

About the Program

Jan Dismas Zelenka's virtuosic sonatas for oboe and bassoon evoke an elusive and unfamiliar emotional world, where the reeds sigh, welp, and proclaim their testimonies into the air. The quixotic music is mirrored in Zelenka's own peculiar life as a Bohemian violone player who found himself leading Dresden's Hofkapelle, one of the highest-paying orchestras in Europe at the time. A marriage of Galant style and his Bohemian harmonic ingenuity, these pieces expanded the possibilities of double-reed repertoire for centuries to come.

It was not by mere coincidence that Zelenka chose to compose such complex virtuosic music for an instrument like the *hautbois*, invented only some forty years ago at the time. In 1709, the Hofkapelle featured four virtuoso oboists, including the well-known Johann Christian Richter. By the time he composed this set of trio sonatas around 1721, the Hofkapelle oboists and bassoonists had likely already oriented the court towards the virtuosic possibilities of these instruments within the orchestra and chamber ensembles.

Until Heinz Holliger's Archiv recordings ushered in the Zelenka renaissance in 1972, these pieces were considered essentially unplayable due to their unparalleled technical difficulty. Today, we are excited to share the endless possibilities and eccentricities of Zelenka's sonic world.

Georg Frideric Handel remains one of the most celebrated composers of the Baroque era. Known mostly for his popular English oratorios, Handel actually was very well-travelled, and influenced by a variety of national styles, particularly those of Italy and Germany. While living in England in 1719, he was ordered to recruit singers for what would become the Royal Academy of Music. In pursuit of singers, he travelled to Dresden, where he attended an opera by Antonio Lotti and may have encountered Johann Christian Richter, the virtuoso oboist who likely played many of Zelenka's oboe sonatas.

Even though he likely heard phenomenal oboe playing in Dresden and beyond, he didn't seem to need convincing or inspiration to compose for the oboe. When he was asked about one of his compositions from childhood, he quipped, "I used to write like the Devil in those days, but chiefly for the *hautbois*, which was my favourite instrument." This lighthearted and energetic sonata for two recorders embodies the same musical excitement and passion of his oboe sonatas with a less dramatic tone. The recorders' unique lightness brings a brief joviality amid the spectacle.

A violinist from the small municipality of Buttstedt, **Johann Friedrich Fasch** composed prolifically for voice, but is today greater known for his works for instruments, which are the only manuscripts of his music that survived. In fact, none of his music was actually published in his lifetime, despite being frequently performed and enjoyed in his day. A student of Johann Kuhnau, Fasch actually went on to found the Leipzig Collegium in 1714, where J.S. Bach later became music director. Interestingly, Bach seems to have transcribed a Fasch trio sonata to create his famous organ work, BWV 585. From the same collection as the sonata Bach transcribed, Fasch's *Trio Sonata in Bb Major* for 2 oboes, bassoon, and continuo is similarly worthy of reiteration and celebration.

About the Artists

Oboist and recorder player, **Andrew Blanke** is an active performer both in the areas of historical and modern practice. He holds performance degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the Juilliard School. He now enjoys a varied career, performing with groups around the country. He resides in Washington Heights and frequently programs chamber concerts in and around New York City.

Gaia Saetermoe-Howard, of Los Angeles, California, is a dynamic interpreter of both historical music and the modern repertoire for the oboe and recorder. She performs regularly throughout the Northeast as part of varied concert programs, ranging from the Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church to Halloween-themed orchestral series with the Syracuse Symphoria. As a passionate educator, she maintains a thriving private oboe studio, and teaches at the Morse and MAP programs at The Juilliard School. She holds degrees in Oboe Performance from the Eastman School of Music and in Archaeology from the University of Rochester. Currently, she is pursuing a Masters of Music in Historical Performance from The Juilliard School.

Aaron Goler is a New York-based bassoonist, reedmaker, and teacher. A member of the Baroque ensemble Twelfth Night, Aaron has played with orchestras across North America including the National Symphony Orchestra, L'Orchestre Philharmonique des Musiciens de Montréal, the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra, and the St. Cloud Symphony. Aaron is currently studying under Dominic Teresi at The Juilliard School; he holds a Master's in Music Performance from McGill University and a Bachelor's from the University of Minnesota.

Kevin C. Devine performs engaging, often unconventional programs in his home base of New York and across the United States. Kevin has obtained degrees from Boston University, Stony Brook University, and most recently, is pursuing a graduate diploma at The Juilliard School. He has been invited to play solo recitals on several concert series, including Gotham Early Music Scene in Manhattan and Harpsichord Heaven at the Barn at Flintwoods. As an accompanist and teacher, he has taken part in Amherst Early Music Festival, American Bach Soloists and San Francisco Early Music Society Baroque Workshop. An avid hurdy-gurdy player, Kevin explores the breadth of the repertoire for the instrument, from the *cantigas de Santa Maria* to 18th-century arrangements of Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

NEXT WEEK: Gavin Black
Selections from Bach's The Art of the Fugue