

Pomona College Department of Music · Mabel Shaw Bridges Hall of Music
In conjunction with the Claremont Symphony Orchestra Association

Pierre D'Archangeau

VIOLIN

Marilyn Mason

HARPSICHORD

TWO RECITALS of Violin Sonatas
by BACH and HANDEL

FIRST RECITAL: Wednesday, October 29, 1980, at 8:15

Sonata in C Minor, BWV 1017 BACH
Siciliano (Largo) — Allegro — Adagio — Allegro

Sonata in A Major, Op. 1, No. 3 HANDEL
Andante — Allegro — Adagio — Allegro

Sonata in E Major, BWV 1016 BACH
Adagio — Allegro deciso — Adagio ma non tanto — Allegro

Intermission

Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, No. 12 HANDEL
Adagio — Allegro — Largo — Allegro

Sonata in B Minor, BWV 1014 BACH
Adagio — Allegro — Andante — Allegro

Sonata in E Major, Op. 1, No. 15 HANDEL
Adagio — Allegro — Largo — Allegro

1980-81 series, number 12

(Over)

SECOND RECITAL: Friday, October 31, at 8:15

Sonata in F Minor, BWV 1018 BACH
Larghetto — Allegro — Adagio — Vivace

Sonata in G Minor, Op. 1, No. 10 HANDEL
Andante — Allegro — Adagio — Allegretto

Sonata in A Major, BWV 1015 BACH
(Andante) — Allegro assai — Andante un poco — Presto

Intermission

Sonata in A Major, Op. 1, No. 14 HANDEL
Adagio — Allegro — Largo — Allegro

Sonata in G Major, BWV 1019 BACH
Vivace — Largo — Allegro (Harpisichord solo) — Adagio — Allegro

Sonata in D Major, Op. 1, No. 13 HANDEL
Adagio — Allegro — Larghetto — Allegro

1980-81 series, number 13

CHAMBER MUSIC FROM THE PHILHARMONIC:

MARIO GUARNERI, trumpet; DAVID BREIDENTHAL, bassoon;
FRED TINSLEY, double bass; assisted by FREEMAN DAVIS, basso;
and CHET SWIATKOWSKI, piano.

MOZART: Aria Per questa bella mano, for bass with
double bass obbligato

HINDEMITH: Sonata for Bassoon and Piano

KUPFERMAN: Five Predictions for solo trumpet

KUPFERMAN: Sound Phantoms IV: Dynamite Garden, for
trumpet, bassoon, and string bass (première)

Bridges Hall, Tuesday, November 4, at 8:15

WALKER CUNNINGHAM, harpsichord, performing the BACH: Gold-
berg Variations.

Bridges Hall, Friday, November 14, at 8:15

VIOLIN SONATAS OF BACH AND HANDEL

Program Notes

by Frederick Neumann

BACH AND HANDEL were born in the same year - 1685 - within a short distance from each other in the German heartland. Their names are always paired as the two gigantic figures that represent the culmination of a style period now commonly called the Baroque. But their musical personalities are as different as their life stories, which are well known to most music lovers. The two sets of six violin and harpsichord sonatas, presented here in their entirety in two concerts, faithfully reflect the vast differences between the two masters.

Handel's sonatas have spirited fast movements often derived from the dance, slow movements of beguiling sensuous beauty straight out of Italian opera, fugal movements written with virtuosic abandon that never smack of effort or learnedness. The harmonies are simple, the forms compact and easy to grasp, and everything has a luminous sound. There are no problems for the listener.

Bach's sonatas make greater demands on the listener. Their harmony, melody, counterpoint, and even their rhythm are more complex, and their forms, alone by virtue of their greater length, not always easily grasped. In part — but only in part — these differences stem from contrasting compositional techniques used for the two sets of sonatas.

Handel's sonatas are written on two staves for violin and figured bass. This standard setting — often without figures — for countless "solo" sonatas of the Baroque usually involved both a harpsichord that "realized" the bass (i.e., filled out the harmonies indicated or implied by the bass) and a bass melody instrument: a cello, gamba, or a bassoon that doubled the bass line. Such doubling was often indicated because the bass, as a genuine melodic line, was a full-fledged counterpart to the "solo" melody instrument. But if the harpsichord has a strong, sonorous low register, such reinforcement can be dispensed with. For the D Major sonata, the only one for which an autograph survived, Handel wrote as title *Sonata a Violino solo e Cembalo* and this title alone would seem to vindicate performance without a reinforcing bass instrument.

We do not know when the sonatas were written. Three of the six were published in Amsterdam in 1724. These three and two more appeared interspersed in a collection of 12 sonatas for flute, recorder, violin, and oboe published in 1732 by Walsh in London (Handel's chief publisher) as Op. 1. The sixth, the above-mentioned sonata in D Major, probably the finest of the set, was included only in the complete Handel edition from the end of the 19th century.

The six sonatas are all in the Italian style, modeled after Corelli and more specifically after the latter's "church sonatas" (*sonate da chiesa*) with their typical four-movement form of which the first and third are slow and songful, the second fast and in fugal style, and the fourth usually in the character of a gigue or another fast dance. The slow-fast slow-fast design is common to all six sonatas but only two, the D Major and the first one in A Major (Op. 1, No. 3), have fugal second movements. Also thoroughly Italian is Handel's method of writing adagios in unfinished form. They were not meant to be played as written; performers of the time were jealous of their privilege of adding florid embellishments to the basic melodic line. Thus Handel's — like Corelli's or other Italian masters' — often apparently austere lines of an adagio do not mirror noble simplicity, but are in reality a melodic skeleton to be fleshed out by the performer, who became a partner in the creative process.

