

Tafelmusik

Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir

Safe Haven Program Notes

By Alison Mackay

Safe Haven is an exploration in music, words, and images of the influence of refugee populations on the culture of their adopted countries. From the beginning of human history, war, persecution, poverty, and climate crises have caused people to abandon their homes and seek asylum beyond their borders. The British poet **Warsan Shire**, who was born of Somali parents in Kenya, has captured the anguish of making the decision to leave one's own country in her poem called *Home*:

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbours running faster than you

[...]
you have to understand
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land

Religious persecution in early modern Europe caused several waves of migration which profoundly influenced the commerce and culture of host communities. The largest diasporas resulted from the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in the late fifteenth century and the outlawing of Protestantism in late seventeenth-century France.

For almost a century, the 1598 Edict of Nantes had provided protection for Huguenots, the French protestant followers of the sixteenth-century reformer Jean Calvin. In 1685, Louis XIV revoked the edict, ordering that Protestant churches be destroyed, schools be closed, clergy be deported, and lay people be forced to convert and remain in France. Protestant men caught leaving the country would be sent to the galleys, women would be imprisoned, and children would be confiscated.

In response to these threats, hundreds of thousands of farmers, scholars, bankers, lawyers, artists, and musicians left France in secret, and because they were said to be

seeking “refuge,” people began to refer to them as “*refugiés*,” inspiring the first use of the English term “refugee.” France’s loss of human and economic capital became the gain of Europe’s cities — by 1700, a fifth of the population of Berlin and a quarter of the population of Amsterdam were French asylum seekers. The industries manufacturing Irish linen, Swiss clocks, South African wines, and Dutch paper were founded by refugee entrepreneurs bringing their technical expertise to their new communities.

The magnificence of Louis XIV’s Versailles had already had a strong influence on Northern European taste, and the arrival of French artists and musicians in London, Amsterdam, and Berlin helped to disseminate and solidify the liking for French goods and design. In October of 1685, Frederick William of Brandenburg and Prussia issued the Edict of Potsdam — an invitation to French refugees to make their homes in Germany. Prussian diplomats in Amsterdam arranged for sea transport to Hamburg, where the exiles were met by government representatives and escorted up the Elbe River to their chosen destinations. The newcomers were granted abandoned land and given building materials with which to erect new houses or repair old ones; the original landowners were fully compensated.

At the music-loving court of Celle, refugee actors and musicians were especially welcomed by the Duke’s French wife, Éléonore Desmier D’Obreuse, herself an ardent Huguenot. The Duke and Duchess kept a French orchestra mentioned by C.P.E. Bach in his account of his father’s life and musical influences:

[In 1700, when he was fifteen] Johann Sebastian went to St. Michael’s School in Lüneburg. Here he had the opportunity to listen to a famous orchestra kept by the Duke of Celle, consisting for the most part of Frenchmen: thus he received a thorough grounding in the French taste, which in those regions was at that time something quite new.

Many of the wind players in Lully’s orchestra had been Protestants, and in exile they helped to introduce the oboe, a new French instrument, to Germany. **J.S. Bach** was the most important composer of baroque music featuring the oboe (his cantatas feature more solos for oboe than for any other instrument), and it is likely that he was introduced to the instrument by the French oboists at the court of the Duke and Duchess of Celle.

French refugees also played a vital part in the dissemination of the music of Louis XIV’s official court composer, **Jean-Baptiste Lully**. The Huguenot theatre impresario Jean-Jacques Quesnot, who had been imprisoned in Grenoble on the charge of encouraging fellow Protestants to leave France, fled to the Netherlands and

recognized a potential market in the new Francophone public in the Hague and Amsterdam. He organized performances of Lully's *Armide*, *Thésée*, and *Atys*, and may have been the one to send a troupe of players to perform in a highly influential first full production of a Lully opera in London, *Cadmus et Hermione*.

