

September 23 and 24, 2023
Chamber Orchestra Concert

"THE GLORY OF BAROQUE: Bach and Friends"

September 23rd – 7:30 pm
September 24th – 3:30 pm

Violin Concerto No. 1, BWV 1041, A Minor
Johann Sebastian Bach

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

Wes Luke, Violin

Concerto Grosso in G Major, ZWV 186
Jan Dismas Zelenka

- I. Allegro
- II. Largo cantabile
- III. Allegro

Intermission

Viola Concerto in G Major
Georg Philipp Telemann

- I. Largo
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante
- IV. Presto

Sean Dostal, Viola

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, BWV 1046, F Major
Johann Sebastian Bach

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro
- IV. Minuet and Trio
- V. Polacca and Trio

Chamber Orchestra Concert I

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A chamber orchestra is a small orchestra, frequently consisting of some twenty musicians. Like larger orchestras, chamber orchestras are usually led by a conductor. They will have a full complement of first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses, as well as timpani. On many occasions, members of the wind and brass sections will be featured, such as flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, and trombone. As among larger orchestras, not everyone plays all the time for any one piece.

Violin Concerto No. 1, BWV 1041, A Minor

Johann Sebastian Bach (b. Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, March 21, 1685; d. Leipzig, Saxony, Germany July 28, 1750)

- I. **Allegro moderato**
- II. **Andante**
- III. **Allegro assai**

Wes Luke, Violin

The score calls for solo violin, first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, string basses, continuo (harpichord). It lasts for 15 minutes.

The art of Johann Sebastian Bach is omnipresent in the music life of today, accessible to everyone. “This is the accomplishment not just of vocal and instrumental soloists and musical groups all over the world, but, importantly, also of the recording industry, radio, and television, and, not the least, the music publishing industry,” writes orchestra conductor Kurt Masur in his forward to *Johann Sebastian Bach – Life and Work* by Martin Geck.

Yet, there is so little known about Bach’s actual life, less than for any great composer since his time. In fact, if only because of the sparse biographical details, one pays especially close attention to his music. Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany. His parents were Johann Ambrosius Bach (a gifted court and town musician) and Elisabeth Lammerhirt Bach, daughter of a town official in the town of Erfurt, Germany. Peter Williams continues reviewing Bach in his book, *The Life of Bach*, by writing, “While ‘Johann’ was a common family name, ‘Sebastian’ comes from little Johann’s godfather, as was customary.”

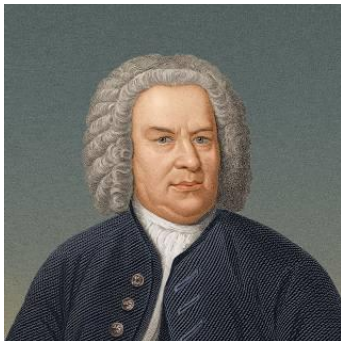
Various members of the Bach extended family remained prominent town musicians, but it was his church’s organist who had a major musical influence on young Johann. In fact, the young boy was allowed to learn as many basics of organ playing as were feasible. His schooling is uncertain before 1693

when he entered the Latin school, suggesting he was a brighter than average child. Johann's parents passed away when he was only nine years old, and he began living with his older brother, who was also an organist. The older brother, Christoph, had studied organ for three years with Johann Pachelbel, a well-known German composer, organist, and teacher who lived 1653 – 1706. This organ performance and composition knowledge was undoubtedly passed on to the young Johann Bach. However, Johann also grew and developed music knowledge on his own.

The number of surviving compositions for orchestra alone is small. Besides the Brandenburg Concertos (we will hear No. 1 in this concert), there are two violin concertos, a double concerto for two violins, and four orchestra overtures.

We don't know whether Bach played the solo parts himself, although a fair guess would be that he did. He was a capable violinist who liked to direct his orchestras while playing the viola, where he could be in the middle of things musically and physically. He owned a violin by Jacob Stainer, whose instruments were prized more highly than those of Stradivari in the 18th century. And Bach extended the horizons of the violin as a "complete" harmonic and contrapuntal instrument in his phenomenal unaccompanied partitas and sonatas, works that could not have been written by someone without a comprehensive working knowledge of the instrument.

Written from 1717-1723 according to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Fifth Edition*, Bach's *Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor* consists of three movements (fast-slow-fast) in typical Baroque style in a pattern set by Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, whose works we will hear later this concert season. The first movement is fast with a main section that comes back in fragments in both the solo violin and orchestral parts. The second movement is song-like —lyrical, expressively warm, and ever gentle. The last movement is fast, *Allegro*. Like Bach's two other violin concertos, the solo instrument at times stands out from the orchestra and may blend with the orchestra.



