An Evening of Music
Swain Family & Guests
October 26, 2007

Sonata for Oboe in g minor, HWV 364a
George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759
Nathan, oboe; Laurie, organ; Jeremy Woolstenhulme, cello
       Larghetto
       Allegro
       Adagio
       Allegro

Praeludium in f# minor
Dietrich Buxtehude, 1637-1707
Laurie, organ

Chorus from “Judas Maccabaeus”
George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759
Michael, cello & Nathan, piano

Bach Concerto for Oboe & Violin in c minor, CWV 1060
JS Bach, 1685-1750
Nathan, oboe; Danielle, violin; Jeremy Woolstenhulme, cello;
Barbara Riske, piano
       Allegro
       Adagio
       Allegro

Sonata II in G Major
Joseph Bodin de Boismortier 1682-1765
Nathan, oboe; Laurie, organ; Rebecca, flute; Danielle, violin;
Michael, cello
       Allegro
       Largo
       Allegro

Intermission

Concerto for Oboe in C Major, K.314
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791
Nathan, oboe & Michelle Lee, piano
       Allegro, 1st movement

Introduction & Variations
Franz Schubert, 1797-1828
Rebecca, flute & Michelle Lee, piano
       Introduction & Theme
       3rd Variation
       5th Variation

Tambourin Chinois
Fritz Kriesler, 1875-1962
Danielle, violin & Barbara Riske, piano

Trio for Flute, Oboe & Piano
Madeleine Dring, 1923-1977
Nathan, oboe; Rebecca, flute & Barbara Riske, piano
       Allegro con brio
       Andante Semplice
       Allegro Giocoso

*Please join us afterward for refreshments in the lobby
George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759  Perhaps the single word that best describes the life and music of George Frideric Handel is "cosmopolitan." He was a German composer, trained in Italy, who spent most of his life in England. Handel was born in the German city of Halle on February 23, 1685. His father noted but did not nurture his musical talent, and he had to sneak a small keyboard instrument into his attic to practice. As a child he studied music with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, organist at the Liebfrauenkirche, and for a time he seemed destined for a career as a church organist himself. After studying law briefly at the University of Halle, Handel began serving as organist on March 13, 1702, at the Domkirche there. Dissatisfied, he took a post as violinist in the Hamburg opera orchestra in 1703, and his frustration with musically provincial northern Germany was perhaps shown when he fought a duel the following year with the composer Matheson over the accomplishment to one of Matheson's operas. In 1706 Handel took off for Italy, then the font of operatic innovation, and mastered contemporary trends in Italian serious opera. He returned to Germany to become court composer in Hannover, whose rulers were linked by family ties with the British throne. His patron there, the Elector of Hannover, became King George I of England. English audiences took to his 1711 opera Rinaldo, and several years later Handel jumped at the chance to move to England permanently. He impressed King George early on with the Water Music of 1716, written as entertainment for a royal boat outing. Through the 1720s Handel composed Italian operatic masterpieces for London stages, and in the 1730s and 1740s Handel turned to the oratorio. Among the most popular of all the oratorios was Judas Maccabaeus, composed in 32 days in 1746. Handel presented the oratorio six times during its first season and about 40 times before his death 12 years later, conducting it 30 times himself. In 1737, Handel suffered a stroke, which caused both temporary paralysis in his right arm and some loss of his mental faculties, but he recovered sufficiently to carry on most normal activity. He was urged to write an autobiography, but never did. Blind in old age, he continued to compose. He died in London on April 14, 1759. Beethoven thought Handel the greatest of all his predecessors, and once said, "I would bare my head and kneel at his grave."

