

Friday, April 4, 2008, 8pm  
First Congregational Church

# Europa Galante

Fabio Biondi, *conductor & violin*

*France, Italy and England: Connections and Exchanges*

PROGRAM

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697–1764) Concerto for Violin and Strings in C major,  
Op. 7, No. 3 (1737)  
Allegro  
Largo  
Allegro assai

Henry Purcell (1659–1695) Suite in D minor from *Abdelazer, or  
The Moor's Revenge* (1695)  
Overture  
Rondeau  
Aire  
Aire  
Minuet  
Aire  
Jigg  
Hornpipe  
Aire

Suite: *Les Nations*  
arr. Fabio Biondi (b.1961)

Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785) Alla francese  
Georg Muffat (1653–1704) Les Jeunes Espagnol  
André Campra (1660–1744) Les Chinois  
Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) Badinerie italienne  
Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1664–1704) Les Barbares  
Telemann Les Danoises  
Telemann Les Angloises  
André Cardinal Destouches (1672–1749) Chaconne

INTERMISSION

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) *The Four Seasons*: Four Concerti for Violin,  
Strings and Continuo, Op. 8, from *The Contest  
Between Harmony and Invention* (1723)

*Spring*  
Allegro  
Largo  
Allegro

*Summer*  
Allegro non molto  
Adagio  
Presto

*Autumn*  
Allegro  
Adagio  
Allegro

*Winter*  
Allegro non molto  
Largo  
Allegro

*Europa Galante with Fabio Biondi reserves the right to change the program.*

*Europa Galante with Fabio Biondi records for Virgin Classics and may also be heard on Opus III/Naïve.*

*Europa Galante with Fabio Biondi appears by arrangement with New World Classics,  
Kerby Lovallo, director: kl@newworldclassics.com.*

*Learn more about the artists at [www.newworldclassics.com/galante.htm](http://www.newworldclassics.com/galante.htm) and [www.europagalante.com](http://www.europagalante.com).*

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*Cal Performances' 2007–2008 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank.*



## Europa Galante

*Violin Soloist & Conductor*  
Fabio Biondi

*Violin 1*  
Fabio Ravasi  
Luca Giardini

*Violin 2*  
Andrea Rognoni  
Rossella Borsoni  
Giancarlo Ceccacci

*Viola*  
Stefano Marcocchi

*Cello*  
Maurizio Naddeo

*Violone*  
Riccardo Coelati Rama

*Theorbo*  
Giangiacomo Pinardi

*Harpichord*  
Salvatore Carchiolo

## Jean-Marie Leclair (1697–1764) *Concerto in C major, Op. 7, No. 3 (1737)*

In the early 18th century, two national styles dominated instrumental music. Italian sonatas and concertos emphasized virtuosity, exciting rhythms, operatic vocal-style melodies and sophisticated counterpoint (fugue, etc.). French instrumental music was derived much more from the theater. Its elastic rhythms derived more from spoken poetry, and melodies showed the influence of the melodic flow of the French language. Ornamentation—sometimes very complex—was of capital importance, and the *style* of a performance was the chief value.

Many musicians of the time strove to combine these two national styles. For example, several of J. S. Bach's cantatas amalgamate or partake of both styles. François Couperin composed a set of works titled *Les goûts réunis* in which he carried out his ideal of “unified tastes” meaning the blended combination of Italian and French styles.

What Couperin set into motion was brought to fulfillment by violinist-composer Jean-Marie Leclair, who was often called “Corelli de la France.” An experienced young performer in Lyons and Turin, Leclair garnered rich patronage in Paris beginning in 1723. The originality of his violin sonatas and his performances of them impressed listeners greatly. Success at home and abroad led to his appointment as one of Louis XV's musicians. Leclair rose to prominence, but intense professional rivalry led to his resignation in 1737. In that year, he published the collection of six concertos identified as Op. 7. A highly rhythmic, three-paragraph theme in the strings introduces the first movement.

Unlike typical Italian composers, Leclair gives the soloist various segments from the theme, so that the solo part is rather like a commentary on it. Various portions of the theme return periodically in the strings until the soloist's brief cadenza, leading to a final thematic statement.

