



# THE BAROQUE APPRENTICE

## TEACHER AND STUDENT MATERIALS

This guide was created by Alison Mackay to accompany Tafelmusik's music education initiatives.

There is no specific CD referred to in this guide.

To hear the sound of a baroque orchestra you may wish to listen to:

*A Baroque Feast* (CD# AN 2 9811)

Analekta 2002

Music by: J.S. Bach, Purcell, Marcello, Vivaldi, Handel, and Locatelli

Soloists include: John Abberger, oboe; Maxine Eilander, harp;

Geneviève Gilardeau, violin; Jeanne Lamon, violin;

Christina Mahler, cello and Allen Whear, cello

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Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra & Chamber Choir

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This 50-minute student concert will present music from three different European orchestras which were all active in 1733, the year of the premiere of Jean-Philippe Rameau's first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie* in Paris. Two of these orchestras, those of Bach and Vivaldi, used talented young music students, often pupils of the composers themselves. The opera orchestra in Paris was a strictly professional organization accessible only to accomplished performers who had passed through a rigorous apprenticeship.

Music Director Jeanne Lamon and the members of the Tafelmusik orchestra will describe the life of a music student in 1733 and will perform excerpts from *Hippolyte et Aricie* as well as movements from concertos by Bach, Vivaldi and Telemann featuring solo violin, harpsichord, recorder and bassoon.

For detailed information about the instruments and musical style of *Tafelmusik* please refer to the accompanying *Teacher's Guide*.

### **Vivaldi and the Conservatory of the Ospedale della Pietà: An Orchestra for Girls**

Some of the earliest institutions for systematic music teaching were the so-called conservatories attached to orphanages in several Italian cities during the baroque period. One of the most famous of these was the *Ospedale della Pietà* in Venice, a home for girls. Those who showed musical talent were trained in singing and playing instruments in preparation for taking part in performances at the orphanage; well-advertised chapel services attracted large congregations who supported the conservatory with their donations. The all-female orchestra which also included daughters of local families who brought them for private lessons, became renowned and attracted tourists from all over Europe.

Singing was considered an important requirement for all of the girls. A typical day consisted of five hours in the morning devoted to vocal exercises and three hours in the afternoon of theory, counterpoint and repertoire.

The account books of the *Pietà* indicate that a large number of fine stringed and wind instruments were bought for the use of the girls. There were accomplished instructors in these various instruments, the most famous of whom was Antonio Vivaldi.

Vivaldi was born in Venice in 1678. His father, a barber and professional violinist, was active in the Venetian musical scene and lived with Vivaldi in three successive apartments in different parts of Venice between 1711 and 1736. Antonio, who suffered throughout his

life from asthma, was trained for the priesthood but his first love was the violin and he became famous as a performer and composer.

Vivaldi became a violin teacher at the *Pietà* in 1703. He gave lessons to the girls and composed music for their regular performances. Although he began to travel widely in connection with the production of his operas, he retained a connection with the conservatory throughout his life and produced more than 500 concertos for the girls to play.

It is appropriate that we should demonstrate the repertoire of this orchestra with a work for solo violins (Concerto 222 in A+); Vivaldi's wild and virtuosic improvising on the violin was described in this way:

*He came within a grass-stalk's width of the bridge with the fingers of his left hand so that the bow had no room – this on all four strings at an incredible speed!*

### **Bach and Zimmermann's Coffee House: An Opportunity for Boys**

After seven years of living in Leipzig and composing sacred music for the city's churches, Bach added to his duties the directorship of the "Collegium Musicum" in 1729. The Collegium was a fraternity of music students and amateurs founded in 1702 by Telemann and by Bach's time it met every Friday evening between eight and ten at Zimmermann's Coffee House.

Leipzig was famous all over Germany for its delicious Turkish coffee, a new novelty import, and Collegium evenings were often attended by international merchants and tourists who were in town for the trade fairs which were a feature of life in the city.

Concertos for solo instruments and orchestra were often performed on the Friday programs with Bach himself, accomplished local musicians or visiting virtuosi playing the solo parts. The orchestra was mostly made up of students from the university and from the St. Thomas School, one of the most famous music schools in Germany.

