

Bach, et. al. Say it fast. Bach it all. All good. All Bach, except for et. al. with which we begin and punctuate tonight's celebration of the music of history's finest musical craftsman. Issuing from a family with seven generations of musicians before him, in Bach's native Thuringia, to be a "bach" was to be a musician. So, while none of us on stage tonight is a Bach, we are all bachs.

During his lifetime, Georg Philipp Telemann was the most important musician in Germany, more popular than either Bach or Handel, both of whom were his friends. Telemann and Bach were close enough for Telemann to become the godfather to Johann Sebastian's Number Two Son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel, who eventually succeeded his Telemann as Kantor of the Johanneum and director of music at Hamburg's five principle churches. The composer of over 4000 compositions, Telemann was a progressive who, before most everyone else, comprehended that what we now refer to as baroque music was about to give way to a lighter "galant" classical approach. His music has an immediate appeal and Italianate charm that never goes out of style.

With tonight's opening selection, Telemann's rousing Sinfonia Spirituoso, we introduce the FIU Baroque Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Carlos Riazuleo. The most obvious difference between a standard orchestra and a baroque orchestra is that it is much smaller, actually more of a large chamber ensemble than an orchestra. It also includes a harpsichord and sometimes one or two lutes. You may notice that the string players are using baroque bows – from the FIU Collegium Musicum instrument collection. Baroque bows are shorter and lighter than the standard Tourte bows and are easily identifiable from a distance by their sharply pointed tips. Compared to modern bows, baroque bows produce a more articulated sound that brings out the dance character that permeates virtually every Baroque compositional medium. Notice the textural changes during the slow movement where the harpsichord drops out and leaves the chordal accompaniment exclusively to the theorbo, a long-necked baroque lute with a deep bass register.

Among the instruments listed in Bach's estate was a lute. He is known to have dabbled in the instrument and had a number of students who were somewhat expert. Among his friends was the greatest lutenist of the day, Silvius Leopold Weiss (1686-1750). Although composed for the lute, tonight the Prelude in A Minor is performed on classical guitar. In the early music world, we often forget that how one plays is more important than the instrument on which one plays. This is followed by a lovely and too-seldom played rhapsodic prelude from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The French Suites, BWV 812-817, refer to six suites that Johann Sebastian Bach wrote for the clavier (harpsichord or clavichord) between the years of 1722 and 1725. In his suites, Bach followed established precedent by adopting a form and style strongly influenced by 17<sup>th</sup>-century French lutenists and harpsichordists. In three great sets of six suites for keyboard, he achieved a perfect synthesis of the French and Italianate styles underpinned by his unparalleled command of counterpoint. Usually for lute or keyboard, four pieces formed the nucleus of the suite, each representing a different national temperament, with its own character and metrical and rhythmical patterns. In the German keyboard suite, these dances were the allemande, serious and supposedly Germanic, the courante, French and

in a graceful, running manner, the sarabande, dignified and Spanish in style, and a lively, skipping gigue, perhaps based on an English dance. Other *galant* dances, such as bourées, minuets, gavottes and polonaises could be added between these movements. This music was designed to charm, entertain, and delight; it might be played on the harpsichord either for a small group of listeners or be solely for the performer's pleasure, perhaps on the clavichord.

George Frederick Handel's music is truly international. It displays Italian exuberance balanced by French poise, tempered by British reserve, blended with German ingenuity. While today we tend to think of Handel as the composer of "The Messiah," during his day he was primarily known as an opera composer and organ virtuoso. This evening he is well represented with a Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord in the Italian style and two opera arias. "V'adoro pupille" is Cleopatra's aria from his opera seria *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, which was presented by the Florida Grand Opera in Miami this past spring. Here Cleopatra uses her feminine wiles to seduce Cesare to gain the throne of Egypt. In this aria, she sings to him, full of sensuality and surrounded by the Muses of Parnassus.

