

BERKELEY
SYMPHONY
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NOW

07|08 SEASON

INAUGURAL SEASON
Berkeley Akademie



Kent Nagano & Stuart Canin

CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

**J.S. BACH
BEETHOVEN
STRAUSS**

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

First Congregational Church of Berkeley

BERKELEY AKADEMIE ENSEMBLE

2007-08 INAUGURAL SEASON

Kent Nagano Stuart Canin

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JAMES A. KLEINMANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**8:00 pm, Wednesday, December 19, 2007
First Congregational Church of Berkeley**

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, BWV 1048

- I. [Allegro]
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Grosse Fuge, Op. 133

— INTERMISSION —

RICHARD STRAUSS

Metamorphosen, A Study for 23 Solo Strings

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, BWV 1047

- I. [Allegro]
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

**Stuart Canin, violin
Emma Moon, flute
Laura Griffiths, oboe
David Washburn, piccolo trumpet**

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**Tonight's concert will be broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM,
Sunday, January 27, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.**

Berkeley Akademie Ensemble is a program of Berkeley Symphony.
Berkeley Symphony is a member of the League of American Orchestras
and the Association of California Symphony Orchestras.

Program Notes

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

J. S. Bach was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, in what is now the state of Thuringia in east-central Germany. He died on July 28, 1750, in Leipzig. The third of the so-called “Brandenburg” concertos attained its final form during Bach’s tenure as Kapellmeister in the principality of Anhalt-Cöthen, although the work is probably a revision of a concerto (now lost) written while Bach served in Weimar between 1714 and 1717. The date of the work’s first performance is not known; it was not published until 1850 (although some earlier manuscript copies exist), when C.F. Peters of Leipzig issued both score and parts. Bach’s score calls for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos, and basso continuo (consisting of violone and harpsichord). Duration ca. 11 min.

In March of 1719, Johann Sebastian Bach traveled to Berlin to take delivery of a splendid new harpsichord for his then-current employer, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. While in the Prussian capital, Bach would no doubt have managed to get himself presented at court, where he would probably have performed before some of the more musically-minded members of the royal family. Presumably, one family member, Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, was moved to request

that Bach send him some compositions for his own library.

It took Bach two years to comply with Christian Ludwig’s request. On March 24, 1721, he put the finishing touches on an elaborate manuscript. This beautifully copied-out score (titled *Six Concertos with Diverse Instruments*) contains a half-dozen previously-composed instrumental concertos together with a dedication to the Margrave. Bach’s dedication, written in passable courtly French, runs in part:

Your Highness deigned to honor me with the command to send Your Highness some pieces of my composition: I have then . . . taken the liberty of rendering my most humble duty . . . with the present concertos, which I have adapted to several instruments.

It is not known whether the Margrave thanked Bach for the gift, or whether the works were even played. After the Margrave’s death, his library (including the manuscript) was sold, eventually becoming part of what is now the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (German State Library) in Berlin. During the revival of interest in Bach’s music in the 19th century, the manuscript was published for the first time and one of Bach’s biographers named the set after their dedicatee. To this day, the works are known as the “Brandenburg Concertos.”

The composition dates of the concertos are not known. Based on

stylistic features, it seems most likely that they originated during Bach’s years as Court Organist and Chamber Musician to the Duke of Weimar (1708–1714), when Bach first got to know the Italian concerto style and in particular the music of Antonio Vivaldi. It also seems likely that Bach, who presided over an instrumental ensemble of extraordinary ability in his capacity as Kapellmeister to the prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, tested and revised the concertos before presenting them to the Margrave.

It was Bach’s usual practice, when gathering together collections of his works for presentation or publication, to treat his subject encyclopedically—in other words, to try to demonstrate everything it was possible to achieve within a genre. The Brandenburg Concertos are no exception to this habit. The six works exhibit an astonishing variety of instrumentation, as well as approaches to texture and formal considerations. No two concertos use the same orchestration, nor the same formal procedure.

In the past 250 years or so, the term “concerto” has come to mean “an orchestral work featuring a solo instrument.” Yet from the birth of the genre in the early 17th century up through Bach’s time the term was used for pieces with a great variety of configurations. A common arrangement was the *concerto grosso*, in which a small group of instruments (the *concertino*) was pitted against the full orchestra (the *ripieno*). Other, more flexible arrangements were also possible, including ones in which the various members of the orchestra take solos in turn.

The third Brandenburg concerto is scored for three groups of three string instruments each, composed of violins, violas, and cellos, respectively,

supported by a *basso continuo* group. Almost certainly, Bach envisioned a single player per part, and that is how the work will be performed tonight (although modern orchestras often employ larger forces).

Bach treats the ensemble in a dazzling variety of ways. Sometimes he treats each trio of instruments as a unit, creating a texture stratified by range. At other times, he treats one of the trios as if it were a *concertino* group (a soloist with two accompanying instruments) and the rest of the ensemble acts as the *ripieno*. In the course of the piece, every one of the string parts gets the opportunity to shine as soloist. Then occasionally, the entire orchestra coalesces into a single unit, playing in unison to emphasize a particular point of arrival.

