

AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN

Friday, April 11

8 pm

Folly Theater

Georg Kallweit, concertmaster
Xenia Löffler, oboe

- VERACINI** Overture (Suite) No. 6 in G Minor
Allegro
Largo
Allegro
Menuetto
- BACH** Concerto in F Minor for Violin, Strings and Continuo, BWV 1056a
(Allegro)
Largo
Presto
- VIVALDI** Concerto for Strings in C Major, RV 114
Allegro; Adagio
Ciaccona
- MARCELLO** Concerto in D Minor for Oboe, Strings and Continuo
Andante e spiccato
Adagio
Presto

INTERMISSION

- HANDEL** Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6 No. 2, HWV320
Andante larghetto
Allegro
Largo; Adagio; Larghetto andante, e piano
Allegro, ma non troppo
- VIVALDI** Concerto in C Major for Oboe, Strings and Continuo, RV 450
Allegro molto
Larghetto
Allegro
- TELEMANN** Overture (Suite) in A Minor, TWV55:a1
Overture
Rondeau
Gavotte
Courante
Rigaudon
Forlane
Menuet

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This evening's program probes the complex relationship between Italian and German Baroque concertos. Two principal structures exist: the solo concerto, showcasing the virtuosity of an individual player, and the *concerto grosso*, showcasing a group of soloists known as a *concertino*, from among the larger ensemble. Both of these forms originated in Italy and spread throughout Europe.

Inevitably, aspects of Italian style found their way into the music of German composers. Complicating this cross-pollination process were French elements, including the so-called French overture and several French dances whose rhythmic profiles became popular in other countries.

Each of the seven works that the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin performs presents a different approach to the concept of the concerto. Their selections include works by the Baroque titans Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, and Telemann, as well as discoveries by two less familiar composers, Veracini and Marcello.

Overture (Suite) No. 6 in G Minor Francesco Veracini (1690-1768)

Two Florentine musicians named Veracini figured prominently in the Italian Baroque. Francesco's uncle, Antonio Veracini (1659-1733), remained in Florence for most of his career, working in church and school positions. His nephew Francesco had a far more international career – and a more flamboyant life.

To begin with, Francesco was one of the most distinguished violinists of his day, which is saying a great deal. (His contemporaries included Tartini, Vivaldi, and Geminiani, all brilliant players.) Veracini began touring at age 21. Over the next several years he performed in London, Düsseldorf, and Venice, eventually earning a post at the Dresden Court. There he became embroiled in the politics of jealous musicians, who allegedly plotted to murder him (or so Veracini claimed in his writings.) He fled Dresden in 1722 by jumping out a window and apparently breaking a leg in the fall. The injury left him with a lifelong limp.

Subsequent travels took him to Prague, Florence, and twice back to London, where he concertized actively in the 1730s. Veracini spent his last 18 years in Florence, performing and conducting concerts into his old age.



Francesco Maria Veracini

One would expect that a virtuoso violinist would write extensively for his instrument, and there are several dozen sonatas for violin and *basso continuo*, but Veracini's compositions also include operas, oratorios, cantatas, and a theoretical treatise that was important in its day.

The Overture that opens this evening's program is one of six believed to date from 1716, and the only one in minor mode. The title 'Overture' was synonymous and interchangeable with 'Suite' in the early 18th century. As in a Baroque instrumental suite, all the movements are in the same key and are stylized dances. Veracini synthesizes the concerto format with that of the suite, calling for a *concertino* group of two oboes and bassoon. The bold triplets of the opening *Allegro* are characteristic of his strong musical personality. All four movements attest to Veracini's mastery of counterpoint and the concerto style.

Concerto in F Minor for violin, strings and continuo, BWV 1056a

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Bach played a crucial role in the development of the solo keyboard concerto. The best known example is the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto, which features the harpsichord as the most prominent of three solo instruments.

Over the next two decades, Bach produced more than a dozen concertos for one, two, three, or four solo harpsichords. Some were composed anew, but he reworked most of them from his existing concertos for other instruments, most often those for the violin or oboe. Early 18th century composers did not necessarily restrict their music to a specific instrument, and such rearrangements were common. This F Minor concerto is better known in its keyboard version, but could well have originated for the violin, as we hear it.

