

MUSIC AT ST. PHILIP
CONCERT SERIES



2016
2017
SEASON

• PRESENTS •

Serious Fun — Baroque Trios

with



Elizabeth Blumenstock
VIOLIN



Mary Springfels
VIOLA DA GAMBA



Matthew Dirst
HARPSICHORD

in music by

Dieterich Buxtehude Heinrich Biber Philipp Heinrich Erlebach Johann Sebastian Bach

St. Philip Presbyterian Church
4807 San Felipe St | Houston

FREE (DONATIONS WELCOME)

Friday
March 10
7:30 pm

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The *stylus fantasticus* so widely used in German Baroque music might be thought of as “serious fun.” In his enormously influential *Musurgia Universalis* (1650), the polymath Athanasius Kircher gives the term a definition that invites many interpretations: “The fantastic style is especially suited to instruments. It is the most free and unrestrained method of composing, it is bound to nothing, either to words nor to a melodic subject, it was instituted to display genius and to teach the hidden designs of harmony and the ingenious composition of harmonic phrases and fugues.”

Through the music of Heinrich Biber, who was trained by Kircher, we can easily grasp the gist of the above description. Virtually all Baroque music displays some kind of harmonic cohesion, either in its overall plan or in the harmonic implications of its musical inventions. In addition to the spontaneity and virtuosity described by Kircher, the fantastic style also often included the most complex polyphonic interplay of voices, which he called “fugue,” whose realization may fall to a single player (at the organ or harpsichord, for example) or to a diverse company of musicians.

Among German composers especially, the violin and viola da gamba became natural partners in the trio sonata genre, perhaps simply because the very different sonorities of these instruments produce a diverse palette of potential colors. Some of the finest works for this particular combination can be found in **Dieterich Buxtehude's** two volumes of trio sonatas for violin and viol, published in 1694 and 1697. His **Sonata III in g minor** begins with a *Vivace* built on a ground (repeating) bass played by the keyboard, which is subsequently transposed, augmented, sliced, diced, and passed among the other players. The merest snippet of a *Lento* connects this opening section with a freely-composed *Allegro*. Another short *Lento* ensues, then an *Andante* constructed on a three-bar Passacaglia, after which comes a short but lovely *Adagio* and a delightful concluding *Giga*. The ease and seeming nonchalance of the cleverly intertwined violin and viol parts are remarkable; among Buxtehude's contemporaries, only Henry Purcell's high-minded yet effortless virtuosity comes close.

The period from 1650 to 1720 is often called the golden age of the viola da gamba. Reams of splendid music poured forth from the ingenious pens of English, French, and German performer-composers especially. The Bohemian **August Kerzinger**, about whom little is known, clearly understood the prevailing national idioms, including the Italianate sonata and its kid sister, the “sonatina.” Kerzinger's **Sonatina for viola da gamba and basso continuo**, like Buxtehude's sonatas but on a smaller scale, includes several short but artfully connected sections.

Bach's unassuming **Violin Sonata in G major**, BWV 1021, comprises four short but independent movements. An opening *Adagio* in binary form leads to a sprightly but brief *Vivace* movement; a *Largo* and concluding *Presto* make for a similar pair, with the latter the most searching fugal movement in the entire work. While not composed in the “fantastical style,” the sonata nonetheless conveys sweetness, energy, pathos and gaiety aplenty.

The two books of Bach's **Well-Tempered Clavier** offer a comprehensive catalogue of both free and fugal styles of composition, as realized in 48 preludes and fugues in all the major and minor keys by the greatest genius of the German Baroque. The A-major prelude from Book I (1722) is cast in the style of a three-part invention, with fully invertible counterpoint in all voices, while its corresponding fugue is a gently teasing affair: listen especially for the provocative rest after its subject's initial note. From Book II (1742), a prelude and fugue in the corresponding minor key offers a binary-form prelude with two invertible contrapuntal voices and a dramatic fugue.

Heinrich Biber's sonatas run quite a gamut of instrumentation and comprise five published sets, along with several single sonatas, two of which are exclusively for violin and continuo. The preeminent violin virtuoso of the seventeenth century, Biber championed the use of *scordatura* (deliberate mistuning of the strings), among other special techniques. The **violin sonata** on this program is not from his famous “Rosary Sonatas,” a set of sixteen dating from around 1676, but from an unnamed set of eight sonatas published in 1681. Formally, Biber's sonatas are somewhat more expansive than their sectional Italian predecessors, which typically feature a series of short sections in highly contrasting meters, tempi, and moods. Biber solo sonatas also rely heavily on themes with variations: tonight's E-minor sonata has two such sections, affording the performer ample opportunities for technical and affective displays.