The first movement having been strongly Italianate, the second is an equally strong statement in the French style. Rhythms in the strings at the opening and later statements are those of the typical French *ouverture*. In between, the soloist plays an independent cantilena that blends ele-

ments from French and Italian vocal and instrumental styles.

The fast minuet theme of the third movement may remind us of Vivaldi, and the soloist's free virtuosity also seems to pay homage to his familiar concertos. In fact, the soloist dominates this movement to a greater degree than previously in this work. As the orchestra had provided an *entrée* for the soloist, so they also round out the concerto with exit music.

## Henry Purcell (1659–1695) *Suite from Abdelazer, or The Moor's Revenge*

When the English restored their monarchy in the early 1660s (the “Restoration”), London's theaters were re-opened after a hiatus of nearly 30 years. There followed a great demand for dramatic entertainment, which lasted for decades. England did not want Italian opera; instead, it developed a style of musical theater that employed large amounts of music. Most music was “incidental”—overtures, dances, entrance music and *entr'actes*—and inserted songs. Yet entire scenes involving ritual or pageant might be set to music.

Henry Purcell came along at just that time and made greater musical contributions to Restoration theater than any other musician of the period. He wrote incidental music to dozens of plays. This music gives us a good idea of theatrical music at that time and is also some of Purcell's best orchestral music.

*Abdelazer, or The Moor's Revenge*, produced in 1695 at Drury Lane, was a “serious” drama containing much incidental music by Purcell. The bloody plot dealt with a ruthless protagonist who would go to extremes to achieve his ends.

The music begins with an “Overture,” a form borrowed from French operas. The slow, majestic opening section leads to a spirited fugue. The “Rondeau” is the play's most famous piece of music, made so when Benjamin Britten used it as the basis for his *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell* (1945), better known as the *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*.

A pair of “Airs” follows. The first has a gentle, courtly feel; the second is brilliant and bold,

like grand entrance or exit music. The somewhat brief “Minuet” that concludes this group of movements is again polite courtly music and full of the formality associated with the ballroom dances of the time.

Another “Air” initiates the final group of movements. It is sprightly and sharply rhythmic. By contrast, the “Jig” is of a more moderate speed than we might expect; again, we have the influence of formal court manners. The splendid “Hornpipe” is one of the high points of the *Abdelazer* music, in its way just as catchy as the earlier “Rondeau.” The concluding “Air” contains a distinctly British character, cheery yet noble and resolute. Its phrases spin out in a continuous array, beautifully rounding out this theatrical suite like a stately final curtain.

### **Suite: *Les Nations***

*Arr. Fabio Biondi*

At the height of the Baroque period (mid–late 17th century) musical styles in Europe were strongly polarized. From Italy came the predominant style of opera and its vocalisms. It also produced the concerto and chamber sonata with their rhythmic vitality and lyrical lines. From France came the instrumental suite—first the dance suite from the lutenists and harpsichordists of Louis XIV, and then looser suites of pieces (called *ouvertures*) mainly drawn from the operas of the king’s composer Jean-Baptiste Lully.

By the early 18th century, French suites were a loose anthologies of dances and *gallantries* (character pieces), which composers all over Europe were writing. Dance movements had already invaded Italian music beginning with the chamber sonatas of Corelli, and suites influenced by the French style had become extremely popular in Germany. At about the same time, the leading French composer, François Couperin (“François le Grand”) became interested in amalgamating elements of Italian and French music—and their offshoots found in other countries—into a single central style, which he termed *Les goûts réunis* (united tastes). His greatest effort to achieve this ideal was a set of four suites titled *Les nations: sonades et suites*, comprising “La

Françoise,” “L’Espagnole,” “L’impériale” (German) and “La Piémontoise” (Italian).

The title of Biondi’s suite is, of course, a tribute to Couperin. His suite goes a bit further by stringing together pieces by composers from various countries: Galuppi (Italy), Muffat and Telemann (Germany), Biber (Austria), and Campra and Destouches (France). Even more interesting is that in each piece, the composer expresses his impression of some land or culture other than his own. In a sense, then, this *Les nations* is a musical travelogue of countries and peoples as perceived by foreigners.