*V'adoro, pupille saette d'amore,  
Le vostre faville son grate nel sen.  
Pietose vi brama il mesto mio core,  
Ch'ognora vi Chiapa l'amato suo ben.*

I adore you, eyes, missiles of love.  
Your spark is welcome to my breast.  
My sad heart desires you, who inspire pity,  
And whom it always calls its best beloved.

"Bel Piacere" is a Poppea's aria from the opera seria *Agrippina*. It tells the story of *Agrippina*, the mother of Nero, as she plots the downfall of the Roman Emperor Claudius and the installation of her son as emperor. In this aria Poppea sings to her beloved Otho, expressing the happiness and the pleasures of a faithful love.

*Bel piacere è godere fido amor!  
Questo fà contento il cor.  
Di bellezza non s'apprezza lo splendor;  
Se non vien d'un fido cor.*

'Tis great pleasure to enjoy a faithful love!  
This brings contentment to the heart.  
Splendour is not measured by beauty,  
If it does not come from a faithful heart.

"Clarity through contrast" refers to the notion that heightening the differences between contrasting elements (or moods) sharpens the identity of each element. The more dramatic the contrast, the better. White appears whiter next to black than next to grey. The whiter the white and the blacker the black, the more we appreciate the contrast. This principle functions on every level of music making in the Baroque era, from performance to composition. Astute performers of Baroque music emphasize the dissonances so that

the consonances sound that much sweeter. Contrasting tempos or meters and the other identifiable characteristics of each movement in a multi-movement work are clearly articulated. In terms of composition, no genre in the history of music illustrates the principle of clarity through contrast more clearly than the concerto.

Early on, the word “concerto” had many connotations, but by the time we get to the high Baroque, it meant a large work for a soloist or soloists and an orchestra. It is often a vehicle for virtuosic instrumental display. A concerto with several soloists, as in Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, is properly designated as a *concerto grosso*. The small group of soloists, the violin and two flutes in this case, are referred to as the *concertino*, and the larger group that includes the rest of the strings and basso continuo are called *tutti* (everyone) or *ripieno* (full). From this description we can already identify several of the major contrasts inherent in this form: fast vs. slow, larger sound and fuller texture (*tutti*) vs. smaller sound and thinner texture (soloists), the simpler material of the *tutti* vs. the more virtuosic figurations in the *concertino*, the surround sound of the whole group vs. the narrowly focused sound of the soloists, and the generally rhythmic nature of the first and third movements vs. the song-like lyrical second movement.

The first and third movements in Baroque concerti are usually in *ritornello* form, which is related to the ritornello form found in da capo arias, where an instrumental ritornello or refrain begins and ends the aria, and is also placed between large sections of the song. In the concerto, the *tutti* and *concertino* always play the ritornello, the easily recognizable melodic material that begins the concerto. Recurring at somewhat regular intervals, the ritornello may or may not return in exactly the same form as it first appeared. However it appears, it is readily identifiable as the ritornello. The soloist(s) play in between each statement of the ritornello. A ritornello may occur in a variety of related keys throughout the movement, but remains in whatever key it began in from the beginning to end of each occurrence. For instance, a movement may have six ritornelli in the keys of G, G, E Minor, C, D, and G, with the soloist performing the modulation from one key to the next. Ritornello form provides a solid and yet elegant architectonic structure, while at the same time creating an environment that allows for maximum dramatic contrast.

Only thirty-six years old when he composed the six Brandenburg Concertos for the Margrave of Brandenburg, Bach already demonstrated a compositional mastery well beyond his years. Bach’s festive Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major presents an engaging conversation between the *tutti* and solo recorders while the solo violin part, which requires unusual poise and virtuosic ability, comments in the background. This concerto has a very high tessitura having been originally composed for “fipple-flutes” or *flutes-à-bec*, that is, flutes with a beak, something akin to recorders. The third movement remarkably superimposes a free fugue over ritornello form.

- David Dolata and members of the FIU Collegium Musicum