

This concert samples one of “Father” Bach’s less celebrated and more puzzling but nevertheless wonderful works, along with two by his sons, and a work by an acquired member of the Bach family, Georg Philipp Telemann.

Families matter. And as the Holiday season approaches, we wish the best to each of *your* families, from ours – and, by proxy, from the Bachs, as well.

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) was the most prominent of his generation of German composers (eclipsing his friend Johann Sebastian Bach in contemporary fame). He was also godfather of one of Bach’s sons and as such would have been considered as “part of the [Bach] family.” He can thus be included in a “Bach family” concert.

Unlike Bach, Telemann traveled widely, and happily absorbed new musical styles that were being developed in France and Italy. While this adventurous trait helped make him popular in his own time, it troubled later musicologists. As a result, only recently has Telemann regained anything like his former stature as a composer of the first rank. This “Sonata” is in some ways akin to a contemporary Italian concerto grosso — a large work, incorporating five solo voices (unusually, two of these are violas) plus basso continuo. It is also in a somewhat unfamiliar key, f minor.

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782) was the youngest of the sons of J. S. Bach — born when his father was 50 years old. After being taught at home in Leipzig, he studied in Italy, and then spent his entire career in England. Both his early learning experiences and his later location influenced his compositions. This work — a “Quintetto” because, in the Baroque fashion, he did not count “continuo” instruments — is more Classical than Baroque. One can hear a melodically-focused musical approach that not only influenced Mozart when the two met in London in 1764-5, but must have affected J. C. Bach’s older brother when J.C.F Bach visited him. J.C. Bach was also an early proponent of a radical new instrument — the *pianoforte*, which we now know as the piano. The sound of the piano features prominently in this work.

Johann Christof Friedrich Bach (1732-95) was the next-to-youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, and also a gifted composer. However, he spent his working life in the obscure role of court composer at remote Bückeburg, Germany. Thus his compositions, while often outstanding, have been far less known and performed than those of his father and brothers. J.C.F. Bach’s patron at Bückeburg was nevertheless a sophisticated music lover; consequently, the works of this isolated composer fully reflect a musical revolution that was sweeping the continent. The e-minor Sonata is a good example of his approach, mixing Baroque and “Galant” styles, and at times strongly suggesting the new, “Italian” musical idiom.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was not only a great composer but the father of four other major composers. A “summit” composer of the Baroque, by the end of his life Bach could see his era was being eclipsed by a new musical style — one being led in part by his sons.

The J.S. Bach music we know today is usually “serious;” often religious and highly wrought. But other sides of Bach as a parent, teacher, friend and composer existed. These characteristics are to be found in his “occasional” and more intimate music, such as this fascinating cantata, BWV 209.

The cantata seems to have been composed around 1731, as part of a farewell celebration for a student who was leaving for a new professional post. We can also assume that its soprano part was performed by Anna Magdalena Bach, the composer’s second wife. But — why are there so many nautical references, if the trip would be to landlocked Ansbach? Why is the text in Italian, and why a pastiche of opera libretti by Guarini and Metastasio? Why is the introductory Sinfonia not a true “introduction” at all, but a one-movement flute concerto that (for Bach) is unusually Italianate? Were games being played, affectionate musical jokes and compliments being presented that were understandable only to the Bach family and other insiders? Scholars puzzle and argue about these matters. What is not open to argument is the music’s beauty and, in the last movement especially, its sheer joy.

Shoreline Chamber Players

The Shoreline Chamber Players perform chamber music for pleasure. This has led them to venues such as UConn-Avery Point, St. Edmund's / Enders Island and Providence's Music Mansion. The music they play was written for people like them — skilled *amateurs* (musicians performing for the love of doing so). In the *amateur* tradition, they are unpaid. Contributions support their music library and are shared with host non-profit organizations.

David Bradley (cello) is a retired music teacher who lives in Stonington. He earned his BMed and MMus from URI, and during a 39-year period with the University's Orchestras, served many times as principal cellist and bassist. David's career involved virtually every facet of music education, from pre-kindergarten through high school and college. He also plays in both classical and popular music combos.

Jean Brown (violin, viola) retired from teaching music in the East Lyme schools in 2002. A former member of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, Musica Dolce, and other ensembles, Jean has been a private teacher of violin and viola. She finds that one of the joys of retirement is having time to play chamber music on a regular basis. She and her husband reside in Niantic.

Charles Hildreth (keyboard) is a retired consumer researcher. He studied classical and jazz piano as a youngster, and played in dance bands in high school and college. At Cornell University he sang with the A Cappella Choir, played glockenspiel in the Big Red Band, and was Chimes Master of the 18-bell carillon. He has participated in chamber music workshops at Kneisel Hall in Blue Hill, Maine, and lives in Mystic.

Matt McCauley (double bass) is a singer, double bass player and electronic musician. He studied bass at Oberlin Conservatory with Jacque Posselle and Diane Meisel, electronic music with John Meisel, jazz theory and bass with Jeff Fuller and improvisational music with cellist David Darling.

Beth Peirce (violin) received a BA in Music from Ithaca College and a MS from Indiana University. For over 35 years Beth has played with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony and the Connecticut String Trio. She and her husband reside in East Lyme, and have three grown adoptive children.

Jane Revkin (flute) studied music at University of Rhode Island and received an M Ed. degree from Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. Jane focuses on music education and on music performance in the community. She is associated with RI Philharmonic Orchestra and Montessori schools in Rhode Island. She teaches flute and recorder in East Greenwich, RI, is a member of the Rhode Island Wind Ensemble, and performs regularly with various groups in the community.

John Simpson (violin) is a founding member of the Shoreline Trio and Madison Connection chamber ensembles, and plays violin in the American Chamber Orchestra and Civic Orchestra of New Haven. He has been coached by members of the Fine Arts, Charleston, Vermeer, Muir and Manhattan quartets. An engineer, John lives in Madison. He is currently a volunteer with Music Haven.

Peter Tacy (viola) is Executive Director Emeritus, Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. Peter was a headmaster in Connecticut and a teacher for nineteen years in Massachusetts. A resident of Mystic, he has been a participant in the Manhattan String Quartet's Conferences for 25 years, and was a founding member of the Litchfield Chamber Orchestra.

Birgitta Andersson Whited (soprano) sang as a child in Sweden, and later was both a classical singer and a vocalist with a big band. After settling in the U.S. she began singing leads in musical theater with Academy Players in East Greenwich, RI., and the Cabot Street Light Opera, in Providence. She sings for Swedish audiences around New England, including in New Sweden, Maine, where Midsommar Fests are a cherished tradition. Birgitta lives in Hope Valley, RI.