

Program Notes

Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C major (BWV 1066) is one of four. They were likely composed while he was at Cöthen or during his early years in Leipzig and as such are around 300 years old. They are vibrant examples of his mastery of Baroque dance suites. Orchestral Suite No. 1 opens with a stately French overture with majestic, dotted rhythms that give way to a lively fugue. The suite comprises six dance movements—Courante, Gavottes, Forlane, Minuets, Bourrées, and Passepieds—each showcasing distinct rhythms and moods, from the graceful flow of the Courante to the buoyant charm of the Bourrées. The prominent use of oboes adds a warm, reedy color while the interplay of strings and woodwinds creates a rich, balanced texture. Bach's orchestral suites reflect his ability to infuse courtly dance forms with intricate counterpoint and expressive depth resulting in delightful staples of the Baroque orchestral repertoire. They were more than likely performed for public concerts at the Zimmermann Coffee House by Leipzig's Collegium Musicum, an orchestra consisting largely of university students.

In keeping with our celebration of the 300th anniversary of Bach in Leipzig, we have included in this concert a work by Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel, known otherwise as C.P.E. In 1722 and then again in 1725 Johann Sebastian gave his wife Anna Magdalena notebooks in which she and her family could record music. C.P.E.'s first compositions are in that book, which is 300 years old this year. In his time, C.P.E. was more famous as a composer than his father. Tonight, we honor C.P.E.'s legacy and contribution to music with his Cello Concerto in B-flat Major (Wq. 171, H. 436). Composed around 1750 during his tenure at Frederick the Great's Prussian court, it exemplifies his pioneering style that bridges Baroque and Classical aesthetics. The concerto is in three movements and embodies C.P.E.'s *empfindsamer Stil* (sensitive style) through its emotional intensity and dramatic surprises. The concerto highlights the cello's technical and expressive range, cementing its place as a forward-looking work that anticipates the Classical concerto while retaining Baroque intricacy.

We continue to celebrate 300 years of Bach in Leipzig by performing Cantata 23 and Cantata 140. Cantata 23 *Du wahrer Gott und Davids Sohn* (You True God and Son of David) was first performed in February 1723 for Quinquagesima Sunday, the last Sunday before Lent. It was a part of Bach's audition for *Kantor* at Leipzig. The Gospel reading for that Sunday, Luke 18:31–43, recounts Jesus' prediction of his passion and the healing of a blind man near Jericho who calls out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." This plea has been echoed throughout the history of the Christian church in the *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy) of the Divine Service and is marvelously reflected in this cantata's text. In the first movement the blind man, and we by extension, call out to Jesus. In the second the blind man begs Jesus not to pass. In the third we pray that Jesus opens all eyes until He closes them in death. In the fourth movement we join the blind man in pleading for mercy by singing an intense setting of the Martin Luther's hymn *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* (O Christ, Thou Lamb of God), a hymn still sung in some Lutheran churches today.

We conclude this concert with Cantata 140 as we continue to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran chorale and the 300th anniversary of Bach's Chorale Cantata Cycle. In the year 1731 Easter fell early, which meant that the church calendar included all 27 Sundays after Trinity. On this rare occasion, the appointed Gospel reading was Matthew 25:1-13 – the Parable of the Ten Virgins. For this Sunday Bach composed his cantata on Philipp Nicolai's famous hymn *Wachet auf* (Wake, Awake) written in response to a devastating plague. This cantata, one of Bach's most beloved, uses all three stanzas of Nicolai's hymn in a seven-movement musical drama portraying Christ as the Bridegroom and the church as His bride. Bach added this cantata to his Chorale Cantata Cycle of 1724-25 because in 1725 the church year ended with the 25th Sunday after Trinity. Movement 1 is a chorale fantasia based on Stanza 1 of the hymn with the sopranos singing Nicolai's melody in long notes while the rest of the choir and the orchestra weave intricate counterpoint around it. The dotted rhythms in the orchestra evoke the sense of urgency while the altos, tenors, and basses call everyone in the city to *wachet auf* (wake up), *wohl auf* (be of good cheer), *steht auf* (stand up), and *macht euch bereit* (prepare yourselves). When they get to the word "Alleluia", they break into a very joyful and elaborate fugue that leads the Sopranos into singing the final phrases of the chorale. Movement 4 is a chorale prelude on Stanza 2 where tenors sing the melody in unison accompanied by a lilting violin obbligato that exudes peace and joy. Later Bach arranged this movement for organ. The recitatives and duets expound upon the bridal imagery. Unique to Bach's cantatas, this one includes two duets for Soprano and Bass, the Soprano representing the Soul and the Bass representing Jesus. In Movement 3 the Soul sings *Wenn kommst du, mein Heil?* (When will you come, my Savior?) with Jesus assuring her that He is coming. That duet is balanced by Movement 6, another duet in which the Soul, now in the presence of the Bridegroom, sings of her love for her Savior and Jesus responds in kind. Movement 7 is a rousing four-part setting of Stanza 3. It begins and ends with references to Christmas, Jesus' first coming.

We pray that you are blessed and encouraged by the music this evening. We thank you for coming, Westminster for hosting us, the Westminster AV staff for livestreaming the events, the musicians for all the time and energy they spent in preparing and presenting this music, and our donors for making it all possible. Soli Deo Gloria!