



Harpsichord Concertos by J.S. Bach

Featuring the
harpsichordists
of Juilliard415

Programmed
and prepared by
Béatrice Martin

Juilliard

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Photo by Claudio Papapietro

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The Juilliard School
presents

Harpichord Concertos by J.S. Bach

Featuring the harpsichordists of Juilliard415
Programmed and prepared by Béatrice Martin

Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 6pm
Paul Hall

JOHANN
SEBASTIAN
BACH
(1685-1750)

Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C Minor, BWV 1060

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

Francis Yun and Jacob Dassa, Harpsichords

Chiara Fasani Stauffer, Violin 1

Rebecca Nelson, Violin 2

Yi Hsuan Ethan Lin, Viola

Madeleine Bouïssou, Cello

Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings in F Minor, BWV 1056

(—)

Largo

Presto

David Belkovski, Harpsichord

Chiara Fasani Stauffer, Violin 1

Rebecca Nelson, Violin 2

Yi Hsuan Ethan Lin, Viola

Madeleine Bouïssou, Cello

Italian Concerto in F Major, BWV 971

(—)

Andante

Presto

Francis Yun, Harpsichord

(Program continues)



Please make certain that all electronic devices are turned off during the performance. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not permitted in this auditorium.

Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C Major, BWV 1061a

Allegro

Adagio ovvero largo

Fuga

David Belkovski and Caitlyn Koester, Harpsichords

Intermission

Concerto for Harpsichord in D Minor, BWV 974

(transcription of Alessandro Marcello's Concerto for Oboe and Strings)

Allegro

Adagio

Presto

Caitlyn Koester, Harpsichord

Brandenburg Concerto No.5 in D Major for Harpsichord, Flute, Violin,
and Strings, BWV 1050

Allegro

Affettuoso

Allegro

Jacob Dassa, Harpsichord

Chiara Fasani Stauffer, Solo Violin

Taya König-Tarasevich, Solo Flute

Rebecca Nelson, Violin

Yi Hsuan Ethan Lin, Viola

Madeleine Bouïssou, Cello

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes, with an intermission

About Bach's Harpsichord Concertos

By Francis Yun

In 1713, Prince Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar returned to his court after a two-year stay in the Netherlands. Amsterdam in particular was a hub of music publishing and many Italian composers had their music engraved there instead of their native Italy because of the higher quality of work. During the prince's stay, Italian concertos were all the rage, thanks to Antonio Vivaldi, who published his first set of concertos, the Op. 3, *L'Estro Armonico*, in 1711. Vivaldi did not invent the concerto, but this set was an innovative achievement full of novel melodic ideas, impressive virtuosic passages for the soloists, and a well-thought-out structure.

Prince Ernst returned to Weimar with Vivaldi's Op. 3 and a trunkful of other concertos by Italians, eager to enjoy the new music at home. The prince latched onto a trend he had witnessed in Amsterdam: concertos transcribed for solo keyboard to be performed without the benefit of a full band. He tasked his court organist with the job of transcribing a number of them for solo keyboard. The court organist was 28-year-old J.S. Bach.

Bach learned to compose music by copying it. It even got him into trouble as a child when he stole a prized manuscript of his brother's—access was granted only to those at a level his brother deemed the 10-year-old Johann Sebastian had not reached—and copied it over several nights by moonlight. Copying music by hand allowed Bach to examine how music worked; it revealed every detail of how a piece was constructed and Bach absorbed these compositional techniques during the act of copying. Transcribing concertos was in a sense copying, and whether or not Bach learned how to write concertos when he started the task, he ended up absorbing the form and concertos became an important part of his compositional output.

From transcribing concertos in his Weimar period, Bach learned the technique of ritornello, the most important organizing principle of Italian concertos. Ritornello is based on alternation. The piece starts with an identifiable motto or theme played by the full ensemble and confirms the key of the piece. This motto returns throughout the movement, hence ritornello, which means "little return." In between are solo passages where the music is less stable and travels through different keys. The constant harmonic motion of the solo passages allows the composer to write virtuosic music for the soloist that highlights the inherent tension of music that is constantly in flux and unstable. The returning motto then serves to ground the listener in a moment of stability before the soloist again veers off into unfamiliar territory. The movement then ends when the original key is reached and confirmed with the ritornello. Ritornello changed how Bach wrote music and its influence is heard in all of his works, from cantata arias to orchestral suites to instrumental sonatas.

