



BACH & TELEMANN

PREMIERES

OCT 9 | 8 PM

DOWNTOWN SERIES

PROGRAM

BACH & TELEMANN

ANTOINE PLANTE, CONDUCTOR

JONATHAN GODFREY, VIOLIN

MARIO ASCHAUER, HARPSICHORD

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Concerto for Harpsichord in D minor, BWV 1052

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Concerto for Two Violins, Two Cellos, and Strings in D major, RV 564

- I. Allegro
- II. Largo
- III. Allegro

INTERMISSION

J.S. BACH

Concerto for Violin in A minor, BWV 1041

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681-1767)

Overture-Suite in C minor, TWV 55:c3

- I. Overture
- II. Prelude
- III. Aria I (Presto)
- IV. Aria II (Vivace)
- V. Aria III (Vivace)
- VI. Aria IV (Allegro)
- VII. Aria V (Allegro)
- VIII. Aria VI (Presto)

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The collaboration between The Juilliard School's Historical Performance Program and Mercury Chamber Orchestra continues.

This initiative encourages the development of talented young instrumentalists and fosters a strong relationship between two major players in America's period instrument performance scene.

2021/2022

MERCURY-JUILLIARD

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CHLOE
KIM
(Violin)



NATALIE
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Photo: Todd Rosenberg

ARTIST PROFILES

ANTOINE PLANTE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LYNN WYATT CHAIR



Praised by audiences and musicians alike for his conducting verve and innovative programming, Antoine Plante has garnered praise for bringing music to life. “Plante led his orchestra, the choir and the soloists in an impressive account of the Requiem: authoritative, vigorous, emotionally intense, at times utterly gripping,” writes Charles Ward of the Houston Chronicle.

Plante is a founder of Mercury Chamber Orchestra, a Houston, Texas-based orchestra that has experienced remarkable audience growth over its twenty-year history. In that capacity, Plante has become known for his deftness in balancing a great works repertoire with lesser-known and unknown pieces. His exciting musicality has made him an audience favorite, as evidenced by Mercury’s fast-growing audience.

He is also a passionate supporter of classical music education and has led Mercury’s educational outreach program, a significant effort that includes classroom music education in underserved schools, master classes for school orchestras, and performances for school children.

Plante is extremely versatile. At ease with the great romantic and modern composers, he also loves to perform Classical and Baroque music with period instrument orchestras. Experienced in directing orchestral pieces as well as staged works, he has conducted several operas and ballets. He collaborated with noted French director Pascal Rambert to produce a modern staged version of Lully’s *Armide*, which was performed to critical acclaim in Paris and Houston. He worked with Dominic Walsh Dance Theater to create a score for Dominic Walsh’s ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. An innovative artist, he has premiered new works such as *The Crimson Prince* with Director Denis Plante, and *Loving Clara Schumann* with Director Tara Faircloth.

Under his leadership, Mercury has grown to be an important arts organization in Houston, offering over 50 concerts per season in many different venues, making great music accessible to the whole community.

Plante has been invited to perform as guest conductor for the San Antonio Symphony, Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra, Chanticleer, Ecuador National Symphony Orchestra and Atlanta Baroque.

ARTIST PROFILES

JONATHAN GODFREY, VIOLIN



A founding member of Mercury Chamber Orchestra, violinist Jonathan Godfrey has served as Concertmaster and violin soloist since the orchestra's inception. A graduate of Rice University, Mr. Godfrey has performed with many ensembles including the Houston Symphony, the Houston Bach Society, the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, and the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra.

He has also served as Concertmaster of the Sinfonietta Cracovia, The Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, The American Radio Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra X, and the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra. He has concertized in the US and abroad, performing solo and chamber music recitals in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Interlochen, and Kansas City, as well as Guanajuato, León, Monterrey, and Santiago, Mexico; Yokohama, Kyoto, Matsumoto, Sapporo, Date, and Tokyo, Japan; and Quito and Ambato, Ecuador.

A music educator as well, Mr. Godfrey has taught for twenty-five years, including positions on the violin faculty of both the Interlochen Arts Camp and the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory. Mr. Godfrey is also the co-director of Prelude Music Classes for Children, a school of music for young children and their families that teaches the research-based music and movement program Music Together® and a co-founder of the Prelude Music Foundation.

ARTIST PROFILES

MARIO ASCHAUER, HARPSICHORD



Praised as an “unconventionally playful” performer by the press, Mario Aschauer works as conductor, harpsichordist, and musicologist at the interface of music scholarship and performance.