Dietrich Buxtehude, 1637-1707  Danish organist and composer of church, chamber and organ music, Dietrich Buxtehude was possibly the most influential composer of his time. His early youth and birthplace remain a mystery. Most scholars recognize that he studied music with his father. Being the organist at Helsingbørg (c.1638-41) and at Helsingor (c. 1642-71) his father was most likely qualified to teach and have a great influence on him. Buxtehude moved to Lubeck in 1688 and became organist of St. Mary's Church. In Lubeck he rose to such fame that musicians from northern Germany came to the city to meet the composer and attend his concerts. He was visited by Handel in 1703 and by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1705. According to legend Bach walked more than 200 miles to meet him. Bach did meet him and studied with him for several months in 1705 and 1706. Both Handel and Bach wanted to follow Buxtehude at St. Mary's, but neither one wanted to marry his daughter as that was a condition for the position. Buxtehude's best and most important compositions are those for organ. They consist of preludes, fugues, toccatas, chaconnes, music from chorales, and the passacaglia which influenced Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor. Buxtehude's organ preludes are short and usually unlike Bach's in having no theme in common with the fugues.

Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750  Bach is considered by many to have been the greatest composer in the history of western music. He was the youngest child of Johann Ambrosius Bach, an organist at St. George's Church. His father taught him to play violin and harpsichord. His uncles were all professional musicians, whose posts ranged from church organists and court chamber musicians to composers. One uncle, Johann Christoph Bach (1645–93), was especially famous and introduced him to the art of organ playing. Bach was proud of his family's musical achievements, and around 1735 he drafted a genealogy, "Origin of the musical Bach family." Bach's mother died in 1694, and his father eight months later. The 10-year-old orphan moved in with his oldest brother, the organist at nearby Ohrdruf. There, he copied, studied, and performed music. At the age of 14, Bach was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the prestigious St. Michael's School in Lüneburg. In addition to singing in the a cappella choir, it is likely that he played the school's three-manual organ and its harpsichords. He probably learned French and Italian and received a thorough grounding in theology, Latin, history, geography, and physics. It is likely that during this stage he became acquainted with the music of the German organ schools, especially the work of Dieterich Buxtehude. Bach spent the height of his working life in a Lutheran church position in Leipzig, as both organist and music director. Much of his music is religious, and many of his secular works admit religious interpretations on some levels. Bach's main achievement lies in his synthesis and advanced development of the primary contrapuntal idiom of the late Baroque. He was able to successfully integrate and expand upon the harmonic and formal frameworks of the national schools of the time: German, French, Italian & English, while retaining a personal identity and spirit in his large output. Bach is also known for the numerical symbolism and mathematical exactitude which many people have found in his music – for this, he is often regarded as one of the pinnacle geniuses of western civilization, even by those who are not normally involved with music. His large output of organ music is considered to be the greatest legacy of compositions for the instrument. His other solo keyboard music is held in equally high esteem. His chamber music is similarly lofty, and his large output of concerti includes some of the finest examples of the period, including the Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor.

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier 1682-1765  Joseph Bodin de Boismortier was among the most popular composers of 18th-century France. He was born in the town of Perpignan and relocated to Paris in about 1724. In the years that followed, he published over one hundred and two major works, all written with an eye on popularity. They were printed and reprinted providing him with enormous wealth. His wealth and success made him the butt of many jokes among the musical establishment. However, Boismortier was a knowledgeable composer even though his works aimed at Italian and French audiences. He was, for instance, the first French composer to work within the new Italian innovation, the concerto, through which he demonstrated a knowledge of how to skillfully use five instruments of the same kind to produce varying tonal colors. The music theorist Jean-Benjamin de la Borde wrote in his Essay on ancient and modern music in 1780 about Boismortier: "Bienheureux Boismortier, dont la fertile plume peut tous les mois, sans peine, enferner un volume." ("Happy be Boismortier whose fertile pen can give birth without pain to a new piece of music every month.") To such criticism, it is said that Boismortier would simply answer: "I'm earning money."
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791  Mozart showed such a prodigious talent for music in his early childhood that his father, also a composer, dropped all other ambitions and devoted himself to educating the boy and exhibiting his accomplishments. Between ages six and fifteen, Mozart was on tour over half the time. By 1782, he was a virtuoso on the clavier - an early keyboard instrument and predecessor of the piano. Mozart soon became a good organist and violinist as well. He produced his first minuets at the age of six, his first symphony just before his ninth birthday, his first oratorio at eleven, and his first opera at twelve. His final output would total more than 600 compositions. Much has been said and studied in the popular media about Mozart's roguish lifestyle and apprehension of conformity. It was this aspect of his personality that never won him the support of royalty or the church, which, at that time, was critical to any composer's survival. As such, Mozart died young, ill, poor, and relatively unappreciated. Only after his death to become the mostly widely acknowledged orchestral composer in history. Mozart's Oboe Concerto in C Major, K.314, was written for the Mannheim oboist Friedrich Ramm, and became known as "Mr. Ramm's showpiece". Both Ramm's virtuosity and improvements in instrument design are displayed in this Oboe Concerto.

