

Peoria Symphony Orchestra Program Notes
June 3, 2017
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1685 was a very good year. Two of the finest composers of the late Baroque were born early that year - George Frideric Handel in Halle, Germany on February 23, Johann Sebastian Bach in Eisenach, Germany on March 31 and seven years earlier Antonio Vivaldi in Venice, Italy on March 4, 1678 and - and all three appear on this concluding program of our 2016- 2017 season. Peoria Symphony Orchestra very own Music Director, George Stelluto is featured on a brilliant Vivaldi double concerto. After intermission one of the great church cantatas by Bach, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!* To end the program we play one of Bach's fine orchestra suites.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Concerto for Two Violins in A minor, Op.3, No.8, RV522

This work was published in 1711, though may date from a few years earlier.

Antonio Vivaldi - the "Red Priest" of Venice - was the most prominent and influential Italian composer of the late Baroque. He was also among the Baroque's great violin virtuosos. He composed in nearly every genre - some 40 of his operas, dozens of his sacred works, and nearly 100 of his chamber works survive - but it was his 450 concertos that had the broadest influence. These concertos were widely circulated and emulated in Vivaldi's day, and it was he who established many of the standard operating procedures followed by his contemporaries Bach, Handel, and Telemann in their concerto writing. Perhaps the most influential Vivaldi concertos are the twelve works published in 1711 as *L'estro armonico*, his opus 3. The collection, which is equally divided between works scored for one, two, and four solo violins, was immensely popular in Germany, and several of the noted German composers of the day voiced their admiration of the concerti, and imitated them. The most famous debtor to *L'estro armonico* was J. S. Bach, who arranged three of Vivaldi's Op.3 as organ concertos.

The eighth concerto, scored for two solo violin parts, with accompanying violas, cellos, and *basso continuo*, is one of those later arranged by Bach. The concerto is laid out in three movements: *Allegro - Larghetto e spiritoso – Allegro*. The first *Allegro* is clearly built along the lines of most of Vivaldi's fast movements, with an alternation between *tutti* and soloists. The *tutti* sections provide a series of repeating ideas, from which the soloists spin a delicate series of duets and fiery solo passages. The *Larghetto* begins with a unison statement of a theme that will be used as an ostinato (though with some development) beneath a passionate violin duet. The final *Allegro* begins with a rather serious imitative passage, but Vivaldi pushes a whole series of emotional buttons in this concentrated little movement, with agitated duo passages, a pair of remarkable lyrical solos, and a furious concluding duet.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
Gloria in excelsis Deo

Handel probably composed this work in 1707. Duration 17:00.

The discovery of new works by major composers is always a source of great excitement...and controversy. On March 11, 2001, London's *Sunday Telegraph* ran an article with the breathless headline "Lost work by Handel could rival *Messiah*." Despite the rather overblown comparison to one of Handel's great oratorios, the article described what had actually been found: a setting of the Latin *Gloria* for solo soprano, violins, and continuo, discovered in the library of the Royal Academy of Music. The manuscript containing the piece originally belonged to the Englishman William Savage (d. 1789), who as a young man had been one of Handel's singers. It then passed to Savage's student Robert Stevens, who in turn willed it to the Royal Academy. The *Gloria*, which is attributed to Handel in the manuscript, was actually noticed in the 1980s, but was quietly dismissed as inauthentic. Then in 2001 Handel scholar Hans Joachim Marx rediscovered the piece and announced it publically, attracting worldwide attention. The *Gloria* was promptly performed and recorded several times. One of Prof. Marx's pieces of evidence was that the *Gloria* shared musical passages with other undisputed Handel works - Handel habitually recycled his own music in new pieces. It did not take long for other scholars to point out that in fact Handel habitually borrowed from *other* composers too, and that while he may well have known the *Gloria*, there was no reason to suppose he actually composed it. There followed a lively musicological debate about the *Gloria*'s authenticity. The last word (so far) seems to be a closely-reasoned 2006 article by Gregory Barnett that supports Handel's authorship.

If Handel in fact composed this piece, when did he write it? The most likely scenario seems to be that he composed it during his tour of Italy in 1706-1710. Handel's first important professional job had been at the opera house in Hamburg, where, at age 19, he composed his first opera. By 1706, he moved to Italy, and spent the next four years studying, composing, and mastering the Italian style. The *Gloria* was probably written, along with other Latin works, in the summer of 1707, when Handel was Rome, under the patronage of the nobleman Francesco Ruspoli. The challenging coloratura soprano part may have been intended for the singer Margherita Durastanti, who was also employed by Ruspoli, and it has even been suggested that Handel wrote one of the violin parts for the reigning Roman violin virtuoso Archangelo Corelli.