As a performer on historical keyboard instruments, Mario specializes in Austrian repertoire from the Baroque and Classical periods. He is member of the Calamus-Consort, which won first prize at the International H.I.F. Biber Competition in 2009 and

since then has been invited to numerous renowned early music festivals such as Resonanzen Wien, Bach Fest Leipzig (Germany), and Itinéraire Baroque en Périgord Vert (France). Their CD “Un dolce affanno” (Passacaille, 2012) features highlights from operas performed at the Vienna court around 1700 with chalumeau, clarinet, and harpsichord as solo instruments.

Having earned a degree in conducting from the Linz Bruckner Conservatory at the young age of seventeen, Mario had already conducted major works from the choral and symphonic canon before he graduated from high school. With his period instrument group Ensemble NovAntique Linz, Mario has performed late eighteenth-century repertoire beyond the standard including large-scale sacred and symphonic works and oratorios by composers such as Florian Leopold Gassmann, Joseph Martin Kraus, Antonio Salieri and Georg Christoph Wagenseil.

In addition, Mario also collaborates with early music ensembles such as Progetto Semiserio Vienna, Harmony of Nations Baroque Orchestra, Ars Antiqua Austria, and L'Orfeo Baroque Orchestra, Ars Lyrica Houston, Houston Bach Society, and Mercury Chamber Orchestra.

Mario Aschauer is Assistant Professor of Music at the Sam Houston State University School of Music where he also directs the Center for Early Music Research and Performance (CEMRAP). Furthermore, he teaches harpsichord and basso continuo at the Rice University Shepherd School of Music. In addition to his conducting degree from the Linz Bruckner Conservatory, Mario holds degrees in harpsichord performance from the University of Music and Performing Arts (Vienna), and a PhD in musicology from the University of Vienna. He has since returned to teach at these institutions.

Mario's current recording projects include a selection of keyboard works by Mozart and Beethoven contemporary Emanuel Aloys Förster.

PROGRAM NOTES

Before the proliferation of ensembles of accomplished instrumentalists, the emergence of concert seasons and professional concert series, and the creation of purpose-built concert halls, the music concert was both a less regular and less formal event. In centuries past, gatherings to hear performing musicians usually accompanied specific and special occasions or activities (e.g., an important day in the church calendar, banquetting accompanied by *musique de table*). Even the emerging practice of holding regular public concerts took place in venues devoted to other purposes, such as J. S. Bach's and Georg Philipp Telemann's *Collegia Musica* that performed in urban coffeehouses, or to cite another example, Dieterich Buxtehude's church-hosted *Abendmusiken* (evening music concerts). This much sketches the concert world of all four pieces of this program, three of which were written for such coffeehouse performances, and one, Antonio Vivaldi's concerto, for performance in church, even if as concert music.

The hundreds of concertos written by Vivaldi reflect the growing popularity of what had originally been a practical accommodation of circumstances. Vivaldi was first *maestro di violino* and then *maestro de' concerti* at the Venetian orphanage for girls known as the

Pio Ospedale della Pietà. This meant that he was responsible for the training of instrumentalists from among the orphans and for the care of the instruments they played. His concertos and other instrumental works originally served to train his students and, simultaneously, to adorn the church services of the Pietà with instrumental music. Throughout his years' service to the Pietà, Vivaldi found his concertos more and more in demand as their popularity grew among visitors to the orphanage. Showcasing the talents of the Pietà's musically trained orphans and their ensemble playing, Vivaldi's concertos served more and more as concert entertainment for an eager and appreciative public.

Bach's concertos and Telemann's overture, too, originated as public concert repertory, but within the very different context of *Collegia Musica* – that is, “collegial” organizations of amateur and professional musicians that were formed for the purpose of presenting weekly concerts in cities throughout German-speaking Europe. Telemann founded one in Leipzig in 1704 (the same group that Bach led between 1729 and 1737), and Telemann went on to lead others in Frankfurt and Hamburg. The performing venue of the *Collegium Musicum* was typically the coffeehouse, itself a new institution in European cities.

PROGRAM NOTES

The Leipzig *Collegium*, for example, performed weekly Friday evening concerts in the fashionable Café Zimmermann during Leipzig's colder months, and during warmer weather, its musicians played in an adjoining garden on Wednesday afternoons.

