

D86

1979 Stanley Ritchie - Baroque Violin

1-7 Elisabeth Wright - Harpsichord

The Duo Geminiani

&

The Bach Ensemble

Richard Sparks - Director

IN A GALA
ALL BACH PROGRAM

Meany Hall

Sunday, January 7, 1979

3:30 p.m.

Reel!

Program

Tape #9249-s. 1

Motet VI - "Lobet den Herrn"

7:17

"Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol Him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us; & the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Alleluia!" (Psalm 117)

Fred Inman, Cello

Jim Biedel, Violone

Elisabeth Wright, Harpsichord

Brandenburg Concerto #4 in G major (BWV 1049)

14:5

Stanley Ritchie, Baroque Violin

Philip Dickey & David Ohannesian, Recorders

Margret Cornell & Mary Tarr, Violins

Melissa Libby Swedberg, Viola

Fred Inman, Cello

Jim Biedel, Violone

Elisabeth Wright, Harpsichord

Harpsichord Concerto in E major (BWV 1053)

20:58

Elisabeth Wright, Harpsichord

Stan Ritchie & Margret Cornell, Violins

Melissa Libby Swedberg, Viola

Ronald Wilson, Cello

Jim Biedel, Violone

Tape #9248
S. 2

Reel 2

* Intermission *

Sonata in B minor (BWV 1014) 12/11/11

Duo Geminiani:

Stanley Ritchie, Baroque Violin

Elisabeth Wright, Harpsichord

20 Cantata #196 "Der Herr denket an uns"
(Trauungskantate) (BWV 196) 12/11/12

Nancy Zylstra, Soprano

Steve Stevens, Tenor

Michael Deviny, Bass

Sinfonia

Chorus: "The Lord thinks of us & blesses us. He
blesses the house of Israel, the house of Aaron."

Soprano Aria: "He blesses they that fear the
Lord, both great & small."

Tenor, Bass Duet: "The Lord blesses you
evermore & more, you & all your children."

Chorus: "You shall be the blessed of the Lord;
Heaven & earth has made you the blessed
of the Lord. Amen."

PROGRAM NOTES

Any program of Bach's music which contains both sacred and secular compositions is likely to represent different phases of his career. This is not because Bach felt the two categories to be irreconcilable, but because most of the positions which he held required him to compose in only one of them.

The cantata Der Herr denket an uns is one of Bach's earliest compositions. It was written for a wedding, probably that of his Aunt Regina Wedemann which took place in 1708 while he was a church organist in Mühlhausen. Since the cantata is an early work, it is not surprising that it shows differences from his mature practice, most noticeably in the absence of recitatives and a chorale. Less expected, perhaps, are the numerous signs of the later master, such as the use of an obbligato accompaniment (unison violins in the soprano aria) and a fondness for extensive counterpoint (the choral fugues). A significant feature is the strong motivic unity which the composition exhibits; an upward leap of a fourth or fifth is prominent in the first four movements and reappears at the very end of the last.

Bach's first opportunity to extensively produce secular instrumental music did not occur until 1717 when he became Cöthen Court Conductor. The Prince of Cöthen was a musician of considerable ability and understanding who was deeply interested in instrumental music. As he played both violin and clavier, it is possible that the Six Sonatas for Harpsichord and Violin of 1720 were written for him and Bach to perform together. The title of this set of compositions is significant, for they specify "harpsichord" and not

just "continuo". The distinction between the two words becomes apparent once these sonatas are compared with the two sonatas which are for violin and continuo. In the latter, the continuo part is written merely as a figured bass, whereas in the former the keyboard part is notated in full. Essentially, these sonatas can be considered as trio sonatas for two performers: the violin and the harpsichord's right hand are the melody lines, while the left hand is the bass. In the B Minor Sonata, the trio texture is most apparent in movements two and four, which are three-part fugues. However, the independence of the harpsichord is established from the outset of this composition; it begins the piece alone.