Never content to merely reproduce a model, Bach saw possibilities in ritornello that allowed innovations in his concertos that were new and distinctly Bachian. His biggest innovation came from blending the lines

About Bach's Harpsichord Concertos (continued)

between solo and ritornello passages. Simply put, ritornellos ease tension by being stable and solos increase tension by being unstable. However, Bach often uses ritornello material as the basis for his solo passages. He fools listeners into thinking that a moment of stasis has been reached with the ritornello theme only to surprise them by using it to modulate into different keys. Often the large ensemble interrupts the soloist with ritornello material, as if insisting that the soloist reach a moment of stability. Bach also blurs the lines between ritornello and solo by having the soloist play virtuosic passagework over a full statement of ritornello in the orchestra. Bach took a form that relied on alternation and tinkered with it to create maximum drama between the soloist and the accompanying orchestra, a battle between two opposing forces rather than a vehicle to showcase a soloist.

Bach also realized that a concerto didn't need to have a soloist with orchestra for it to be a concerto. From his transcription work, Bach learned that a single keyboard could adequately suggest the opposing forces of soloist and orchestra, as can be heard tonight in the D Minor concerto and the Italian Concerto. Or a diverse group of instruments could be a solo group, as in the Brandenburg No. 5. Or two harpsichords without orchestral accompaniment could be opposing forces, as in the C Major concerto.

He could write standard concertos with soloist and orchestra too, as in the C Minor concerto for two harpsichords and the F Minor concerto. But even these works are innovative in that Bach elevates the harpsichord to the status of a solo instrument. Always considered an accompaniment, the harpsichord never had solo status in an ensemble until Bach. From the exciting cadenza in the Brandenburg No. 5 to the seven concertos for solo harpsichord to the many concertos for two or more harpsichords, Bach made the harpsichord a virtuosic solo instrument akin to the violin.

Ever since Bach's first encounter in 1713, concertos became an essential part of his career. Concertos fulfilled the whim of a patron: the concerto transcriptions from Weimar; he used concertos to apply for a job: the Brandenburgs; he used concertos to perform as part of his Collegium in Leipzig: the solo and double harpsichord concertos; and he published a concerto to showcase his thorough knowledge of the form and to inspire others to learn from his example: the Italian Concerto.

It was important to Bach to share his work in order to inspire and teach others. He also wanted others to know that his accomplishments rode on the shoulders of those who came before him and mastery came through hard work and constant study. Bach's concerto output is an illustration of that philosophy. From learning the form through Italian models to innovations throughout his career, Bach wanted others to figure out his techniques and pass them on to generations of students. "I was obliged to be industrious," Bach said, "Whoever is equally industrious will succeed equally well." We are still learning from the concertos of Bach.

Notes on the Program

Concerto for Harpsichord in D Minor, BWV 974

Although he is considered the most profound composer of the 18th century, in his lifetime Bach remained curious about the works of other composers. In a list of masters influencing his father, C. P. E. Bach makes no mention of any of the great Italian composers we know and love today such as Vivaldi, Corelli, or the Marcello brothers. However, Bach's 16 concertos for keyboard (printed as a complete collection in 1832, long after Bach's death)—all transcriptions of Italianate concertos—reveal both an awareness and an admiration of these composers and their works.

The earliest surviving manuscript of Bach's 16 concertos dates from 1715 while Bach was in Weimar. After a trip to Amsterdam in 1713, Prince Johann Ernst returned to Weimar with compositions by Italian masters. These were likely made available to Bach, influencing his creation of the 16 transcriptions. The identity of each concerto was not immediately obvious to scholars, especially BWV 974. An introduction to the 1715 manuscript led to the initial belief that Vivaldi was the composer of all 16 concertos in their original form. Later, another copy of BWV 974 including the name "Marcello" suggested that the work was originally after the more famous of the two Marcello brothers, Benedetto. Finally, by the mid 20th century, the discovery of Alessandro Marcello's Oboe Concerto in D Minor (S D935) revealed him as the true original composer.

