

Saturday, April 12, 2008, 8pm  
 First Congregational Church

# Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

## PROGRAM

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Concerto for Strings in G minor, RV 156

Allegro  
 Adagio  
 Allegro

Alessandro Marcello (1669–1747) Concerto for Oboe in D minor  
 (ornaments by J. S. Bach)

(Andante) Adagio — Presto

Johann Gottlieb Graun (c.1702 –1771) Concerto for Viola da Gamba in A minor,  
 Graun WV A:XIII:14

Allegro  
 Adagio ma non tanto  
 Allegro

## INTERMISSION

Philipp Heinrich Erlebach (1657–1714) *Ouverture No. 5 in F minor, from VI Ouvertures, begleitet mit ihren darzu schicklichen Airs, nach französischer Art und Manier eingerichtet und gesetzt von Philip Heinrich Erlebach, Nuremberg, 1693*

Ouverture — Air Entrée —  
 Air qui se joue alternativement avec le Trio/  
 Air Trio — Air Courante — Air Bourrée —  
 Air Marche — Air Rondeau — Chaconne

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Concerto for Harpsichord D minor, BWV 1052

Allegro  
 Adagio  
 Allegro

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## Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Georg Kallweit	<i>concertmaster</i>
Kerstin Erben	<i>violin</i>
Edburg Forck	<i>violin</i>
Thomas Graewe	<i>violin</i>
Uta Peters	<i>violin</i>
Verena Sommer	<i>violin</i>
Dörte Wetzel	<i>violin</i>
Clemens-Maria Nuszbaumer	<i>viola</i>
Sabine Fehlandt	<i>viola</i>
Anja Regine Graewel	<i>viola</i>
Jan Freiheit	<i>viola da gamba</i>
Werner Matzke	<i>violoncello</i>
Walter Rumer	<i>double-bass</i>
Xenia Löffler	<i>oboe</i>
Christian Beuse	<i>bassoon</i>
Raphael Alpermann	<i>harpsichord</i>

**Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)**  
**Concerto for Strings in G minor, RV 156**

Antonio Vivaldi spent much of his career in the capacity of musical director and violin teacher at a Venetian conservatory and orphanage for girls, the Seminario Musicale dell'Ospedale della Pietà. In his day, he was well known as a violinist and conductor; however, his renown as a composer did not begin until the early 1700s. After a Dutch music publisher issued a collection of his concertos in 1711, his fame spread throughout Europe. Though Vivaldi wrote many vocal works, including numerous operas, psalms, motets and Mass movements, most of these works remained only in manuscript form and were not performed until the last few decades. These vocal works are part of a highly active, ongoing project to re-evaluate and research this material, which many musicologists believe will alter Vivaldi's standing in the field of vocal music. Until recently, however, Vivaldi's reputation has rested primarily on his legacy of nearly 500 instrumental concertos.

His most popular work, *The Four Seasons*, is a series of four programmatic violin concertos. About 230 other Vivaldi concertos are for solo violin and orchestra. Some 40 others have survived that fall into the category of *concerto à quattro*: for a full string complement with no soloists. This type fell out of favor as the popularity of the solo concerto grew, which means that RV 156 in G minor is probably from the early 1700s.

The most unusual feature of this work is that all three movements are in the same key. While the minor mode was far more common in the Baroque era than the mid- and late-18th century, this scheme wherein all of the movements are in the same key, especially the stormy key of G minor, is singular. The motoric finale with its upward flourishes (called *tirate*—wrenches or pulls) generates tremendous momentum and energy.

**Alessandro Marcello (1669–1747)**  
**Concerto for Oboe in D minor**  
**(ornaments by J. S. Bach)**

Johann Sebastian Bach spent nine years in Weimar from 1708 to 1717 in service to the Dukes and Princes of Saxe-Weimar. During this period, he

acquainted himself with music from France and Italy. Italian style was all the rage in northern Europe, particularly in the German states and the Netherlands. The teenage Prince Johann Ernst, who was a gifted string player and composer, spent two years studying in Utrecht and Amsterdam from 1711 to 1713. He heard the Dutch organist Jan Jacob de Graaf play many recitals in Amsterdam's Nieuwe Kerk, transcribing fashionable Italian instrumental concertos for organ.

When the Prince returned to Weimar in 1713, he brought with him a large collection of Italian concertos primarily by Venetian composers: Vivaldi, Alessandro Marcello, Benedetto Marcello, and others. Some had been published by the Amsterdam house of Etienne Roger; others were still in manuscript. The Prince requested his organist, Bach, and his music teacher, Johann Gottfried Walther, to transcribe these works for organ.

More than 20 of Bach's concerto transcriptions have survived. They divide into two categories: *pedaliter* (requiring the pedalboard of an organ) and *manualiter* (playable on the manuals of an organ without pedals). Bach's transcription of Marcello's oboe concerto is a *manualiter* work. Historically this group is presumed to be for harpsichord, although Bach did compose other *manualiter* works for organ.

