

GERMAN BAROQUE | NOVEMBER 19, 2022

PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto Grosso in D Minor, Op. 3, No. 5

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Premiered in March 1734 in London

George Frideric Handel is considered one of the greatest composers of his time. He began his studies in Halle and worked as a composer in Hamburg and Italy before settling in London in 1712. Handel is best known for his operas, oratorios, anthems, concerti grossi, and organ concertos.

Concerto Grosso in D Minor, Op. 3, No. 5 was published in 1734 as part of a set of six Concerti Grossi by music seller John Walsh. It is suspected that Handel did not know about the initial publishing of this collection as many of the pieces included in this set were written over a period of twenty years. At first, Walsh only published the first two movements of the piece. However, after gaining popularity Handel requested that the piece be published in full.

A concerto grosso is a form of baroque music in which the musical material is passed between a small group of soloists and the full orchestra. This varies from a solo concerto in which a solo instrument carries the melodic line with accompaniment by the orchestra. *Concerto Grosso, Op. 3 No. 5* is scored for two oboes (originally one), one bassoon, strings, and continuo. The piece contains five movements straying from the standard four movements used at the time.

Viola Concerto in G Major

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Premiered c. 1715 in Frankfurt for the weekly Frauenstein concerts

Georg Philipp Telemann is said to be the most prolific composer of all time with more than 3,000 compositions, half of which are lost to this day. Of his surviving works, the *Viola Concerto in G Major* is one of his most famous concertos. It was one of nearly 200 pieces Telemann wrote while serving in Frankfurt as the city's music director. The concerto was a result of Telemann's focus on composing works for lesser-known instruments. The piece explores the soloistic sound of the viola allowing it to be considered more than just an ensemble instrument.

The *Viola Concerto* is scored for solo viola, strings, and continuo. It contains four movements, unlike the standard three movement concertos of the time. The piece opens with *Largo*, a warm movement with long notes. It is followed by the most played movement of the piece, *Allegro*. The *Andante* movement features a slow, mellow melody with harmonic twists. The *Presto* concludes the piece with a fast, dance-like movement.

“Overture” from Overture-Suite in E Minor

Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758)

Johann Friedrich Fasch was born to a musical family in Buttelstadt, Germany in 1688. At the age of 13, he studied with Johann Kuhnau at the St. Thomas School in Leipzig. He continued his studies at the University of Leipzig where in 1708 he established a society of amateur musicians who met to rehearse and perform for pleasure known as a Collegium Musicum. During this time, he wrote many overtures for the society in the style of Telemann. Following his time in Leipzig, Fasch studied and worked as a violinist and composer around Germany and then later Prague where he spent two years as Kapellmeister, or conductor, and court composer to Count Morzin.

In 1722, Fasch took a position as court Kapellmeister at Zerbst. During this time, his sacred compositions gained him popularity and he was invited to compete for a position as music director of the St. Thomas School in Leipzig against J.S. Bach. Fasch refused the position and remained in Zerbst until his death in 1758. It is known that both Bach and Telemann held Fasch's music in high regard. Bach even wrote out five of Fasch's orchestral suites while Telemann performed a cycle of church cantatas in Hamburg. Most of Fasch's music was never printed during his lifetime resulting in much of it being lost to this day. He is most well known for his overtures, symphonies, concertos, and chamber music. His *Overture-Suite in E Minor* is scored for two flutes, two oboes, bassoon, strings, and continuo.

“Air” from Orchestral Suite No. 3, BWV 1068

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Composed c. 1730

Orchestral suites were popular in Germany during the Baroque period. Fasch wrote approximately 100 while Telemann's 135 surviving examples only represent a fraction of the number he actually composed. However, Johann Sebastian Bach was less interested in these types of compositions. Although he wrote other suites for solo instruments, he only wrote four orchestral suites, which occurred between 1723-1731.

Orchestral Suite No. 3, BWV 1069 is scored for two oboes, three trumpets, timpani, strings, and continuo. However, the second movement, *Air*, only contains strings and continuo. This is the only movement that we are playing at tonight's concert. This movement is in a simple binary form with no clear return to the opening melodic material in the second half. The movement was arranged by German violinist August Wilhelmj shortly before 1900 and became known as *Air on the G String*.

Overture-Suite in C Major, “Hamburger Ebb und Fluth”

Georg Phillip Telemann (1681-1767)

Premiered on April 6, 1723 in Hamburg

Telemann was considered more popular in the early 1700s than his friend Johann Sebastian Bach. In 1721, he accepted a position to work as music director at the five largest churches in Hamburg where he encountered

opposition from church officials because they felt his secular music and marital problems were too much of a distraction. He would stay in this position until his death in 1767.

Overture-Suite in C Major, "Hamburger Ebb und Fluth" ("Hamburg ebb and flood") is often referred to as Telemann's *Wassermusik*, or *Water Music* (not to be confused with Handel's more popular *Water Music*). It was composed to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Hamburg Admiralty, an organization who protected the city's shipping and port system which is so important to the city's maritime trade. As part of the celebration, ships fired cannons and flew pennants, and a large banquet was held during which Telemann's piece was performed.

The ten movement piece is scored for two flutes, two oboes, bassoon, strings, and continuo. The piece begins with a French overture that depicts the physical movement of the ocean from gentle waves to tumultuous seas. Several dance movements follow representing mythological deities related to the sea. The sleeping sea goddess Thetis is portrayed in the *Sarabande* and is then awoken in the lively *Bourrée*. The *Loure* represents the sea god Neptune in love while the *Gavotte* depicts playful water nymphs known as Naiads. *Harlequinade* showcases the playful and joking mood of Neptune's son, Triton, through energetic figures.

The next two movements represent deities of the winds: Aeolus, stormy ruler of the winds, in *Tempête*, and Zephir, gentle god of the west wind, in *Menuett*. The *Gigue* showcases the ebb and flow of the waters of Hamburg and *Canarie* depicts the sailors themselves celebrating through dance.