

2015-2016 – A Celebration of the Montgomery Philharmonic’s 10th Anniversary Season Concert 3 – February 7, 2015

Bach | Telemann

About Johann Sebastian Bach –

Johann Sebastian Bach was the most prolific composer of the Baroque period. The study of music theory centers around his compositions. Bach advanced the idea of four-part harmony, modulation, ornamentation, the idea of the soloist with orchestra and continuo, larger instrumentation and exploiting an instrument’s potential, and, most importantly, counterpoint. Other contemporaries worked in these areas of composition, but none could compare to Bach in furthering the art of composition.

Bach’s father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, taught him to play the violin and harpsichord and his brother, Johann Christoph Bach, taught him to play the clavichord and exposed him to the contemporary music of the time. Bach’s only formal musical training, other than that from his father and brother, was at St. Michael’s School in Lüneberg, Germany, for two years. It was there that he studied music and sang in the choir. After graduating from St. Michael’s, he held several posts across Germany. Most notably, he was the Kapellmeister (music director) to Prince Leopold of Anhalt–Köthen, Thomaskantor (music director) in Leipzig and also an educator at the Thomaschule, and he served as the “Royal Court Composer” for Augustus III.

Oddly enough, Bach’s music was very popular when he was alive but became less so as his health began to decline. At his passing, his music was quickly considered old-fashioned and disappeared into oblivion. What slowly brought his music back into favor was that Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, and Mendelssohn each wrote music in Bach’s contrapuntal style. Mendelssohn was a champion of his work and singlehandedly renewed interest in Bach’s music with a performance in 1829 of *St. Matthew’s Passion* in Berlin. In the 20th and 21st centuries, several prominent musicians—Pablo Casals, Glenn Gould, Ton Koopman, William Scheide and the Bach Aria Group, Karl Richter, Arthur Grumiaux, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Nikolas Harnoncourt, and John Elliot Gardiner—went even further to champion Bach’s music.

Born – March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died – July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Children – 20 children; Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Johann Christian Bach, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Johann Gottfried Bernhard Bach, Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, Johanna Carolina Bach, and Regina Susanna were among the more famous ones

Works – 224 cantatas or parts of cantatas, 6 motets, 11 masses and magnificats, 6 passions and oratorios, 188 four-part chorales, 79 songs and arias, 246 works for organ, 222 works for keyboard, 45 chamber works, 24 concerti for solo and orchestra, 4 overtures and suites for orchestra

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D major, BWV 1050

Bach wrote six concerti while in the service as Kapellmeister at the Court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt in Cöthen. His appointment to this position was very controversial, however, as the Duke of Weimar didn’t want him to leave. The Duke refused to accept Bach’s resignation and had him held under arrest for a month before finally relenting and allowing Bach to go to Cöthen.

Musical life in Cöthen was very different, given that Prince Leopold had been building an orchestra in Cöthen since he was a teenager. Leopold was a decent viola da gamba player and had assembled three violinists, a cellist, and double bassist, two flutists, an oboist, a bassoonist, two trumpeters, a timpanist, an organist, and three singers. This formed the core of the professional orchestra and Bach added several fine amateur musicians that Prince Leopold knew. Much of Bach’s best instrumental music was composed during his years at Cöthen. Everything was going quite well until Prince Leopold got married and his wife did not like music. Bach saw the handwriting on the wall, so began to plot his exit.

Bach met Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg and, thinking that the Margrave might like to hire him, wrote him a letter to which he cleverly attached the six Brandenburg Concerti. The Margrave never acknowledged the letter or the receipt of the concerti, so Bach’s attempt ended there. As it turned out, the forces in Cöthen were much better than the forces in Berlin as the Margrave never invested in finding the best court musicians, but the word Brandenburg was forever attached to the six concerti. Bach enjoyed six years of glorious music-making in Cöthen, so in the end, he did the right thing by staying in Cöthen.

The Third Brandenburg concerto was the first to emphasize the blend of the orchestral string section. Bach exploits each string section alone as well as blended together. The violins, violas, and celli perform as both *concertino* and *ripieno*; in *tutti* sections, the three players of each instrument (their ranks may be increased in orchestral performance) perform in unison as a section, but in the contrasting episodes they go their separate ways as three soloists.

The first movement tosses the motif material from section to section in a sort of musical choreography. What is most notable is the motivic material is a small gem of three notes. The second movement is one of the most talked about compositions in history. It is simply two chords. Historically, it is thought that this gave an opportunity for a member of the ensemble to improvise leading to the two chords. Others feel that because there is a fermata on the second chord, the improvisation should be on the second chord. Still others believed that Bach only wanted the two chords, a Phrygian Cadence, to stand alone as a buffer between the two spirited outer movements. The third and final movement is a spirited fugue in a binary dance form that begs for speed.

Artifact –

[Bach’s original score of the work](#)

Instrumentation – 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 celli, double bass, cembalo



1. [Bach: Brandenburg Concertos - Orchestral Suites - Violin Concertos - Academy of St. Martin in the Fields & Sir Neville Marriner](#)

2. [Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 - EP - The English Concert & Trevor Pinnock](#)

3. [The Best of Baroque Music - Cologne Chamber Orchestra & Helmut Müller-Brühl](#)

4. [Bach: Six Concertos for the Margrave of Brandenburg - European Brandenburg Ensemble & Trevor Pinnock](#)

5. [Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G, BWV 1048: I. \(Allegro\) - I Musici & Maria Teresa Garatti](#)



1. [J. S. Bach \(Vol 1\)](#)

2. [J. S. Bach \(Volume 2\)](#)

3. [Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven](#)

YouTube Video Links –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLj_gMBqHX8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXe4MHYQBk4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdsyNwUoON0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mB1M2HaEb14>