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AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN
FOREIGN AFFAIRS: CHARACTERS OF THE BAROQUE

Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 7:30pm

Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: CHARACTERS OF THE BAROQUE

A program that explores the richness of the familiar and the foreign in culture through the means of music, sometimes exotic, sometimes ironic, but always diverting and highly musical.

Georg Philipp Telemann
(1681-1767)

Overture-Suite in B-Flat Major, TWV 55:B5, "Les Nations"

Ouverture
Menuet I alternativement
Menuet II doucement
Les Turcs
Les Suisses
Les Moscovites (Grave, Viste)
Les Portugais anciens (Grave)
Les Portugais modernes (Viste)
Les Boiteux alternativement
Les Coureurs

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major, BWV 1049

Allegro
Andante
Presto

20-minute intermission

Georg Friedrich Händel
(1685-1759)

Suite from Almira, HWV 1

Ouverture
Chaconne
Courante
Sarabande
Bourrée
Menuet
Rigaudon
Rondeau
Ritornello

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Concerto for 2 Oboes in D Minor, RV 535

Largo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro molto

Jean Féry Rebel
(1666-1747)

Les Caractères de la Danse

Prélude
Courante
Menuet
Bourrée
Chaconne
Sarabande
Gigue
Rigaudon
Passepied
Gavotte
Sonate
Loure
Musette
Sonate



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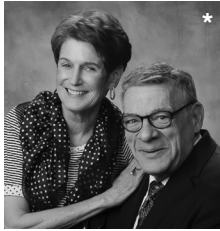
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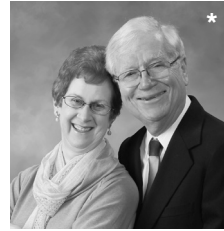
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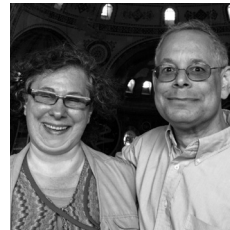
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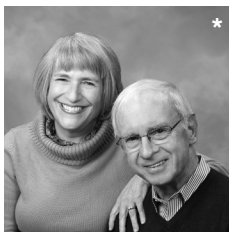
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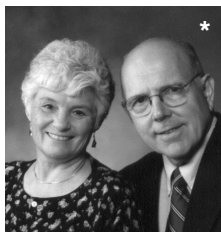
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PROGRAM NOTES

The 18th century was an age of great travel that led to the discovery of other cultures. The arts have the power to illustrate the unknown, transport information, and characterize the foreign. Music, as an acoustic art form, attempts to mimic sounds and rhythms of regions far away or of their own culture, to carry them out into the world, sometimes even with passages of ironic mutations. The opening piece by Telemann is an excellent example of such imaginative travel: character sketches with rhythmically westernized evocations of culture and temperament. Händel explores the orient, though with a European language. Vivaldi and Bach represent the opposite poles of northern and southern European perspectives, while Rebel's joyous and popular observation of various dance styles is both an original and unique composition. Rebel's suite is a dance fantasy, reflecting the French style that spread rapidly over Europe at the beginning of a new century.

—Courtesy of Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN

Born March 14, 1681, in Magdeburg, Germany
Died June 25, 1767, in Hamburg, Germany
Overture-Suite in B-flat Major, TWV 55:B5,
"Les Nations"

With his many and varied works, Georg Philipp Telemann incorporated French, Italian, Polish, and other national styles of music into the traditional German form and pushed the envelope of the Baroque to the early Classical style that would be fully developed by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Unlike his contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach, Telemann had a highly successful career in Hamburg. His massive output includes over 1400 cantatas and more than 600 instrumental works.

National identity remains a fascinating subject in the history of music, and surely Telemann's Overture-Suite with its reference to six different nationalities and its subtitle "Les Nations" is proof of that. Travel was also an important phenomenon during Telemann's time and offered the opportunity to experience different cultures—as suggested by certain movement names of "Les Nations." Travel bans then were not a question.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany
Died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig, Germany
Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major,
BWV 1049

Over all music looms Bach who is often defined as the quintessential Baroque composer but whose music knows no boundaries and somehow suffers few ills from its many translations. Bach stayed close to home, spending 27 of his productive years in Leipzig (1723-50). Prior to that, however, six productive years in Köthen brought such works as the Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, and the Brandenburg Concertos.

