

The Peoria Bach Festival
Chamber Cantatas of the Baroque Period
Westminster Presbyterian Church
June 5, 2025 – 12:00 PM

The Peoria Baroque Players

Courtney Huffman Frye – Soprano Soloist
Lisette Kielson – Treble Recorder; S Blake Duncan – Baroque Oboe & Treble Recorder
Michael Dicker – Baroque Bassoon; Stephanie Hunt – Baroque Cello
Polly Brecht – Harpsichord

Program

Mi palpita il cor (HWV 132b) Georg Friderick Handel (1685-1759)
Cantata for Soprano, Oboe and Continuo

Trio Sonata, op. 37, #2 Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1682-1765)
Oboe, Bassoon and Continuo

1. Allegro
2. Adagio
3. Allegro

Augellin vago e canoro Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)
Cantata for Soprano, 2 Treble Recorders and Continuo

Sonata in C Major, Op. 6, #2 Francesco Barsanti (1690-1772)
Treble Recorder and Continuo

1. Adagio
2. Allegro
3. Largo
4. Presto

Selections from the Cantata *Samson* Élizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729)
From Book II – *French Cantatas from Scripture*, Cantata #6
Cantata for Soprano, Recorder, Oboe, Bassoon, Cello and Harpsichord
Symphonie - Instrumental
Recitative #3 & Air #4 – Soprano with Continuo
Recitative #7 & Air #8 – Soprano, Oboe with Continuo
Air #10 – Soprano with full ensemble

Da, Jesu, deinen Ruhm zu mehren (TWV 1:155a) Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1769)
Cantata for the 12th Sunday after Trinity for Soprano, Treble Recorder, Oboe and Continuo

Translations

George Friderick Handel - *Mi palpita il cor*

RECITATIVE:

My heart throbs, and I don't know why.

ARIA:

My soul is agitated, and I don't know what it is.

RECITATIVE:

Torment and jealousy, disdain, pain and sorrow, what do you want from me? If you want me to be a lover, a lover I am. But, oh God, don't kill me, because my heart, amidst many pains, can suffer your chains no more!

ARIA:

I have so many pains in my chest, which is tormenting me the worst I can't describe. I know well that I open myself up to a bitter and cruel pain that wants to kill me.

RECITATIVE:

Chloris, I complain about you, and of you, oh God, son of Venus, that you pierced my heart for one that doesn't know what is love. But if, with the same arrow, you pierce her heart, I won't complain any more, and reverently in front of your image I will prostrate myself on the ground, humbled and devoted, to worship the God who fulfilled my desire.

ARIA:

If one day the cruel one loves me back, my heart will be contented. What is pain, what is torment, this heart of mine will know no more.

Alessandro Scarlatti – *Augellin vago e canoro*

ARIA:

Little bird, roaming songster, you long for the hill and meadow and yet with snares of gold are tenderly imprisoned.

RECITATIVE:

Never still, sweet bird, your wings and feet circle endlessly; And your harmonies which seem notes of joy are but laments.

ARIA:

I feel for you, sweet prisoner, you want liberty, and with your songs, now tender, now harsh, lament your fate and beg for mercy.

RECITATIVE:

But moved to pity by your pain, with snow-white hand Irene now looses your fetters, opens the narrow door of the fair prison which held you for so long; Quick and light you resume your former flight, soaring through the air above the fields below, you return to the summit of the beeches to greet the day with your song!

ARIA:

How I envy your flight O fortunate bird! I too am caught and tied and have none to console me.

Élizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre – *Samson*

RECITATIVE #3:

The Philistines deride Samson whose lust has reduced him to a slave. Their cruel games are presented to their god Dagon as a sacrifice.

AIR #4 – The prayer of the Philistines to their God, Dagon:

“Almighty Dagon you have delivered him into our hands,” they say enjoying his pain. “He no longer sees the light of day; his steps are uncertain; He is a toy of our just hatred.”

