar repertoire, even though it was originally composed for piano. This composition, written in 1890, has two main melodies. First, driving theme that builds in energy, followed by a melancholic middle section, then the opening melody returns and brings the piece to its conclusion.

Habanera: This arrangement is a combination of Carmen Fantasy for violin and orchestra, and piano four hand version by Gryaznovon, arranged by Bassam, Holly and Lama along with the composition: "La Cumparsita" for tonight's performance. This famous "Habanera" from Georges Bizet's opera Carmen is probably his most performed and widely known piece.

La Cumparsita: a tango written in 1916 by the Uruguayan musician Gerardo Matos Rodríguez, with lyrics by Argentines Contursi and Enrique Maroni. It is among the most famous and recognizable tangos of all times.

Zigeunerweisen, Op. 20: (Gypsy Airs) a musical composition for violin and orchestra written in 1878 by the Spanish composer Pablo de Sarasate. He wrote it based on music he heard while visiting Budapest, Hungary in the spring of 1877 and premiered the same year in Leipzig, Germany. Probably one of the most virtuosic pieces written for violin. It is in one movement but can be divided into 4 sections. It starts with a virtuosic introduction with slow majestic energy by the orchestra, followed by a slow improvisatory lugubrious Lento, then the violin plays a more slowly melancholic melody (3rd section), and ends with Allegro Molto Vivace: a challenging violin part which consists mainly of long spiccato runs, along with double stops and left-hand pizzicato in 2/4 time.

About the Artists

Bassam Nashawati (a.k.a. Deacon George), violinist



Born in Damascus Syria, Mr. Bassam Nashawati began playing the violin at the age of seven. After graduating from the Arab Institute of Music, he immigrated to the United States to pursue his musical studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and earned a Bachelor's degree studying with the late Isadore Tinkleman. Mr. Nashawati continued his musical education with renowned professor Donald Weilerstein at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he earned both a Master's and Professional Studies degrees.

After performing with the New World Symphony, Mr. Nashawati joined the San Antonio Symphony's first violin section in fall 1999 and held a position as an adjunct faculty at St. Philip's College for several years. He has appeared many times as a recitalist and soloist with the Syrian National Symphony in his native country performing the Beethoven Violin Concerto, which took him on a tour to the US in 1998. Bassam has been playing with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra during the summers since 2004, founded and led by Daniel Barenboim, in addition to playing several chamber music concerts in Argentina and as part of the Salzburg Music festival in Austria. Most recently, he was appointed as the director of the St. Mary's University Orchestra.

Lama Nashawati DeVries, pianist



Lama was born in Damascus Syria, she studied piano at Conservatory of Music in Damascus. At the age of 18, she pursued further her musical studies in the United States and received her bachelor's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1996. She has performed in many solo and chamber music recitals including performing Beethoven's 3rd piano concerto with the Syrian National Symphony in 1998. In 2003, she returned to the Middle East and taught at the High Institute of Music in Damascus and at the Conservatory of Music in Zahle, Lebanon. In 1999 she left to study at L'Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris on a one-year scholarship as well as studying French at Alliance Française. Ms.

Nashawati Devries obtained her master's degree in French Literature from the University of New Orleans in 2020 and is currently a French teacher in Cy Fair ISD and a private piano instructor.

Holly Foster, pianist



Holly Foster got her bachelor's degree in piano performance from The Florida State University, where she performed Bartok's Third Piano Concerto with orchestra, performed duo piano with her partner Eric Levine in competitions and recitals, studied harpsichord with Dr. Karyl Louwenaar and pedagogy with Dr. Victoria MacArthur. She was one of seven national finalists in the MTNA Young Artist Competition. Holly received her master's degree in piano performance with Abbey Simon at the University of Houston Moores School of Music, where she also taught precollegiate piano for 9 years. She has taught piano for 30 years, adjudicated local events and created a masterclass for grad students to work with younger students. She has accompanied students at local high schools.

About the Duo pianist: Holly and Lama met at Northwest Houston Music Teachers Association in 2016 and started performing together around the Houston/Cypress area. They enjoy sharing their love of music at benefit concerts to help others.