

Chamber Orchestra

September 21, 2024

7:30 pm

“BACHtoberfest!”

Suite for Strings in G Major, S. 206

Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729)

- I. Overture: Allegro - Affettuoso
- II. Entrée
- III. Menuet
- IV. Gavotte
- V. Bourrée
- VI. Loure
- VII. Rondeau
- VIII. Menuet

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, BWV 1051, B-flat Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

Sean Dostal and Adrian Jackson, Viola

Intermission

Nonet for Strings (1960)

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990)

- I. Largo
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante
- IV. Presto

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, BWV 1048, G Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro
- IV. Minuet and Trio
- V. Polacca and Trio

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“BACHtoberfest!”

A chamber orchestra is a small orchestra, frequently consisting of some twenty musicians. Like larger orchestras, chamber orchestras are usually led by a conductor. They will have a full complement of first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses, as well as timpani. A harpsichord may be present to provide the “continuo” or bottom line which is also played by the cellos and double basses. On many occasions, members of the wind and brass sections will be featured, such as flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, and trombone. As in larger orchestras, not everyone plays all the time for any one piece.

Suite for Strings in G Major, S. 206

Johann David Heinichen (b. Weissenfels, Germany, April 17, 1683; d. Dresden, Germany, July 15, 1729).

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| I. | Overture: Allegro - Affettuoso | V. | Bourrée |
| II. | Entrée | VI. | Loure |
| III. | Menuet | VII. | Rondeau |
| IV. | Gavotte | VIII. | Menuet |

The score calls for first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, basses, continuo (harpsichord). Performance time is approximately 14 minutes.

The amount of works composed by Johann David Heinichen is rather large. In 1913, G. A. Seibel (S.) in his biography of Heinichen gave a thematic catalogue of 271 numbers which are preserved in Dresden, Germany. *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Fifth Edition* reads, “While he wrote a great deal for the church, he also composed four symphonies, two overtures, and 30 concertos for orchestra. Of his vast output, nothing was published in his lifetime.”

Heinichen was a pupil at the St. Thomas School at Leipzig, studying composition under Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722), a German composer whose official post was as Thomaskantor in Leipzig, which he occupied for 21 years. Heinichen also studied law and practiced for a short time in the town of Weissenfels, Germany. Yet, he continued composing and began conducting as well. He traveled to Italy and remained there for six years. Returning to Germany, he was then appointed court conductor at Dresden by the Electoral Prince of Saxony for the opera as well as for church and chamber music.



Johann David Heinichen

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, BWV 1051, B-flat Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (b. Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, March 21, 1685; d. Leipzig, Saxony, Germany July 28, 1750)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio ma non tanto
- III. Allegro

Sean Dostal and Adrian Jackson, Viola

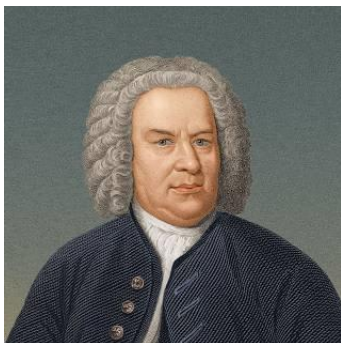
The score calls for two solo violas, first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, basses, continuo (harpsichord). Performance length is approximately 18 minutes.

The Brandenburg Concertos (BWV 1046–1051) by Johann Sebastian Bach are a collection of six instrumental works presented by Bach to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt, in 1721 (though composed earlier). The original French title means "Six Concertos for several instruments." Some of the pieces feature several solo instruments or in combination. They are widely regarded as some of the greatest orchestral compositions of the Baroque era.

The number of Bach's surviving orchestral compositions for the orchestra is small. Besides the Brandenburg Concertos (we will hear Nos. 3 and 6 in this concert), there are two violin concertos, a double concerto for two violins, and four orchestra overtures.

We don't know whether Bach played the solo parts himself, although a fair guess would be that he did. He was a capable violinist who liked to direct his orchestras while playing, where he could be in the middle of things musically and physically. He owned a violin by Jacob Stainer, whose instruments were prized more highly than those of Stradivari in the 18th century.

Peter Williams writes in his book, *The Life of Bach*, that there are similarities between the Brandenburg Concertos No. 3 and 6. For instance, listen to the opening bars of the two concertos, where the pulsating chords provide excitement. "The scoring of all six Brandenburg concertos, though different from one another to an unusual and unique degree, may reflect current practices. No. 6's pair of violas was not unfamiliar. And No. 3 expands the notion of a string consort, yet very different from the exhilarating No. 6. Together they contrast the old (No. 6) with the new (No. 3), both doing so with a tremendous sense of inspired melody.



Johann Sebastian Bach

Intermission

Nonet for Strings (1960)

Aaron Copland (b. New York City, New York, November 14, 1900; d. Sleepy Hollow, New York, December 2, 1990)

The score calls for three violins, three violas, and three cellos. The duration is 18 minutes.

