



FAIR LANE FESTIVAL



CHICAGO SYMPHONY BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

JEAN MARTINON, *Conductor*

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1967, AT 8:30

FAIR LANE, DEARBORN CAMPUS, THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Program of Compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach

*Suite No. 2 in B minor (S. 1067)

Overture
Rondeau
Sarabande
Bourrée

Polonaise
Minuet
Badinerie

DONALD PECK, *flute*; KENNETH GILBERT, *harpsichord*

Concerto for Harpsichord, No. 1 in D minor (S. 1052)

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

KENNETH GILBERT, *harpsichord*

INTERMISSION

Concerto for Two Violins in D minor (S. 1043)

Vivace
Largo ma non tanto
Allegro

VICTOR AITAY, SAMUEL MAGAD, *violin*; KENNETH GILBERT, *harpsichord*

Suite No. 4 in D major (S. 1069)

Overture
Bourrée
Gavotte

Minuet
Réjouissance

KENNETH GILBERT, *harpsichord*

* *RCA Victor Records*

SECOND PROGRAM

1967 FAIR LANE FESTIVAL

COMPLETE SERIES 3567

89th Season of University Musical Society Presentations

Twenty-third program in the Sesquicentennial Year of The University of Michigan

PROGRAM NOTES

by JOHN F. OHL*

Bach's Orchestral Works

Bach's compositions for orchestra consist of twenty-two concertos, disregarding fragments but including a certain number of reworkings of his own or other composers' works, and four suites for orchestra, called by him "overtures" because of the presence at the beginning of each of an overture in the French style. In all of these works the influence of the concerto idea is unmistakably present. The direct influence is that of Vivaldi, whose concertos Bach studied intensively early in his career, as is shown by the many arrangements which he made of concertos by Vivaldi and other composers who wrote in his style. The bulk of these arrangements are for harpsichord or organ, whose construction—that is, their possession of two keyboards—makes it possible to achieve the essential contrast even though only one performer is involved. The concertos are chiefly of the solo concerto type, but there are a few belonging to the concerto grosso category, and a few "orchestral" concertos. As is usual with Bach, he expands all three categories, carrying Vivaldi's ideas still further, and he enjoys mixing the three types of concerto within a single work, producing an effect of diversity and subtlety that is beyond the reach of any composer of the Baroque period, and perhaps unmatched by any composer since his day.

Suite No. 2, B minor (S. 1066)

This is the best-known and most intimate of Bach's orchestral suites. It may well have been composed between 1717 and 1723 at Cöthen, since it is well within the resources of the Cöthen orchestra. Not unexpectedly it affords ample scope for concerto-style writing with contrast between the solo flute and the string orchestra; at the same time, it is entirely French in the sequence and character of its movements. Following the standard practice in French orchestral suites, the dance movements which follow the Overture include only the Sarabande from the group of "obligatory" movements in a keyboard suite, the others being chosen from the many French movement types which in his keyboard suites Bach regarded as "extras." In the Overture the solo flute is treated as part of the orchestral *tutti* in the slow opening and closing sections, but in the fugal middle section the flute acts as if it were the solo instrument in a concerto, the strings presenting a lightly-scored background for its agility. The Rondeau is a favorite French form in which an opening section recurs at intervals with contrasting episodes between. As might be expected, the solo instrument is independent of the orchestra during a part of one of these. The lovely Sarabande introduces no solo passages; it is characteristic of Bach's mastery that the melody and the bass line are in strict canon at the distance of one bar and at the twelfth below without any interference with the lyricism of the movement by the use of this "learned" device. The Bourrée is paired, in the French manner, as in so many movements of Suite No. 1 in

* John F. Ohl is Chairman of the Department of Music History and Literature, School of Music, Northwestern University.

C major. This is also true of the Polonaise, but here the second is a "Double" in which the solo flute breaks up the notes of the melody of the first dance into lively figuration; meanwhile, Bach presents the original tune simultaneously in the bass instruments. After a charming and straightforward Minuet the Suite ends with a "character-piece" called Badinerie ("banter") which allows the flute to display all its virtuosity.

Concerto for Harpsichord, No. 1, D minor (S. 1052)

Like nearly all of Bach's concertos for solo harpsichord, this magnificent work seems clearly to have been originally written for a bowed stringed instrument. The Bach specialist Karl Geiringer has suggested that this was first of all not the violin but an instrument tuned in the manner of the viola d'amore, that this version was later rewritten for the violin, and this in turn rewritten for the harpsichord. It is evident that the Concerto was one of Bach's own favorites. Not only did he rewrite the version for solo harpsichord at least three times, but he also used portions of the work in Cantata 146 and Cantata 188, with the solo assigned to the organ. In Cantata 146 Bach uses the first movement as an instrumental introduction, and the second as material for the opening chorus, the vocal parts being fitted into the instrumental fabric. Suggestions that the concerto original was not by Bach at all are surely beside the point; a study of the changes he made in the entire fabric of the work during the course of reworking, changes which involve extensive alterations in the form itself as well as in the writing for the solo instrument, make speculation concerning the original composer quite irrelevant. As usual, the influence of Vivaldi is everywhere, but no extant work of the Italian composer corresponds to Bach's Concerto, and the power and drive of the first movement, the lovely melody of the slow movement, with its ostinato bass (always a favorite type of slow movement with Bach, and Vivaldi and Telemann as well), and the exuberant last movement all seem to point to only one composer for the original, whatever it was: Johann Sebastian Bach.