RECITATIVE #7:

Samson was led into the temple of Dagon. Two large columns held up the dazzling building where the sacrilegious celebration was taking place. There but for a moment he stopped, to ask for his strength from his God. And God heard his cry.

AIR #8 – The Prayer of Samson:

Almighty God of our ancestors, do not allow this People to enjoy the triumph they promised themselves: I deserve death, and you see me subjected to it. I rejoice, I rejoice that with me the idolater perishes.

AIR #10:

Israel, sing the victory of the Hero who perished for you! His saving death is your triumph and his glory. In this great day he erases the shame of his slavery; And with his courage he repairs the weakness of his love.

Georg Phillip Telemann – *Da, Jesu, deinen Ruhm zu mehren* – Based on Jesus healing the man born deaf, Mark 7:31-37

ARIA:

Because, Jesus, to increase your glory, the mute speak, the deaf hear, my heart therefore praises you. Your glorious praise shall now resound. How? Alas! My tongue can hardly babble! The greatness of your power astonishes and silences me.

RECITATIVE:

You, whose ears and mouths are healthy through the power of God's grace, never let this precious treasure slip from your sight! Let devotion itself always say: The Lord has done all things well! Yes, dedicate your mouth, in every way, to the praise of the God who is never sufficiently praised!

ARIA:

Let yourselves be heard, ready lips, with joy in supplication, in thanksgiving, in praise, in teaching! To you too, Jesus calls: Ephphatha! To you, to you, Jesus calls: Ephphatha! Ephphatha! Ephphatha!

Divine goodness, ever soaring higher, falls sweeter than sugar upon praising tongues. Well done! Praised be Jehovah! Praised be Jehovah! Praised be Jehovah!

Program Notes:

The early 17th century saw a major transformation of musical style in Europe, particularly in Italy and France. These changes manifested themselves in the development of new instruments, new musical forms, styles of playing and venues for musical performance. Instruments such as the Renaissance shawm – a loud outdoor instrument used for dancing and for military purposes was modified and transformed into the sweet sounding and delicate oboe; and thus suitable to performed in the chambers of the aristocracy (hence: “chamber music!”). Other instruments followed the same pattern: the dulcian became the bassoon; the popular full sounding recorder consort’s alto member took on a more soloistic role, as did its sister the transverse flute. But perhaps most importantly the early 1600’s saw the development of the violin and other members of the violin family, like the viola and the violincello. By the middle of the 17th century the violin had swept through Europe and become exceptionally popular and the center of musical ensemble composition. These string instruments thus became the core, the heart and soul of instrumental music of the “Baroque” period (1600-1750) that enabled the development of ensembles such as the orchestra, and also led to the development of smaller ensembles as well. The trio sonata is an example of such a smaller ensemble which became exceptionally popular. Created by the Italian violin master Archangelo Corelli, the trio sonata was embraced as the most popular small ensemble form. The trio sonata was a brief work for 2 solo, usually treble, instruments (such as two violins) accompanied by a keyboard instrument such as organ or harpsichord with the bass line doubled by cello or viol da gamba. Eventually wind instruments such as the recorder, flute, oboe and bassoon were included. The trio sonata was a work in either 3 or 4 contrasting movements and as time moved on composers such Antonio Vivaldi and others began to adapt the form for solo sonatas by removing one of the two solo instruments, but leaving the accompaniment, the “Continuo” in tact.

For our program we will perform two contrasting examples of this basic form: The Trio Sonata by the French composer Joseph Bodin de Boismortier is an early example of the French appropriation of this Italian form. Indeed, Boismortier was noted for utilizing Italian forms such as the trio sonata and the concerto and popularizing them in France through his own compositions and his publications, as he was a noted publisher. The Italian composer Francesco Barsanti spent most of his life living in London where he played viola with Handel’s opera orchestra. The 6 sonatas for recorder were only re-discovered in the 1940’s but have become popular among recorder players for their innovative and idiomatic writing for Alto or Treble recorder. Musicologist Walter Bergmann is quoted as saying that they “not only show unusual knowledge of the recorder, as one would expect from a master of that instrument, but also high musical imagination. As musical creations, they are not inferior to any other recorder sonatas, including Handel’s; technically, with their refined original phrasing, they are better.”