As in most Baroque settings of this text from the Mass (as in in for example Vivaldi's famous *Gloria*, written a few years later), Handel divides the *Gloria* into several movements, according to the structure of the text and its various shades of meaning. *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is a brisk aria that is perfect for this joyous opening line. The character turns more pensive for *Et in terra pax hominibus*, with a brief vocal flourish at the end to set up to more upbeat acclamations of *Laudamus te*. The mood changes again in the prayerful *Domine Deus*. The most substantial section of the piece is the emotional *Qui tollis* - lines of supplication that are set in the best Italian operatic style. The *Gloria* ends with a joyful *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*. Baroque settings of the *Gloria*

nearly always reserve something particularly exciting for the concluding words “Cum sancto spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.” and here it is a sudden quickening of the tempo and a brilliant coloratura passage.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Cantata No.51: *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!*, BWV 51

Bach probably composed this work in 1730. Duration 18:00.

Bach did not invent the Lutheran church cantata, a multi-movement setting of sacred texts, but his cantatas are the finest examples of the form. Though he composed cantatas throughout his career, the great bulk of them were written during his first few years in Leipzig, where he arrived in 1723 to take the position of Kantor at the Thomaskirche - the head church musician in the city. Among many other duties, Bach was expected to produce a cantata every week. The cantata was viewed as an important addition to both the selected Bible verse and the hymn of the day, and Bach's texts are often drawn from these sources, as well as sacred librettos assembled by Lutheran pastors and Bach himself. In his first years at the Thomaskirche, Bach created no less than *five* annual cycles of cantatas, mostly newly-composed: each cycle including some 60 works, one appropriate to each Sunday of the Church Year, and special cantatas for Christmas, and the main feasts of Advent and Lent. Of these 300 works, nearly 200 survive.

Cantata No.51, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!* - possibly written in 1730, after the great burst of cantata-writing in his first years at the Thomaskirche - is a relatively unusual example, and one of the comparatively few cantatas for solo voice. The libretto, probably by Bach himself, is a perfectly conventional sacred text, appropriate to a specific Sunday in the Church Year, the 15th Sunday after Trinity, but Bach also added a note to the effect that this was appropriate for “all other times as well.” It is the vocal part itself that is unusual, however. The vast majority of his cantatas were written with the highly trained but limited boy's voices of the Thomaskirche chorus in mind, but the solo part of Cantata 51 was clearly written for a professional and highly skilled soprano. One possibility is that he wrote the solo part for his wife, Anna Magdalena, to be sung at some private function. (Women did not sing the Thomaskirche choir.) Another possibility is that Bach wrote this showpiece with an eye towards impressing singers and potential patrons outside of Leipzig. One biographer has suggested that the cantata was written for the leading *prima donna* of the glittering Dresden court opera, Faustina Bordini, or perhaps even for the Dresden *castrato* Giovanni Bindi.

The opening aria, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!*, is an appropriately joyous piece for soprano, trumpet, and violin, set in the “*da capo*” form common in contemporary opera arias - allowing the singer to ornament on the repeat of the opening section. (The brilliant trumpet part may have been added by Bach's son Wilhelm Friedemann.) After a supplicating recitative, Bach sets another *da capo* aria, *Höchster, mache deine Güte*, a gentle vocal line sung above a lilting continuo. In the chorale movement, Bach uses a texture that he employed many times in his cantatas, with the solo part intoning a 16th-

century chorale tune, *Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren*, phrase by phrase as the two violin parts weave delicate counterpoint around her. This moves directly into the joyous final aria, *Alleluja!*, which again includes a bright trumpet obbligato part.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Suite No.3 in D Major, BWV 1068

Bach probably composed this work between 1717 and 1723. Duration 20:00.

