

TUESDAY EVENING CONCERT SERIES PRESENTS
Tafelmusik
12 March 2024 at UVA's Old Cabell Hall
Program Notes by Laurie Shulman © 2024

Overture in D minor, from FWV K:d4
Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758)

Johann Sebastian Bach is the dominant figure in German Baroque music, but he had many gifted contemporaries. Johann Friedrich Fasch is a prime example. Born near Weimar, he sang as a boy soprano in Suhl and Weissenfels, before being recruited by Johann Kuhnau for the Leipzig Thomasschule in his early teens. He studied at the University of Leipzig, founding a Collegium Musicum there and establishing a reputation as a composer. He wrote operas for the Naumburg Festivals in 1711 and 1712, and obtained formal instruction in composition in Darmstadt with Christoph Graupner and Gottfried Grönwald.

Fasch worked as violinist and organist in several German cities, and as Kapellmeister to a Bohemian Count in Prague. He eventually settled in the Saxon city of Zerbst as court Kapellmeister in 1722. Though he applied for some other positions, he remained in Zerbst for the rest of his life. Many of his operas and cantatas have been lost. His instrumental music – *Ouverturen*, symphonies, concerti, trio sonatas and solo sonatas – has survived, and is the basis for his reputation today.

The term *Ouverture* in the German Baroque was synonymous with the instrumental suite, generally comprising an introductory movement followed by a series of dance movements. Fasch's first movement is a French overture, alternating slower sections with a pronounced dotted rhythm and a brisk scalar flourish with a faster fugal section in brisk triple meter. At six

minutes, it is the work's lengthiest segment.

The ensuing movements demonstrate Fasch's skill in varying the musical emphasis between his woodwinds and strings. His Air showcases the oboes and bassoons in an up-tempo minuet, with well-mannered commentary from the strings. Fasch's Gavotte doubles the oboes with the violins for the sprightly melody, with just one brief cameo solo for the woodwinds. The Aria is a plaintive duet between oboe and bassoon, with continuo in a supporting role.

The four-voice *Fuga* is for strings alone (though it would not have been unusual in the 18th century to have the oboes doubling the violins) and shows Fasch's skill in counterpoint. A pair of minuets follows. The first, in D major, has the texture of rococo music, with an emphasis on melody and accompaniment rather than counterpoint. Its D minor sibling preserves that texture, and the first minuet recurs for a brief *da capo*.

Réjouissance means rejoicing or merry-making, and Fasch's music – again in exuberant D major – delivers the message. The movement unfolds as antiphonal dialogue between the D major strings, often in unison, and contrasting minor mode episodes from the winds. Their interaction is seamless and companionable. Fasch concludes his suite with another Minuet, back in his home tonality of D minor. The writing is in three parts, again with emphasis on melody and accompaniment rather than an imitative texture. Here again, 18th-century custom would have invited doubling of the winds with the strings.

Concerto Grosso in C minor, Op. 1 No. 11
Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764)

Italian Baroque composers can seem a bewildering array of similar sounding names and music. Corelli and Torelli, Veracini and Valentini, Pasquini and Pasqualini, Bononcini and Rinuccini, Tartini and Nardini. Apart from titans like Monteverdi and Vivaldi, how does one sort them out?

The violinist and composer Pietro Locatelli makes it a bit easier, because his cosmopolitan career was so unusual. He was educated in Bergamo and in Rome, where he may have studied with Corelli and Valentini. By 1721, his renown as a composer had spread to northern Europe. The prestigious Dutch firm of Estienne Roger published his Opus I, a set of twelve concerti grossi, that year. Locatelli was also renowned as a virtuoso player. His *L'arte del violino*, Op.3 contains writing that is a pre-echo of what Niccolò Paganini would compose a century later. Locatelli obtained a position in the court at Mantua, then worked in several German cities before settling in Amsterdam in 1729. He would remain there for the rest of his life – 35 more years – and for practical purposes was as much a musician of the Low Countries as he was Italian.

The C minor concerto grosso, No.11 is somewhat like a Baroque sonata da chiesa [church sonata] in that it comprises four movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast. That stated, Locatelli's opening Largo is followed by three dance movements, which also connects this work to the Baroque suite. For the most part, Locatelli's concerti had fewer movements than Corelli's, and those movements tend to be more extended. The Allemande and Giga are clear binary

forms with repeats, and the Sarabande switches from C minor to F minor. The transitions between the first two movements and the last two suggest that each pair was intended to be played without pause. Locatelli's emphasis on melodic line with harmonic accompaniment reflects a departure from the polyphonic textures of Baroque music, toward the more transparent textures of rococo and the early classical style.