*Program Notes by Dr. Michael Fink  
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### **Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)**

#### ***The Four Seasons* (1723)**

Program music is a term that often describes works that tell a story. Very few Vivaldi works are programmatic, yet *The Four Seasons* strongly features narration. Why did Vivaldi turn to descriptive subjects for his concertos during the 1720s, when no tradition of instrumental program music existed in Italy and when his earlier epoch-making concertos give no hint of this orientation? One possible stimulus was the world of operatic music, with which Vivaldi had been deeply involved as both a composer and impresario. Another was perhaps the growing commercialization of Vivaldi’s concerto output; he sold his concertos to patrons and “customized” them with descriptive effects that lent a touch of novelty or whimsy. *The Four Seasons* was dedicated to the Bohemian count Wenzel von Morzin.

Vivaldi reconciles the four programs with the normal structural principles of his concertos in a logical and satisfying manner. The tutti sections based on the recurrent material are used to portray the constant aspects of the scene such as the shepherds’ dance in the finale of the “Spring” Concerto or the hunt in that of the “Autumn” Concerto.

Transient episodes are illustrated in the intervening solo episodes in which the solo violin comes to the fore. This pattern has to be modified, however, in the central slow movements which are too brief to develop a narrative. Here Vivaldi likes to provide a complex tableau, superimposing different elements assigned to various instruments, as in the “Spring” and “Winter” Concertos, or to alternate images as in the “Summer” Concerto, where the buzzing of flies and the distant rumble of thunder are juxtaposed. In contrast, the “Autumn” Concerto presents a single image: dozing drunkards.

The enormous and immediate success of *The Four Seasons* gave fresh impetus to Vivaldi’s activity as a composer of concertos. The “Spring” concerto remained popular longest of all; Michel Corrette based a motet on its first movement and Jean-Jacques Rousseau arranged an entire concerto for unaccompanied flute. One can also identify *The Four Seasons* as the archetypes of programmatic cycles by Telemann and Haydn.

*Courtesy of Philips Classics*

**Europa Galante** was formed by Fabio Biondi to draw the international public's attention to a new and definitive Italian presence in the interpretation of music from the baroque and classical eras on original instruments. Biondi gathered around him some of the best Italian musicians with whom he had already worked, and soon Europa Galante was met with huge success.

Europa Galante has performed in many of the world's major concert halls and theatres: La Scala in Milan, the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Musikverein in Vienna, Lincoln Center in New York and the Sydney Opera House. The ensemble has toured throughout Australia, Japan, Canada, Israel, United States and South America and often collaborates with the Ente Santa Cecilia in Rome to find and restore 18th-century Italian operas, such as Antonio Caldara's *La Passione di Gesù Cristo* and Leonardo Leo's *Sant'Elena al Calvario*.

Europa Galante's repertoire ranges from the operas of Handel (*Poro*), Vivaldi (*Bajazet*) and the oratorios of Alessandro Scarlatti (*Maddalena*, *La Santissima Trinità*), through to the great instrumental works of the 18th century. The ensemble has performed at the Alessandro Scarlatti Festival in Palermo, giving the world premieres of *Clori*, *Dorino e Amore* and the staged operas *Massimo Puppieno*, *Il Trionfo dell'Onore*, *La Principessa Fedele* and, in 2003, *Carlo Re d'Alemagna*. The ensemble has a varying structure, and often performs chamber music such as the string sonatas of Italian composers of the 17th century.

In 1998, after years of collaboration with the French record company Opus 111, Europa Galante signed an exclusive contract with Virgin Classics, which went on to release their recordings of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Luigi Boccherini's string quintets as well as arias from cantatas by J. S. Bach with the tenor Ian Bostridge. Its CD of Vivaldi's *Concerti con molti strumenti* was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2004. Recent CDs include Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorio *La Santissima Trinità* (following its U.S. premiere at Lincoln Center), Mozart concertos and *Sifonie con titoli*. Their next opera project, after Vivaldi's *Bajazet*, which has already met with considerable critical acclaim and was no-

minated for a Grammy in 2006, will be Vivaldi's *Ercole sul Termodonte*. Other future recording projects include Vivaldi's concertos for viola d'amore, another Boccherini album and a Vivaldi collection, entitled *La Stravaganza*.

