

University of Washington
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

L54
1995
2-28

THE
BRANDENBURG
CONCERTI

Barry Lieberman, *director*

with guest artist
Gerard Schwarz

*DEDICATED TO THE
DUKE OF BRANDENBURG
IN 1721 BY*

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

8:00 PM
Meany Theatre
February 28, 1995



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The six so-called "Brandenburg" (BWV 1406-51) concerti were composed by Bach during his employment under Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Coethen. The concerti were sent to and dedicated to the Duke of Brandenburg in the first part of 1721, this being the reason they are called the Brandenburg Concertos today. The precise reason for the composition is not entirely clear, although much can be gained by looking at the dedication itself. A rough translation, provided by Norman Carrel in his book, The Brandenburg Concertos, reads as follows:

Sir,

A couple of years ago I had the good fortune to perform before Your Royal Highness at Your command, and I noticed then that you showed some pleasure at the small talent for music which Heaven has given me. When I took my leave Your Royal Highness did me the great honor of ordering me to send Him some pieces of my own composition: therefore, and in accordance with His gracious order, I have taken the liberty of fulfilling my very humble duty to Your Royal Highness with these little concerti which I have scored for several instruments.

Humbly I pray You not judge their imperfections by the fine and delicate taste in music which everyone knows You possess, but rather to take into Your benign consideration the deep respect and humble obedience which I have endeavored to show You by them.

Further, Sir, I beg very humbly that Your Royal Highness will continue to have the goodness to hold me in His good favor and be convinced that I have nothing nearer to my heart than to be employed on occasions more worthy of You and Your service.

I am, Sir,
with unparalleled zeal,
Your Royal Highness's
Very humble and very obedient servant
Johann Sebastian Bach

Despite the mention of employment and an order to send pieces, evidence does not support that these works were commissioned by the Duke. For one thing, the works require a wide range of instrumentalists that the Duke may not have had in his orchestra. We know that at the time of the Duke's death in 1734, the orchestra consisted of only six people. This would not be nearly enough for four of the six concerti. We also know that J. S. Bach used portions of these concerti in later works, such as Cantatas 52, 174, 207 and the clavier concerto in F (BWV 1057). If these concerti had been commissioned, practice of the day would have considered the musical content to be property of the Duke, and not available for later use by Bach.

The works were more likely a sample of music sent by Bach on request by the Duke. One can imagine the following very plausible scenario: It is known that Bach was in Berlin towards the end of 1718 to purchase a new keyboard instrument for Prince Leopold of Coethen. While there, Bach performs for the Duke of Brandenburg and the Duke express the desire, either genuine or out of politeness, to 'see some of your music sometime.' The result was not a set of standard concerti for the Ducal orchestra. Instead, Bach composed six highly experimental and varied works in terms of style and instrumentation using the vast resources of the Prince's orchestra, an orchestra of about seventeen people. Some of the works were even thought to have been composed before Bach's encounter with the Duke and specifically for an orchestra with the numbers and variety of Leopold of Coethen's.

ID1 INTRO TALK - 10'

IN ORDER OF PERFORMANCE...

*Denotes guest or faculty member

ID2 Brandenburg #1 in F-Major 20'03

This concerto requires the most players of any of the Brandenburg Concerti. The first concerto, as well as two, four and five, are in ripieno form. In this case the solo instruments are the two horns, three oboes, the bassoon, and the violin. One interesting note is that the solo violin line was originally composed for the Piccolo violin, a violin tuned higher than the standard violin. The concerto was probably composed before Bach's encounter with the Duke of Brandenburg and may have used two trumpets instead of horns in the original version.

*Rodger Burnett, *horn 1*; Ryan Stuart, *horn 2*; Scott Perry, *oboe 1*;
Darlene Franz, *oboe 2*; Jennifer Bullinger, *oboe 3*; *Arthur Grossman, *bassoon*;
Won Soon Chung, *violin solo*; *Maria Larionoff and Jeff Yang, *violin 1*;
Kyung Chee and *David Fulerton, *violin 2*; Camber Charlot, *viola*;
Leslie Hirt, *cello*; *Barry Lieberman, *bass*; *Stephanie Leon, *cembalo*
*Gerard Schwarz, *conductor*

ID3 Brandenburg #4 in G-Major 16'13

It is believed that this concerto was composed sometime in the winter of 1719 to 1720. The concerto was originally composed for solo violin, two recorders, and accompaniment although there is some doubt as to who exactly Bach intended to be the soloist. The title page of the work is slightly ambiguous, leading some to believe that this concerto may have been written as a solo concerto for violin with the two recorders as part of the accompaniment. If this is the case the fourth concerto would stand alone as the only solo concerto in the set.