Johann Sebastian Bach

Concerto Grosso in G Major, ZWV 186

Jan Dismas Zelenka (b. Louňovice, Bohemia, Czechia, October 16, 1679; d. Dresden, Germany, December 23, 1745)

- I. Allegro**
- II. Largo cantabile**
- III. Allegro**

This score calls for first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, string basses, continuo (harpsichord).

A 'concerto grosso' features a small group of solo instruments – often two violins and two cellos with harpsichord. This ensemble is set against the larger forces of the chamber orchestra.

A Czech composer, Johann (Jan) Zelenka was raised in Central Bohemia, educated in Prague and Vienna, and spent his professional life in Dresden. "His father was the village schoolmaster and musician so he received a good musical training at home. Zelenka later attended the Jesuit College in Prague and later entered the court orchestra at Dresden as a double-bass player in 1710," reads *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians Fifth Edition*. "He then went to Vienna to study composition with Johann Joseph Fux, an Austrian composer."

In the early 1720s, Zelenka returned to Dresden and composed some of his finest works; his compositions still constitute an important part of the repertoire of the Catholic court church. In addition to composing, throughout his life Zelenka taught a number of prominent musicians of his time, including Johann Joachim Quantz (Frederick the Great of Prussia's longtime court flautist and flute teacher). Among his close friends was the eminent composer Georg Philipp Telemann.

On December 23, 1745, Zelenka died and was buried on Christmas Eve. He never married and had no children. His compositions and musical estate were purchased from his beneficiaries by the Electress of Saxony and the Queen of Poland Maria Josepha of Austria. After his death, these were considered valuable court possessions. Telemann tried unsuccessfully to publish Zelenka's "Responsorias," writing that "the complete manuscript will be at the Dresden court, kept under lock and key as something very rare."

While Zelenka was aware of the music in different regions of Europe, he wrote complex fugues, ornate operatic arias, galant-style dances, baroque recitatives, Palestrina-like chorales, and virtuosic concertos. Zelenka's musical language is closest to Bach's, especially in its richness of contrapuntal harmonies and ingenious usage of fugal themes. He is sometimes considered Bach's Catholic counterpart (Bach was a German-Lutheran).

Zelenka's music is influenced by Czech folk music. In this respect, he continues the tradition of the production of specific Czech national music initiated by Adam Michna Otradovic (a Czech Catholic poet, composer, hymn writer, organist and choir leader of the early Baroque era) and brought to its culmination by composers Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák in the nineteenth century and Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů in the twentieth century. Interest in Zelenka's music has grown, especially since the end of the 1950s with the revival of interest in Baroque music. More than half of Zelenka's works have now been recorded, mostly in the Czech Republic and Germany.

Today's work was composed in 1723 and entitled, *Concerto à 8 Concertanti*. Musicologist Wolfgang Reiche compiled a thematic catalogue listing Zelenka's works: [*Jan Dismas Zelenka: Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke (ZWV), Dresden, 1985*]. This listing of Zelenka's output includes vocal-instrumental (masses, requiems, oratoria, psalms, hymns, litanies, operatic works, melodrama, processions, antiphons, arias, motets, short liturgical and spiritual compositions), instrumental and orchestral works (sonatas, sinfonias, concerto, etc.).



Jan Dismas Zelenka

Intermission

Viola Concerto in G Major

Georg Philipp Telemann (b. Magdeburg, Germany, March 14, 1681; d. Hamburg, Germany, June 25, 1767)

- I. Largo
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante
- IV. Presto

Sean Dostal, Viola

The score calls for solo viola, first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, string basses, continuo (harpsichord).

Solo music by Georg Philipp Telemann is loved by string, wind, and brass musicians. Just as music by Bach is so rewarding, so is music by Telemann. Interestingly, however, “Telemann received no regular musical training, but by diligently studying the scores of the great masters – in particular Lully – made himself conversant with the science of music,” reads *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians Fifth Edition*. “At age 19 he went to the University of Leipzig and, while carrying on his studies in languages and science, became, in 1704, organist of the New Church.”

Telemann continued on with his growing musical career throughout Germany, in fact, Handel knew Telemann well while Handel was still in Germany. As a composer, Telemann was highly skilled with a well-developed technical mastery of current forms of composition. A son of a clergyman, he composed a great deal of religious music including oratorios. He also wrote many operas and instrumental music of all kinds.

