

Bennington College

presents

A SECOND CONCERT OF BAROQUE MUSIC

Directed by Doris Lee Robbins as part of her Senior Project

Program II

LA FORQUERAY

From the "Cinquieme Concert"

J. PH. RAMEAU (1683-1764)

Doris Lee Robbins, Piano

Ruth Miller, Violin

Sara Chancellor, 'Cello

ETUDE IN C MINOR

C. P. E. BACH (1714-1788)

ETUDE IN Eb MAJOR

W. HAESSLER (1747-1822)

Doris Lee Robbins, Piano

SONATE EN SOL MINEUR (L'Astree)

FRANCOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733)

Carol Diamond Feuer, Violin

Ruth Miller, Violin

Sara Chancellor, 'Cello

Doris Lee Robbins, continuo

SIX VARIATIONS (Mein junges leben hat ein end)

J. P. SWEELINCK (1562-1621)

Doris Lee Robbins, Piano

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE (Funeral Sentence)

HENRY PURCELL (1658-1695)

HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID

ORLANDO GIBBONS (1583-1625)

DIE MIT TRANEN SAEN

HERMANN SCHEIN (1586-1630)

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, June 6, 1950

at 5:00 p.m.

TWO CONCERTS OF BAROQUE MUSIC

* NOTES ON PROGRAM II *

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.

LA FORQUERAY

J. PH. RAMEAU (1683-1764)

From the "Cinquieme Concert"

The beginning of the musical baroque in France coincided with the succession to the throne of Louis XIII and reached its zenith during the reign of Louis XIV. Never before had the relations between the arts and politics been more apparent than during French absolutism. Music became a powerful political tool in the hands of such shrewd statesmen as Richelieu, Mazarin and Colbert. It became a major issue in the struggle for national self-preservation against the dominating Italian influences. As cultural life centered about the court, a new aesthetic doctrine was bound to develop. After the death of the musical dictator Lully (an Italian), the French composers set about to create a style more in keeping with their own artistic convictions. Called "rococo", this intimate and interior art whose primary consideration was entertainment was the very antithesis of the grandiose, pictorial-architectural baroque.

It is indicative that Rameau, the greatest French musician of the period, declared his aim to be "the restoration of reason in music". Compelled to accept the gospel of the "style galant", he gave up his career as an opera composer (which had made him the center of serious controversies that criticized his inventive scoring with such comments as, "for three hours the musicians have not even the time to sneeze") and spent the rest of his life furnishing divertissements for the court. Although fashion necessitated a smaller canvas, his conception was a large one. His dramatic intensity, the use of late baroque harmonic innovations and his superb coloristic sense make his works stand above the compositions of his contemporaries. La Forqueray (in honor of a popular lady of the court) is actually part of a clavecin suite that Rameau arranged "en concert" as an ensemble sonata. The subordination of melodic invention to

the array of harmonic progressions and rhythmic motives is not very surprising in view of the fact that Rameau was the theorist who first formulated the system of harmony that was to serve as the foundation of modern musical science.

ETUDE IN C MINOR
ETUDE IN Eb MAJOR

C. P. E. BACH (1714-1788)
W. HAESSLER (1747-1822)

The works of C. P. E. Bach form the link between the polyphonic style and forms of his father (J. S.) and those of Mozart and Haydn. (He was composing in a mature style of his own when the B Minor Mass was written, and his last sonatas were published the year Don Giovanni received its first performance.) Although he is best known as "the inventor of sonata form", his primary interest was not in the technical-formal aspect of his art. It was in the course of creating an idiomatic, expressive piano style that he arrived at the "classic sonata form" which is based on the dramatic-expressive principles of dualism and contrast. Haessler's etude demonstrates (in miniature) this new stylistic principle that was to be applied to all forms of modern instrumental music.

The Bach etude is an early work in simple binary form, i.e. like the early Scarlatti sonatas, it is divided into two sections, the latter of which is longer, for in it various related keys are explored or touched upon until the return to the key of the first section is achieved.

SONATE EN SOL MINEUR (L'Astree)

FRANCOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733)

Couperin strove for a union of French and Italian styles which would, in his opinion, bring about "the perfection of music". Called "the cynosure of rococo art", he was the most characteristic musician of the Regency, but as an early 18th Century composer still had strong ties with the "baroque". In this trio sonata (the piano part is merely a realization of a figured bass), Couperin's essentially grave temperament is expressed in the poignant modulations and the use of contrapuntal texture in the dance movements. The sudden changes from tender, aria-like passages to those filled with gloom reveal the baroque operatic influence, whereas the calculated introduction of ornaments (regarded by Couperin as the most important element of virtuosity) belongs more to the rococo. The influence of Couperin on Bach can readily be traced in the clavier suites of the latter, particularly their similarity of conception in the slow movements. In addition, they both made use of the two patterns that can easily be distinguished in this "sonata". They are: the simple binary form, the "rondeau" in which the repetition of the main theme sets off the episodes.

SIX VARIATIONS (Mein junges leben hat ein end)

J. P. SWEELINCK (1562-1621)

The separation of the Calvinist north from the Catholic south in the Netherlands had its repercussions in music. Calvinist restrictions limit the outlet of musical activity mainly to instrumental music and it was in this medium that Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, the founder of the north German school of organists, was the unrivalled master of his time.

The long history of the organ chorale was opened with his ingenious variations of sacred and secular tunes that made him the idol of delighted Amsterdam crowds. He transferred the essentially secular techniques of variation to the chorale tune and so made of it a form of "spiritual exercise".

This set of variations is based on a folktune; but as in the chorale variations, the tune never loses its identity. With a liturgical dignity it keeps itself aloof from the elaborations that involve the surrounding voices.

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE (Funeral Sentence)

HENRY PURCELL (1658-1695)

The baroque spirit finally manifested itself in England during the last quarter of the 17th Century in the works of Henry Purcell, who not only "had the advantage of greater genius", but also succeeded in uniting the Italian, French and German styles with those English traditions that he had inherited. Although he adopted the existing forms and worked within the conventions of the Restoration, his compositions have the varied inspiration of a unique personality.

Like Monteverdi, Purcell's flair for the dramatic and theatrical led him to experiment with bold dissonances and revolutionary harmonic progressions. In this early verse anthem he employed the traditional device of chromaticism for expressive purposes, i.e. he pictorially underlined the affective portions of the text. Most noteworthy of all is the favorite device that Purcell continued to use in his later odes and welcome songs: the drastic juxtaposition of major and minor modes.

That this is a work of transition seems to be indicated by the mixture of renaissance polyphonic technique and ambiguous tonality with the early baroque homophonic concept.

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.

DIE MIT TRÄNEN 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 Tränen 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 Leipzig, almost a century later.

* Despite all the learned encomiums that words can contrive, music commands itself best by the performance of a skillful hand.

* * * (Henry Purcell)