*Felix Skowronek and Kyong-Joo Min, *flute*; Kevin He, *violin solo*;
Jeff Yang, *violin 1*; Thane Lewis, *violin 2*; Camber Charlot, *viola*;
Loren Dempster, *cello*; *Barry Lieberman, *bass*; *Stephanie Leon, *cembalo*

ID4 Brandenburg #5 in D-Major 23'11

This is the only one of the Brandenburgs where the keyboard line is not restricted to an accompaniment role. The cembalo (in this case, piano) part was believed to originally be broken up between two players, one soloist along with the violin and flute and the other an accompanist. The combination of the two roles into one is not unusual; in fact, there is only one keyboard part with solo and tutti designations given. Slightly more unusual is the use of piano instead of cembalo in this performance.

*Maria Larionoff, *violin solo*; *Felix Skowronek, *flute*;
*Jonathan Shames, *piano solo*; Kyung Chee, *violin*; Camber Charlot, *viola*;
*Toby Saks, *cello*; *Barry Lieberman, *bass*

ID2 Brandenburg #6 in B-flat Major 18'57

The sixth Brandenburg concerto stands out from the other concerti in that it is not a concerto in the strictest sense of the term. This work, thought to have been composed in or before 1718 was originally scored for two violas, two viola da gambas, cello, violone (a predecessor of the bass), and cembalo. This is markedly different from the other concerti, in that the usual accompaniment group of strings is not present. Even in the third concerto, a work that does not have a clear-cut set of soloists, the usual consort of strings is used. It is also considered unusual by some that Bach chose to write for two violas instead of violins. The reason for

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CA 55 12, 534
SIDE B
CA 55 12, 535 - A
DAT 12, 533

this becomes clearer when it is noted that Bach himself was, as well as an outstanding composer and keyboard player, a violist.

Camber Charlot, *viola 1*; *Maria Larionoff, *viola 2*; Leslie Hirt, *cello 1*;
Loren Dempster, *cello 2*; Gretchen Yanover, *cello 3*; *Barry Lieberman, *bass*;
*Stephanie Leon, *cembalo*

103 Brandenburg #3 in G-Major 13'09

The third concerto also stands out as unusual in that it is a concerto for orchestra. All nine violinists, violists, and cellists are listed as soloists with only the bass and cembalo being left over for continuo. Bach also omits a melodic middle movement found in the other concerti and instead merely provides two slow sustained chords as a transition into the final movement. The last movement is fugal in nature, demonstrating Bach's well known talent for this complex form of writing. It must be noted that the third concerto is not unique in having a fugal last movement. The second, third, fourth, and fifth concerti also contain fugues in their last movements.

*Maria Larionoff, *violin 1*; Won Soon Chung, *violin 2*; Kyung Chee, *violin 3*;
Camber Charlot, *viola 1*; Jeff Yang, *viola 2*; Ed Davis, *viola 3*;
Leslie Hirt, *cello 1*; Loren Dempster, *cello 2*; Gretchen Yanover, *cello 3*;
*Barry Lieberman, *bass*; *Stephanie Leon, *cembalo*

104 Brandenburg #2 in F-Major 11'45

In the writer's opinion, Bach as an experimenter in orchestration can be seen especially well in this work. Bach puts four seemingly disparate instruments together as soloists and explores the different timbres created by the various combinations. Although woodwind, violin and brass are set together in the first concerto, the sheer number of players helps to offset any imbalances that various combinations may cause. In this work, each instrument must compete and blend individually, and not in a larger orchestral setting.

*Martin Berinbaum, *trumpet*; *Megan Lyden, *flute*; Darlene Franz, *oboe*;
*Maria Larionoff, *violin solo*; Kevin He, *violin 1*; Won Soon Chung, *violin 2*;
Camber Charlot, *viola*; *Toby Saks, *cello*; *Barry Lieberman, *bass*;
*Stephanie Leon, *cembalo*

PROGRAM NOTES AND ASSISTANCE BY OLAV HEKALA

Barry Lieberman, double bass, began his career in Winnipeg, Canada, as principal bass at the age of 20. He joined the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1975 and was appointed associate principal in 1976 by Zubin Mehta. Mr. Lieberman began his bass studies with Jacques Posell, principal bass of the Cleveland Orchestra, and later studied with Lynn Harrell. Mr. Lieberman is a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy and the Cleveland Institute of Music.

In addition to his orchestral work, Mr. Lieberman is a regular performer with Chamber Music Northwest, Music from Angel Fire, Bravo Colorado, and this summer with the Seattle Chamber Music Festival and the Seattle International Festival. Mr. Lieberman, along with his wife Maria Larionoff, are members of the New European Strings, which tours world-wide. He is currently on the faculty of the University of Washington. A recent review from the Oregonian stated, "Every time Barry Lieberman made an entrance, the blossoming sound went straight to the gut. Such moments propelled the music, suffusing it with joy."

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