This work is the first known concerto for viola and was written around the years of 1716–1721. Telemann focused on composing for lesser-known instruments, resulting in the composition of this work. Telemann's *Concerto in G Major for Viola* represents a major Baroque concerto, as he explored the soloistic sound of the instrument, allowing it to be viewed as more than just an ensemble instrument.

Telemann's *Concerto in G Major for Viola* contains four movements:

- I. *Largo*: A smooth, warm movement with long notes. Some performers choose to add significant ornamentation to this very simple movement.
- II. *Allegro*: The melody begins with a distinctive syncopated figure which is also found later in the movement.

- III. *Andante*: A slow, mellow, soft movement is played largely on the upper strings of the instrument.
- IV. *Presto*: A fast, exciting movement.

The fast movements contain very few slurs, and many performers' editions include slurring suggestions in addition to those markings contained in the original. (A slur in sheet music connects two or more notes of different pitches and means the notes should be played as smoothly as possible, with no space in between.) The performer is encouraged to invent a varied pattern of slurs which fits the shape of each phrase. The slow movements both give the option of a cadenza, which is an improvised or written-out ornamental passage played by the soloist, usually in a "free" rhythmic style, and encouraging virtuosic display.

Paul Doktor, violist, teacher, and conductor, has written the cadenzas for this concerto. Born in Vienna, he moved to the United States in 1947 and became an American citizen. Doktor was a faculty member at The Juilliard School, The Mannes College of Music and New York University. He was an outstanding contributor to string pedagogy.



Telemann

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, BWV 1046, F Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (b. Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, March 21, 1685; d. Leipzig, Saxony, Germany, July 28, 1750)

- I. **Allegro**
- II. **Adagio**
- III. **Allegro**
- IV. **Minuet and Trio**
- V. **Polacca and Trio**

The score calls for violino piccolo (small violin), three oboes, one bassoon, two horns, strings, and continuo (harpsichord).

J. S. Bach composed well over a thousand works and addressed virtually every genre (opera being a notable exception) common in the first half of the eighteenth century. Beethoven referred to Bach as "the father of all harmony." Claude Debussy called him "the Good Lord of music." Orchestra conductor Kurt Masur writes in his forward to *Johann Sebastian Bach – Life and Work* by Martin Geck, "Many composers, writers, and philosophers of every cultural background have eulogized Bach in this manner – they testify to the deep admiration as well as to the respect and humility that one feels when gazing

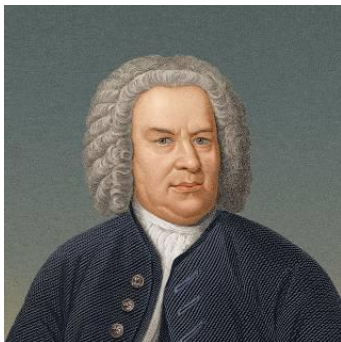
upon the sheerly incomprehensible creativity and greatness that radiates from the work of the cantor of Leipzig's Thomaskirche (one of the church organist jobs Bach held in his lifetime).

"The Bach performance tradition reflects innumerable shifts in taste and changes in performance practices," writes Allan Kozinn in his book *Essential Library – Classical Music of the New York Times*. "Not least among these is a healthy discussion between advocates of period instruments who state that Bach's music should be performed on instruments that were used in his day, and champions of modern instruments who feel that the medium is not the message." One set of pieces – the Brandenburg Concertos – that embodies both qualities is this suite of concertos that Bach compiled for Christian Ludwig, the Margrave of Brandenburg (who was also the younger brother of King Frederick I of Prussia), in 1721.

In the case of the *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1*, the soloists are quite numerous and give this concerto its particular coloration. In fact, it is the most complex of the Brandenburg Concertos. At various points in the composition, Bach crafted solo roles for one violin, three oboes, one bassoon, and two horns—nearly as many musicians as might constitute a small orchestra. Although a superior court orchestra would have had no difficulty in fielding such a large and diverse number of virtuoso players, the margrave's orchestra was less skilled. The Margrave of Brandenburg, Christian Ludwig, lacked the resources to support such a talented ensemble.

While Bach himself may have performed violin in performances, it is likely that these concerti were never performed at the Brandenburg court. "Yet, Bach – as in his other important cycles – is primarily concerned with making an unmistakable contribution to a historically developed musical imprint (to address the way that music appears at a particular historical moment and in a specific social setting)."

Among Bach's surviving instrumental concertos, some give off a special radiance. Included in this group are the Brandenburg Concertos. The First Concerto has a colorful orchestration, reminiscent of a courtly ritual. "In fact, this concerto requires the violin piccolo to play a king of dancing-master violin part," continues Martin Geck in *Johann Sebastian Bach – Life and Work*.



Johann Sebastian Bach

