

ARTISTS' PROGRAMMING VISION AND MUSIC NOTES (by James Manishen)

Historically, we can loosely define the era of Baroque music as occurring between 1600 and 1750 – the former date close to the creation of the first landmark opera (Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1607) and the latter date the year of J.S. Bach's death. What happened in between was a virtual flood of creativity, imagination, virtuosity, ostentation and individuality. But what I love about the Baroque period is the way such variety takes place within a very strong sense of prescribed musical laws. It's as if the composers have had to assimilate a huge array of skills before being admitted to the 'bar' as it were not just letting imagination run rampant, as we so often find in our time in so many arts, but with each creative impulse governed under disciplined order processes to fit a musical narrative, whether concerto, fugue, or any other form and texture from the period. The remarkable thing is that in the best hands nothing goes wanting in vividness and variety, as we'll hear.

Tonight's focus is on the concerto. Instrument technology was growing and the evolutionary process of developing short dances into complex virtuoso pieces for solo instruments became a highlight of the Baroque period. Listen especially to how the personalities of the solo instruments shine through in the writing. Nothing generic here, as the composers clearly viewed the expanding communicative range of the instruments as great tools to display the individuality and skill of both performer and creator.

Baroque music of course wasn't designed for large concert halls and is rarely heard on symphony orchestra programs today in its original forms. So we at the WSO welcome our new partnership with Virtuosi Concerts and look forward to bringing you music from this most exciting period!

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713): Concerto grosso in G minor, op. 6, no. 8 (Christmas Concerto) Corelli's most famous work is an example of the so-called Baroque "church" concerto, which was more serious in manner than the lighter, dance-inspired "chamber" concerto. This lovely, beautifully crafted work was composed around 1690 for Cardinal [Pietro Ottoboni](#) and is scored for an ensemble consisting of two [concertino violins](#) and [cello, ripieno strings](#) and [continuo](#). The brief movements conclude with a gentle Pastorale that recalls the shepherds who entered the Italian cities at Christmas time to play their pipes in manger scenes of local productions. Cinema observers may recognize the third movement which was featured on the soundtrack of the movie [Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World](#).

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805): Cello Concerto No. 4 in C major, G.

477. Boccherini's debut as a cellist occurred at the age of just 13. At age 15 he and his father, a professional double bass player, were summoned to Vienna to play in the court orchestra. Young Luigi made a deep impression and for the rest of his life the cello became a prominent part of a huge output that comprised 12 cello concertos in all, the last of which was only discovered in 1987. The concertos are likely youthful works and No. 4 is fresh, enjoyable music with wonderful cadenzas and many virtuoso elements for the soloist.



Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809): Trombone Concerto in B-flat major. Albrechtsberger taught the young Beethoven counterpoint for a short period, commenting that he would "never amount to anything." Despite this profound lapse of judgement, Albrechtsberger was a significant musician who drew praise from Mozart for his organ-playing and from

Haydn for his skills as a teacher. Though Albrechtsberger's *Trombone Concerto* is actually a post-Baroque classical-period concerto, it harkens back to the imitative Baroque counterpoint and "basso continuo" the composer so loved and offers much virtuoso display for the soloist.

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767): Don Quixote, Suite for Strings and Continuo

Cervantes published *Don Quixote* in 1605 and it inspired generations of composers since. As he described his delusional hero: "Through little sleep and much reading, he dried up his brains as he wholly lost his judgment. Thereupon, he fell into one of the strangest conceits that a madman ever stumbled on in this world...that he should become a knight-errant, and go throughout the world with his horse and armour to seek adventures and practice in person all he had read was used by knights of yore..." Telemann's suite opens with a finely pompous French overture with a centerpiece of errant-knightly dash. The second movement's drone signifies a reluctance to wake up from the land of inflated dreams. The fury of the Windmill attack is boldly painted in music. The *galant* period device of a sighing second interval shows the Don's amorous feelings for Aline. Then comes some galloping misadventures with Sancho Panza, the work closing quietly as the Don's thoughts never stray from dreams of more 'heroic' deeds.