The Bach Sonatas

Bach's sonatas are an entirely different matter. Quite certainly they were composed during his years as court Kapellmeister in Cöthen (1717-23), that saw the production of the greatest part of his chamber music. The sonatas were written for violin and harpsichord obbligato, meaning that the keyboard part was fully written out and the two instruments treated as equal partners. Bach's first five sonatas derived their slow-fast slow-fast pattern also from the Italian *sonata da chiesa*, but, characteristically, all of his fast movements are fugal, as well as some slow ones. The typical texture is that of a trio of independent and equivalent voices: the harpsichordist's left hand, the right hand, and the violin; some exceptions will presently be pointed out. Italian influence is evident, not in Corellian traits as in Handel, but in the driving rhythms of Vivaldi's concerto style that made a lasting impression on Bach. But Bach did not follow the Italian (and Handelian) procedure of providing only more or less detailed sketches of his *adagio* movements; he wrote out all the notes he wanted played, and none need or ought to be added.

Sonata No. 1 in B Minor. The first movement with its lovely pastoral mood is quite transparent and easily accessible, in spite of its five-voice writing, much of it moving in thirds or sixths. The sprightly second movement, a genuine trio, combines fugal writing with the ternary ABA form of the Italian *da capo* aria. Its first four measures offer a performance problem that recurs in other movements and deserves mention because it is widely misunderstood. The theme is announced by the violin, yet not alone as in a fugue, but attended by the bass. Practically all editors and modern performers "realize" this bass part by filling in harmonies. This was quite certainly not intended; Bach wrote neither figures for the bass nor the abbreviation "accomp" (*accompanando*), which he would have done had he expected a harmonization. Also, by leaving the right hand idle, its own entrance with the theme in the fifth measure gains in plasticity. The two lines are self-sufficient, and if left alone they help again to clarify for the listener the onset of the *da capo*. The third movement is a duet between the violin and the right hand, with the left in the role of an accompanying but melodically moving bass. The fourth movement has again the unmistakable imprint of the Vivaldian concerto style.

Sonata No. 2 in A Major. The tender first movement in moderate 6/8 meter is in strict three-part writing with all three voices participating equally in thematic elaboration. The second movement integrates Italian concerto style, fugal treatment, and the *da capo* form (ABA). Its B part is climaxed by brilliant violin arpeggios set against the elaboration of the principal theme in the harpsichord. The third movement has the violin and the right hand of the harpsichordist engaged in an enchanting duet in strict canon over the lute-like plucking accompaniment of the left hand. The brilliant last movement is fugal, in binary form. Again, the two-part writing at the start should not be thickened by harmonization.

Sonata No. 3 in E Major. Perhaps the most beautiful work of the set, this sonata starts with an Italian-style aria sung by the violin with all the coloraturas written out, while the harpsichord is limited to accompaniment. The following jolly fugal movement echoes the spirit of French dance music. Here the theme is announced in the harpsichord, and its strict two-part setting confirms that there should be no additional harmonization for all similar openings. The third movement, in C# Minor in the form of a *passacaglia*, starts with the four-measure bass theme that is repeated fifteen times. Over it the violin announces a melody of exquisite tenderness with the right hand of the harpsichordist providing a very simple chordal harmonization. Then the roles are reversed: the right hand takes over the melody and the violin harmonizes, whereupon both melodic voices join in a duet. The exhilarating last movement in *da capo* form bears again the clear

physiognomy of the concerto style. The B part offers a fascinating contrast in graceful triplet figurations set against binary accompanying figures of the bass. The ensuing rhythmic clashes add a delightful flavor to this section. The suggestions of some editors to eliminate the clashes by "adapting" the accompaniment are based on unconvincing modern theories.

Sonata No. 4 in C Minor. The first movement is a siciliano lament whose kinship to the famous aria *Erbarne dich* from the *St. Matthew Passion* has often been noted. The harpsichord is limited to simple accompaniment. The fugal second movement is very long, vigorous and rich in invention, but perhaps somewhat academic. It is followed by an adagio in Eb, an elegant, serene aria for violin with simple accompaniment. The last movement shows again clear traits of the Italian concerto style.

Sonata No. 5 in F Minor. The profound meditation of the opening movement makes for a majestic start. The center of gravity lies in the harpsichord with its consistent writing in three eloquent parts to which the violin adds a fourth voice, at first hesitatingly, later in full commitment. The second movement returns to strict three-part texture. The next adagio is unique in the absence of any distinct melody; its musical substance, as if in premonition of Chopinesque mood pieces, resides solely in shifting harmonies. The ever-recurring alternating 32nd figures of the harpsichord — scale-derived in the right hand, arpeggios in the left — were enlivened later from original 16th notes in the earlier version of this piece. The last movement, *vivace* in 3/8 meter, concludes the sonata in a whirlwind of chromaticism, complex counterpoint, and rapidly shifting harmonies.

Sonata No. 6 in G Major. Bach has taken considerable pains over this work; three different versions of it exist. The first and the last have five movements, which is most unusual, yet the second version had even six! In its final form the sequence of movements is fast-slow-fast-slow-fast; the center movement is an extended binary *allegro* for harpsichord solo. The first movement with its impetuous rhythmic drive is again indebted to the Italian concerto. The splendor of this movement is contrasted with the dark colors of the two elegiac slow movements and well balanced by a last movement that — alone in the whole set — evokes the spirit of a *gigue*.

Reinforcement of the bass line by a gamba or cello, as recommended by an important editor, does not seem advisable. Considering the full equivalence of the two hands of the harpsichordist in almost every movement, a reinforcement of the left would result in an unjustifiable imbalance of the parts.