

Grace and Harmony from the Baroque

*A Concert Honoring the Ministry of New Hope International
in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*



Performed by

Ensemble Gaudior

Alexandra MacCracken, baroque violin and director

Daniel Rippe, baroque cello

Elena Tsai, harpsichord

Sponsored by

National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

Vienna Presbyterian Church, Vienna, Virginia

2:00 PM, October 31, 2010
4101 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

PROGRAM

Sonata in A major, Op. 1, No. 3 (HWV 361)
for violin and basso continuo
Andante, Allegro, Adagio, Allegro

George Friderich Handel
(1685–1759)

Prelude and Fugue in F major, BWV 880
(from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II)
for harpsichord solo

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Ms. Tsai

Sonata No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017
for violin and obbligate harpsichord
Siciliano, Allegro, Adagio, Allegro

Bach

INTERMISSION

Remarks about New Hope International

Free-will Offering

Passacaglia in G minor (“The Guardian Angel”)
for violin solo

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber
(1644–1704)

Ms. MacCracken

Two Sonatas in A major, K. 208–09
for harpsichord solo
Adagio e cantabile, Allegro

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685–1757)

Ms. Tsai

Sonata in C minor, RV 6
for violin and basso continuo
Preludio, Corrente, Grave, Allemanda: Allegro

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678–1743)

New Hope International partners with the Church in eight countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union by focusing on “the next generation,” which involves children, youth, and families. New Hope believes that by God’s design, families are the primary influence in nurturing and guiding the next generation toward maturity, while the church is the second most important influence. Thus, New Hope works closely with churches to provide support, training, and resources for establishing successful marriages and families. In many of the countries where it works, New Hope has been welcomed for years into public schools to provide presentations on issues of substance abuse and abstinence. Since Communist times, New Hope has had an active program of Christian summer camps. New Hope is the largest publisher of Sunday School materials in Eastern European languages.

As members of God’s family, reconciled by the cross, New Hope wants to contribute to the unity within the Church by working across denominations, and it seeks partners with a wide range of specialized ministries and outreaches. You are invited to visit the information table in the narthex to learn about New Hope’s Vision Tours and about its short-term mission opportunities. Contributions are welcomed and may be made by check to New Hope International.

PROGRAM NOTES

Although **George Frideric Handel** devoted most of his attention to composing vocal music, today that part of his legacy (with the notable exception of *Messiah*) is less well known than his equally fine but comparatively small output of orchestral and chamber music. Handel's so-called Opus 1, a group of sonatas for various solo instruments and basso continuo, was actually a pirate publication compiled about 1730 by the English publisher John Walsh, and indeed two of the dozen pieces it contains are almost certainly not by Handel, while others were reassigned to different instruments. The A-major violin sonata, however, is both genuine and essentially unaltered from Handel's surviving autograph manuscript. Its songful opening Andante is followed by a fugal second movement strongly reminiscent of the corresponding section of a sonata in the same key by Arcangelo Corelli, whom Handel knew while living in Italy as a young man. A brief Adagio then leads directly into a lively binary-form movement that is a gigue (akin to the English jig) in all but name.

Johann Sebastian Bach is remembered today mainly for his activities as a virtuoso organist and devout church musician, but we should not forget that he was also a teacher, especially while working in Leipzig from 1723 until the end of his life. Twice during his career he assembled collections of preludes and fugues that included one such pair in every possible key, including remote tonalities rarely or never used by his contemporaries. Many of these originated as teaching pieces for his pupils, who undoubtedly were expected to learn how to tune as well as to play the harpsichord and clavichord. In naming his two volumes *The Well-Tempered Clavier* Bach was making the point that if one knew how to do it properly, it was possible to tune a keyboard instrument in such a way that one could in fact play in any key without producing unacceptable dissonances, an idea which at the time was still somewhat avant-garde. The set in F major from Book II consists of a prelude based on steadily-flowing eighth-note figuration followed by a fugue in similarly uninterrupted triple-meter gigue rhythm.

Bach's six sonatas for violin and harpsichord—not to be confused with the six legendary sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied violin—are effectively trios for two musicians, in which the violinist plays one melodic line while each of the keyboard player's hands is given an independent line of its own. (In contrast, when playing basso continuo the harpsichordist performs the written-out bass line with his or her left hand—often together with another instrument such as cello or viola da gamba—while using the right hand to improvise a chordal accompaniment.) The C-minor sonata begins with a siciliano movement whose theme resembles that of the alto aria “Erbarne dich, mein Gott” (Have Mercy, My God) from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, while the third movement also sounds like an aria for the violin with unrelated accompanimental figuration in the harpsichord part. Meanwhile, the second and fourth movements are vigorous and contrapuntal Allegros in which the sonata's true nature as a trio is most clearly apparent.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, widely known in his own time as a virtuoso violinist, wrote virtually all of his music for his own instrument, either as soloist or in an ensemble. Born in Bohemia, he entered the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1670 as a violinist; by 1684 he had risen to the position of music director there and had published four collections of instrumental music, which call at various times for the use of high positions on the fingerboard, double-stops, and other idiomatic and path-breaking performance techniques. Biber's passacaglia for solo violin is the concluding piece in a manuscript collection that otherwise contains fifteen sonatas for violin and continuo depicting the mysteries of the Catholic rosary, each of which is identified by a small copperplate engraving. The illustration provided for this piece shows a small child and his guardian angel, whose constant presence is symbolized by the pattern of four descending notes (G, F, E-flat, and D) that is repeated continuously throughout the piece.

