

## **Baroque Splendour: The Golden Age of Dresden**

### **A Chat with Guest Director Alfredo Bernardini**



**The baroque oboe produces one of the most distinctive sounds we associate with that period. How did you come to choose the oboe as your instrument?**

My interest in early music started when I was 12 years old and played renaissance consort music in a recorder quartet in my native city of Rome. Soon after, I discovered Bach cantatas – the most beautiful music ever – through the recordings of Leonhardt and Harmoncourt, which had just started to be released. I decided to be part of that world for life and to play the baroque oboe, both for its sound and its important role in that repertoire.

**Did you start, as many oboists do, with the modern instrument and then change over to the baroque oboe?**

I started with the recorder and studied modern oboe at the conservatory of Rome. At that time (mid-1970s), there was no baroque oboe playing in Italy yet. My modern oboe teacher focused on strictly technical and instrumental aspects, while I had an uncontrollable passion for the baroque repertoire. This is what prompted my rejection of the modern oboe immediately after my studies: I never played that instrument professionally, which I now think is a pity.

**You're also known for making baroque oboes. What drew you to such an ambitious task and what's involved in that process?**

Oboe players are busy on a daily basis with craftsmanship because they have to make their own reeds. Many among us decide to go a step further and make the whole instrument. Making a baroque oboe is relatively easy and it's fun. It also complements the performing activity very nicely: if the concert is a unique and passing moment, making an oboe can last as long as you like and after that it stays forever.

**You've created an interesting programme for Tafelmusik that includes works by composers we don't often hear, like Fasch and Pisendel. How did you go about selecting the works on the programme?**

The subject of the programme is the magnificent orchestra of the Saxon court of Dresden around 1720. This orchestra included some of the most amazing virtuosos of the time and this fact is reflected in the music written by and for them. Composers from all over Germany sent their music to that court, mostly written in the two dominant styles of the time: the dancing and rhythmic French style and the singing and brilliant

Italian style. Also Antonio Vivaldi, who had met the Dresden virtuoso violinist Pisendel, regularly sent his compositions to Dresden. And occasionally we come across incomparable pieces like the sensitive and extravagant *Hipochondrie* by Zelenka.

**We don't usually see ensembles directed from the oboe. Tell us about how you do this.**

There are a few examples of early 18th-century oboists who directed their orchestras while playing the oboe: Schuechbauer from Munich and Boehm from Darmstadt. The oboe is basically a stick and seems to be quite easy for an orchestra to follow. More than that, it's wonderful to work in cooperation with the other principals of the orchestra (first and second violin, cello and harpsichord, for example). This offers a dimension of a large chamber music group and often results in very lively performances.

**Your ensemble Zefiro is known around the world for virtuoso performances and recordings that emphasize wind instruments. What plans on are on the horizon for the ensemble?**

Zefiro's activity is divided into three areas: baroque chamber music, classical *Harmonie* music, and baroque orchestra music. As a *Harmonie* (large wind ensemble), having performed and recorded all of the works by Mozart and Beethoven, we're now working on a project that links Turkish music to the classical repertoire, with music by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Krommer and Rossini. As a baroque orchestra, we will soon release a CD with Telemann's antiphonal ouvertures – great music! And we will soon present more recordings of solo concerti: Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach and others. We would like to increase our collaboration with singers, and in 2012 we'll perform cantatas by Handel and Bach. Luckily the baroque repertoire for our instruments seems to be endless ...

### **Upcoming Guest Artist Masterclass**

**Saturday, December 3**

**3:00-5:00 pm**

**Class on wind and chamber repertoire from baroque Germany  
with Italian oboist **Alfredo Bernardini****

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to see Alfredo working with young artists.

**Admission:** \$10 (at the door)

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or call Emily Wall at **416.964.9562 x241** for details