

## South Bay Chamber Music Society

February 14 & 16, 2020

### *Bach's Circle:*

Janice Tipton, flute

Allan Vogel, oboe

Elizabeth Baker, violin

Julie Feves, bassoon

Erika Duke Kirkpatrick, cello

Patricia Mabee, harpsichord

Today's program is dedicated to the music of the Baroque era. Originally, the term "baroque" referred to a misshapen pearl, and was used pejoratively when describing the new taste that emerged in the arts around 1600. In general, Baroque arts are flamboyant, dramatic, theatrical, and expressive of universal emotions. While based on ancient ideals of symmetry, balance and simplicity, Baroque arts used ornaments to further intensify the drama of their subject matter.

### *Historical background*

By 1600, the scientific revolution was in full force in Europe. Gradually, observation and rational, deductive thinking replaced an authoritative perspective, which was based on tradition or superstition. Scientists such as Galileo Galilei (astronomy), Descartes (deductive reasoning), and Sir Isaac Newton (law of gravitation) revolutionized scientific thinking.

In politics, a new thinking emerged that advocated democracy. At the same time, European countries were expanding their powers overseas via colonies. Several European countries prospered from capitalism, which boosted economies across the continent. Ultimately, this expanding prosperity created increased demand for the arts, and led to the emergence of public opera houses and public concerts. At the same time, musicians remained in the service of wealthy secular and sacred patrons.

### *Emotion through motion*

Baroque artists wanted to express emotions, which they wanted their audience to experience as well. They thought they could achieve this by stimulating one's senses through motion. Such motion is evident in the dynamic statues and paintings of the era, as well as in the constant forward motion of Baroque music. A quick glance at two famous statues from the Renaissance and the Baroque may illustrate this focus on momentum:



Donatello: David (cca 1440-1460)

<http://www.italianrenaissance.org/donatellos-david/>



Bernini: David (1623-1624)

<https://nnschulz.wordpress.com/2013/10/12/berninis-david-2/>

Donatello's bronze statue of David, from the Renaissance, is the first freestanding nude male sculpture made since antiquity. It depicts David in triumph, standing on Goliath's severed head. David is physically delicate: The head may have been inspired by classical sculptures of Antinous, a beloved companion of emperor Hadrian. The statue's physique, contrasted with the large sword, symbolizes that David has overcome Goliath not by physical prowess, but through God.

Bernini's addition of motion in his statue of David, from the Baroque period, adds visual interest and complexity, inviting the viewer to examine the work from different angles. The viewer may see David in action, with a strained and determined look perhaps evoking an emotional response. Bernini paid special attention to realistic details, be it folds of cloth or anatomical accuracy.

#### *An emphasis on contrasts*

Aside from a focus on energy, we also find constant creative tension in Baroque music. This may come from tension between control (composition) and freedom (improvisation and embellishment) and between metric music and free flowing music. Or, we may notice the juxtaposition of bass and treble lines, the use of both homophony (one main melody with chordal accompaniment) and imitative counterpoint (many melodic lines of equal importance occurring at the same time).

#### *Basso continuo*

Basso continuo, or figured bass, is a kind of shorthand notation of chords. Generally, two instruments perform figured bass: One that plays chords, such as a harpsichord or lute, and one that can sustain long notes and offers a wider range of dynamics, such as a bassoon or cello/viola da gamba. This technique leads to surprising results: For instance, a trio might involve four performers: two one-line parts, and one basso continuo part, which is performed by two players.

#### *The maturing of idiomatic styles and genres*

Influenced by scientists' new practice of classifying observed phenomena, artists too began to group their works. They used different criteria for classifying compositions, such as purpose (sacred or secular), venue (chamber or large ensemble), nationality (Italian, French, German, English, Spanish), and type (improvisatory, imitative, sectional, dance-oriented), and the like.

Composers also began to write idiomatically for voice and instruments, and it is during the Baroque that genres such as the opera, concerto, and sonata became standardized. On today's program, we will hear examples of sonatas and concertos.

### **Concerto in a minor, TWV43:a3**

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Telemann was a German composer and multi-instrumentalist. He spent much of his professional life in Hamburg, where he served as the musical director of the city's five main churches. Telemann is one of the most prolific composers in history and was considered to be one of the leading German composers of his time. His music stands as an important link between the late Baroque and early Classical styles.

In general, the concerto is a multi-movement work for solo instrument and orchestra. In the Baroque, it was common to write not for one soloist, but rather for a small group of solo instruments, and this is the case in this work as well: Telemann features the flute (originally the recorder), oboe, and violin, and *basso continuo*, which is performed on bassoon, cello, and harpsichord on today's program.

Although Telemann never traveled to Italy, he often embraced elements of the Italian Baroque style in his compositions: He fully exploits the contrasting sonorities of the recorder, oboe, and violin, and features complex string figurations, particularly in the closing movement.