BACH AND SECULAR MUSIC

From 1723 until his death in 1750, Bach served as music director of the St. Thomas church in Leipzig. His responsibilities lay primarily in the area of composing, rehearsing, and conducting church music. Beginning in 1729, however, he also became director of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, a university society that Telemann had founded. Members met weekly in coffee-houses or gardens (depending on the season), for the purpose of making music. In such a context many of Bach's instrumental compositions, including the concertos, received their first performances. Music historians believe that Bach's works for keyboard and string orchestra date from the Leipzig Collegium years; however, the original music upon which they are based was probably composed earlier.

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In all his solo concertos, Bach adopted the three-movement Italian form developed by Vivaldi. The first and final movements were in fast tempos, with full orchestral sections (*tutti* or *ripieno*) alternating with solo passages for the featured instrument. The middle movement was always slow, with an elaborately decorated melody rather like an Italian opera aria. The F Minor concerto is consistent with this overall structure. Its emphasis on melodic line is convincing stylistic evidence supporting the music's origins as a violin or oboe work.

The most famous part of this concerto is its lovely central movement, whose lyrical melody is nearly as beloved as the so-called “Air on a G string.” Bach used the same melody for the instrumental prelude to his Cantata No. 156, *Ich steh mit einem Fuss im Grabe* written in 1729, (“I am standing with one foot in the grave”.) Modern arrangers have appropriated this movement for many other instrumental combinations. The comfort and solace offered by Bach's theme attest to music's enduring power to touch our souls.

Concerto for Strings in C Major, RV 114 Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Vivaldi's renown as a composer began in the early 1700s. After a Dutch music publisher issued a collection of his concertos in 1711, his fame spread throughout Europe. Today his reputation rests primarily on his legacy of nearly 500 instrumental concertos.

Vivaldi's most popular work, *The Four Seasons*, is a series of four programmatic violin concertos. Some 230 other Vivaldi concertos feature solo violin. About sixty others that have survived fall into the category of *concerto à quattro*: for a full string complement and continuo, with no soloist. This type – known as a *ripieno* concerto – fell out of favor as the popularity of the solo concerto grew, which means that such works probably date from the early 1700s.

The Concerto in C Major RV 114 belongs to a group known as the Paris Concertos, because Vivaldi's manuscripts are housed at the Paris Conservatoire library. By coincidence, this one does have some stylistic traits consistent with French music at the turn of the 18th century, such as Vivaldi's extensive reliance on dotted rhythms in the first movement, suggesting a French *Overture*. Generally, in such cases, Vivaldi was writing for a patron whose taste leaned toward the French style.

Listening to this concise work, one is struck anew by Vivaldi's limitless imagination. He treats each string group as an oversize soloist with a bigger, blocked sound. Complementing the brisk dotted rhythms of the Allegro are a rippling sequence and a scale pattern; from these simple means he constructs a lively movement that showcases unity among the individual sections and ensemble in the whole. Providing harmonic variety with momentary flashes of minor mode, this brisk opening – barely 2-1/2 minutes of music – fully satisfies the ear.



Antonio Vivaldi in 1725

This concerto has no slow movement proper; rather there is just a two-measure transition marked *Adagio* and comprised three chords. These chords invite an improvised solo to provide the transition to the last movement. (Bach employed the same device in his Third Brandenburg Concerto.) The finale is a *Ciaccona*; the more familiar French term is *chaconne*, in which a simple repeated bass line of eight bars forms the basis for a set of variations. Vivaldi's use of the *ciaccona*, which was more popular in France than in Italy, is another bow to French taste.

Once again, Vivaldi's imagination is astounding, using the string ensemble to employ a wide variety of syncopated, rhythmic patterns; bowings, articulations, and dynamics. Toward the end of the movement, five variations in a minor mode alter the bass line, making it chromatic. Following the return to C Major, a decisive coda brings the *Ciaccona* to an energetic close.

Concerto in D minor for Oboe, Strings and Continuo

Alessandro Marcello (1673-1747)

If you think you've never heard of Marcello, much less heard a note of his music, you may be surprised. This concerto is one of the best known works of the Baroque era, in large part because Bach transcribed it for solo harpsichord. Ironically, Bach believed it to be by Vivaldi, the Italian composer he admired most.

Bach grouped his Marcello transcription with a group he labeled *XVI Concerto nach A. Vivaldi*. A century after his death, a German researcher reviewed Bach's manuscripts and assumed that Bach's identification of the music as Vivaldi's was correct. (In fact, nine of the sixteen transcriptions *are* after Vivaldi.) When copies of the original concerto surfaced in libraries in Mecklenburg and Darmstadt, bearing the name Marcello, two different German scholars attributed the piece to the prolific Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739.) As it turned out, they were still incorrect.