The *Brandenburg Concerto No. 4* of 1721 is one of six concertos Bach dedicated to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, thus giving them their famous title. Like all of its companion pieces, the Brandenburg No. 4 brings the thrill of recognition from its opening notes to its concluding ones. That thrill, however, comes not only from its familiarity but also its excellence.

The opening *Allegro* invites us into the work with good cheer that is sustained throughout the movement. The second movement *Andante*, however, reveals the darker side of Bach with its

more solemn tempo and the minor harmonies. We are then thrust into the merry *Presto* of the last movement—if one can legitimately refer to Bach as “merry.” Perhaps brilliant and virtuosic is a better description.

The Akademie Für Alte Musik Berlin recorded the Brandenburg Concertos in 2010 on the Harmonia Mundi label.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Born February 23, 1685, in Halle, Germany
Died April 14, 1759, in London, United Kingdom
Suite from *Almira*, HWV 1

Handel’s suite of nine dances is based on his first opera, *Almira*, premiered in Hamburg on January 8, 1705, when he was only 20 years of age. While the dances range between 30 seconds and four minutes in length, the opera itself was over four hours long. The German audiences were particularly drawn to the dances from the opera and the combination of German and Italian influences in the music. Perhaps it would be helpful to identify the dance forms within the suite although mere definitions will not tell the whole story:

- Chaconne—a stately dance in a series of sections in slow triple time over a repeated bass theme
- Courante—an old French dance in 3/2 time
- Sarabande—a stately dance of Spanish or Oriental origin in triple time
- Bourrée—a dance of French or Spanish origin in rapid tempo usually with two sections, one in 2/4 time and the other in 4/4 time
- Menuet—an early French dance form in triple time
- Rigaudon—a lively French dance in 4/4 time with an upbeat of a quarter note

- Rondeau—an instrumental piece in which the first section is repeated
- Ritornello—a refrain or postlude

The elegant four-minute *Overture* turns lively and playful and then moves back and forth between the two effects before it leads to the march-like *Chaconne* with its stately energy. Then comes the brief *Courante* with its forward motion. In some thirty seconds, Handel gives us the very lively *Bourrée* which is almost a race with time. The *Menuet* is in contrast with the elegance and grace suggested by that dance form. Here one can almost envision an 18th-century ballroom. Elegance bows to fun in the *Rigaudon*, while Handel seems to summarize things in the *Rondeau* before we are off to the races of the closing *Ritornello*.

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Born March 4, 1678, in Venice, Italy
Died July 28, 1741, in Vienna, Austria
Concerto for Two Oboes in D Minor, RV 535

Known as “The Red Priest” because of his fiery red hair, Vivaldi’s personality and music reflect his nickname. He was born in Venice on March 4, 1678, the same day an earthquake hit the city. He was, in fact, ordained a priest in 1703 but continued to live with his family and study the violin with his father. He stopped saying Mass shortly after his ordination and was censured for “conduct unbecoming a priest,” probably related to his distraction by music. At the same time, he became violin master at the Pio Ospedale della Pietá in Venice, an institution that served both as a home for orphaned girls and an extraordinary musical conservatory for them. The Ospedale, with its excellent choir and orchestra, proved to be a great resource for the enterprising Vivaldi and served as an impetus for his many instrumental and vocal works. In addition to his

position at the Ospedale, Vivaldi was appointed leading violinist at St. Mark's which contributed not only to his own tremendous virtuosity as a player but also to the demanding violin scores he would write.

Vivaldi wrote lavishly for oboe. In addition to the D Minor Concerto for Two Oboes that we hear on this program, he wrote two other concertos for two oboes as well as some twenty concertos for solo oboe and strings. The D Minor is dated before 1742.

The four movements of the Concerto might suggest simply an alternation between slow and fast, but the music is much more than that. While the slowness of the opening *Largo* seems appropriate to Vivaldi's use of the minor key, things then take off at a fast pace in the following *Allegro* before the solemnity of the second *Largo* returns to the mood of the first but with many new explorations. The final *Allegro molto* returns to the quick tempo of the second movement but, again, with totally new musical ideas and a satisfying conclusion.