The life of **Philipp Heinrich Erlebach** is something of a cypher. All we know of him is that he was a court musician in Thuringia, and that he was a very productive composer, a maker of chamber music, cantatas, and large concerted pieces for Lutheran worship. Unfortunately, most of his output was destroyed in a fire in 1735. Among the few musical survivors is Erlebach's collection of six sonatas for violin, viol and continuo, printed in 1694, from which comes the closing work on tonight's program. This lovely **A-major sonata**, which mixes freely the Italian and French modes, comprises a serene *Adagio*, a Gallic *Allemande*, a *Courante* bristling with hemiolas, a graceful *Sarabande*, a fine *Ciaconne*, and meltingly beautiful *Final*.

TONIGHT'S PROGRAM
Serious Fun
Crafty Music from the Heart of Europe

Sonata III for violin, viola da gamba, and continuo

Vivace – Allegro – Andante – Lento – Giga

Dieterich Buxtehude
c. 1637–1707

Sonatina in D for viola da gamba and continuo

August Kerzinger
1622–1678

Sonata in G major for violin and continuo BWV 1021

Adagio – Vivace – Largo – Presto

Johann Sebastian Bach
1685–1750

Prelude and Fugue in A major BWV 864 (*Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*)
Prelude and Fugue in a minor BWV 889 (*Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II*)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Sonata V in e minor for violin and continuo

Preludio – Allegro variatio – Adagio – Presto – Aria variation

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber
1644–1704

Sonata Terza in A major

Adagio – Allemande – Courante – Sarabande – Ciaconne – Final

Philipp Heinrich Erlebach
1657–1714

**Please join us for a reception in the gathering area following the program.
A freewill offering in support of this concert will be received at the sanctuary exits.
Your presence and your generosity are welcome.**

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Elizabeth Blumenstock, BAROQUE VIOLIN, is a concertmaster, soloist, and leader with the San Francisco Bay Area's Philharmonia Baroque and American Bach Soloists, the International Handel Festival in Göttingen, Germany, and is Artistic Director of the Corona del Mar Baroque Music Festival in Southern California. She is a member of several chamber ensembles including Musica Pacifica, Galax Quartet, Live Oak Baroque, and Voices of Music. Blumenstock teaches regularly for the Juilliard Historical Performance program, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the American Bach Soloists' summer Festival and Academy. She plays a 1660 Andrea Guarneri violin built in Cremona, Italy, on generous loan to her from the Philharmonia Baroque Period Instrument Trust.

Mary Springfels, VIOLA DA GAMBA, is a veteran of the American early music movement. She began her career at the age of 21 with the New York Pro Musica, and has played with most of the major ensembles in the field, including the Waverly Consort, The Folger Consort, Philharmonia Baroque, the Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Musica Sacra of New York, and Pomerium Musices, to name a few. In 1983 she became Musician-in-Residence at the Newberry Library, and was the director of the Newberry Consort for 20 years. In 2008, she fulfilled a lifelong dream, and moved to New Mexico. Since then, she has travelled widely, working with Sonoma Bach, the Lobo Baroque Orchestra, the Arizona

Bach Society, Ars Lyrica Houston, The Texas Early Music Project of Austin, and continues to work with Drew Minter, and her beloved colleagues at the Folger Consort. She can be heard on dozens of recordings. Springfels is also a very active teacher and coach. She and Elizabeth Blumenstock are Co-Directors of the newly-founded *Severall Friends*, based in Santa Fe.

Matthew Dirst, HARPSICHORD, is Organist at St Philip and Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, where he teaches courses in music history and performance practice. He is also Founder and Artistic Director of Ars Lyrica Houston, a Grammy-nominated ensemble that specializes in Baroque chamber and dramatic works. Winner of major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, including first prize at the American Guild of Organists National Young Artist Competition (1990), Dirst is widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting of Baroque music especially: his "crisp but expressive direction" of the Monteverdi 1610 Vespers was named "Best Classical Performance of 2010" (*Dallas Morning News*). Early Music America described his recent solo recording, of harpsichord works by François and Armand-Louis Couperin (Centaur), as a "stylish, tasteful, and technically commanding performance... expressive and brilliant playing." Dirst's recordings of music by Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti and J. A. Hasse with Ars Lyrica on the Naxos and Sono Luminus labels have earned a Grammy nomination for Best Opera 2011 and widespread critical acclaim.

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Saturday, **April 15** at 5:00 pm | **Musical Reflections for Holy Saturday**

Tony Boutté, Colin St. Martin, Barret Sills, and Matthew Dirst

Sunday, **April 23** at 11:00 am | **Jazz Communion**

Paul English and friends

Sunday, **April 23** at 6:00 pm | **Organ Concert in Honor of Robert Bates**

Retirement celebration featuring current and former students of Dr. Bates

Sunday, **May 14** at 11:00 am | **Vivaldi Gloria**

St. Philip Choir, Julia Fox and Cecilia Duarte with period instruments

St. Philip Presbyterian Church ◆ 4807 San Felipe Street ◆ Houston, Texas 77056



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