Opera quickly became the most popular vocal form during the Baroque period. But at the same time as opera was increasing in popularity the “Cantata” form also emerged and became equally popular. From the beginning the Cantata was used in church for telling Biblical stories. But outside the church the form was so flexible that soon secular cantatas were composed based on mythology, pastoral themes and love stories. The Italian Composer Alessandro Scarlatti was a notable composer of secular cantatas. Scarlatti was one of most important keyboard composers of the early Italian Baroque, a composer whose work had great influence on German composers such as Handel, Telemann and Bach. But today we will perform his sweet secular cantata *Angellin vago e canoro*. The libretto

tells the story of two little birds who long to escape their caged captivity and fly free, which by the end they do, thanks to a kind young woman named Irene. The cantata perhaps has a not quite so subtle commentary on the plight of so many of Europe's aristocratic women who often found themselves forced to marry for political and monetary reasons only to find themselves caged like a bird inside their homes, longing to fly free.

But there were a few women in the Baroque period who through a combination of extreme talent and the good fortune to have the right connections were able to avoid this fate. The French composer Élizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre was born into a family of French violin makers who supplied instruments to the court of Louis XIV. As a child Élizabeth studied keyboard, violin and composition with her father and at an early age performed for the King himself, who was so enchanted with her that he provided for her education and became her greatest supporter for the rest of his life. Under the patronage of the King Louis XIV, Élizabeth Jacquet ("de la Guerre" became part of her name with her marriage) composed multiple books of keyboard works and sonatas along with 3 published books of chamber cantatas. She even composed a full opera based on a myth which was produced, but not terribly successful. The cantata *Samson* comes from her 2nd book of Biblical cantatas. We are performing selections which take us from Samson's captivity through the final destruction of the Philistine Temple. We believe this is most probably the first performance of this Cantata in Illinois and probably in the United States.

The remaining two cantatas we will perform – Handel's *Mi palpita il cor* and Telemann's church cantata *Da, Jesu, deinen Ruhm zu mehren* – are quite different from each other. Handel, Telemann and JS Bach were all North German composers who lived near the end of the Baroque period. By this time the strict stylistic expectations which kept Italian and French style compositions apart had broken down and these composers in particular worked to integrate the styles even further. Handel spent his career living in London and working as an opera composer and impresario. But as a young student Handel had travelled to Italy and spent a number of years studying there. During this time in Italy Handel discovered his love of composing opera and even completed the masterpiece "Agrippina." But as part of his studies, he composed in a variety of forms, including composing a number of chamber cantatas. *Mi palpita il cor* is such a work and for it he employs an obligato oboe. This secular cantata is based on a libretto which was set by other composers, like so many others, including the Scarlatti, and expresses the emotional experience of falling madly in love with a partner who either doesn't return the affection, or isn't aware.

Georg Philipp Telemann was easily perhaps the most well-known and celebrated composer working in the first half of the 18th century. He was amazingly prolific as a composer having composed literally thousands of works, not all of which have survived. Nevertheless, a substantial number of his multitude of compositions have survived thanks in no small part to his having established his own printing company which was taken over by his nephew at his death. The sacred chamber cantata was an example of a type of composition which was exceptionally popular and extremely lucrative for Telemann. For some years he sold subscriptions to churches and courts and he would send cantatas and other works (like Passions!) to all of these subscribers. The cantata we will perform comes from his popular collection entitled *Die Harmonischer Gottesdienst* (or "The Harmonious Worship Service.") This collection of an entire yearly liturgical cycle of cantatas includes works for both high and low voice with obligato solo instruments such as violin, flute, recorder and oboe. *Da, Jesu, deinen Ruhm zu mehren* employs obligato recorder and oboe, along with organ continuo and features a soprano soloist.

We hope you enjoy the program!

Musician biographies can be found at the Peoria Bach Festival website:

<https://peoriabachfestival.org/artists>