An English researcher discovered yet another copy of the Marcello concerto in the British Library. This one, part of Jeanne Roger's collection published in Amsterdam about 1717, clearly identifies Alessandro Marcello as the composer. After more than two centuries of misattribution, the concerto's correct authorship was established. Even then, the confusion did not abate, for copies of the concerto exist in both C minor and D minor. We hear it here in the original key of D minor.

The Marcellos were a noble and artistic Venetian family. The two brothers, Alessandro and Benedetto – and probably their other brother Gerolamo – studied violin with their father Agostino and had additional music instruction from Francesco Gasparini (one of Vivaldi's predecessors at the Ospedale della Pietà) and Antonio Lotti, the organist at San Marco. Alessandro served in the Venetian judiciary and as a diplomat for the Republic. He was also an artist, and published some poetry that was well known in Paris. He used the pseudonym 'Eterio Stinfalico' for his music.

Because this concerto is so popular, its music is familiar. Marcello was indebted to Vivaldi and particularly to Tommaso Albinoni, who wrote extensively for oboe and orchestra. That stated, his achievement is no less remarkable. As Arthur Hutchings observed in his landmark study *The Baroque Concerto*:

The elegiac beauty of the first movement, the noble pathos of the second, and the clean strength of the finale could have been matched by Bach himself but for the fact that the style is so thoroughly Italian. . . as for the finale, an expert could be excused for supposing it to be by Albinoni, who was surely among those who attended some of Alessandro Marcello's academies.

Relatively few of Marcello's compositions have survived: eighteen cantatas, nine other concerti, and a dozen sonatas for violin and continuo. The transparent elegance of this Oboe Concerto prompts interest in discovering more by this little known master.

Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6 No. 2, HWV320 George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

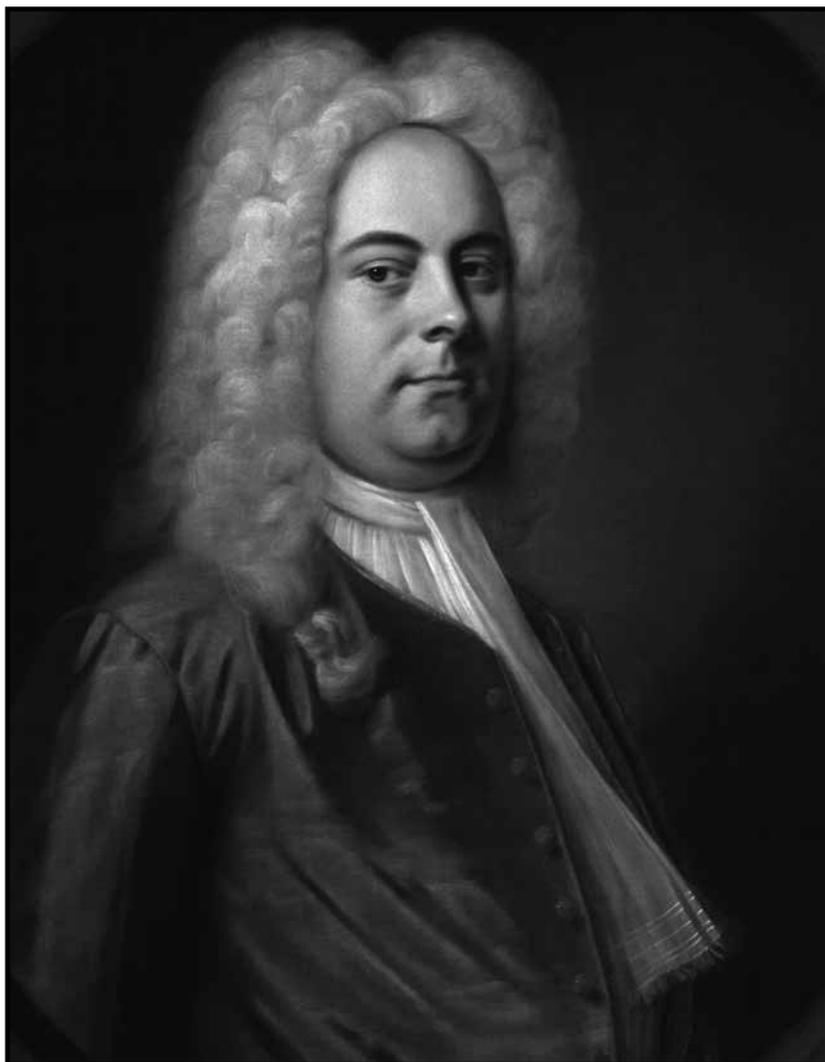
The composer we know and love best because of the *Messiah* actually did not compose sacred oratorios until late in his career. Handel began his study of music as an organist and harpsichordist. In 1705 his first operas were produced in Hamburg. The following year, he went to Italy to learn more about Italian opera, which was considered the most fashionable in all of Europe. That journey changed his style of composing, and indeed the course of his career. After travel and study in Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice, young Handel understood as much about Italian opera as any native.

