

Bennington College

presents

A CONCERT OF BAROQUE MUSIC

- Directed by Doris Lee Robbins as part of her Senior Project -

A second concert of Baroque music by Rameau, Couperin, C. P. E. Bach, W. Haessler, Sweelinck and Purcell will be given on Tuesday, June 6, in the Carriage Barn at 5:00 p.m. The works by Schein and Gibbons will be repeated.

Program I

SONATA IN G MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

G. F. HANDEL (1685-1759)

Andante
Allegro
Adagio
Allegretto

Carol Diamond Feuer, Violin
Mary Atherton, Piano

CURRITE POPULI

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567-1643)

Miriam Tannenbaum, Mezzo-soprano
Sara Chancellor, 'Cello
Doris Lee Robbins, continuo

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER

J. S. BACH (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue in C Minor (Volume I)
Prelude and Fugue in Eb Major (Volume II)

Doris Lee Robbins, Piano

DIE MIT TRANEN SAEN
BEATA ES VIRGO MARIA
HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID

HERMANN SCHEIN (1586-1630)
GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1557-1613)
ORLANDO GIBBONS (1583-1625)

Joseph Liebling, Conductor
Ruth Miller, Violin
Sara Chancellor, 'Cello
Louise Loening, Flute
"Seven O'Clock Singers"

Mary Atherton	Herbert Millington
Carol Diamond Feuer	Suzanne Mosher
Claude Frank	Joan Olmsted
Louise Ganter	Doris Lee Robbins
Francine Jupp	Sally Schumacher
Joseph Liebling	Martha Woodcock
Louise Loening	(Paul Boepple, ex-officio)

The Carriage Barn
Tuesday, May 30, 1950
at 5:00 p.m.

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TWO CONCERTS OF BAROQUE MUSIC

* NOTES ON PROGRAM I

The "baroque" period in music extended roughly from the 17th century to the first half of the 18th century. Philosophic and scientific discoveries along with extreme socio-economic changes led to the development of a new aesthetic formula. The growth of fervent nationalism, the invention of the printing press, the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War radically altered the cultural climate of Europe and the stylistic orientation of the arts.

The "baroque" thrived upon a religious background. The spirit of the Catholic Counter-Reformation was also a generating influence. It found expression in those arts connected with the church, and so it is not surprising that similar tendencies simultaneously appeared in the architecture, painting, literature and music of the period. Unlike the other arts, however, the renaissance of music took place in the baroque era for it was then that music first attained its classic forms. The baroque worship of the monumental, the pictorial, and the dramatic-expressive brought about the development of the opera, the oratorio, the cantata and the Passion. Gradually, the instrumental ideal succeeded the vocal and correspondingly the solo sonata, the trio sonata, the fugue, the prelude, the toccata, the suite and the concerto grosso were created.

By the end of the period it became clear that a new concept of tonality had been established. Harmony replaced polyphony as the determining means of musical structure.

SONATA IN G MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

G. F. HANDEL (1685-1759)

It is interesting to note that Handel, the composer who left the deepest impress upon English music, was a German brought to England in order to satisfy the demand of the upper classes for operas in the Italian style (referred to as "exotic and irrational entertainment" by Dr. Johnson). His instrumental works exhibit the assimilation of the most heterogeneous national styles of the era.

This is a "baroque sonata", so do not expect to find in it "sonata form" in the "classic" sense, for in the "baroque sonata" it is the continual flow of ideas, not their development, that is important. Known as a "sonata da chiesa" or "church sonata" because of its original function in the church service and because of its solemn nature (in comparison with the "chamber sonata") its four movement, slow-fast-slow-fast form was established by the Italian master, Corelli. The opening movement preserves the character of an introduction, probably a counterpart of the opera and cantata overture. Following it is the major movement, an allegro written in sturdy, imitative contrapuntal style. By way of contrast, the third movement is slow and homophonic. The broad, simple, highly expressive melody serves as a bridge to the finale, a dance-like movement in triple rhythm.

CURRITE POPULI

CIAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567-1643)

"Run, run, people !
Play on your instruments,
Play on your drums
And say with your voices:
Allelujah !
For today we celebrate
The feast of St. Ignatius
Whose soul is now in paradise.
O, O, Ignatius, most holy and wise,
To you may there be praise,
And glory, and love, and victory.
Pray for us,
That we shall be deserving
Of entering the regions of heaven.
Allelujah ! "

This motet based on a sacred text was composed by Monteverdi while he was choirmaster at St. Mark's in Venice. The expressive power, exploitation of the dramatic elements inherent in the words, and the stile recitativo are typical of his operatic style. His "affective" approach to words had created such a stir that every house "that harbored a harpsichord or lute was filled with the plaintive accents of Arianna (an operatic heroine) sung by a trembling voice". The over-loaded polyphonic treatment of texts, so sharply criticized by the Vatican, had been replaced by a new treatment: the solo melody with a chordally conceived accompaniment. This new style was called "monodia" (monody) in supposed analogy to the music of the Greeks which the opera composers of the period had set out to revive.