There is a bit of mystery about the origins of Bach's four orchestral suites - their precise dates of composition cannot be determined, but they were probably written during the years 1717-1723, when Bach served as the *Kapellmeister* to the Cöthen court of music-loving Prince Leopold von Anhalt-Cöthen. Leopold's musical establishment included a fine orchestra, and Bach was encouraged to create instrumental music in the latest style: half of the famous "Brandenburg" concertos were written for the Cöthen court, as was the lion's share of Bach's surviving orchestral music. The orchestral suites were probably written for musical programs at Cöthen, and reflect popular French style, a lengthy and rather pompous overture followed by a series of French courtly dances. Bach's original title for each of the suites was *Ouverture* - a reference to the French style that was the model for many German composers of his day.

The opening movement begins as all good French *Ouvertures* should: with a passage of solemn, almost pompous dotted figures leading to a brighter fugato. Strings carry most of this intensely contrapuntal movement, with doubling from the oboes and occasional punctuation by trumpets and timpani. The movement closes with a reprise of the slower opening idea. The *Air* that follows is based on one of Bach's most beloved melodies - best known in an arranged version as the *Air on the G String*. In the original, which seems to have been inspired by vocal style, there is a lovely violin duet above a quietly plodding bass. The three remaining movements are based upon French dance forms, and return to the opening scoring: a lively set of *Gavottes* with call and response between the strings and winds, a rollicking *Bourrée*, and quick *Gigue* that is led by the trumpets.

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Texts and translations

Handel, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Glory to God in the highest,

*Et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.*

and on earth, peace towards
men of good will.

*Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam tuam.*

We praise You, we bless You,
we adore You, we glorify You.
We give thanks to You
for Your great glory.

*Domine Deus, rex coelestis,
Pater omnipotens,
Domini Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe altissime,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius patris.*

Lord God, heavenly king,
Father almighty,
Lord, the only-begotten Son,
Jesus Christ, the most high,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.

*Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris,
miserere nobis.*

You, who takes away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us, receive
our prayers.
You, who sits at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy upon us.

*Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus
Dominus, tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe.
Cum sancto spiritu in gloria
Dei Patris. Amen.*

For You alone are holy, You alone are
the Lord, You alone are the Lord,
O Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of
God the Father. Amen.

J.S. Bach, Cantata 51: *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!*

1. Aria

Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!

*Was der Himmel und die Welt
an Geschöpfen in sich hält,
müssen dessen Ruhm erhöhen,
und wir wollen unserm Gott
gleichfalls itzt ein Opfer bringen,
da er uns in Kreuz und Not
allezeit hat beigestanden.*

Praise God in every nation!

All that exists in heaven and
the world of creation
must now exalt in his glory,
and we would to this, our God,
likewise now present an offering,
for He in the midst of cross and suffering
has always stood close beside us.

2. Recitative

*Wir beten zu dem Tempel an,
da Gottes Ehre wohnt,
da dessen Treu,
so täglich neu,
mit lauter Segen lohnet.
Wir preisen, was er an uns hat getan.
muss gleich der schwache Mund von
seinen Wundern lallen,
So kann ein schlechtes Lob ihm
dennoch wohlgefallen.*

We pray at the temple
where God's glory dwells,
where his faithfulness.
renewed daily,
rewards us with unmixed blessing.
We praise what he has done for us -
even if our weak mouths can only
babble about his wonders.
yet even imperfect praise can
still please him.

3. Aria

*Höchster, mache deine Güte
ferner alle Morgen neu.*

*So soll vor die Vattertreu
auch ein dankbares Gemüte
durch ein frommes Leben weisen,
dass wir deine Kinder heissen.*

O highest God, make your goodness
new every morning from now onwards.

Then to your fatherly love
a thankful spirit in us, in turn,
though a devout life will show
that we might be called your children.

4. Chorale

*Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren
Gott Vater, Sohn, Heiligem Geist!
Der woll in uns vermehren,
was er uns aus Gnaden verheisst,
dass wir ihm fest vertrauen,
gänzlich uns lass'n auf ihn,
von Herzen auf ihn bauen,
dass uns'r Herz, Mut und Sinn
ihm festiglich anhangen;
drauf singen wir zur Stund:
Amen, wir werdn's erlangen,
glaub'n wir aus Herzensgrund.*

May there be praise and glory and honor
for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!
May it be his will, to grow within us
what he promises to us through his grace,
so that we might firmly trust in him,
rely completely on him,
from our hearts build upon him,
so that our heart, spirit, and mind
might depend steadfastly on him;
we now sing about this:
Amen, we shall achieve this if
we believe from the bottom of our hearts.

5. Aria

Alleluja!

Hallelujah!

(translations ed. M. Allsen)