One unusual feature of the work is the lack of a proper slow movement. In Bach’s manuscript there are simply two chords marked “Adagio” between the two fast movements. These are often interpreted to signify that an improvisation was called for, but Bach placed a fermata (or “hold” sign) over the second chord, rather than over the first, which would be the normal cue for a cadenza. In any case, it is up to each performer to decide how to deal with the situation.

The first movement is based on a simple neighbor-note motive (main note—step below—main note) which chugs along, providing an inexorable rhythmic drive. Bach avoids monotony by shifting the motive frequently between upbeat and downbeat positions. When in the downbeat position, the motive has a tail that includes wide leaps that get bigger as the piece progresses. At the movement’s climax, the leaps extend to wide-ranging arpeggios, outlining a

dissonant chord over a dominant pedal. When that chord finally resolves, the journey back to tonic begins and soon the opening melody is heard in its original guise.

The final movement is cast as a fleet *perpetuum mobile* that pauses only at the ends of each half (each of which is repeated). At the start, the instruments enter canonically, but this turns out to be a ruse; there is no strict counterpoint here. The rushing sixteenth-note motive is paired with an innocuous-seeming repeated-note countersubject. Soon after the start of the second half, a new, lighthearted theme is introduced. Each of its occurrences is marked *piano*, as if to say “this is just a bit off the subject, but . . .” In the course of the second half, the repeated-note motive elbows its way to the foreground, causing the original sixteenth-note tune to throw up its hands in despair. This effectively brings the work to an end.

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Grosse Fuge in B-flat Major, op. 133

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn and baptized on December 17, 1770. He died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. Originally scored for string quartet, edited for string orchestra. Duration ca. 16 min.

Beethoven composed his B-flat Major String Quartet, op. 130,

between August and November 1825 as the third of the three late quartets commissioned by Prince Nicholas Galitzin. The work was premiered on March 21, 1826 by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, Beethoven’s faithful interpreters and champions. The second and fourth movements had to be encored on the spot to satisfy the clamorous applause. The colossal fugue, however, met with some resistance, and the usually headstrong Beethoven was somehow persuaded to detach it and compose another concluding movement for the Quartet.

In 1827 the *Grosse Fuge* was published separately as Opus 133, for which Beethoven received as much money as he had previously for the entire Quartet. It took approximately a century for quartets to begin playing the B-flat Quartet with its original finale, but such performances now predominate. Meanwhile, the *Grosse Fuge* developed a life on its own, both in quartet performances and in transcription for string orchestras.

With this tour de force Beethoven produced not so much his “Art of Fugue,” as many have suggested, but his “Art of Thematic Transformation,” ingeniously clothed in fugal raiment. The extraordinary introduction, Overtura, previews the various incarnations of the main subject in reverse order in a key sequence of fifths. The main body of the fugue is organized in three “movements.” The first presents a double fugue in which the jagged countersubject is developed as extensively as the main subject. Beethoven’s notation of the sustained notes of the fugue subject has occasioned much discussion—each pitch is written as a pair of tied eighth-notes instead of as a quarter note. What did Beethoven mean by this rare form of emphasis?

The slow middle “movement” shifts to a rich new key, not for a strict fugue but for a fugato (imitative texture) in which the main subject is treated as a cantus firmus (fixed melody) around which the other parts weave their counterpoint. The “finale” begins with a dancelike section based on the main subject and in the original key, but abruptly shifts into a fugue in a remote key. This unpredictable fugue abounds with modulations and contrapuntal complexities. Beethoven delights in treating mere fragments of the subject. He recalls his slow section—and the introduction in an even more condensed style—and closes his “Art of Thematic Transformation” with a brilliant coda, which despite all its seriousness introduces a touch of levity.

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Metamorphosen

RICHARD STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

Richard Strauss was born in Munich on June 11, 1864, and died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, on September 8, 1949. Scored for 23 solo strings (10 violins, 5 violas, 5 cellos, and 3 basses). Duration ca. 26 min.

In his lush, somber *Metamorphosen* the eighty-year-old Strauss is said to have poured out his sorrow over the consequences of World War II on musical life, touched off by the destruction of the places to which his

own career had been tied: the Munich Court Theater and the Dresden and Vienna opera houses. He had labeled an early sketch, written the day the Munich Court Theater was bombed in October 1943, *Trauer um München* (*Mourning for Munich*).

The main work on the piece took place in 1945 in the space of one month, between March 13 and April 12. This was a time when Strauss had set himself the task of reading all of the great Goethe’s works, and he was particularly seized by some of the aging author’s self-searching in two poems from *Zahme Xenien*: *Niemand wird sich selber kennen* (No one can really know himself) and *Wie’s aber in der Welt zugeht* (But what goes on in the world). Strauss copied out both poems in full in the pages of the *Metamorphosen* sketches. Thus it seems the melancholy of some of Strauss’s most beautiful music has roots not only in tragic world events but in the composer’s own self-searching. The title *Metamorphosen* may also bear a Goethe connection, since the poet used the word to refer to his mental processes in the course of works that took decades to write, and again in the titles of two late poems.

