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PUBLICK MUSICK
BACH in LONDON

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First Church of Christ, Scientist
Central Park West at 68th Street, NYC
Saturday, 4 March 2023 at 7:30 PM

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR

violins
Daniel S. Lee, concertmaster
Francis Liu, principal
Aniela Eddy • Kate Goddard
Isabelle Seula Lee • Joanna Mulfinger
Rebecca Nelson • Jude Ziliak

violas
Daniel McCarthy, principal • Annie Garlid

basses
Ezra Seltzer, principal • Sarah Stone – violoncelli
Nathaniel Chase – double bass

woodwinds
David Ross – flute
Andrew Blanke • Caroline Giassi - oboes
Joseph Jones – bassoon

brass
Sarah Cyrus • Linda Dempf – horns
John Thiessen • Steven Marquardt – trumpets

Daniel Mallon – timpani

Meet EM/NY artists at www.EarlyMusicNY.org

Bach–Abel Concerts 1765-1782

Symphony in Eb major, Op. 7:6, 1767 — Karl Friedrich Abel, 1723-1787
(attributed to Mozart as Symphony #3, K.18)
- Allegro molto
- Andante
- Presto

Flute Quartet in C major, W.B 58, pub. 1776 — Johann Christian Bach, 1735-1782
- Allegro
- Rondo grazioso

Symphony in D major, Hob.I:53, [L'Impériale], ca. 1777-9 — Franz Joseph Haydn, 1732-1809
- Largo maestoso
- Vivace
- Andante
- Menuetto/Trio
- Finale – Presto

interval

Symphony in G minor, Opus 6:6, before 1769 — J.C. Bach
- Allegro
- Andante più tosto adagio
- Allegro molto

Symphony in D major, Hob. 1:70, 1779 — Haydn
- Vivace con brio
- Specie d´un Canone in Contrapunto doppio: Andante
- Menuett: Allegretto
- Finale: Allegro con brio

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Carl Friedrich Abel and Johann Christian Bach knew each other from "the old country" of their birth, Germany. Abel studied with J.C.'s father, Johann Sebastian, in Leipzig before securing a post in the Dresden court orchestra. But their names became ineluctably connected through the series of concerts they spearheaded in London from 1765 through 1781.

Abel, like Bach, was born into a musical family. His father, Christian Ferdinand, was lead viol player in the court orchestra in Cöthen, playing under, and eventually succeeding, J.S. Bach. After more than a decade in Dresden, Carl Friedrich arrived in London in 1758 or 1759. At his first concert, just four days before the death of Georg Frideric Händel in 1759, he made an enormous impression, performing on the bass viol, harpsichord and a new-fangled (and, within 25 years, obsolete) cello-like instrument called a pentachord, having composed most of the music on the program as well. Much in demand after that, he encountered J.C. Bach at the court of the German-born English Queen Charlotte, where both had been appointed chamber musicians by 1764.

Johann Christian was a boy when Abel studied with the elder Bach, but in the intervening years J.C. had acquired a reputation as a composer and harpsichordist. Upon his father's death, he continued his studies with composer (and half-brother) Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach in Hamburg, before decamping to Italy to study with famed musician and friar Padre Martini in Bologna. By age 25, J.C. had become the organist at the cathedral in Milan, and – having been raised in his father's Lutheran faith – a convert to Roman Catholicism. Ready for new frontiers, he traveled to London in 1762 to oversee the production of three of his operas, expecting to stay just a year. Instead, he put down roots, and found himself working with Abel at the royal court.

The catalyst for what became known as the Bach-Abel concerts was a curious figure who called herself Teresa Cornelys. Born Anna Maria Teresa Imer in 1723 in Venice, she was raised by an opera impresario and an actress, and trained for the operatic stage with a sideline as a seductress. As early as 1746, she had appeared in a Gluck opera in London, to less than stellar reviews. Sojourns in Vienna, Paris and Rotterdam, and the birth of four children – only one by her husband, and one by none other than the legendary adventurer Giacomo Casanova – culminated in her return to London in 1759, self-styled as a widow with cultural connections. Without knowing a word of English, she leased Carlisle House in Soho Square and got down to work.

Thanks to her amour of the moment, an English gentleman and reputed member of the clergy known as John Freeman (also not his original name) and well-connected courtier

and courtesan Elizabeth Chudleigh (who achieved notoriety later on as a bigamist), Cornelys soon was hosting a series of entertainments – at first only balls and card games – for society's upper crust, introducing the concept of subscription tickets to guarantee the exclusivity of the events. Success spurred her to expand her horizons, building a concert hall adjacent to the original house (cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale had a hand in the expansion) and inviting Bach and Abel to organize musical evenings there.

After three flourishing years, Bach and Abel took matters into their own hands, keeping the subscription model and moving their concert series to a competitor venue, Almack's Great Room in St. James's. They also shared living quarters in Soho for several years. Continued success enabled them to build their own concert hall, the Hanover Square Rooms, in 1775. By then, however, competition from other concert series was strong, and Bach and Abel were unwilling to change with the times. After the 1781 concerts, Bach's health declined precipitously, and he died on January 1, 1782. Abel continued the concerts through that spring, but then escaped to the continent, reportedly to avoid his creditors. The Hanover Square Rooms would remain the principal concert venue in London for a century, notably hosting Joseph Haydn**'s** first London appearances in 1791.