Concerto for Two Violins, D minor (S. 1043)

The Double Concerto, as it is usually known, along with the Concertos for Violin Solo in A minor and E major, are the only ones for solo violin which have come to us in their original form, the others surviving only as arrangements for solo harpsichord. As with the violin solo concertos, which also exist as harpsichord concertos, the Double Concerto has its counterpart in a version for two harpsichords (S. 1062). As Karl Geiringer points out, the survival of the original string versions of just these three works may well indicate that Bach considered them his finest in this category, and considered the others as superseded by their arrangements for keyboard. In any case it could be argued that the Concerto for Two Violins is the most beautiful concerto work in all of Bach's output. The combination of two violins gives the entire concept of the concerto a new dimension; it is, as it were, a solo concerto with the solo enhanced and expanded to double the capabilities of a single violin, an idea which Brahms adopted in a somewhat different way in his Double Concerto for Violin and Violoncello in A minor, Op. 102, where the two solo instruments are at times made to sound as if they were a single instrument with a range from the lowest note of the cello to the highest note of the violin. Bach's Double Concerto is a serious, even tragic work, with a slow movement in the major of such ineffable beauty as to remind the listener of

Schubert's use of the major mode for just such an effect. The first movement of the Concerto is constructed on a *tutti* which is fugal, an idea which perhaps shows the influence of Giuseppe Torelli, whose concertos frequently make use of this sort of texture in the first orchestral section of a concerto-style movement. The two solo instruments then present their own thematic material which exploits the violin's characteristic ability in widely spaced leaps, while the orchestra either acts as a background or tosses in bits of the fugal material of the opening. The slow movement belongs entirely to the two violins, which take turns in presenting a flowing melody in a kind of etherealized *Siciliano* rhythm that makes one of Vivaldi's favorite styles of slow movement something utterly beyond Vivaldi's reach. The two violins twine and intertwine like two tendrils of a single vine, each furnishing an accompaniment to the other's presentation of the song-like melody except for four brief moments when they join in a love-duet in meltingly tender sixths. The serious mood returns in the last movement. The opening section, with the two violins in canonic imitation at the unison at the distance of one beat, recalls the opening of the last movement of the Sixth Brandenburg Concerto, but this is only one of many effects in this extraordinary movement. Perhaps the most striking of these is a passage which occurs twice, in which the two solo instruments, each playing double stops, furnish full four-note chords while all the upper strings of the orchestra present the main thematic material in unison.

Suite No. 4, D major (S. 1069)

This, the most brilliant of the four Suites, is scored for the largest orchestra to be found in any of them; it not only employs the three trumpets and timpani of the third Suite, but adds to its two oboes a third oboe and a bassoon. It must have been intended for use in Leipzig, for only after he went there in 1723 did Bach have such instrumental forces available. Even this instrumentation, however, was not the most elaborate which Bach employed for this work, for Cantata 110 uses the Overture as the opening chorus, the first slow section serving as an instrumental introduction to this opening chorus, which is made from the fast fugal middle section of the Overture. Here the orchestra consists of two flutes, three oboes, oboe d'amore, oboe da caccia (a tenor oboe much like the modern English horn), three trumpets, timpani, and string orchestra and continuo. Since the Cantata has recently been shown to have been composed in 1725, it seems likely that the Suite dates from Bach's first years in Leipzig; like Telemann's Concerto for Three Trumpets and Two Oboes, to be heard on the fourth concert of the present series, it would seem likely that the Suite was written for a great public occasion. The high spirits of the Overture pervade the entire Suite. As in the other three Suites, the style of the remaining movements as well as their individual character is French, and it may be remarked that this time there are no "obligatory" dances at all. The Bourrée and Minuet are doubled, the second Bourrée using only the woodwind choir and strings, while allotting a solo role to the bassoon; the upper strings are restricted to the reiteration of a single figure. In the first Minuet the oboe-bassoon choir doubles the strings and drops out for the second Minuet, leaving it to the strings. The Gavotte is scored for all the instruments; toward the end of the second half of the movement the first trumpet is introduced as a solo instrument. The final Réjouissance is a "character piece," like the last movement of Suite No. 2 in B minor. As its title implies, the mood is one of high revelry, with brass, oboes, and strings coming forward in turn and joining in a brilliant conclusion.