He returned briefly to Germany in 1710, where he secured a position in service to the Elector of Hannover. A series of trips to England ensued. In Britain Handel found great favor and a huge, monied audience eager for his Italian operas. When his German patron became heir to the throne of England in 1714, becoming King George I, Handel's English future was sealed.

By the late 1730s, his reputation was such that entire concerts of his compositions drew capacity audiences. Long concerts-sometimes lasting several hours-mandated that both instrumental and vocal pieces were included to create variety. (18th century audiences demanded their money's worth!) This is the context for which Handel composed the 12 *Concerti Grossi*, Op. 6. He wrote them in a characteristic fever of inspiration during a five-

week span in September and October 1739. They were the first of Handel's works to be protected by a Royal Privilege to copyright his music. Issued on October 31, 1739, the copyright specified *Twelve Grand Concerto's* [sic] in 7 parts, for *Four Violins, a Tenor, a Violoncello with a Thorough-Bass for the Harpsichord*. His publisher John Walsh issued Op. 6 early the following year. Handel's biographer Percy Young calls these pieces Handel's crowning works in concerto form.

Because Handel had also played violin in Hamburg early in his career, he understood both string playing and the way an orchestra worked. Obviously the instrumental concerti of his Italian contemporaries were familiar to him as well. However, his concerto model differs from that of Vivaldi and Albinoni, whose Venetian concerti tended to be in three substantial movements, organized fast-slow-fast. Handel composed more movements and shorter ones, (*continued on page 94*)



George Frideric Handel, born in 1685, the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach.
By Balthasar Denner (c. 1726-1728)

BAROQUE DANCES

Bach, Telemann, and Handel used a variety of dances and occasional, other movements in their instrumental suites and *Ouvertures*. By the time these dances were incorporated into the instrumental suite, they are no longer intended (nor is it even possible) to be used as dances; rather they are stylized dances whose references would have been familiar to their contemporaries. This glossary identifies some of the most common ones.

Allemande - the word is the French term for “German.” This dance, in two-part or binary form, originated in Germany during the Renaissance and remained in regular use throughout Europe in the Baroque era. It was customarily the first dance movement in an instrumental suite. Most *allemandes* are in quadruple meter (4/4 time.)

Bourrée - a quick, energetic dance in duple meter and generally in two-part or binary form. Such dances generally start with a single quarter note upbeat. *Bourrées* are generally faster than *Gavottes*. The *bourrée* became popular in the court of Louis XIV as a dance in the ballets of Jean-Baptiste Lully, and soon gained favor as an independent instrumental dance elsewhere in Europe.

Courante - this dance, called *Corrente* in Italian, is in a triple meter, with its origins in the 16th century. In Italy, the *corrente* was often fast, which tallies with the term’s meaning: literally ‘running;’ however, in France the dance was slower and more dignified, sometimes even approaching the solemn character of the *sarabande*. Most *courantes* are in a 3/2 meter (three half notes per measure) and in a two-part or binary form. They open with an upbeat.

Forlane - in German suites, this dance generally appears with its French name, but the origins are the Italian *forlana*, a brisk dance with origins in Friuli, an area of Northern Italy. Italian musicians brought it to the French court, where the *forlane* developed into a fast dance in a compound meter of 6/4 or 6/8 and a character that embraced both elegance and gaiety. The most celebrated 20th century *forlane* is in Ravel’s *Le tombeau de Couperin*.

Gavotte - a dance in a moderate duple meter that is generally constructed of four-measure phrases with two quarter-note upbeats; the phrases customarily end mid measure. *Gavottes* grew out of the Renaissance *branle* and gained favor in the operas and ballets of Lully and Rameau. *Gavottes* surface in the music of many later composers. Famous examples include Ambroise Thomas’s *Mignon* and the third movement of Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony*. However, the dance is most celebrated for its Baroque glories.