Bach grouped his Marcello transcription together with other transcriptions he labeled *XVI Concerto nach A. Vivaldi*. A century after his death, a German researcher reviewed Bach's manuscripts and assumed that Bach's identification of the music as Vivaldi's was correct. (In fact, nine of the 16 transcriptions are after Vivaldi.) When copies of the original concerto surfaced in libraries in Mecklenburg and Darmstadt bearing the name Marcello, two different German scholars attributed the piece to the prolific Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739). As it turned out, they were still incorrect. An English researcher discovered yet another copy of the Marcello oboe concerto in the British Library. This one, part of Jeanne Rogers collection published in Amsterdam about 1717, clearly identifies Alessandro Marcello as the composer. After more than two centuries of misattribution, the concerto's correct authorship was established. Even then the confusion did not abate, for copies of the concerto exist in both C minor and D minor. We

hear it in this Friends of Chamber Music concert in the original key of D minor.

The Marcellos were a noble and artistic Venetian family. Alessandro and Benedetto and probably their other brother Gerolamo studied violin with their father Agostino and received additional music instruction from Francesco Gasparini, one of Vivaldi's predecessors at the Ospedale della Pietà, and Antonio Lotti, the organist at San Marco. Alessandro served in the Venetian judiciary and as a diplomat for the Republic. He was also an artist, and published some poetry that was well known in Paris. He used the pseudonym Eterio Stinfalico for his music.

Marcello's concerto is popular and the music is familiar. Bach's transcription is faithful to the original in the outer movements, with no substantive changes to the musical content. He took more liberties, however, decorating the melody of the *Adagio*. Oboists have benefited from the fusion of both composers' imaginations.

**Johann Gottlieb Graun (c.1702–1771)**  
**Concerto for Viola da Gamba in A minor,**  
**Graun WV A:XIII:14**

On this evening's program, Johann Gottlieb Graun represents the transition from the Baroque to a newer style, what we think of as the *rococo* style or the *style galant*. Both terms are French in origin, so once again we encounter a commingling of international influences. More surprising is that, for this forward-looking music, Graun chose as his soloist the *viola da gamba*, an instrument that was about to go out of fashion in favor of the cello. A couple of his surviving concerti for *viola da gamba* have been transcribed for cello and are occasionally performed on the modern string instrument.

Graun came from a musical family; both of his brothers were professional musicians. He and his brother Carl Heinrich were considered among the most distinguished North German composers of their day, but Carl Heinrich's glittering success as an opera composer eclipsed that of his older brother. Still, Johann Gottlieb Graun must have had an excellent reputation because Johann Sebastian Bach sent his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, to study with him after meeting the elder Graun in Merseburg in 1726.

After enrolling at the University in Leipzig, Graun studied violin with Giuseppe Tartini in Prague. He spent most of his adult career in service to Frederick the Great, starting in 1732 when Frederick was still Crown Prince. As a court musician, he was the leader (today he would be called a concertmaster) of the opera orchestra and participated in the court's lively chamber music culture. Although he composed a considerable amount of instrumental music, little of it has been published. Most of his concerti were for one or two violins and orchestra, yet he wrote at least a half dozen concerti for *viola da gamba*, suggesting he likely had an excellent *gamba* player in his court orchestra.

Listeners will immediately notice a textural shift in his concerto from the other music on this evening's program. A single melody dominates, with the ensemble either accompanying the soloist in a harmonic role, or carrying the melody in the violins with the balance of the instruments providing harmonic support. Fugal textures are absent and even imitation is rare. The pleasing, ingratiating quality of Graun's music foreshadows the music of early Haydn and Stamitz.

**Philipp Heinrich Erlebach (1657–1714)**  
**Ouverture No. 5 in F Major, from VI**  
**Ouvertures, begleitet mit ihren darzu schicklichen**  
**Airs, nach französischer Art und Manier**  
**eingrichtet und gesetzt von Philipp Heinrich**  
**Erlebach, Nuremberg, 1693**

Let us begin with the lengthy German title, which translates to *Six Overtures*, accompanied by suitable *Airs*, after the French style and manner, prepared and established by Philipp Heinrich Erlebach. Apart from the composer's name, the most important word in that heading is *Französischer* French. Why was a musician born in East Friesland, who spent his entire career in central Germany, emulating French style?

In modern times, Erlebach has taken a back seat to the major figures of the German Baroque, but his music has been undergoing an enthusiastic renaissance in recent years. At age 20, he was sent to the Thuringian court of Count Albert Anton von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, a minor German prince. Within three years he was promoted to

*Kapellmeister*, a position he held for more than 30 years, until his death.

The *Kapellmeister* was responsible for both sacred and secular music-making at the court, and was expected to compose new works at a rate that is staggering today. Erlebach was a prolific composer of both sacred and instrumental compositions. Despite a catastrophic fire at the Rudolstadt court in 1735, in which hundreds of his manuscripts were destroyed, much of his music has survived. His works show a thorough acquaintance with the music of his French and Italian contemporaries, and an impressive ability to unite their stylistic character with the accepted forms of German music. In France, his principal model would have been Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), who was affiliated with the court of Louis XIV from 1653 until his death.