Even more influential were the French music printers who set up shop in Amsterdam and began to publish the orchestral movements from Lully's staged works in editions which were sold all over Europe. The most prominent of the Huguenot publishers was **Étienne Roger**, who left Normandy as a young man in 1685, immediately after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He apprenticed in the printing trade and began to publish grammars and dictionaries. He produced his first beautifully engraved music books in 1696, and by the time of his death in 1722 had published over 500 editions of works by Europe's most famous composers.

The contract between **Arcangelo Corelli** and Roger concerning the publication of Corelli's twelve concerti grossi, Opus 6, one of the most influential publications of the eighteenth century, was discovered in the Amsterdam city archives in the 1990s and reveals fascinating information about the relationship between composers and publishers.

The contract, written in French, indicates that Corelli and Roger had exchanged a number of letters about the publication and that Corelli had already sent one batch of concertos to Amsterdam. The others would follow and the entire set of twelve would be engraved and published together entirely at Roger's expense. No money was exchanged, but it was arranged that Corelli would receive 150 free copies of the partbooks, to be sent over land and delivered to his doorstep. Roger would undertake to print an extra 150 copies to be deposited with Corelli's Amsterdam agent until the first 150 arrived safely in Rome. Then Roger and Corelli would both be free to offer their 150 copies for sale.

Less than a year after the contract was concluded, Corelli died and the publication was gradually received by his heir, the violinist Matteo Fornari. It was possible at the time for an engraver to create four to six pages on copper plates in a week. There are 202 pages of engraved music divided among seven partbooks in the publication, which would have taken almost a year to produce. The music was sent to Rome in small batches to lessen the danger of accident or theft — probably seven bundles, each containing 150 copies of one part as it was finished. The music is so beautifully engraved that we still use copies of Roger's editions in Tafelmusik performances today. *Safe Haven* ends with a joyful Allegro from the fourth concerto of the set, featuring two virtuosic solo violin parts in dialogue.

After Roger's death, his business was taken over by his daughter **Jeanne**, and after her death by her sister's husband, **Michel-Charles Le Cène**, who published **Antonio Vivaldi's** most famous work, *The Four Seasons*, in 1725. Our concert about the cultural influence of Huguenot entrepreneurs, landing as it does in the January cold, is an appropriate setting for Elisa Citterio's performance of "Winter," part of the *Four Seasons* cycle which runs through our 2017/18 season.

Huguenots were not the only exiles who influenced the commerce and culture of seventeenth-century Holland. In January of 1492, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile had conquered Granada, ending an era of Muslim rule in the south of Spain which had lasted for seven centuries. Emboldened to the cause of Christianizing the entire peninsula, Ferdinand and Isabella issued a royal decree that ended a Jewish presence in Spain dating back to Roman times. All Jews had to convert to Christianity or leave Spain by August 2 of that year. Many submitted to an outward conversion to Christianity, and many fled to Portugal hoping for greater freedom of worship. After a few years, Portugal also turned on its Jewish population, and in 1536 the Portuguese Inquisition began to torment descendants of Jewish refugees. "Marranos," converts who continued to practise Judaism in secret, came under increasing pressure and began to look for new homes in Italy, England, and Holland. After 1600, they were particularly welcomed in the port city of Amsterdam, where they established trading networks which greatly contributed to the prosperity of the city.

The poet **João Pinto Delgado** (1580–1653), who was of Spanish descent, was born in the south of Portugal and educated in Lisbon. In middle age he fled through France to Amsterdam, where he became a governor of the Talmud Torah Seminary. His autobiographical poetry, published in 1627, describes the experience of leaving Lisbon and arriving in a safe haven where Passover could be openly observed. We have set the Spanish verses from this poetry to music by the seventeenth-century Spanish composer **Juan Hidalgo**, who in 1633 became the official harp player to the royal chapel in Madrid.

In England, it was steadfast Catholics who were forced into exile by religious persecution. After Elizabeth I succeeded her Catholic half-sister Mary as queen of England, legislation was passed declaring the practice of Catholicism to be high treason, punishable by death. Though Catholic musicians were sometimes tolerated, the brilliant composer and keyboard virtuoso **Peter Phillips** felt his situation to be dangerous enough to warrant escape to the Continent. For three years he worked for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome, where he was also engaged as organist at the

English Jesuit College. In 1590 he settled in Belgium and began to exert a strong influence on the school of north-European keyboard music. The Amsterdam organist **Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck**, whom Phillips visited in 1593, composed a set of variations on a famous pavan by Phillips; both the Phillips model and variations by Sweelinck are featured in the second half of our programme.