One of Bach's major responsibilities at Cöthen was conducting and providing music for the small but well-trained orchestra which the Prince maintained. Among the compositions which Bach wrote for the group were concertos, undoubtedly inspired by a desire to demonstrate the respective abilities of the individual players. In 1721, Bach took six of the concertos which he had already written for the orchestra, and recopied them with a dedication to the Margrave of Brandenburg. Although the dedication was appropriately obsequious, it is unlikely that the composer's gesture endeared him to the Margrave, since the Brandenburg orchestra was too small and inexperienced to perform any of the concertos.

The fourth of the Brandenburg concertos uses an original combination of soloists. Although the violin is the dominant soloist, the two recorders have an important part of the material, even to the extent of a brief cadenza for the first at the end of the second movement. Structurally, the concerto shows how Bach could enrich a conventional conception. In the

first movement, he adds to the symmetry of the traditional ritornello form by giving it an ABCBA pattern, while in the customarily lighter finale he uses fugue technique to increase its depth of expression. Even the relatively simple slow movement is unusual, at least among the Brandenburgs, in not requiring any reduction of performing forces.

Upon moving to Leipzig in 1723, Bach returned to sacred composition. He was responsible for the music programs in all the municipal churches, and was expected to provide a new cantata every Sunday and feast day at one of the two major churches. It has been suggested that the motet Lobet den Herrn (1729) is, in fact, a movement from one of the cantatas which Bach wrote during this period. The work is unlike Bach's other motets: it has no chorale; it is not subdivided into separate movements; and it is the only one for a four part choir. Some commentators have even gone so far as to question its authenticity. To others, the characteristic fugal structure of the piece is enough to confirm the hand of Bach. Perhaps its most striking feature is the initial subject which spans a twelfth.

Although Bach threw himself into the composition of sacred works at Leipzig, producing hundreds of cantatas and the St. Matthew Passion before 1730, he received little appreciation from his superiors. Fortunately, he was able to redirect his energies towards a more responsive audience when he was appointed head of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum in 1729. The members of this institution met in a coffee house where they performed instrumental music and secular cantatas. Among the compositions which

Bach wrote as a result of his new appointment were harpsichord concertos for him and his sons to play. Many of these concertos were adapted from violin concertos by giving the original solo line to the right hand while maintaining the continuo function in the left. Although a similar relationship between the right and left hands occurs in the E Major Concerto, there is no evidence of a violin original. The sources of this piece are movements from two cantatas which already included extensive organ obbligati. In Bach's mind, at least, there was no division between sacred and secular.

--By Stephen Tarr

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 4th: THE BACH ENSEMBLE presents Nancy Zylstra, soprano, and Sand Dalton, baroque oboe, in Bach's solo cantata "Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut". The program also includes Bach's motet "Jesu, meine Freude". 4 PM at Grace Lutheran Church, Bellevue; 8 PM at Central Lutheran Church, Seattle. \$3.00/\$2.00.

February 9th: SOLO HARPSICHORD RECITAL by ELISABETH WRIGHT featuring the French Overture of Bach and works by Froberger and Louis Couperin. Seattle Concert Theater, 8 PM. \$4.00/\$3.00.

February 23rd: SEATTLE PRO MUSICA RECITAL SERIES presents CARTER ENYEART, cello, performing Bach suites for unaccompanied cello. 8 PM, Seattle Concert Theater. \$4.00/\$3.00.

February 24th: DUO GEMINIANI with guests Catharina Meints, viola da gamba, and James Caldwell, baroque oboe and viola da gamba, in a concert of French baroque music featuring works by F. Couperin, Rameau, Marais, and Leclair. 8 PM at the Seattle Concert Theater.

February 25th: PRO MUSICA SINGERS & CHAMBER ORCHESTRA join forces to present the W.A. Mozart Mass in C Minor (Great Mass). 3:30 PM, First Presbyterian Church (7th & Spring), Seattle. \$3.50/\$2.50.