Franz Schubert, 1797-1828  The son of a schoolmaster, Franz Schubert showed an extraordinary childhood aptitude for music, studying the piano, violin, organ, singing and harmony and, while a chorister in the imperial court chapel, composition with Salieri (1808-13). By the age of 17 he had produced piano pieces settings of Schiller and Metastasio, string quartets, his first symphony and a three-act opera. Although family pressure dictated that he should teach in his father's school, he continued to compose prolifically. At age 21 he discontinued teaching and under aristocratic patronage, devoted himself to composition. Schubert's fame was long limited to that of a songwriter, since the bulk of his large output was not even published, and some not even performed, until the late 19th century. Yet, he produced major instrumental masterpieces as well. These are marked by an intense lyricism (often suggesting a mood of near-pathos), a spontaneous chromatic modulation that is surprising to the ear yet clearly purposeful and often beguilingly expressive, and, not least, an imagination that creates its own formal structures. This expression is demonstrated in his piece for flute and piano, Introduction and Variations on an Original Theme Op. 82, No. 2, D. 968a.

Fritz Kreisler, 1875-1962  Among the most distinguished violinists of his time, Fritz Kreisler was born in Vienna and became a student at the Conservatory at the age of seven, studying with the younger Joseph Hellmesberger and later, in Paris, with Massart. His subsequent international career, interrupted briefly by diversion into medical studies and army service, consolidated his position as a leading virtuoso. Kreisler first played in the United States in 1899, and after his 1901 performances became perhaps the most popular violinist in the country. As a composer he provided himself with a series of brief encore pieces, well suited to the then requirements of the recording studio. These took the form of arrangements and transcriptions as well as a more controversial series of pieces attributed to composers of the past but in fact his own composition. These too have become a standard part of violin repertoire and it seems strange, in retrospect, that anyone should have thought them anything but effective. Kreisler made useful additions to violin repertoire in his many transcriptions, short compositions of acknowledged authorship and a series of pieces that he attributed to lesser known composers of the 18th century, but which were in fact his own work. Kreisler's violin work "Tambourin Chinois" ("tumbling dance") was composed in 1933.

Madeleine Dring, 1923-1977  Madeleine Dring, an English composer and actress, was born into a musical family and showed talent at an early age. She studied in the junior division of the Royal College of Music beginning at age nine, receiving on scholarship for violin. Her talent for the stage was also noticed, and she performed in the children's theatre. She continued at the Royal College through senior-level study in music, where her composition teachers included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells, and Gordon Jacob. In addition to music, she also studied mime and drama. Dring's two loves of theatre and music would coexist happily; many of her compositions were for the stage, upon which she often sang and played piano. In 1947 she married Roger Lord, an oboist, for whom she composed several works, including the Trio for Flute, Oboe and Piano. Madeleine Dring's musical style is typically light and unpretentious. She admired the idiomatic and rhythmically vibrant writing of Francis Poulenc, which is echoed in her works. Her harmonizations are often jazzy and her writing has often been compared to that of George Gershwin. She wrote many of her songs for herself and as such made no particular effort to make them melodically easy to sing, as she herself had perfect pitch. Because family responsibilities kept her from completing large-scale works, most of Dring's output was in shorter forms. She wrote a good deal of solo piano and chamber music, as well as many pedagogical works. She did, however, complete a one-act opera, Cupboard Love, and a dance drama, The Fair Queen of Wu. Dring died in 1977 of a cerebral hemorrhage.