Between the union of Poland and Lithuania in 1569 and the takeover of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by Russia in 1768, Poland was known as a place of relative religious toleration. The Warsaw Confederation Act of 1573 was the first piece of European legislation to guarantee freedom of worship, and by 1600 about three-quarters of the world's Jewish population lived in Poland. Catholics from Scotland and Roma families fleeing persecution in the Hapsburg Empire also found new homes there. The Roma became closely associated with musical life in Poland, performing at the royal court, at weddings, and in country inns. **Georg Philipp Telemann**, who for three years was in the employ of Count Erdmann II at his Polish estates, wrote about having been influenced by the music that he heard at these country inns, and while he was in Poland he notated a number of melodies which he later incorporated into orchestral compositions. The work called "Mezzetin en turc" from his "Burlesque" Suite began life as one of these tunes, called "Polish Dances" in a manuscript in Telemann's handwriting now found in Rostock.

The development of European musical instruments is closely bound up with the cross-fertilization brought about by the movement of peoples through trade and migration. The design of the early violin in the northern Italian cities of Brescia and Cremona was influenced by Sephardic Jewish luthiers who fled to the north of Italy in the late fifteenth century. A military census from 1520 in Cremona shows Andrea Amati as an apprentice in the household of one of these instrument builders. The European lute was an offspring of the Arabic oud, which had flourished in Muslim Spain for centuries.

Today in Canada the musical scene is enriched by the presence of many players of instruments which flourished around the world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, providing us with exciting opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. One of these instruments is the west African kora, a plucked instrument made from a calabash covered in hide, with a neck bearing 21 strings. The **kora** was played by members of distinguished bardic families in Mali, where improvised music accompanied epic narratives which were passed down from generation to generation. Our guest artist, **Diely Mori Tounkara**, is the member of such a family from Mali and now lives in Montreal. He and our other guests, **Maryem Tollar** and **Naghmeah Farahmand**, are enriching Canadian musical life through their

performing and teaching, passing down ancient traditions to a new generation of Canadian musicians. We are honoured to share our stage with these guests.

The final section of our concert explores some of the rich cultural traditions of West Africa and Mali in particular, traditions which were unknown to the Europeans who profited from the Atlantic slave trade, believing Africans to be somehow less than fully human. By 1700, ancient trade routes had connected the communities around the Niger River with the Mediterranean for a thousand years. Caravans conveying gold and ivory used in exquisite art works in Benin and Ghana travelled north across the Sahara to the coast, and returned with tablets of salt and reams of paper for the great centres of scholarship and manuscript production in the cities of Djenée and Timbuktu. In the eighteenth century, the favoured paper for the manuscripts of Mali came from Venice and was made in the same paper mills which supplied paper to Vivaldi. These fragile sheets of paper have survived the dangers of conflict and climate to bear witness to the common humanity of all who need safety and security to fully express our shared desire for knowledge and beauty.

The long-term effects of the slave trade still play a part in the complex story of human displacement today, for the great waves of refugee migration which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are tragically not a thing of the past. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees states that in 2017 there are 65 million people worldwide who have been forced from their homes, including 22 million official refugees who have fled from their countries. In 2016, only 189,000 refugees were resettled worldwide, 46,700 in Canada.

The stories of refugees who arrived here a generation ago reveal the tremendous contributions that they have made to the economy and culture of their new country. Thirty years ago, 155 Tamil refugees came to Canada in dire circumstances. They had been forced into lifeboats in the North Atlantic and were rescued by Newfoundland fisherman Gus Dalton. One of the boats was recently discovered by Canadian filmmaker **Cyrus Sundar-Singh** (photo left) and we are grateful to him for helping to tell the story with his own images and words: "The boat, which was once a reminder of fear and shame, has become a powerful symbol of hope for a better life in a new land."

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