

PROGRAM NOTES

William Byrd, an English composer-virginalist of the late Renaissance, was one of the first composers to elevate keyboard music to an independent art form. Pavan “Ph. Tregian” and Galliard come, as most of Byrd’s keyboard music, from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. Both Pavan and Galliard demonstrate the composer’s fascinating ability to contrapuntally weave whole sections from a short motif.

Girolamo Frescobaldi was acclaimed as the most brilliant performer on the harpsichord and organ of his day. He also was known for his eccentric character. Toccata Nona from *The Second Book of Toccatas* (1627) perfectly captures both characteristics: it is a piece of unprecedented virtuosity, with many short episodes following one another in a quirky way. Frescobaldi occasionally puts different meter proportions simultaneously in two hands, using Renaissance technique in a truly Baroque way. At the end of the toccata Frescobaldi left a special remark “non senza fatica si giunge al fine” (“not without effort does one reach the end”), acknowledging the challenges this piece presents.

Juan Bautista Cabanilles was a Spanish organist and composer at Valencia Cathedral. Unlike composers from other countries, who were finding a new musical expression in baroque style, Cabanilles follows traditions of Iberian renaissance music. *Diferencias de Folías* (1696) is a relatively late composition, but it is tracing its roots in music of Antonio de Cabezón. Its highly contrapuntal writing is complicated by free voice crossings, characteristic of renaissance polyphony.

Johann Jakob Froberger was a German composer who amalgamated both Italian and French styles in his music. He is known to have studied with Frescobaldi in Italy, and was one of the earliest developers of a French dance suite, consisting of Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue. His dance pieces are notable for their uneven phrases and use of French lute style *brisé*. In the Suite in D, typical of Froberger style, Allemande (“Meditation”) strays away from a regular dance rhythm, instead heavily using short rhetorical gestures.

Two pieces by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1724) demonstrate a significant change in French harpsichord style. *Les Tendres Plaintes* (The Tender Complaints) features long singing lines with a simple harmonic accompaniment. *Les Cyclopes*, with its unique virtuosic harpsichord writing, pictures an action scene between Odysseus and Polyphemus the Cyclops; the piece manifests Rameau’s taste for theatricality, which was fully realized in his first opera only nine years later.

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach was the second son of Johann Sebastian Bach, from whom he learned the art of composition. He was known as a genius improviser. Even though he follows his father’s contrapuntal style more closely than his brothers, his music has an improvisatory edge, which is noticeable even in fugues. *Fantasia in D minor*, composed around 1760 – 1785, is built from three elements: a turbulent Allegro di molto with arpeggiated figurations, a stately Grave in triple meter, and a fugue with a subject resembling ones by J. S. Bach, but developed with much more freedom. A short cadenza at the end suggests parallels with C. P. E. Bach and associated with him *Empfindsamkeit* style.

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Sonata in E major, Hob. XVI:31 was published in 1776 in a set of 6 sonatas. That collection marks a shift in Haydn's keyboard sonatas publications: here he begins to carefully notate articulation and ornamentation, which before he was leaving to the taste of performer (himself). The first movement of the sonata is in a traditional sonata form. Second movement is surprisingly in a baroque trio sonata style with counterpoints and a walking bass. Finale combines rondo and variations forms, with the middle episode cleverly alluding to both the theme of the finale and the opening tune of the first movement.

Joseph Woelfl was an Austrian pianist and composer, whose music is practically absent from the modern keyboard repertoire. In 1790 he visited Mozart in Vienna and possibly had lessons with him. In 1799 he had a piano 'duel' to Beethoven, which he lost. According to contemporaries, he was very tall and had a huge hand span. The Andante with Variations displays a style between Mozart and early Beethoven, with melodious tunes supported by alberti bass type of accompaniment, accents on weak beats, radical contrasts, and inventive sound palette.

Muzio Clementi was born in Rome, but moved to England when he was 14 to become a patriarch of the English piano school. His activities included being a prominent composer and virtuoso performer, piano pedagogy, publishing, editing, and piano manufacturing. Clementi also happens to be one of the last well-known keyboard composers who started their musical training on harpsichord. The Sonata in G major was published in 1802 in a set of three piano sonatas. The music is generally optimistic and joyful, but in each movement Clementi juxtaposes it with dramatic sections in minor that come seemingly out of nowhere. The first movement is written in a concert piano style, with bunches of chords, octaves and brilliant passagework. The second movement is a bel canto aria for piano. The catchy tune of the Finale rondo-sonata is reminiscent of Mozart's comic opera characters. Many elements of Clementi's style featured in this sonata, such as chordal and octave writing, brilliant passagework, sonorous dampers-off episodes, and keyboard 'bel canto' influenced Beethoven, Czerni, Chopin and many other piano composers.

Mikhail Grazhdanov

Harpsichord, Fortepiano

Historical Performance Practice, DMA