In presenting a program of representative works heard during the 17 years of Bach-Abel concerts, we have had to make some 21st-century accommodations. Printed programs for the audience were not provided, the better to ensure the exclusivity of its offerings. As they were society events, the surviving reportage has been short on repertoire details. Their competitors' concert series followed a similar format, and for the decade following the conclusion of the Bach-Abel concert series, documentation is more thorough.

A concert in that era included far more than the 90-120 minutes of music to which contemporary audiences are accustomed, with a wider variety of works and genres. For example, a program from February 26, 1783 – less than a year after the last Bach-Abel concert – included three symphonies, four concertos for different solo instruments, four individual song interludes and a cello solo. Some programs added chamber works to the mix. A night out at a concert could run four hours or more.

As a concession to contemporary expectations, most of the works to be performed this evening will involve classical orchestra, with forces ranging from 17 to 21 players. But Bach's engaging flute quartet will offer a taste of the variety that made concertgoing such a rich pastime in Georgian era London.

Bach and Abel took turns leading the concerts, primarily programming their own music, occasionally including works by mostly continental colleagues. Their concerts very likely included the first performances of Haydn's orchestral music to be heard in England. It is difficult to establish just which Haydn symphonies they performed, but at least four have been verified, and two of them are on tonight's program.

Abel's compositional output was prodigious: in addition to numerous works for viola da gamba, on which he was an unparalleled virtuoso, he wrote more than 40 symphonies, seven flute concertos, six keyboard concertos, two cello concertos, a dozen string quartets and many more chamber works. One of his symphonies – the one heard tonight – achieved greater renown than the others, though not as his own work.

The Mozart family spent more than a year in England, starting in April 1764, when Wolfgang Amadeus was only eight years old. During their stay, he spent quality time with J. C. Bach, under whose influence his first symphonies took shape. In the days before photocopying and recordings, the best way to study the construction of a musical work was to copy it out by hand. Among the scores Mozart copied was a symphony in E-flat major by Abel. This work ultimately was published in 1767 as the sixth in Abel's Symphonies, Opus 7.

Mozart's copy was found among his papers years after his death. Abel and his work had fallen into obscurity by the time the first complete edition of Mozart's work was published (1877-1883). Since the symphony was stylistically like Mozart's other works of the time, was in his own handwriting and omitted Abel's name, it was presumed to be by Mozart and included in the complete edition as Symphony No. 3, K.18. Only with the rediscovery of Abel's music in recent years was the misattribution uncovered.

As he copied, the precocious Mozart couldn't leave well enough alone. His fondness for the clarinet, which in later years would manifest itself in the beloved concerto and quintet, among other works, was already evident here, as he substituted clarinets for Abel's oboes. Tonight, it will be played as originally composed.

J.C. Bach's compositional output was equally abundant: more than 30 symphonies, two dozen keyboard concertos, more than 100 chamber works, and vocal music including operas and oratorios. His exceptional mastery is represented here both in the flute quartet. which provides a pastoral interlude between two orchestral works, and the forward-looking Symphony in G minor, Op. 6 No. 6, which shares a dramatic focus with, and undoubtedly influenced, the two symphonies by Mozart in the same key. It embodies the principle of "sturm und drang" (storm and stress) that symphonists of the 1760's embraced, including an Austrian upstart named Joseph Haydn. Tom Service, writing in *The Guardian*, sums up this remarkable work by Bach:

> "Brace yourselves for the compressed edge-of-the-seat drama of its first movement, the unsettlingly emotional slow movement…and the minor-key

rocket of the finale, propelled by horn-calls and explosions in the upper strings…Bach doesn't resolve the tensions in this G minor symphony, as later composers might have felt they had to; instead, he leaves the tempest he has just unleashed fizzing electrically in the air and in your imagination."

Haydn's Symphony No. 53 (the nickname "L'Impériale" was bestowed by a publisher) represents a less erudite, more popular approach to symphonic writing. As Haydn's work became known outside the Austro-Hungarian empire, the preference for the more melodic Italian style dictated less counterpoint, and less "sturm und drang." The second movement is cast in the form of double variations, a Haydn specialty. The symphony was a great success both at home and abroad, especially in London. When published in England, the fourth movement was different from the one he originally composed at Esterházy, where he was court composer; it is supposed he had second thoughts and adapted an existing opera overture (minus its last thirteen measures) as a substitute finale, and sent it to England. (Bach and Abel might have attempted to secure Haydn's services on their series as a way of besting the competition, but if so, they had to settle for a movement rather than a maestro.) It is the second finale that will be played tonight.

Symphony No. 70 is more substantial, described by pre-eminent Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon as "a work which stands out among its predecessors and contemporaries like a Hercules." Older contrapuntal principles and newer stylistic elements are combined homogeneously. The second movement offers another example of the composer's trademark double variation technique. The finale daringly starts in D minor, and incorporates a formidable triple fugue on its way to a D major conclusion.

Daniel Guss

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Leanne Mahoney – Church House Committee Chair

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