JEAN-FÉRY REBEL

Born April 18, 1666, in Paris, France
Died January 2, 1747, in Paris, France
Les Caractères de la Danse

French composer Jean-Féry Rebel (pronounced "re-BEL") was also a violinist, harpsichordist, and conductor who studied with Jean-Baptiste Lully. After travelling to Spain in 1700 and broadening his international experience, he returned to France to assume several important musical positions including court composer to Louis XIV and *maître de musique* at the Académie royale de musique. His innovative compositional style with its complex counter-rhythms and daring harmonies came under criticism from traditionalists, but his *Les caractères de la danse*

of 1715 became one of his most popular works and was performed in London in 1725 under the baton of George Frideric Handel. In addition to the dance forms mentioned in the Handel work above, *Les caractères de la danse* contains:

- Gigue—a lively dance form in triple rhythms and containing a fugue
- Passepied—an early French dance in 3/8 or 6/8 time
- Loure—a French dance in 6/4 or 3/2 time with a slow tempo and strongly marked downbeat
- Musette—a short piece that imitates the sound of a bagpipe

Beyond these definitions, however, is a lovely eight minutes of music that makes one want to dance.

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AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN

Founded in Berlin in 1982 and recognized today as one of the world's leading chamber orchestras, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, or *Akamus*, enjoys an unprecedented history of success. The ensemble, which performs regularly in Europe's leading musical centers, has toured Asia, North America, and South America. In 2016, the orchestra toured Buenos Aires and Japan. In March 2017, *Akamus* returns to North America on its fifth US tour, returning to Cal Performances, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Kansas City Friends of Music, Carnegie Hall in New York, Boston Early Music Festival, and first performances with San Diego Early Music Society, New Orleans Friends of Music, and Mississippi Academy of Ancient Music.

Ever since the reopening of the Berlin Konzerthaus in 1984, the ensemble has enjoyed its own concert series in Germany's capital, and since 1994 has been a regular guest at the Berlin Staatsoper. Starting with the 2012-13 season *Akamus* also has its own concert series at Munich's Prinzregententheater. Each year *Akamus* gives approximately 100 concerts, ranging from small chamber works to large-scale symphonic pieces, and performs under the artistic leadership of its concertmasters Stephan Mai, Bernhard Forck, and Georg Kallweit.

The close partnership with René Jacobs has produced many celebrated opera and oratorio productions. The latest interpretations of Mozart's operas *The abduction from the seraglio* and *The Magic Flute*, as well as J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion* and *St. Matthew Passion*, have been highly praised by critics and audience.

The ensemble has also worked regularly with conductors such as Marcus Creed, Daniel Reuss and Hans-Christoph Rademann. The orchestra will be led by Emmanuelle Haïm, Bernard Labadie, Paul Agnew, and Rinaldo Alessandrini in upcoming seasons.

Most notable is the congenial cooperation with the RIAS Chamber Choir, whose quality is recognized by numerous award-winning recordings. *Akamus* works regularly with internationally renowned soloists like Isabelle Faust, Andreas Staier, Alexander Melnikov, Anna Prohaska, Werner Güra, and Bejun Mehta. Moreover, *Akamus* has extended its artistic boundaries to work together with the modern dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests for innovative productions like Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and *Medea* (music by P. Dusapin).

The international success of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin is highlighted by well over a million recordings sold to the public. Recording exclusively for harmonia mundi France since 1994, the ensemble's CDs have earned many international prizes, including the Grammy Award, the Diapason d'Or, the Cannes Classical Award, the Gramophone Award, the Edison Award, the German Record Critics' Award, the MIDEM Classical Award 2010 and the Choc de l'Année. The latest additions to the orchestra's discography are CDs devoted to Handel's *Water Music*, Bach's *St. John Passion* conducted by René Jacobs, and Mendelssohn's *Elias* conducted by Hans-Christoph Rademann.

The orchestra has been honored with the Telemann-Preis Magdeburg and in 2014 with the Bach Medaille Leipzig and the ECHO Klassik.

THE ENSEMBLE

Bernhard Forck, violin (concertmaster)

Kerstin Erben, violin

Anna Fusek, violin/recorder*

Clemens-Marie Nuszbaumer, violin

Dörte Wetzel, violin

Gabriele Steinfeld, violin

Sabine Fehlandt, viola

Anja-Regine Graewel, viola

Jan Freiheit, cello

Walter Rumer, double bass

Michael Bosch, oboe*

Xenia Löffler, oboe*/recorder*

Christian Beuse, bassoon

Michele Pasotti, lute

Raphael Alpermann, harpsichord

*soloists