Venetian brothers Benedetto and Alessandro Marcello were wealthy men who studied law and dabbled in many different activities, including composition. Alessandro's small output of compositions includes a focus on wind instruments, including his D Minor oboe concerto. The work was first published in 1716 in Amsterdam in his *12 Concerti à 5* (12 Concertos in 5 Voices). Due to the earlier publishing date of Bach's transcription, it seems apparent that an earlier unpublished manuscript of the D Minor concerto was circulating and made its way to Bach via Johann Ernst.

One of the most notable and fascinating differences between the original oboe concerto and Bach's keyboard transcription is the soloist's melodic part. Marcello's oboe line is unornamented, suggesting the common 18th century practice of adding one's own ornaments to the melody. Bach's version is heavily ornamented, adding both his own artistry and interpretation to the piece and morphing the work into a more keyboard-friendly version. Although many of the ornaments are not easily executed on baroque oboe, it has become the common practice of modern oboists to play the concerto with Bach's keyboard ornaments. This work—both as a keyboard transcription and as an oboe concerto with Bach's added ornaments—has become popular in the 20th and 21st centuries. Due to the beautiful and expressive writing, the second movement especially has found wide appreciation and popularity in and outside of concert halls.

Italian Concerto in F Major, BWV 971

Bach published the Italian Concerto as the first part of his *Clavier-Übung II* in 1735. The *Clavier-Übung* series, of which there were ultimately four, was designed to show the range both musically and technically of what a keyboard instrument was capable of playing. *Clavier-Übung II* shows how a composer can write for the keyboard in imitation of an orchestra. The Italian Concerto is a true concerto for one harpsichord. It has the standard concerto design of three movements and shows the opposition between one soloist and an orchestra. Bach gets these solo and orchestra effects by specifying an instrument with two manuals, or keyboards. By switching between the manuals, Bach creates a large orchestral sound for the ritornellos as well as creating the effect of solo and accompaniment. The keyboard writing in the Italian Concerto, with its quick leaps between keyboards and figures that are more idiomatic for string instruments, is a tour de force that not only shows off Bach's compositional mastery but his keyboard virtuosity as well.

—Francis Yun

Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings in F Minor, BWV 1056

The F Minor concerto is a compact and turbulent work that presents some of Bach's most rigorously economical writing. The opening movement's first four bars, formally part of the ritornello, contain the information from which Bach unravels the rest of the movement: triplet figures, syncopations, and poignant melodic detours. As was commonly practiced during his time, we find that Bach recycled material from an earlier work of his own to furnish the exquisite slow movement. The sinfonia from Cantata 156, *Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe* ("I stand with one foot in the grave"), is our slow movement's clear predecessor. Bach reconfigures the music in notable ways to make it more suitable for the F Minor concerto. While he featured the oboe in the cantata, the harpsichord "sings" this quasi-aria in the concerto, whose original melody Bach colors with dense elaboration. The final Presto flies forward with suggestive bumps and twists of melody. Its relentless energy is curbed only by sudden echo effects and tossed off cadences, a perfect example of wit and humor in Bach's music.

—David Belkovski

Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C Minor, BWV 1060

As *Kapellmeister* of the Calvinist court in Anhalt-Köthen in 1717-23, Bach was able to explore instrumental genres that may not have been explicitly written for church. With access to a highly accomplished orchestra, Bach composed many of his instrumental concertos during this time. The C Minor concerto exists in a manuscript from the 1730s during his time in Leipzig but is believed to be a transcription of a concerto for oboe and violin dated from his post in Köthen (based on a catalogue from that time). Bach's practice of transcribing concertos is not unusual; all of his keyboard concertos except for the fifth Brandenburg concerto are known or believed to be transcriptions of earlier works.

This work is written with exceptional maturity, handling the delicate instrumentation with ease, while highlighting the strengths of the harpsichord as a solo instrument. The two harpsichords perform the majority of the thematic material in the piece, while the strings support the soloists with a colorful bed of harmony and gesture. The second movement seems to reverse the expected roles of the instruments, giving rhythmic pizzicato notes to the string instruments, while the harpsichords play sustained melodies in an endearing dialogue.

