

SCOTTISH SINFONIA

NIGEL MURRAY violin
ANNE EVANS flute

patron Roderick Brydon
conductor Neil Mantle

BACH CONCERT

Cathedral Church of St Mary, Palmerston Place

Sunday 24 August 1980 at 5pm

programme

VIOLIN CONCERTO in E MAJOR

BWV 1042

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro assai

NIGEL MURRAY violin

If the orchestral suites are modelled on the French School the three violin concertos are influenced by the Italian - and largely by Antonio Vivaldi. Bach transcribed several of the Italian master's concertos in his early years and in the violin concertos he follows their basic layout. Where they part company with their models however is in the contrapuntal development of themes and especially in the closer interrelationship between solo and tutti passages. The second movement of the present work is a set of variations upon an ostinato-like figure in the bass, while the finale is dance derived.

The concertos were composed around 1720 during Bach's Cöthen period.

ORCHESTRAL SUITE No.2 in B MINOR

BWV 1067

Ouverture
Rondeau
Sarabande
Bourrées 1 & 2
Polonaise
Menuet
Badinerie

ANNE EVANS flute

The four orchestral suites have come down to us only in the form of a set of contemporary orchestral parts partly in Bach's autograph and partly by an unknown hand. Even the place and date of composition are uncertain, but most authorities put them in Bach's Cöthen period, probably between 1717 and 1723.

The French suite originated as music for the court balls of seventeenth century France. After the 'Ouverture' they had no fixed succession of movements. The French overture consisted of a brilliant allegro, usually fugal framed on either side by a slow, stately section of great nobility.

Of Bach's four suites the Second is the most heavily influenced by the conventions of the French court and its composers.

After the Ouverture, unusual in that in the return to the opening slow section Bach not only changes from common to triple time but introduces new material instead of closely paralleling the opening (cf Suite No.3), come six short dance movements.

Rondeau (Gavotte) A favourite form of Couperin and Marais, this was originally a French peasant dance which reached court (in a refined form) in the sixteenth century.

Sarabande A slow and solemn dance in three time. It should be noticed that here Bach has the melody and bass line in canon at the twelfth.

Bourrées 1 & 2 Like the Gavotte the Bourrée always began on the second, weaker beat of the bar, but is generally of more lively tempo.

Polonaise & Double The exact origin of the 'Polish dance' is uncertain. It only entered court at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The somewhat strutting rhythm and sharply contrasting dynamics must have

provided welcome relief to the jaded palates of the nobles. The Double is (with the Badinerie) the most openly virtuosic part of the Suite for the solo flute, who executes brilliant flourishes over the Polonaise theme in the continuo.

Menuet The most famous of all the dance movements is first to be found in the operas of Lully. It was originally a very rapid movement: L'Affilard (1705) quotes 160 beats to the minute. But by 1750 it had become far more measured, danced with great restraint and barely suggested movement.

Badinerie ('teasing' or 'trifling') As already stated, this is a movement of great virtuosity. It was not a dance movement at all, but was used as an orchestral interlude.

INTERLUDE OF 10 MINUTES

Allegro
Allegro

The six Brandenburg Concertos were written while Bach was in the service of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. They were the result of a commission from Ludwig, the Margrave of Brandenburg, in 1719. The Margrave had a fine band of musicians and wanted new music to show off their skills. Bach despatched the concertos with a long flowery dedication phrased in a suitably obsequious manner. Ludwig never replied, and it is believed that the works lay unopened in his library. After his death the bundle of manuscripts was sold off as junk. Fortunately for us, they eventually found their way to the Berlin Royal Library.

Each of the concertos features different groups of players. No.3 is scored for strings only - 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos and bass. Although the work as we have it is in two movements, both of them fast, Bach obviously intended a slow central movement to be improvised, as he left two isolated chords to indicate the correct musical transition. We have inserted a short violin cadenza at this point.

ORCHESTRAL SUITE No.3 in D MAJOR

BWV 1068

Overture
Air
Gavottes 1& 2
Bourrée
Gigue

This suite has more festive scoring than No.2 - oboes, trumpets, drums and strings. The second movement is the air made famous or infamous by the syrupy transcription of the nineteenth century violinist Wilhelmj - 'Air on a G string'. After the succeeding two dance movements the suite is rounded off with a gigue. The jig originated in Elizabethan England and is to be found in the virginal books of the time. Curiously it was little danced on the continent but was more popular as a purely instrumental piece.

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NIGEL MURRAY was born in Aberdeen and studied the violin in London with Norbert Brainin, who first inspired him to study Bach's violin works in depth. He later studied in Switzerland and Italy before returning to London to become a member of the Menuhin Festival Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin's in the Fields. He gave many recitals in Britain and abroad with the pianist David Ward and as a member of the Georgian String Quartet. In 1971 he returned to Scotland to study for a BSc at Edinburgh University, and since completing his degree he has been in charge of chamber music and orchestral playing at St Mary's Music School, as well as teaching the violin there.

ANNE EVANS is a graduate of Edinburgh University where she took an honours degree in French and German. She studied flute with David Nicholson in Edinburgh and Prof. Camillo Wanausek in Vienna. Her first professional engagement was a European tour in 1975 with the Mozartoper, Salzburg. In the following year she returned for a longer tour with them. In Edinburgh her activities are divided between flute teaching, coaching (for the Lothian Region Schools' Orchestra) and performing both as soloist and as a member of various ensembles. Her engagements have included many appearances with the Scottish Baroque Ensemble, and last season she made her first recording with the BBC. She has given many recitals throughout Scotland with her husband Peter, who is a professional pianist. Recently they gave a London performance in which they were joined by the cellist Steven Isserlis. Anne has been principal flute of Scottish Sinfonia since 1978.