Bach was the head of music at the St. Thomas School which was run as a public school, deliberately made accessible to talented boys of any social rank. The students ranged in age from 12 to 23 and were divided into seven classes. They spent their day studying Latin, scripture, and vocal and instrumental music according to this schedule from 1733:

Rise at 5:00 am (6:00 in winter)

7:00 – 9:00	Latin grammar, catechism
9:00 – 10:00	Singing lessons
10:00	Dinner
12:00 – 1:00	Singing lessons
1:00 – 2:00	Latin syntax
2:00 – 3:00	Other music lessons
5:00	Supper
8:00	Bed

The boys also sang at the many services at local churches; their schedule was often interrupted by rehearsals, performances and frequent holidays.

The boys were instructed in various instruments in keeping with the custom of the time. In 1745 Bach adjudicated the audition of an apprentice town musician and reported:

*He performed quite well to the applause of all the city musicians on all the instruments customarily employed by the town musicians, namely, violin, oboe, flute, trumpet, horn and the bass instruments.*

Bach's style of directing the orchestra was in keeping with the practice used in Tafelmusik; he directed while he played. In 1738 his conducting was described by Johann Gesner, the principal of the school:

*He watches over everything at the same time and holds 30 or 40 musicians to the rhythm – this one by a nod of the head, another by tapping his foot, a third by a warning finger. Although he himself is playing the most difficult part, he immediately notices if anything is wrong. He holds everyone together and corrects everywhere, restoring security if there is anywhere a weakness.*

### **Jean-Philippe Rameau and the Orchestra of the Paris Opera**

Rameau's first opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* opened in Paris on October 1, 1733. The composer was 50 years old and until then had made his living as an organist and music theorist. He had moved to Paris from his native Burgundy in 1722 in order to oversee the editing of one of his theory books and after attending operas in the capital he became determined to compose an opera of his own. He went on to compose 29 more before his death in 1764.

In 1733 Paris was the most important city in Europe as a centre for trade, commerce and the arts. It was a magnet for music lovers who came to see the latest breathtaking performances in which opera and ballet were usually combined. Theatres at this time had

very complicated stage machinery capable of producing magical effects as spectacular as anything on the live stage today.

Professional music making revolved around the king, Louis XV, who provided employment for dozens of musicians in his various establishments in Versailles and Paris. It was a world tightly controlled by the musicians' union in which orchestral positions were often bought, sold or inherited. Apprentices received training from a famous performer or from an older relative; accountants' pay lists demonstrate that it was common for several generations to be represented in the same orchestra. Rameau himself taught lessons in theory, harmony and composition. Up to twelve pupils met together each week for three 2-hour classes.

The most important orchestra in Paris in 1733 was that of the *Académie Royale de Musique*, or the *Opéra*, which performed in the *Grande Salle* of the *Palais-Royal*, the Paris residence of the Duc d'Orléans. There were 45 players in the orchestra – 34 string players, 10 woodwinds and 1 harpsichord, all crammed into a slightly lowered area in front of the stage 7.5 metres across and 3 metres deep, less than half of the modern standard space for an opera orchestra of this size. This must have been good for tight ensemble playing but challenging for collegial rapport! Discipline at the opera house was draconian, however. In 1735 the much-loved singer Catherine-Nicole Le Maure was sent to prison on the king's order because she walked off stage once in the middle of a performance. The same fate befell Rameau's own nephew when he insulted the opera directors in 1748.

*Hippolyte et Aricie*, the tragic story of Theseus's son, caused a sensation at its first performance at the *Opéra*. The work is full of many dance movements featuring the orchestra alone and Rameau used the colours of the different instruments in ways that had never been heard before. Some of the performers were resistant to the new challenges; almost half of them had been in the orchestra for over 25 years and they were set in their ways. The public was so enthusiastic, however, that the show went on for 40 performances and was revived four times in the 18th century.

By 1751 the orchestra had become so affectionate towards Rameau that they gave him a spontaneous ovation when he appeared after a long illness at the back of the theatre for a performance of one of his operas. The *Mercure de France* for May of that year reported that this had never been seen before: “the assembled orchestra adding their rapturous cheers to those of the general audience.”