

*FACULTY RECITAL*

*THE FISCHER DUO*

*NORMAN FISCHER, cello*

*JEANNE KIERMAN, piano*

*A PROGRAM OF WORKS BY  
AMERICAN COMPOSERS*

*Thursday, October 19, 1995*

*8:00 p. m.*

*Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music

## PROGRAM

**Duo for Violoncello and Piano (1951)** Arthur Berger  
Gentile (b. 1912)  
*Deliberamente; Scherzevole commodo*

**Andante and Scherzo** Victor Herbert  
*from Suite, Op. 3 (1883)* (1859-1924)

**Character Pieces (1980)** Ellsworth Milburn  
Fantasia I (b. 1938)  
Nocturne I  
Intermezzo  
Nocturne II  
Fantasia II

## INTERMISSION

**A Game for cello and piano** Jonathan Kramer  
*(in two movements) (1988-92)* (b. 1942)  
*(World Premiere)*

**Three Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 1 (1882)** Arthur Foote  
Andante con moto (1853-1937)  
Andante  
Allegro con fuoco

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Duo for Violoncello and Piano** . . . . . Arthur Berger

Arthur Berger, a native New Yorker, has been active in all aspects of musical culture. As a writer, he wrote a book on Aaron Copland in 1963, was a critic for *Musical Mercury*, *The Boston Transcript*, *The New York Sun*, and *The New York Herald Tribune*, as well as being on the editorial board of "*Perspectives of New Music*." After holding several teaching positions around the country, Mr. Berger settled at Brandeis University in 1953 and was honored as the Naumberg professor there in 1963. The duo for cello and piano that we hear tonight is one of six for various combinations that he wrote between 1948 and 1961. Virgil Thomson wrote, "Berger's highly intellectualized compositions, early modeled on Stravinsky's neo-classic period and later influenced by serialism, are often witty and entertaining, with their just-barely-concealed sidewalks-of-New-York charm."

— Note by Norman Fischer

### **Andante and Scherzo from Suite, Op. 3** . . . . . Victor Herbert

Victor Herbert, an Irish-American, is well-known to us as the composer of the Broadway hits ***Babes in Toyland*** and ***Naughty Marietta***, but few know of his more serious work as a composer and his career as a cellist. Herbert was the principal cellist in the Stuttgart Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony (1898 to 1904), the 22nd Regiment Band (New York), and his own New York Orchestra. In 1910 he founded ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers). As a student, he received a classical education in Germany with the idea of becoming a medical doctor, but family finances took a reversal, and he abruptly commenced intense musical study at the age of fifteen. His cello lessons were with Bernard Cossman, and at the age of twenty-two, he won his job in Stuttgart. While there, he was taken under the wing of the director who gave him lessons in theory and composition, and this *Suite* for cello is one of his first efforts. At the premiere, the work was a great success and launched him as a composer as well as a concert cellist. In these two movements, extracted from the five-movement work, we can clearly see his wonderful melodic gift and his clever virtuosic writing. It was hearing Herbert play his own ***Concerto No. 2 in E minor*** in 1894 with the New York Philharmonic that inspired Dvořák to turn to that medium and compose the most famous cello concerto in our repertoire.

— Note by Norman Fischer



**Character Pieces . . . . . Ellsworth Milburn**

*Character Pieces* began as a one-movement work, but as time went on, it seemed appropriate to include other musical thoughts. During its two-year gestation period, the single movement became a five-movement arch form (ABCBA).

The title refers to the 19th-century genre of small pieces that were not sonatas, trios, or symphonies, but epigrammatic statements that were self-contained: *Prelude*, *Nocturne*, *Intermezzo*, *Impromptu*, etc., and is intended to be an homage to the composers from that era whom I most admire.

Structurally, the first and last movements (the *Fantasias*) are related by musical material; the second and fourth movements (the *Nocturnes*) are related by the use of special effects (pizzicato glissando in the cello in *Nocturne I* and high harmonics in *Nocturne II*); the *Intermezzo* stands by itself, and is based on, and quotes, the *Intermezzo, Op. 118 No. 2*, by Brahms.

— Note by the composer

ELLSWORTH MILBURN received his musical education at UCLA, Mills College, and the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, where he subsequently taught for five years. His teachers include Darius Milhaud, Scott Huston, Henri Lazarof, and Paul Cooper. Currently he is Professor of Music and chairs the Composition and Theory Department at The Shepherd School of Music. In an earlier phase of his career he played jazz and was music director for The Committee (1963 to 1968), San Francisco's improvisational theater company, and composed music for radio, television, and film.

