

The Art of Counterpoint from Bach to Zelenka
Presenting Kleine Kammermusik in Concert

KLEINE KAMMERMUSIK:

Geoffrey Burgess, oboe and voice flute
Meg Owens, oboe, oboe d'amore, oboe da caccia
Stephanie Corwin, bassoon
Becca Humphrey, cello
Leon Schelhase, harpsichord

PROGRAM:

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
and Johann Kirnberger? (1721–1783)

Trio Sonata arr. for voice flute, oboe d'amore, continuo
Largo – Vivace – Adagio – Presto, BWV 1038

Johann Sebastian Bach

Contrapunctus I from *The Art of Fugue*, BWV 1080

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745)

Vide, Domine, cantilena circularis, ZWV 179

Johann Sebastian Bach

Canon a 2 super thema regium

Variatio 15, Canone alla Quinta. a 1 Clav.: Andante from Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Fugue in g minor from Fantasy and Fugue for organ, BWV 542

Three-Part Ricercar from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079

Jan Dismas Zelenka

Sonata IV, 2 oboes, bassoon, continuo, ZWV 181/4

Andante – Allegro – Adagio -- Allegro ma non troppo

Program Notes by Geoffrey Burgess

Jan Dismas Zelenka has come to be regarded as one of the best-kept secrets of the Baroque. He was born near Prague just six years before Johann Sebastian Bach, and died in Dresden five years before Bach died. His scores, guarded by court exclusivity, have come to light only relatively recently, and reveal a prodigious talent coupled with a forthright, inventive spirit.

Zelenka arrived in Dresden in 1710-11, where he was initially employed as a violone (double bass) player at the court of the Elector of Saxon and King of Poland. An apprenticeship in counterpoint and composition with Johann Joseph Fux (renowned for his counterpoint primer *Gradus ad Parnassum*), and exposure to the latest Italian musical fashions as promoted by Vivaldi and other Italian ex-patriots like Dresden-based violin virtuoso Francesco Maria Veracini, equipped him to substitute for the ailing court church composer, Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729). In 1735, the court granted Zelenka the title *Kirchenkomponist*, and the following year Bach received the honorary designation *Hof-Compositeur* from the Saxon Elector. But it was only after continuous lobbying that Zelenka was finally adequately remunerated for his services. The two composers must have found in each other a kindred spirit. J.S. Bach sought out Zelenka's music (Wilhelm Friedemann supplied him a copy of Zelenka's *Magnificat*), and it should not come as a surprise that Bach was an admirer of the work of his Bohemian contrapuntalist-counterpart.

Bach and Zelenka were both conservative in their aesthetic outlook, and their contrapuntal explorations would be largely overlooked by the Enlightenment and Romantic era. Like Johann Sebastian, Jan Dismas also devoted his talent to the glorification of God: the only difference being that, rather than Lutheran, Zelenka's God was Catholic.

Zelenka's virtuosic contrapuntal techniques, clothed in a profusion of ornamental detail, intense dissonance and chromaticism, situate him squarely with Bach as a master contrapuntalist of the Baroque. His six sonatas, dated from around 1720, are not only some of the most virtuosic works written for double reeds, but are worthy to stand alongside revered models in the genre by Arcangelo Corelli and the trio sonata from J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering*.

Read more about this program at www.choralarts.com/blog.