



Festival Orchestra violist **Ramón Negrón Pérez** in conversation with Elizabeth Blumenstock:

Ramón plays in the Festival Orchestra concerts on Sunday June 19 and Sunday June 26, 2022.

For more information and to buy tickets visit the Festival's website: bmf-cdm.org

EB: I am often asked what my favorite piece of music is. This is impossible to answer! I am also asked which composer is my favorite—impossible to answer as well! The impossibility is mostly the fault of that word, “favorite.” So, instead I shall ask: which three Baroque composers consistently delight and move you, and why?

RNP: Bach, Vivaldi and Marin Marais. Bach is the founding father of baroque harmony. He explored numerous variations and forms. He methodically created a vision of this genre of music like no other. Vivaldi, I admire for elevating the soloist, the virtuoso. He is why every child wants to play violin.



Marin Marais (1656-1728)

French composer Marais I identify with as a Latino myself, because he filled everything he composed and performed with his essence and passion. His operatic compositions are full of lively danceable vignettes.

EB: As we have all been painfully aware, live performances came to an abrupt halt in the spring of 2020 and have been more or less down for the count until quite recently. But some other things became more possible during this time. For me, one of these things was working on taming a bit of the wilderness that is my “back yard” in rural, mountainous New Mexico. What was the most interesting of these “newly-possible” things for you?

RNP: I like to think of it as an advance on my retirement. It included moments spent with my children that would never have existed otherwise. As the father of a then Kindergartener and 4th Grader it was a unique opportunity to become Mr. Dad/hall monitor/tutor/cafeteria person/IT support—everything. I had two virtual classrooms going simultaneously every day that required assistance. I had never been so busy. It was a long year and a half of online learning. It was a blessing to have direct insight into the amazing academic inner workings of our education system, although it was a moment in time that was full of uncertainty for all of us. We filled our evenings with impromptu music lessons and jam sessions. We adopted a dog from the humane society. We put up a four-person tent and



camped in the yard, my wife baked far too many sweets, we barbecued and enjoyed the small things.

EB: I have gradually been doing more and more teaching, along with concertizing, and, of course, teaching calls for quite different skills. As performers we wish to be memorable, but this is equally important to teachers! What is the most powerful thing a teacher ever did or said to you?

RNP: Guillermo Figueroa Sr., who began teaching me at in the Children's String Program at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music when I was at the impressionable age of 9 years old, always focused on using the same warm-up exercises. This was done first, before anything else. He told me I would need to repeat these exercises my entire life. His movements, mannerisms and dedication to this simple yet complex task inspired me to create a strong foundation for any repertoire. I now find myself teaching this same technique to my students. Through repetition and discipline this creates control and balance of sound and speed. The other thing that always inspires me is he would tell me in his proper Spanish to always practice with caution but when it came time to perform to throw caution to the wind. Spanish: "practica con vergüenza y toca sin vergüenza." It gets lost in translation, but it means to practice methodically and give it your all when you perform.

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EB: And last, where would you choose to go if you were given an all expenses paid, three week trip to anywhere in the world, and what attracts you about that place?



RNP: Vienna because it is known as the City of Music. I have always admired its historical importance to musicians - a cultural center which both Mozart and Beethoven found to be full of inspiration. It is an elegant city that is not only gorgeous but a hub of creativity. I would fill my trip with sightseeing, museums and as many musical performances as possible.

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