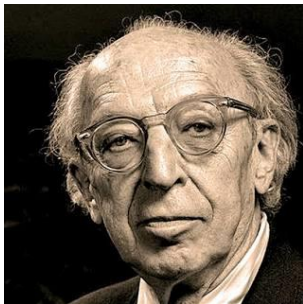
The Dumbarton Oaks Research Library commissioned Aaron Copland's **Nonet** in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss (who presented the library to Harvard University) in 1960. The premiere was to have been conducted at a special anniversary concert by Nadia Boulanger, who was a longtime friend of the music-loving Bliss family.

Musicologist Vivian Perlis, a friend of Copland's, writes, "The work was not finished in time for that event, so Copland conducted the premiere himself with nine string players from the National Symphony, and dedicated the score to Boulanger, 'after forty years of friendship.'" While the initial reading calls for only nine musicians, performances by larger ensembles of up to 48 strings have been authorized by Copland.

"Later, Copland actually conducted the **Nonet** at a friend's memorial service," writes Howard Pollack in his biography **Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man**. "This friend, composer Theodore Chanler (1902-1961), was a fellow graduate of Nadia Boulanger's studio. Copland was always respectful of Chanler's sensitive songs."

Pollack continues, "Copland based this one-movement **Nonet** on a three-chord progression heard at the work's start and immediately expanded into an eight-measure theme for the three cellos. In composing a work for such an unusual ensemble, Copland apparently took his cue from Bach's **Brandenburg Concerto No. 3** which was natural."

"The work's shape can be described as in slow-fast-slow form with an emphasis on harmony. Copland hoped that the ballet choreographer George Balanchine would use the **Nonet** for a ballet; he seems to have had the music's dance potential in mind from the start," continues Pollack. "For the moment, however, it remains one of the lease-played of Copland's major chamber works."



Aaron Copland

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, BWV 1048, G Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (b. Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, March 21, 1685; d. Leipzig, Saxony, Germany July 28, 1750)

Allegro moderato

Andante

Allegro assai

The score calls for first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, basses, continuo (harpsichord). Performance time is approximately 10 minutes.

The art of Johann Sebastian Bach is omnipresent in the music life of today, accessible to everyone. “This is the accomplishment not just of vocal and instrumental soloists and musical groups all over the world, but, importantly, also of the recording industry, radio, and television, and, not the least, the music publishing industry,” writes orchestra conductor Kurt Masur in his forward to ***Johann Sebastian Bach – Life and Work*** by Martin Geck.

Yet, there is so little known about his actual life, less than for any great composer since his time. In fact, if only because of the sparse biographical details, one pays especially close attention to his music. Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany. His parents were Johann Ambrosius Bach (a gifted court and town musician) and Elisabeth Lammerhirt Bach, daughter of a town official in the town of Erfurt, Germany. Peter Williams reviews Bach in his book, ***The Life of Bach***, by writing, “While ‘Johann’ was a common family name, ‘Sebastian’ comes from little Johann’s godfather, as was customary.”

Various members of the Bach extended family remained prominent town musicians, but it was his church’s organist who had a major musical influence on young Johann. In fact, the young boy was allowed to learn as many basics of organ playing as were feasible. His schooling is uncertain before 1693 when he entered the Latin school, suggesting he was a brighter than average child.

Johann’s parents passed away when he was only nine years old, and he began living with his older brother, who was also an organist. The older brother, Christoph, had studied organ for three years with Johann Pachelbel, a well-known German composer, organist, and teacher who lived 1653 – 1706. This organ performance and composition knowledge was undoubtedly passed on to the young Johann Bach. However, Johann also grew and developed music knowledge on his own.

Much as been written about Bach, states Arthur C. Brooks in his book, ***From Strength to Strength – Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life***. Brooks continues, “The great 20th century Spanish cellist Pablo Casals, who brought Bach’s suites for solo cello to a worldwide audience, said this of his musical hero: ‘To inform ordinary activities with spiritual fervor, to give wings of eternity to that which is most ephemeral; to make divine things human and human things divine; such is Bach, the greatest and purest moment in music of all time.’”

Continuing, Arthur C. Brooks points out that J. S. Bach “moved from musical innovator to master teacher. He spent the last ten years of his life working on ***The Art of the Fugue*** – a collection of fugues and canons based on a single theme intended to teach the compositional techniques of the baroque.” He continues, “***The Art of the Fugue*** was written as a kind of textbook.” A fugue is something like a round ... people sing or play the same melody but start at different times while ultimately all playing together.

“J. S. Bach experienced professional decline as a musical innovator,” continues Brooks. “Far from frustration, he finished out his life reinventing himself as a teacher. When he fell behind as an innovator (because the Classic Era was now flowering having replaced the Baroque Era in which J. S. Bach excelled), he reinvented himself as an instructor.”

Brooks continues, with quoting the great composer Johannes Brahms a century after Bach’s death: “Study Bach. There you will find everything.”

“And so it is with his exemplary life, in which his calling was molded perfectly to his changing skills – and as such was filled with joy, love, and service to others,” adds Brooks. “Let’s take Brahms’ advice, not just for music, but study Bach to improve our lives as well.”