In terms of their style, the three concertos and one overture of this program represent Italian and French musical innovations, along with a good dose of German customization. Vivaldi's hundreds of surviving concertos illustrate his ever-abundant gift for crafting memorable orchestral themes and pouring out virtuosic solos. He combined that creativity with a rigorously organized ritornello form in which tonally stable orchestral refrains (ritornellos) contrasted with modulating and improvisatory-sounding solos. His Concerto for Two Violins and Two Cellos adds a few twists to this tidy formal plan: solo figuration can sometimes interrupt an unfolding ritornello, as in the beginning of the first movement; ritornello motives can punctuate what would otherwise seem a continuous solo (second movement); and ritornellos and solos sometimes share an important motif that lends a special unity between orchestra and soloists (finale).

Both Vivaldian ritornello form and the nuances he added to it are

essential ingredients in Bach's own concertos. The opening movement of his Harpsichord Concerto in D Minor deploys a similarly interrupted ritornello to that in Vivaldi's first movement. In Bach's concerto, no sooner does the orchestra play the opening phrase of its austere unison ritornello than the harpsichord suspends its progress with a flourish of passagework over a pedal. The scale of Bach's movement, however, is bigger than Vivaldi's: the full ritornello is longer; the dramatic pedal tones are extended (Vivaldi's opening movement also uses them); and the soloist's passagework more varied and ornate. The second movement, features a richly embellished melody in the harpsichord that is strung between an opening and closing ritornello that, again, features a unison theme, this time haunting. The last movement is perhaps most Vivaldian in creating forward propulsion with its galloping theme. And similar to the last movement of Vivaldi's concerto, the ritornellos and solos in this movement share a central motif (a driving eighth and two sixteenths rhythm) that unifies orchestra and soloist.

Bach's Violin Concerto in A Minor begins with a ritornello form whose overlap of ritornello and solo material makes for an especially intricate handling of the form. In this movement, the functions and thematic materials of orchestra and

PROGRAM NOTES

soloist seem almost blended. The slow second movement is elegiac and profound: plaintive-sounding triplet motion in the violin solos are countered powerfully by the unabating eighth-note pulse of the ritornellos. A gigue-like finale rounds out the concerto with moto-perpetuo virtuosity.

The Baroque overture, often specified as the French overture, was actually the creation of an Italian-born composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully (Giovanni Battista Lulli), who is celebrated as the inventor of *French* opera. The French overture served as an orchestral introduction to opera and featured two parts: the first part, an andante maestoso, was meant to accompany the entrance of the French King, Louis XIV, and his retinue into the theater; the second part, a quick-paced fugue, was intended to whet the audience's appetite for the drama yet to begin. Next to concertos, Telemann's preferred genre of orchestral music was the overture-suite, which comprises the two-part overture, now separated from its original theatrical function, followed by a series of courtly dances. The Ouverture in C Minor typifies Telemann's adaptation of Lully's creation, in which harmonic complexity in the opening section and contrapuntal intricacy in the second establishes a weightier form of French overture than any

by Lully. The result is a piece that easily stands on its own as concert music, without a suite of added dances and apart from an opera performance.

Returning to the topic of concert music, consider the differences and similarities of how we experience these pieces in comparison with Baroque-era Europeans. On the one hand, we hear this repertory in a hall built for public concerts that are part of our long tradition of music consumption. Our European antecedents, by contrast, visited a church or a coffeehouse adapted for occasional concert performance, both an unusual and a recent innovation. On the other hand, our consumption of this music as concert repertory unites us with the Vivaldi's, Telemann's, and Bach's audiences: we have come specifically for the music, as they did. The intricacies of this program's pieces – in their scoring, thematic content, and form – illustrate to us that their composers knew not to take our attention for granted.

Gregory Barnett ©

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- Transform the lives of a diverse audience through music.

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CULLEN THEATER, WORTHAM CENTER DOWNTOWN SERIES

- 1 BACH & TELEMANN**
OCT 9, 2021
- 2 MOZART & BRAHMS**
NOV 13, 2021
- 3 NORDIC MELODIES**
DEC 4, 2021
- 4 HAYDN'S CELLO CONCERTO**
JAN 8, 2022
- 5 HANDEL & VIVALDI**
FEB 12, 2022
- 6 BEETHOVEN & RAVEL**
MAR 26, 2022
- 7 VIVALDI'S MAGNIFICAT**
MAY 14, 2022

VENUES AROUND HOUSTON

NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES

- | | |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 PURCELL & COUPERIN
FEB 24-27 2 MOZART CAMERATA
APR 28-MAY 1 3 TANGO QUARTET
JUNE 2-4 | MIDTOWN
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