Gigue - this dance, related in rhythm, meter, and etymology to the Irish jig, customarily concludes a Baroque suite. In compound meter – most often 6/8 but sometimes 12/8 – the *gigue* provided a bouncy, brisk close to a set of dance movements. Its rhythmic and textural characteristics draw on both French and Italian models and often feature dotted rhythms. Generally *gigues* are in a two-part or binary form.

Menuet [or Minuet] - an elegant, courtly dance in triple meter that enjoyed tremendous vogue in the late Baroque and high Classic eras. Most *minuets* are constructed of regular four-bar phrases; complete movements divide into two halves of roughly even length (two-part or binary form.) *Minuets* are often in pairs, the second of which is a contrasting section called a trio. After the trio’s two halves have each been played and repeated, the first *Minuet* is played again, this time without repetition.

Passepied - a brisk dance in triple meter, usually 3/8. Most examples feature an upbeat and play rhythmic games within regular phrases to form a hemiola (the momentary suggestion of three groups of two, rather than two groups of three; think “America” from *West Side Story*.)

Rigaudon - this lively, upbeat dance in duple time was as popular in England – where it was known as *rigadoon* – as in France. It is closely related to the *bourrée*. Most *rigaudons* retain simple melodies and a simple structure, which makes them eminently suitable for dancing.

Rondeau - in the Baroque suite, a *rondeau* was a simple refrain form common to various dance movements. It is not associated with a specific tempo or meter.

Sarabande - a slow, elegant dance in triple meter, usually in a two-part or binary form. Particularly in France and Germany, the *sarabande* carried weight and solemnity. Most instrumental examples were highly ornamented and rhythmically complex.

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placing his concerti closer to those of Corelli, particularly in their scoring. All twelve of the Opus 6 concerti feature what amounts to a trio sonata (two violins, one cello) as soloists, with a larger accompanying string ensemble (called a *ripieno*.) This is in marked contrast to the concerti of Handel's contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach, whose six Brandenburgs, for example, have different scoring in each concerto, and larger scale movements that link them to their Vivaldian model.

The second concerto in the set consists of four movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast, along the lines of the Italian *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata.) The key of F major had strong pastoral associations in the 18th century. Handel plumbs this idea in the gentle, flowing *Andante larghetto*. The two *concertino* violins play mostly in imitation, occasionally introducing more forceful motives for contrast with the main idea. The movement's coda is a surprise: three separate cadences, all involving dotted rhythm. The third of them effects a transition to D minor and the first Allegro, which proceeds *attacca* (without pause.) Handel adopts the style of a trio sonata, with the primary musical interest focused in the two violin soloists. They play primarily in imitation, with a few passages in parallel thirds.

The second slow movement is sectional, moving between and among multiple tempi: *Largo*, *Adagio*, and *Larghetto andante*. Dotted rhythms in the opening *Largo* relate to the French overture style and the ceremonial world of Handel's *Water Music*; the *Adagio* passages invite improvisation from the soloists, while the placid *Larghetto andante* restores the pastoral atmosphere. The concerto concludes with a vigorous fugue in triple meter.

Concerto in C Major for Oboe, Strings, and Continuo, RV 450 **Antonio Vivaldi**

For most of the years between 1703 and 1740, Vivaldi served as music-master, composer-in-residence, and conductor at the Seminario musicale dell'Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. The institution, itself, consisted of an orphanage, school, convent, and conservatory for girls. Vivaldi wrote most of his instrumental compositions for the talented girls under his tutelage at the Ospedale. Judging from the astonishing variety of solo instruments featured in these works, Vivaldi's students excelled on virtually every instrument that was in common use during the early 18th century.

The concerto on this program is one of about twenty that Vivaldi wrote for solo oboe (a few are either incomplete or of doubtful authenticity.) It conforms to the standard three-movement pattern of the Baroque concerto, but has features that point toward the emerging classical style.

In the first movement, the orchestra presents a full exposition before the oboe enters, foreshadowing the double exposition of the classical concerto yet to come. The concept of *ritornello* passages for orchestra that alternate with those sections for the soloist has more of a sense of dialogue than the concerto format that was eventually to replace the *ritornello* form. Most important is that the texture is more homophonic – melody with accompaniment – rather than polyphonic.

