

Tafelmusik

A RECORDER ROMP

Program Notes
by Charlotte Nediger

JACOB VAN EYCK

We open the concerts with a set of variations for solo recorder by the early seventeenth century Dutch carillonneur and recorder player **Jacob van Eyck**. He was carillonneur of the Domkerk, Janiskerk, Jacobikerk, and city hall in Utrecht, and director of the city's bellworks, spearheading refinements in the casting and tuning of bells. In 1649, the sixty-year old van Eyck was offered a salary raise "provided that he would now and then in the evening entertain the people strolling in the churchyard with the sound of his little flute." That same year he published two volumes of variations on popular tunes for solo recorder, named *Der Fluyten Lust-Hof* (The Flute's Garden of Delights), presumably drawn from what he played in the churchyard.

ANTONIO VIVALDI

The Four Seasons appeared in Vivaldi's 1725 publication of twelve violin concertos entitled *Il Cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* (Bold Experiments with Harmony and Invention). *The Seasons*, full of audacious experiments of every kind, were undoubtedly the inspiration for the title. The four concertos are accompanied by four sonnets, giving detailed descriptions of the programmatic elements of the music, which paint a vivid picture of life in the Italian countryside in the eighteenth century. The concertos are dazzling proof of Vivaldi's skill as a violinist and his ingenuity and inventiveness as a composer. We offer a respite from winter this week with Vivaldi's wonderful depiction of spring, and encourage you to follow the text of the sonnet below.

La primavera

*Guint'è la primavera e festosetti
La salutan gl'augei con lieto canto,
E i fonti allo spirar de' zeffiretti
Con dolce mormorio scorrano intanto.*

*Vengon' coprendo l'aer di nero amanto
E lampi, e tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti;
Indi tacendo questi, gl'augellitti
Tornan' di nuovo al lor canoro incanto.*

*E quindi sul fiorito ameno prato
Al caro mormorio di fronde e piante
Dorme 'l caprar col fido can' à lato.
Di pastoral zampogna al suon festante
Danzan ninfe e pastor nel tetto amato
Di primavera all'apparir brillante.*

Spring

*Spring has come, and joyfully the birds
welcome it with cheerful song,
and the streams at the breath of zephyrs,
flow swiftly with sweet murmurings.*

*But now the sky is cloaked in black,
and lightning and thunder announce themselves;
when they are silenced, the little birds
return to fill the air with their sweet song.*

*Then on the pleasant flower-strewn meadow,
to the gentle rustle of the leaves and branches,
the goatherd rests, his faithful dog at his side.
To the rustic bagpipe's festive sound,
nymphs and shepherds dance beneath
the fair spring sky in all its glory*

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN

Another prolific composer of baroque instrumental concertos was **Georg Philipp Telemann**. Telemann stated that he was not a fan of the purely virtuoso solo concerto, and indeed we find that most of his concertos are more “conversational” than “exhibitionist,” and that many feature more than one solo instrument. We feature two of these this week: a **Concerto for recorder and bassoon, and a Concerto for 3 violins**.

Telemann was an accomplished player of wind instruments, and his writing for winds is wonderfully idiomatic — well crafted and satisfying to play. The dialogue between the recorder and bassoon in the F-Major Concerto is by turns lyrical and playful. Winds are also prominent in the **Quartet in G Major**, which features the same instruments as the Vivaldi Concerto da camera.

The **Concerto for 3 violins** appears in the second volume of Telemann’s famous publication titled *Musique de table, or Tafelmusik* (from which we draw our name!). The title refers to the custom of entertaining guests at ceremonial meals and banquets with music. Each of the three volumes includes an orchestral suite, a concerto for multiple instruments, and a selection of chamber music. The publication was sold on subscription, and the list of subscribers is impressive, including composers, musicians, statesmen, and nobility from all over Europe.

Telemann chooses a different orchestration for each piece in the collection, and explores different styles. The Italianate Concerto for 3 violins shows the clear influence of Vivaldi. All of the music in the three volumes is full of charm, wit, and vivacity, and is designed, ultimately, to entertain.

© Charlotte Nediger