—Jacob Dassa

Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C Major, BWV 1061a

Bach does away with strings in his two-harpsichord tour de force, the C Major concerto. Full of magisterial exuberance, the concerto had string parts likely added later: One quickly realizes that the two harpsichords alone are perfectly sufficient. Throughout the highly charged first movement, the harpsichords go in and out of tutti sections, during which they act as the full orchestra, and solo passages. The second movement is a rarity in that Bach himself suggested a variety of tempi, *adagio* or *largo*. The music is at once rigorously contrapuntal and a flexible dance. In the passages during which the harpsichords play together over the course of the slow movement, listen to the conversation between the players as they pass melodies back and forth. The final movement, a mammoth fugue, appears to be a daunting task for the performers—how can a fugue wrap things up in a way deserving of this thrilling music? Bach is no slouch; he keeps things light and propulsive, never didactic. We close with the same exuberant spirit with which we began. Allow the decadence of the writing to wash over you as the instruments compete with and relent, encourage and complement one another.

—David Belkovski

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major for Harpsichord, Flute, Violin, and Strings, BWV 1050

In 1719, the famed harpsichord builder Michael Mietke delivered a large two-manual harpsichord to the court of Köthen, where Bach served as Kapellmeister under Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen. It is possible that this instrument inspired the fifth concerto in Bach's *Six concertos à plusieurs instruments*, dedicated to Christian Ludwig, margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt in 1721. The set of six concertos, now labeled the Brandenburg Concertos, is a compilation of Bach's finest explorations into the concerto genre from his posts in Köthen and (possibly) Weimar. Perhaps being influenced by the works of Antonio Vivaldi, the master of the concerto genre, Bach wrote each of the Brandenburg concertos for wildly different and creative combinations of instruments.

The fifth concerto presents three soloists: a violin, a traverso (a fairly new and uncommon instrument at the time), and most peculiarly, a harpsichord. While the harpsichord was a standard accompanimental instrument in the concerto genre, Bach elevates its role with an *obligato* solo, effectively creating the first-ever keyboard concerto. The entire work is a celebration of the harpsichord, demonstrating its ability to both support an ensemble with harmony and shine as a virtuosic soloist.

The first movement alternates between a repeated *tutti* passage (accompanied by the harpsichord) and a dialogue among the three soloists. As the movement progresses, the harpsichord begins to overshadow the rest of the ensemble, including the other soloists, with grand flourishes of whirling 32nd notes. This leads to one of the most beloved moments in the concerto repertoire, in which all other instruments drop out, allowing the harpsichord to perform a towering 65-measure long solo. The iconic "cadenza" presents all thematic material from the movement with unprecedented virtuosity, demonstrating Bach's mastery of the instrument.

The second movement is marked *affettuoso*, evoking a sense of tenderness. This is an unusually descriptive label, calling for a more sensitive instrumentation of just the three soloists alone. Bach elegantly pairs the songlike qualities of the violin with the ethereal timbre of the flute, finally displaying the harpsichord's ability to play lyrical melodies. The three instruments intertwine with poised counterpoint and lush harmony, giving the work a moment of repose before launching into the sprightly third movement. Like the opening, the concerto ends with a dialogue among the instruments. Bach again calls special attention to the harpsichord by giving it the most rapid note values as well as a short solo passage written as a two-part canon, nodding to the contrapuntal repertoire of solo keyboard music.