The *Larghetto* is an A Minor movement that crosses a *sarabande* with an opera aria. Slow movements favor the oboe, which can sustain long, expressive melodic lines through extended phrases. Vivaldi's harmonies are inventive, wandering through several surprising key centers.

The concluding *Allegro* is a classic Vivaldian romp, again with an orchestral exposition, now giving momentary cameos to the first chair strings. The sequences and sixteenth-note passages common to Vivaldi's fast movements are much in evidence, but there is also considerable rhythmic variety in both the oboe and the orchestra parts. This is not sewing-machine music, but music carefully crafted to entertain, please and flatter the players. Both the second and the third movements have places for brief, improvised cadenzas.

Throughout the concerto, Vivaldi writes as if he were composing for the violin, the instrument he knew best. While string players can draw the bow back and forth repeatedly to sustain lengthy phrases, oboists rely on breathing to produce their sound. The extended rapid passagework in the outer movements makes breath control a challenge, adding to the difficulty for the oboist.

Overture [Suite] in A Minor, TWV55:a1 **Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1757)**

Posterity views Bach and Handel as the greatest musical geniuses of the Baroque era. During their lifetimes, Georg Philipp Telemann all but eclipsed them both. He was regarded as the finest German composer

of his day, and he was unquestionably the most successful commercially. Telemann's career followed a dizzying path, starting with the direction of the Leipzig Opera one year after he matriculated at Leipzig University. Subsequent appointments included organist at Leipzig's Neue Kirche, Kapellmeister to the court of Count Erdmann II of Promnitz at Sorau, Kapellmeister in Eisenach (Bach's home town), director of music in Frankfurt, and Kapellmeister at Gotha. In all these places, he wrote staggering amounts of sacred and secular music.

Telemann's longest and most significant professional position was in the northern city of Hamburg. From 1721 until his death, he was the guiding light of Hamburg's musical life. His official title was Kantor of the Johanneum. In that capacity, he directed musical activity for the city's five principal churches as well as civic musical events for ceremonies, holidays, and festive occasions. He also oversaw weekly public concerts by the Collegium Musicum and, from 1722 to 1738, served as music director of the Hamburg Opera. With a finger in every conceivable musical pie, Telemann was Hamburg's *de facto* concert manager for an extraordinary tenure of 46 years.

Telemann was a master of both the Italian and French styles. He composed more than 200 *Ouverturen* – multi-movement instrumental suites modeled after the French taste. The one that concludes this evening's program is probably from 1721, his first year in Hamburg. It begins with a French overture: a slow introduction with dotted rhythms, moving to a brisker central *allegro* in fugal texture before a brief return to the *Grave* at the close.

The succeeding movements are bipartite dances with each half repeated. Telemann often assigned fanciful French titles to his suite movements, indicating their character. In this case he retained the dance names as movement titles, interpolating the less standardized *rigaudon* and *forlane* and concluding with a *menuet* rather than a *gigue*.

Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2013



AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin (or Akamus for short) began in 1982 as a courageous display of musical sovereignty against the East German socialist regime, and now, over thirty years later, they enjoy recognition as one of Europe's greatest musical success stories.

In May of 2005, the Akamus made its US debut tour to critical acclaim and sold-out houses at New York's Carnegie Hall, Chicago, Boston, Washington DC, Berkeley, and Los Angeles, among others. They returned to the US in April 2008 in conjunction with a new Harmonia Mundi CD release. Highlights of that tour included stops in Ann Arbor, Kansas City, Spivey Hall, Krannert Center, Charlottesville (VA), Berkeley, Vancouver, Chicago, UCLA, and Carnegie Hall. Their most recent critically acclaimed US Tour in March 2011 included performances at Disney Hall in Los Angeles, First Congregational Church in Berkeley, Jordan Hall in Boston, Carnegie Hall in New York, Old Cabell Hall in Virginia, the Folly Theatre and Krannert Center in the Midwest, and a live "Impromptu" on WFMT Chicago.

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin has received numerous awards for their recordings including the Cannes Festival Award, the French Diapason d'or, the Dutch Edison Award, the British Gramophone Award, The Telemann Prize, as well as a Grammy Award in the US. The ensemble records exclusively for Harmonia Mundi, and, in addition to their annual sold-out series at the Berlin Konzerthaus, they appear at London's Wigmore Hall, the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Zürich Tonhalle, and the Vienna Musikverein.

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

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For more information, please visit: www.akamus.de

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