In the 2007–2008 season, Europa Galante is touring extensively, performing in France (Théâtre de la Ville, Cité de la Musique), Italy (Fondazione Santa Cecilia, Rome), Spain (Auditorium Nacional), Poland (Krakow Festival), Switzerland, Portugal (Centro Cultural de Belém), Holland (Utrecht Festival) and Slovenia. The present tour to North America includes New York, Los Angeles, San Diego, Berkeley, Troy, Washington, D.C., Quebec City and Hanover, New Hampshire. Europa Galante's touring activities include many important festivals, such as the Festival de Radio France (performing a di Majo oratorio), the Salzburg Festival (Oratorio Sant'Elena al Calvario of Leonardo Leo), the Wurzburg Festival, and the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest.

In autumn 2007, Europa Galante continued its collaboration with Fondazione la Fenice, performing two Vivaldi operas on stage at the Teatro Malibran: *Bajazet* and *Ercole sul Termodonte*.

Europa Galante is resident orchestra at Fondazione Teatro Due in Parma.

Born in Palermo, **Fabio Biondi** began his international career at the age of 12, performing his first solo concert with the RAI symphony orchestra. Driven early on by an inexhaustible cultural curiosity, Fabio Biondi was introduced to pioneers of the new approach to Baroque music, an opportunity that was to expand his musical vision and change the direction of his career.

At 16, he was invited by the Musikverein of Vienna to perform Bach's violin concertos. Since then, Fabio Biondi has performed with ensembles including Cappella Real, Musica Antiqua Wien, Seminario Musicale, La Chapelle Royale and Les Musiciens du Louvre (ever since its foundation) all specialised in the performance of Baroque music using original technique and instruments.

In 1990, Mr. Biondi founded Europa Galante, an ensemble which, in just a few years, thanks to their worldwide concert schedule and extraordinary recording successes, became the most inter-



nationally renowned and awarded Italian ensemble of baroque music. Mr. Biondi and his ensemble have been invited to play at the most important world festivals and concert halls, from La Scala in Milan to the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Musikverein in Vienna, the Lincoln Center in New York and the Sydney Opera House.

Their first record (Vivaldi's concertos) was immediately awarded the Premio Cini of Venice and the Choc de la Musique and soon received a number of other awards, including as five Diapasons d'Or and the Diapason d'Or de l'Année in France, the RTL Prize, Record of the Year nominations in many countries, and the Prix du Disque, *ffff*, by the review *Telerama*. In 2006, their recording of Vivaldi's opera *Bajazet* was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Mr. Biondi's musical development, taking in both the universal repertoire plus the rediscovering of minor composers, includes three centuries of music. This is illustrated in his varied discography: Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*; Corelli's concerti grossi; the oratorios, the serenatas and operas of Alessandro Scarlatti (*La Messa di Natale*, *Clori*, *Dorino e Amore*, *Massimo Puppieno* and *Il trionfo*

*dell'onore*); Handel's operas (*Poro*); and the 18th-century Italian violin repertoire (Veracini, Vivaldi, Locatelli, Tartini), as well as sonatas by Bach, Schubert and Schumann. Mr. Biondi embodies the perpetual pursuit of style, free from dogmatism and he remains intent in his quest for the original language. It is due to this very approach that he can collaborate as soloist and conductor with many varied orchestras, including Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Rotterdam Chamber Orchestra, the European Baroque Orchestra, the Opera of Halle, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Norway, the Orchestre Nationale de Montpellier and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, to name but a few.

Mr. Biondi also performs in duo with piano, harpsichord or fortepiano in prestigious venues around the world, including the Cité de la Musique in Paris, Hogi Hall in Tokyo, Auditorium Nacional in Madrid and the Wigmore Hall in London.

Since March 2005, Fabio Biondi has taken on the role of artistic director for baroque music of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

Next season, Mr. Biondi will conduct the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg, l'Orchestre de Montpellier, the Orchestre de Berne, Orquesta de Granada and the English Concert.

Fabio Biondi plays a 1766 Carlo Ferdinando Gagliano violin, once owned by his teacher, Maestro Salvatore Cicero, and kindly lent to him by the Salvatore Cicero Foundation in Palermo.