As a composer, he has received four grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Presser Foundation Grant for publication of his *First String Quartet*, ASCAP Awards, and residencies at the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. Among others, he has received commissions or performances from the Houston Symphony, the Springfield (Missouri) Symphony, the Pardubice (Czech Republic) Chamber Symphony, the Concord, Blair, and Lark String Quartets, Da Camera of Houston, and the Concert Artists Guild. His music has been featured on National Public Radio's "Performance Today," and has been recorded on the CRI, Grenadilla, and Summit labels.

**A Game for cello and piano . . . . . Jonathan Kramer**

*A Game for cello and piano* was composed during a time of upheaval. I was a professor moving from a midwest conservatory to an east-coast university, and I was a composer moving from a modernist

to a postmodernist aesthetic. This was a time for questioning musical values and styles. Thus I am not surprised that the piece, which in a sense chronicles these transitions, took four years to complete (despite being only thirteen minutes long) and contains many different kinds of music.

Commissioned by the Ohio Arts Council, *A Game* was written at the request of and is dedicated to Ann Santen, a close friend throughout my years in Cincinnati. As music director and later general manager of public radio station WGUC, she has done a tremendous amount to promote and support contemporary music, not only in Cincinnati but also nationally and internationally.

Ann is fond of the music of Elliott Carter. Hence it seemed natural to include an homage. The opening of *A Game* finds the two instruments playing in two different tempos simultaneously, as in much of Carter's music. Also, the music of the two instruments is differentiated by their pitch structures, as in many Carter scores. *A Game* uses two sets of six notes each, one for the piano and one for the cello. Since these sets cannot be transposed into each other, the two instruments are unable to play exactly the same music. They are forever caught in their inescapable difference. The game to which the title refers is the challenge of making two incompatible forces — cello and piano, each with its own scale and its own tone color — somehow work together.

This is a composing game more than a listening game. It is difficult to hear the pitch and interval incompatibility of the two instruments, because of such compositional games as: playing in unison except when one instrument needs a note not in the other's scale, limiting the available pitches to those common to both instruments' scales, transposing the scales so that they have no notes in common, having the two instruments seem to play different pieces simultaneously, having the two instruments play similar but independent music simultaneously, making a single melodic line jump back and forth between cello and piano, conceiving of one instrument as subservient to the other, etc.

The piece is in two movements. The first is rhapsodic, varied, and eclectic; the second is romantic and impassioned. For the second movement, the two instruments trade scales — a further aspect of the game which challenged and delighted the composer but which is largely inaudible to the listener. This game helped the piece to become what it is, but it no longer really makes much difference. Games are for playing, after all, and music is for listening.

— Note by the composer

Born in Hartford, Connecticut, JONATHAN KRAMER received his Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from Harvard and his Master of Arts and Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. His composition teachers included Karlheinz Stockhausen, Roger Sessions, Leon



Kirchner, Seymour Shifrin, Andrew Imbrie, Richard Felciano, and Jean-Claude Eloy. Currently a professor at Columbia University, he has previously been on the faculty at Oberlin (where he first met an undergraduate named Norman Fischer), Yale, and the University of Cincinnati. He served four years as program annotator of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and has been annotator of the Cincinnati Symphony since 1980. He has also written program notes for the Pittsburgh Symphony. Schirmer Books publishes a collection of his program notes, **Listen to the Music**. He was the Cincinnati Symphony's Composer-in-Residence from 1984 to 1992. His music has been played in twenty-three countries by such ensembles as the London Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony, Seattle Symphony and Chorus, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, National Orchestra of El Salvador, and Bridgehampton Chamber Music (including pianist André-Michel Schub, cellist Fred Sherry, and violinist Mark Peskanov). Kramer has written **The Time of Music** and edited **Time in Contemporary Musical Thought**, and he is currently working on a book on music and post-modernism.

**Three Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 1 . . . . Arthur Foote**

Arthur Foote is known by many as the "American Brahms." He has the distinction of being the first native-born composer to receive all his musical training in the United States; indeed, he was the first to receive a master's degree in music from an American university (Harvard). He spent his entire musical life in Boston and wrote more than 300 compositions, many for Boston-based performers and musical groups. The **Three Pieces** are, as he said, "my first attempt to write real music" and were probably begun in 1877. The cellist who performed the pieces with Foote was Wulf Fries, a member of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club and member, during its first year, of the Boston Symphony. The "Boston Evening Transcript" described the first performance as "songs without words, each having a well-defined theme of a genuine lyric sort."

— Note by Norman Fischer