Domenico Scarlatti, born in the same year as both Bach and Handel, is less well known today than either of them, primarily because most of the music he composed was either operas and other secular vocal music, or solo sonatas for harpsichord, of which he wrote more than five hundred. Born in Naples, where his father Alessandro was a famous opera composer, he began his own career there before moving on to several positions in Rome; in his mid-30s he was appointed music director of the royal chapel in Lisbon, where Princess Maria Barbara became his harpsichord student. So successful was this relationship that after she married the crown prince of Spain, in 1728, Scarlatti spent the final three decades of his life in that country as her music master. Each of his keyboard sonatas consists of a single movement, usually in two repeated sections. Their tempos and moods vary widely, and many clearly reveal the influence of Iberian folk music idioms, including figuration reminiscent of flamenco guitar playing. Often they were written in pairs, using the same key but contrasting tempos (first slow, then fast), as is true of the two sonatas to be heard today.

Antonio Vivaldi began his career as music teacher at a Venetian orphanage for girls, but his fame soon spread widely, first through publications of his instrumental works and then from performances of his numerous operas in cities across Europe. Best known today as the author of more than 500 concertos, he also wrote lesser quantities of music for small ensembles, generally in a more conservative style. The violin sonata we have chosen is one of several that Vivaldi composed for the German violin virtuoso Johann Georg Pisendel, who studied with Vivaldi in 1716–17 while visiting Venice in the entourage of his employer, the Elector of Saxony. However, we will be performing the revised version (from a manuscript now in Manchester, England), for which Vivaldi extensively recomposed the bass line.

—Thomas G. MacCracken

THE MUSICIANS AND THEIR INSTRUMENTS

Ensemble Gaudior is dedicated to performing masterpieces of chamber music from the Baroque and Classical eras, using instruments from those periods or careful modern copies. By presenting this repertoire to modern concert audiences, we hope to contribute to the process of moving our world toward greater harmony. (The name Gaudior is borrowed from the musical unicorn in Madeleine L'Engle's book *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, who time-travels through the universe joyfully harmonizing with the music of the stars and planets.) Founded in 2000 and based in the Washington D.C. area, the group is built around a core instrumentation of violin and basso continuo, but frequently collaborates with guest artists in order to allow a greater variety of repertoire; additional information is available at www.ensemblegaudior.com.

Alexandra MacCracken, the founder and director of Ensemble Gaudior, has performed as a baroque violinist with Bach Sinfonia, the Washington Bach Consort, Opera Lafayette, and Modern Musick, as well as with other period-instrument ensembles in Richmond, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York. After earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in music from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Ms. MacCracken taught for several years at the University of Virginia, where she also played in the Piedmont Chamber Players, a faculty ensemble. Other highlights of her extensive experience as a chamber musician include membership in the Squareknot Quartet, whose repertoire ranged from the classics to innovative arrangements in popular, folk, and jazz styles, and in the baroque chamber ensembles *La Stravaganza* and *Harmonia Nova*. Her chief end in presenting this concert can be summed up in J. S. Bach's motto "Soli Deo Gloria": to celebrate, glorify, and enjoy God forever, who included music among all the gifts of creation.

Violin by Jacob Stainer (Absam, Austria, 1665), restored to baroque set-up by Fred Lindeman (Amsterdam, 1979); bows by Stephen Marvin (New York, 1981) after an 18th-century French bow now in the Musée de la musique in Paris, and by Richard Riggall (Philadelphia, 1996), after an English painting of c. 1700

Daniel Rippe received a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award for solo performance on viola da gamba, and has been a featured soloist with the Richmond Symphony in J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion*. In addition to local appearances with the Washington Bach Consort, the Folger Consort, Hesperus, and American Opera Theater, he has performed at the Boston Early Music Festival Fringe, Milwaukee's Early Music Now series, and the Pan-Pacific Gamba Gathering in Hawaii, as well as coaching early-music ensembles at Hood College, Towson University, and the University of Colorado. Mr. Rippe earned a Graduate Performance Diploma studying viola da gamba and baroque cello with Ann Marie Morgan at the Peabody Conservatory, and has recorded on the Centaur and Koch labels. He is also founding editor of RipMeister Publications, creating performance editions of early music repertory.

Violoncello by an anonymous Tyrolean maker, c. 1780, restored to baroque set-up by William L. Monical (New York, 1987); bow by H. F. Grabenstein (Williston, Vermont, 2006), based on 18th-century examples

Elena Tsai performs as a harpsichord soloist and continuo player in the Baltimore–Washington D.C. corridor, with ensembles including the Bach Sinfonia, Ensemble Gaudior, the Handel Choir of Baltimore, Harmonious Blacksmith, and Washington's Camerata. She has been the recipient of several awards, including the Harriet Hale Woolley Scholarship, the Frank Huntington Beebe Grant, and the Rislov Foundation Grant, which enabled her to study harpsichord in Paris for a year. She has also been a semi-finalist in both the Pro Musicis Competition in New York City and the Jurow International Harpsichord Competition. Ms. Tsai received her master's degree in harpsichord performance from the University of Michigan as a student of Edward Parmentier, and currently resides in Columbia, Maryland, with her husband, fellow harpsichordist Joseph Gascho, their two children, and four harpsichords.

Harpsichord by William Dowd (Boston, 1984), based on an instrument by Ioannes Ruckers (Antwerp, 1628) as modified in France in 1706