

WSO BAROQUE CHAMBER PLAYERS

- Bach Baroque Family -

Artist's Vision and Music Notes (by James Manishen)

Johann Sebastian Bach fathered 20 children, seven with his first wife Maria Barbara Bach who died in 1720 and 13 with his second wife Anna Magdalena Wilcke. Four of Bach's sons – all represented on our program – went on to become significant musicians. All four received tutelage and guidance from their esteemed father who, as Beethoven

commented on referring to the German translation of "Bach" as little stream or brook said: "His name should not be Brook, it should be Ocean." A telling comment given that each son shared that name...and its implied responsibility! (J.S. Bach)

Our program raises compelling questions, since musically one can speculate that each son broke from Sebastian's influence because they realized they couldn't surpass his achievements. In that light we must ask: Were Carl Philipp Emanuel, Wilhelm Friedemann, Johann Christian and Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach transitional musical figures or important composers in their own rights? How did they advance their compositional styles in the shadow of such a father? How did they break away from the traditions J.S. Bach embodied and how did they influence other composers? We felt the best way to attempt to reveal all of this is to hear their music, with the master's own as point of reference.

C.P.E. Bach was a crucial composer in the transition between the Baroque and Classical periods. As one of the foremost clavier-players



of his time, his masterly treatise on that instrument became the foundation of piano teaching. The wide emotional range of his music initiated a style of composition in Germany at the time called *Empfindsamer Stil* (*sensitive style*). Of him Mozart said "He is the father, we are the children."

W.F. Bach was a more tragic figure, who despite being a renowned organ virtuoso died in poverty. He became an extraordinary

improviser, possibly to set him in relief of his father, as a composer. W.F.'s music contains more of his father's contrapuntal style than the classical-period inclinations of his composer-brothers, but with a distinctive improvisatory edge.

J.C. Bach was a profound influence on Mozart, his keyboard concertos specifically. J.C.'s music is more in the *galant* classical-period style, with clear melodies, accompaniment and phrase direction over contrapuntal elements. He was just 15 when his father died and continued his studies with his brother C.P.E. Bach, 21 years his senior and clearly a progressive influence on the young composer.

J.C.F. Bach was a great keyboard virtuoso who later gained employment in the court of a count whose musical preferences were notably Italian. J.C.F. produced music in a number of styles from Baroque through galant and classical, adopting influences from both his father and his brother C.P.E. Bach. Many of J.C.F.'s works were lost in the WWII destruction of the Berlin building where they were stored.