Concerto in B-flat Major, RV 501 ("La notte") for bassoon, strings, and continuo
Antonio Vivaldi (1675-1743)

No composer is more closely associated with the Baroque concerto than Antonio Vivaldi. This prolific Italian composed more than 450 examples during his lengthy career. Almost 90% of the surviving examples feature individual soloists; however, Vivaldi also composed works that featured duos, trios, or even quartets of instruments set against the larger ensemble. The vast majority of his solo concerti -- some 223 -- are for violin. Surprisingly, the second largest number is for bassoon. Thirty-seven of his bassoon concerti have survived in their entirety; fragments of two additional ones exist. Vivaldi's solo cello concerti are a distant runner-up, with 27 extant examples.

For most of the years between 1703 and 1740, Vivaldi served as a combination of music-master, composer-in-residence, and conductor at the Seminario musicale dell'Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. This institution was itself a combination: orphanage, school, convent, and conservatory for girls. Vivaldi wrote most of his instrumental compositions for the talented girls at the Ospedale. Judging from the astonishing variety of solo instruments featured in these works, Vivaldi's students excelled on virtually every instrument that was in common use during

the early 18th century. After a visit to the Pietà in 1739, the French writer Charles De Brosses reported: "They play violin, recorder, organ, oboe, cello, bassoon; in short, there is no instrument large enough to frighten them." Evidently one of the girls at the orphanage was quite the bassoon virtuoso!

Among Vivaldi's contributions to the development of the concerto form as we know it are the standardized three movements arranged fast-slow-fast. He emphasized virtuosic and flashy solo lines in the concertino sections of the outer movements; highly expressive, even passionate outpourings in the slow movements; and easily recognizable themes that serve as unifiers. These stylistic factors are evident in the B-flat Major concerto, RV 501; however, this concerto is unusual in its programmatic title and content, and its expansion to five connected movements.

Vivaldi opens with unison strings, which then expand to harmonize the introduction. Dignified and untroubled, we imagine the subject dropping gently off to sleep. The soloist's interpolated ascending scales and triplets suggest some light snoring amid the regular breathing of slumber.

Fantasmia abruptly interrupts with a frenetic Presto. Phantoms and spectres invade the sleeper's subconscious, prompting agitation. A second Presto section in 3/8 implies a secondary episode to the bad dream, then finally, Il Sonno: sleep, pacific and free of anxiety. The finale, *Sorge l'Aurora* ['The Dawn Rises'] is the most conventionally concerto-like, with lively conversation between the soloist and the continuo ensemble. The promise of a new day elicits cheerful passage work from the bassoon, showing of the instrument's agility and erasing the

memory of the restless night.

Chaconne from Alcyon

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

If Marin Marais's name rings a bell, it could be because of the 1991 art film *Tous les Matins du Monde* starring Gérard Depardieu, which featured Marais's music for viola da gamba.

Marais studied bass viol with Jean de Sainte-Colombe and composition with Jean-Baptiste Lully, court composer to Louis XIV and the greatest composer of the early French Baroque era. He joined Lully's court orchestra – *Musique de la Chambre du Roi* – in 1676, when he was twenty. Marais spent the next half century in service to the king, celebrated as both a virtuoso soloist and as a composer.

His four surviving operas are *tragédies en musique* in the tradition of Lully, comprising a prologue and five acts. *Alcyone*, widely considered his operatic masterpiece, was first performed at the Paris Opéra on 18 February 1706. Librettist Antoine Houdar de la Motte adapted the story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Greek mythology, Alcyone, daughter of Aeolus, is engaged to Ceyx, the King of Trachis. Evil spells and intrigue interfere with their union, but in the end Neptune intervenes to restore the lovers to each other. The chaconne occurs in the opera's final act; its joyous strains suggest their reunion.

The chaconne is a continuous variation form, related to the *passacaglia* (French *passacaille*). It is thought to have originated in Spain or Italy, possibly imported from Latin

America. Generally in slow triple time, it features extended variations above a repeated ground bass. That bass line is the harmonic foundation for the variations. Marais's Chaconne is somewhat livelier, and serves as a framework for his melodic and textural imagination. It seems to encapsulate Alcyone's and Ceyx's relationship, with several minor variations representing their travails before the happy dénouement.

Orchestral Suite in B-flat Major, TWV 55:B13
Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Telemann was far more famous in his day than his younger contemporary Bach. He had achieved enough renown by 1718 to write an autobiography, and his reputation grew so substantial that he penned two more autobiographies in 1729 and 1739, each for inclusion in a contemporary music dictionary. Because he adapted to stylistic changes evolving around him, he was an important transitional figure from the high Baroque to the Rococo style.

Telemann was incredibly prolific. Though not all his works have survived, we know that he wrote about fifty Passions, some 1400 cantatas, nearly 50 solo concerti, and an immense quantity of chamber music. About 100 of Telemann's orchestral suites bear the title Overture. These works consist of a first movement in French overture style, followed by a series of shorter movements.

