

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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PREVIEW
NOTES

Dover Quartet

Bridget Kibbey, *harp*

Wednesday, January 13 – 6 PM

American Philosophical Society

SELECTION OF PROGRAM NOTES

Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Composed: before 1708

Duration: 10 minutes

Bach's most famous organ piece is notable for its rhythmic drive as well as for its arresting opening motif. Considered the epitome of scary organ music by the many who associate it with melodramatic silent-film scenes, it has been transcribed in various ways. The romanticized, roaring registration often used in organ performances is still effective, although interpretations aiming for historical accuracy tend to give the work a lighter touch. It is difficult to establish a chronology of Bach's organ works, for most of their autograph manuscripts have been lost. Because of its most salient structural aspect—the interpenetration of the toccata material and the contrapuntal fugue—the work has been assigned to the beginning of Bach's career. It is perhaps the very earliest among Bach's well-known masterpieces.

Harpichord Concerto in F Minor, BWV 1056

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1738

Duration: 10 minutes

Like Johann Sebastian Bach's better known Concerto in D minor, this work is thought to be a transcription of a lost concerto. While some scholars have attributed the violin composition to Vivaldi or to a minor German composer, the counterpoint and structure of the clavier seem indicative of Bach's idiom. Written during Bach's Cöthen period, the concerto is in three movements; all three are in ritornello form, in which each movement is based upon a single theme restated in various orchestrations at the opening, the closing, and after each exploratory section.

Art of Fugue, BWV 1080 - Contrapunctus 1-4

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: c. 1740

Duration: 30 minutes

Johann Sebastian Bach never completed The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080. It is a collection of contrapuntal movements with no definite order of presentation or instrumentation. Movements have been added and taken away from the final score over the years. What is certain is that it is among the most gripping instrumental works that exists, demonstrating practically every composing technique available to Bach. The work was among his estate; he probably did not discuss the work with anyone, or there would have been more pressure to have its mysteries settled before his passing. His son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel, found and published the work as he found it in 1751, still incomplete. It did not sell well.

Brandenburg Concerto in G Major, BWV 1048

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1721

Duration: 12 minutes

In 1721, J.S. Bach dedicated six orchestral pieces to Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, ostensibly in response to a commission, but more likely as a sugarcoated job application. These pieces display a variety of styles, influences, and musical preoccupations and were probably not conceived of as a set. The Margrave never thanked Bach, paid him a fee, staged a performance of the works, or offered him a position. Such was life, even for Bach. The Concerto No. 3 in G major may have been written while Bach was at Weimar, given that it is reminiscent of the Italian concerto, a genre with which Bach was fascinated at the time. The motoric rhythm, clear melodic outline, and motivic construction owe a lot to the comparable works of Vivaldi, but the clarified harmony and more interesting counterpoint are unmistakably Bach's.