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER

J. S. BACH (1685-1750)

Bach intended the two volumes of preludes and fugues to serve as models for "youth anxious to learn". Besides containing an immense variety of forms and textures they demonstrated a new development in musical science. For the first time, due to the "tempered" tuning it was possible to compose in all transpositions of the modern major-minor scales. Correspondingly, the 24 preludes and fugues were written in systematic order in all the keys of the circle of fifths.

The preludes are free in design, either polyphonic in the manner of the "inventions" (the Eb major prelude) or homophonic with a characteristic rhythmic vitality and drive (the C minor prelude). This is an excellent audible reminder of Bach's position in music history. Absorbing the common practises of his time and the preceeding century, Bach composed at the end of the epoch that reconciled Renaissance polyphony with the early baroque monody.

Kirnberger said, "He who knows a fugue by Bach knows really only one". Indeed Bach elevated the fugue to a "character piece" embodying a single affection, and developed it as far as was possible without going "out of the field" of baroque music altogether. The nature of the fugue subject determines the essence of the music because, true to the ideals of the period it is spun out rather than developed. The dynamic values of the fugue are an alteration of "piano" and "forte" without gradation between them. Don't make the mistake of thinking that "expressiveness" has been ruled out and that historical study results in dry, virtuous performance. On the contrary, to play Bach's music "in style" you must realize that he developed his own agents of expression within the boundaries of his time. These are the plastic designs of melody, harmony, and the coloristic medium of the instrument itself.

HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID

ORLANDO GIBBONS (1583-1625)

Unlike his contemporaries who cultivated a form we call the "compromise Latin motet", all of Gibbons' sacred music was written for the rites of the Church of England. Although this anthem is written in the polyphonic style of the Renaissance, the strong "key" feeling and instrumentally conceived motives are prophetic of the oncoming style. The veritable riot of bell-like entries vividly portrays the first Palm Sunday crowd welcoming the coming of Christ to Jerusalem.

BEATA ES VIRGO MARIA

GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1557-1613)

The first traces of baroque music appeared when renaissance aesthetics were in full bloom. In early Italian music, especially, we first observe the baroque element of "color".

The architecture of Saint Marks, the cathedral in which Gabrieli's choral works were performed, readily lent itself to his experiments with double chorus. He introduced "echo effects", the subtle play of light and shadow, and the elements of space and contrast, all of which merged into the "concertato" style which manipulated two opposing bodies of sound. The term, probably derived from "concertare", to compete, became the watchword of early baroque music. It is symptomatic that this style originated in the compositions of the Venetian school where instruments were needed to reinforce the voices.

This 6-part motet illustrates Gabrieli's genius for evoking a rainbow of sweeping, dazzling sounds. He enriched music immeasurably by discovering the means by which he could transfer to it the warm, golden, full, transparent effects of the baroque painters, particularly his fellow Venetian, Titian.

DIE MIT TRANEN SAEN

HERMANN SCHEIN (1586-1630)

Who with grieving soweth,
he shall with gladness harvest.
He goeth forth and weepeth,
yet bearing precious sowing,
Returning rejoicing he bringeth
bountless harvest.

Die mit Tranen saen
werden mit Freuden ernten.
Sie gehen hin und weinen,
und tragen edlen Samen,
Und kommen mit Freuden,
und bringen ihre Garben.

This motet abounds in favorite baroque features. Contrasts of rhythm and tempo reflect the opposing moods of sorrow and joy. The section in triple rhythm is full of the warm, hearty quality of the German folksong. Most characteristic of all is the "chord painting", that use of highly expressive dissonance and consonance to heighten the emotional effect of the words.

In a highly individual manner Schein appropriated the Venetian style. The chromatic, "sobbing" motif and the quasi-instrumental style of the piece lead directly to the style of Bach, who was to follow in Schein's footsteps as musical director of St. Thomas in Liepsig, almost a century later.

- * Despite all the learned encomiums that words can contrive, music commends itself best by the performance of a skillful hand.
... (Henry Purcell)