The Suite that Tafelmusik performs is representative. Telemann's first movement has the characteristic dotted rhythm of a dignified French overture with a fugal second section in allegro tempo. In this case, there is a concerto-like episode for solo violin, and lively passage work for

the two oboes. They often play in parallel thirds with the bassoon in a supporting bass role.

Most of the movements that follow are dances familiar from suites by Bach and other late Baroque composers. Telemann's genius lies in the amazing variety of his interaction between the string and wind instruments. Unlike Bach, he occasionally departs from his home tonality, rather than having every movement in the same key. Two of his movements fall outside the dance norm. *Plainte* [Lament] switches to minor mode, changing mood as well as tonality. Solo violin opens the *Affettuoso e molto adagio*, soon joined by oboe in tender conversation. The *Passepied alternativement* closes the suite in a brisk triple meter pair of dances.

Concerto in D minor for two violins, strings & continuo, BWV 1043
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Between 1717 and 1723, Bach was employed by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, a music-loving nobleman from an area northeast of Weimar in what used to be called East Germany. The position was rather similar to the one that Haydn was to hold with the Esterházy family later on in the century. When Bach was engaged as Kapellmeister, Leopold's court boasted one of the largest and finest orchestras in Europe. Bach composed a considerable amount of instrumental music for the Cöthen musicians, including most of his solo concertos.

Bach was very interested in the Italian style of concerto writing, particularly the works of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). He studied Vivaldi's music avidly, sometimes copying the scores to develop greater familiarity with the style. It is no surprise that the D minor Concerto for two violins reflects certain Italian Baroque characteristics.

The three movements adhere to the Vivaldian model of fast-slow-fast. Bach makes extensive use of sequences and contrast between full orchestra (ripieno) and his solo group (concertino, in this case the two violins). The presence of two soloists in the D minor concerto highlights the contrapuntal intricacy of Bach's texture. Their entrances are frequently canonic; he also makes use of invertible counterpoint, whereby the two voices exchange material, maintaining the integrity of each contrapuntal line.

The slow movement, an elegant F Major cantilena in gently rocking 12/8 meter, has particular melodic beauty. Once again, invertible counterpoint plays a significant role, but it is the suspended harmonies that enhance the operatic expressivity of this Largo.

A stormy, aggressive opening motive sets the tone for Bach's finale, which distances itself from the dance-like finales of his solo concertos. Indeed, the relationship between concertino and ripieno is practically reversed here. The orchestra shares in the densely overlapped principal statement, a close canon that functions as a ritornello. Twice in the course of the movement, both soloists play several measures repeated double-stops in steady eighth notes. Together, they form a chordal accompaniment to the sequential gestures the orchestra is tossing about. Bach's abundant melodic material attests to his power of imagination.

This Double Concerto was extremely popular throughout the 19th century, after the 'Bach Revival' spearheaded by Felix Mendelssohn took hold. It remains one of Bach's best-loved instrumental compositions.

Sonate en symphonie in G minor

Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville (1711-1772)

Mondonville may not be a household composer name today, but in 18th century France, he was as renowned as Jean-Philippe Rameau. He came from good musical stock: his father was organist at the cathedral in Narbonne, a southern French town between Perpignan and Montpellier on the Mediterranean coast. As a boy, Mondonville excelled on violin, and soon began composing and conducting. By age 20, he had relocated to Paris, where he played initially at the Concert spirituel, one of the earliest public concert series. His career soon took off. In 1739 he became a violinist of the royal chamber and chapel. From 1744 to 1758 he served as Master of the Royal Chapel, and also benefitted from the patronage of Louis XV's mistress, Mme de Pompadour. Mondonville was named Director of the Concert spirituel in 1755. Surviving programs from that series show frequent performances of his music.

Mondonville's first published works appeared in 1733 and 1734, including his Opus 3, *Six Pièces de clavecin en sonates avec accompagnement de violon*. The set is historically important because they were the first keyboard sonatas to be published in France. In 1749, Mondonville arranged them for the Concert spirituel, expanding the instrumentation to two violins, two oboes, bassoon, and basso continuo, and renaming them *Sonates en symphonie*. In this new form, he provided for the strings to play concertante passages in a quasi-solo role.

All of the *Sonates en symphonie* consist of three movements arranged fast-slow-fast. Mondonville opens the G minor one with a bipartite French-style overture: slow introduction in

dotted rhythm followed by a lively Allegro. The slow movement switches to major mode for a melodious Aria in triple meter. The work concludes with a brisk and energetic Gigha [Gigue], revealing an Italianate influence to Mondonville's music.