—Jacob Dassa

Meet Béatrice Martin

Born in Annecy, France, harpsichordist Béatrice Martin has been a faculty member at Juilliard since 2015. She also teaches at the Paris Conservatoire, Rue de Madrid. Having attended Geneva Conservatory and the Paris Conservatory, she created and directed the harpsichord class in the Escola Superior de Música of Catalunya in Barcelona (2001–13) and was a jury member for the International Harpsichord Competition of Bruges in 2011 and 2015. Festivals where she has taught include the Festival of Ambronay, La Roque d'Anthéron, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Festival Couperin, Bach in Combrailles, Festival of Lanvellec, Printemps Baroque du Sablon, the festivals of Utrecht, MA Festival of Bruges, Daroca, Girona, Malta, Tallinn, 'Cycle clavecinistes Français' in Mexico, London Festival of Baroque Music, Folles Journées of Nantes, and Lisbon Festival. She has played recitals at Théâtre du Châtelet, Opéra Comique, and the Cité de la Musique in Paris. Ensembles she has played with include Les Talens Lyriques, Le Concert Spirituel, Ricercar, Il Seminario Musical, and Les Arts Florissants. Martin is co-founder, with Patrick Cohën-Akenine, of Les Folies Françaises, with which she recorded four discs of music by J.S. Bach: the dialogue cantatas (*Cypres*); complete sonatas for violin and harpsichord; and concertos for harpsichord, BWV 1052, 1053, 1055, and 1056. With Les Arts Florissants, she has recorded more than 20 CDs and DVDs. She won the first prize, audience prize, and Bärenreiter Prize at the International Harpsichord Competition of Bruges in 1998.



Juilliard Historical Performance

Juilliard's full-scholarship Historical Performance program offers comprehensive study and performance of music from the 17th and 18th centuries on period instruments. Established and endowed in 2009 by the generous support of Bruce and Suzie Kovner, the program is open to candidates for master of music, graduate diploma, and doctor of musical arts degrees. A high-profile concert season of opera, orchestral, and chamber music is augmented by a performance-oriented curriculum that fosters an informed understanding of the many issues unique to period-instrument performance at the level of technical excellence and musical integrity for which Juilliard is renowned. The faculty comprises many of the leading performers and scholars in the field. Frequent collaborations with Juilliard's Ellen and James S. Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts, the integration of modern instrument majors outside of the Historical Performance program, and national and international tours have introduced new repertoires and increased awareness of historical performance practice at Juilliard and beyond. Alumni of Juilliard Historical Performance are members of many of the leading period-instrument ensembles, including the Portland Baroque Orchestra, Les Arts Florissants, Mercury, and Tafelmusik, they have also launched such new ensembles as the Sebastians, House of Time, New York Baroque Incorporated, and New Vintage Baroque.

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Since its founding in 2009, Juilliard415, the school's principal period-instrument ensemble, has made significant contributions to musical life in New York and beyond, bringing major figures in the field of early music to lead performances of both rare and canonical works of the 17th and 18th centuries. The many distinguished guests who have led Juilliard415 include Harry Bicket, William Christie, Monica Huggett, Ton Koopman, Nicholas McGegan, Jordi Savall, and Masaaki Suzuki. Juilliard415 tours extensively in the U.S. and abroad, having performed on five continents with notable appearances at the Boston Early Music Festival, Leipzig Bach Fest, and Utrecht Early Music Festival (where Juilliard was the first-ever conservatory in residence), and on a 10-concert tour of New Zealand. With its frequent musical collaborator the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, the ensemble has played throughout Italy, Japan, Southeast Asia, the U.K., and India. Juilliard415, which takes its name from the pitch commonly associated with the performance of Baroque music (A=415), has performed major oratorios and Baroque operas every year since its founding. This summer the ensemble presents *Dido and Aeneas* at Opera Holland Park in London and the Royal Opera House of Versailles. The ensemble made its South American debut with concerts in Bolivia, a tour sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The 2017–18 season was notable for a side-by-side collaboration with Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco as well as return visits by Rachel Podger, William Christie, and Maestro Suzuki, and the rare opportunity to see a fully staged production of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*. In a concert with the Bach Collegium Japan, the ensemble played a historic period-instrument performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in Germany. In an innovative departure from past seasons, new works for period instruments have been a focus for 2018–19. With the Yale Schola Cantorum, Juilliard415 tours Scandinavia, where it performs a new oratorio by Paweł Łukaszewski, who was commissioned for the occasion by Yale. The ensemble performed alongside new choreography for Juilliard dancers in an all-Rameau program led by Robert Mealy and played newly commissioned works for period string quartet in *The Seven Last Words Project*, a Holy Week concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. This season also welcomes return visits by William Christie, Monica Huggett, and Masaaki Suzuki, and the Juilliard debuts of Paul Agnew and Alfredo Bernardini.

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