In French Baroque music, the term *Ouverture* has two definitions. It can designate the instrumental introduction to an opera or ballet; or it can represent a larger instrumental work, more like a multimovement suite. Erlebach's *Ouverture* is of the second type.

Its initial movement consists of a French-style overture, complete with a dignified opening section in dotted rhythm alternating with a faster section in contrasting triple meter.

The remaining movements are all gathered under the term *Air*, the French catch-all label for movements operatic in nature or for other tunes transported into the instrumental suite. Such movements did not necessarily fit into a specific dance category. Erlebach did, in fact, include a generous sampling of French dances in this suite, several of which last barely a minute. By closing his *Ouverture* with a large scale *Chaconne* at six minutes, the lengthiest movement by far he lends dignity and importance to the entire work.

### Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1052

Few of Bach's instrumental concerti survive in their original form. Most of his 14 keyboard concerti are arrangements, primarily of violin concerti. The D minor Concerto is a case where scholars debate whether the original version was for keyboard and Bach later arranged it for violin and orchestra, or

vice versa. In its keyboard version, the version you will hear in this concert it has become one of the best known of Bach's concerti.

Bach obviously thought that the material from this concerto could have other lives since he recycled the material from this work into several others. The first and second movements appear, in adapted form, as both the opening *sinfonia* (instrumental overture) and chorus of Cantata No. 146, "*Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal*." The first movement material surfaces again in Cantata No. 188, *Ich habe meine Zuversicht* arranged for organ and orchestra. The richness of Bach's material permits success in all three guises. As Bach scholar Christoph Wolff has noted:

In his transcriptions Bach never proceeded in a mechanical way; rather, he strove to give the arrangement an identity of its own by subjecting the model to further development and exhausting its potential. This often involved the addition of fresh contrapuntal parts, the alteration of detail and structural modification.

Bach's keyboard writing is virtuosic throughout the Concerto, providing a particularly demanding part for the right hand, with a relatively simple accompaniment for the left hand. The style is more akin to organ or harpsichord toccata writing, and less contrapuntal than much of Bach's music.

Another unusual feature of this concerto is its slow movement in G minor. For Baroque concerti in minor keys, composers almost always switched to major mode for the middle movement, for contrast. The unrelieved sequence of movements in minor mode makes this concerto singular. The melancholy unison statement of the opening theme (which, it turns out, is a ground bass) establishes a somber atmosphere. Above the repetitions of the ground bass, the keyboard soloist embroiders an intricate and expressive melodic line, almost operatic in its coloratura details.

Bach's vigorous finale captures the energy, motor-rhythm, and strong rhythmic profile that characterize so much of his best music. He demonstrates here that a minor key does not preclude high spirits and sparkle. Just before the final *tutti*, a startling two-bar *Adagio* affords the pianist an opportunity for a brief solo cadenza. The interruption caps a brilliant concerto with surprise and drama.

Established in 1982 as East Germany's answer to the then-growing trend of historical performance practice in Baroque and early classical music, the **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin** today enjoys the recognition as being one of Europe's leading chamber orchestras specializing in this field. Next to its active role in Berlin's cultural scene, the orchestra appears regularly in Europe's major concert houses and has also toured Asia, the Middle East, and North and South America.

Recording exclusively for Harmonia Mundi, the Akademie has received numerous international awards for its work, including the British Gramophone Award, the French Diapason d'Or, and the Cannes Festival Award, the Dutch Edison Award, the Telemann Prize, as well as a Grammy Award nomination in the United States.

In May 2005, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin made its debut in the United States, performing to sold-out audiences in Chicago, Boston, New York's Carnegie Hall, Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Los Angeles. *The New York Times* hailed the Akademie's performance as "unified and polished, with a grippingly incisive sense of rhythm," and *The Boston Globe* labeled the ensemble

as "a crack outfit that plays with unflagging, almost exhausting energy." *The Los Angeles Times* went so far as to label the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin as "early music's Bang on a Can All Stars."

Back at home, the orchestra has a regular concert series at the Berlin Konzerthaus as well as in the newly opened Radialsystem V, the new space for the arts in Berlin. Here, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin frequently works together with the modern dance group Sasha Waltz & Guests, a partnership formed after the huge success of the choreographed version of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Praised as "the acquisition of rich, new artistic terrain," the opera marked a new direction for the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, breaking the mold to extend the ensemble beyond traditional forms of performance. In their newest choreographed production of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the members of the Akademie, together with a dancer from Sasha Waltz & Guests, play dual roles as both musicians and actors in a performance that the Cologne press described as "magical, and musically first-class." With this, the orchestra has taken charge of the 21st century, once again displaying its musical sovereignty on stage.