Strauss could well have been thinking about transformations in his own long life, but his sketches also show considerable metamorphosis of themes in the act of creating this piece. His poignant main theme went through many transformations before the idea of linking it with a famous phrase from the Funeral March of Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony occurred to him. It is these metamorphoses during the creative process to which the title refers, since in the piece itself the themes do not metamorphose, or even go through variations. Instead, the themes develop

along the symphonic lines of a free, rhapsodic sonata form. Toward the end of *Metamorphosen* Strauss makes the Beethoven connection explicit by actually quoting the Funeral March phrase in the cellos and basses and marking it “IN MEMORIAM!” in the score.

Strauss subtitled his piece *A Study for 23 Solo Strings*, and it is his remarkable treatment of the ten violins, five violas, five cellos, and three basses that give *Metamorphosen* its uniquely rich sonority. Each of the twenty-three parts is different, yet he basically maintains a four-, five-, or six-voice texture with constantly shifting balancing and doublings.

The solemn opening section introduces not only the main idea with its dotted descending line that ultimately links to the *Eroica* phrase, but a melody with an expressive leap up and little descending turns and a lighter theme in the major mode. This “exposition” spins out all manner of modulations in a Romantic language that stems from Wagner’s most chromatic harmonies. The central section—a kind of fantasia on previously heard themes—is especially notable for the solo flights of individual strings, jabbing reentries of the main idea, and a climax of almost unbearable intensity. Following a loud sustained peak, the opening returns in its original slow tempo with subtle alterations. This much telescoped “recapitulation” surges and ebbs several times before the massive coda begins with accumulations of the main idea. Just as Strauss reaches the depths of despair, the cellos and basses solemnly quote the phrase from Beethoven’s Funeral March, which Strauss overlays with his own Beethoven-like main theme, creating heartrending dissonances.

Paul Sacher, who had been pressing Strauss for some time to write a work for his Collegium Musicum Zurich, conducted the premiere of *Metamorphosen* on January 25, 1946. He invited Strauss to conduct parts of two rehearsals, about which director and administrator Oscar Schuh wrote, “He excelled in bringing out the main line of development by means of powerful dynamic and tempo increases—an unforgettable experience for the conductor, the Collegium musicians, and the few listeners who were present!”

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Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major, BWV 1047

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

For background information about the Brandenburg Concertos please see the opening of Victor Gavenda’s note for Concerto No. 3 above. Scored for recorder (performed on flute), oboe, trumpet, solo violin, strings, and basso continuo. Duration ca. 13 min.

Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos offer a wide spectrum of innovative instrumental schemes and combinations and a great variety in treatment of form—the collection amounts to his “Art of the Concerto Grosso.” While Nos. 1, 3, and 6 use instrumental forces that are fairly balanced in number, Nos. 2, 4, and 5 contrast a small *concertino* with a large *ripieno*.

The Second Concerto uses a

four-part *concertino* consisting of trumpet, flute (originally recorder), oboe, and violin, all soprano instruments, but contrasting in timbre. The high trumpet part, difficult in Bach’s day, still challenges performers and thrills audiences. (Some scholars believe the part may have been intended for horn.) Unlike the challenges of differentiating a homogeneous group of instruments, as in the Third Concerto, Bach sets himself the task of blending a disparate group of instruments. This creates particular balance problems, and necessitated the composer’s use of more detailed dynamics marks than he often provided.

Though Bach’s manuscript gives no tempo marking for the first movement, the style clearly is that of the vigorous fast movements that typically opened concertos in his day. His fanfare-like *ritornello*, or refrain, is one that sounds perfectly suited to the trumpet, yet he ingeniously offers

it to all the other instruments before the trumpet takes it up near the midpoint. Bach’s harmonic scheme has the refrains taking up keys closely related to the home key—like planets “orbiting” the sun, which gives rise to the designation “solar plan.”

The tender character of the Andante provides marked contrast as does its instrumentation, which is reduced to flute, oboe, violin, cello, and harpsichord. With its rich thirds and beautiful suspensions this movement has always contributed to the Concerto’s great appeal.

The final movement combines the rigorous brilliance of a fugue with the joyfulness of a dance. Silent in the middle movement, the trumpet leads off with the fugue subject, which is taken up by each soloist in turn. It is again the trumpet whose ringing tones conclude the piece with one last reminder of the jubilant subject.

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NEXT BERKELEY AKADEMIE CONCERT



Berkeley Akademie Ensemble

Thursday, May 1, 2008 | Kent Nagano

C.P.E. Bach, Symphony in C Major

Igor Stravinsky, *Apollon Musagète*

Wolfgang A. Mozart, “Posthorn” Serenade

8PM at First Congregational Church

The final program of Berkeley Akademie Ensemble’s debut season features violin luminary Stuart Canin leading the first half of the program from the concertmaster chair.