The four movements of this concerto follow the slow-fast-slow-fast tempo structure. The opening *Adagio* is delicate and transparent, followed by a contrapuntal *Allegro*. The third movement, also an *Adagio*, provides further contrast as it returns to a more delicate mood. The finale features rhythmic energy and clearly delineated solo passages contrasted with full tutti sections.

The following link provides a rendition of the work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVJJtMcFA74>

### **Trio Sonata from the Musical Offering, BWV 1079**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Bach was a German composer, organist, violinist, and teacher. His output includes over 1000 works, organized by genre, indicated by BWV number. (BWV: Bach Werke Verzeichnis, or “Bach Works Catalogue.”) Bach’s abilities as an organist were highly respected throughout Europe during his lifetime, although he was not widely recognized as a great composer until a revival of interest and performances of his music in the first half of the 19th century. He is now generally regarded as one of the main composers of the Baroque period, and as one of the greatest composers of all time. He composed in all genres known during his lifetime, except opera.

*The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079, is a collection of keyboard pieces and a trio sonata, all based on a single musical theme given to Bach by Frederick II of Prussia, to whom the work is dedicated.

Originally the sonata was any piece for instruments, but later it became a work for 1-2 instruments and *basso continuo*, generally in three or four movements. The sonata for 1-2 instruments with *basso continuo* became important in the 17th century, mirroring the increased importance of solo vocal music.

The Trio Sonata from the *Musical Offering* follows the slow–fast–slow–fast ordering of its four movements. It is written for flute (the instrument Frederick himself played) and violin, and *basso continuo*. It is highly contrapuntal in its texture, and is serious in its mode of expression.

Click the link for a performance of the work here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vTQ-w0cJKw>

### **Sonata in B-flat, FaWV N:B1**

Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758)

Fasch was among the most esteemed German composers of his day, even though none of his music was published in his lifetime. His reputation was secured by his works being performed frequently by his contemporaries, such as Telemann and others. Fasch traveled extensively in Germany, becoming an orchestral violinist, and later an organist in the city of Greiz. The B-flat major sonata for oboe, recorder, violin, and harpsichord survives in a set of manuscript parts.

Listen to a performance of the work here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCr\\_pAvaqVo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCr_pAvaqVo)

## **Quartet in d minor from *Tafelmusik***

Telemann

*Tafelmusik* (“table music”) is a term used since the mid-16th century for music played at feasts and banquets (hence the “table”), replaced in the late 18th century by the *divertimento*. Telemann’s *Tafelmusik* is perhaps his most widely known composition and has been compared to the renowned Brandenburg concertos of Johann Sebastian Bach, as the work clearly demonstrates the composer’s supreme skill in handling a diversity of musical genres and a variety of instruments.

Follow this link for a performance of this piece: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx\\_zsPj-TSQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx_zsPj-TSQ)

## **Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Continuo in c minor, BWV 1017**

J.S. Bach

Bach’s six sonatas for violin and keyboard are highly unusual, not least due to their inclusion of fully written-out harpsichord parts (as opposed to the shorthand chords used in *basso continuo*). They represent the beginnings of the duo sonata as the term is understood today. It may well be that the Sonata on today’s program is stylistically-speaking the most unusual and forward-looking of the six.

In particular, the third movement is highly unorthodox for its time: The violin’s melody is enhanced by a constant triplet-arpeggio figuration in the keyboard right hand and a simple, streamlined bass line in the left. Although this may not seem novel for us today, this style of keyboard writing in a sonata was much not common for several decades after this work was composed.

For a rendition of this work, please click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSpejHsdc2Y>

## **Concerto in D major, RV 94 (P.207)**

For recorder, oboe, violin, bassoon, continuo (cello and harpsichord)

Antonio Vivaldi

Vivaldi is the best-known Italian composer of the early 18th century. It is during this time that the concerto as a genre became firmly established. Vivaldi spent most of his life in Venice, working at an orphanage. Although he wrote operas, cantatas, and sacred music, he is best recognized today for his 500 or so concertos. Vivaldi used a simple yet flexible formula to write his concerti and achieved astonishing variety. Most of his concertos are in three movements, with the outer ones featuring fast tempos. His slow, middle movements focus on long, expressive melodies, in an *arioso* (“aria-like”) style. Performers were expected to add embellishments to these melodies.

He wrote his fast movements in *ritornello* form: In this structure, returning orchestral refrains (“ritornello sections”) alternate with episodes, which feature the soloist. Ritornellos guide the tonal structure of the music, confirming keys. Episodes feature virtuosic passages for the soloist and generally contain modulations from the previous ritornello’s key to the next one. Through variation, combination, transposition, and other compositional devices, long movements can be spun out from just a few ideas.

Although he used a “formula,” Vivaldi’s concertos are extremely varied in expression. He provided a model for later composers, who used his ritornello form, concise themes, and further developed his concept of the soloist’s role.

You may hear this concerto here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQEB0HbF1Vw>

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