

Suite No. 3 in D major for Orchestra, BWV 1068
by J. S. Bach (1685 -1750)

Duration: Approximately 20 minutes

First Performance: unknown - c. 1731

Last ESO Performance: November, 1985; Robert Hanson, conductor

Of the many types of instrumental music that were developed during the Baroque period, the suite was one of the most important. The form evolved gradually, finally becoming a veritable European union of some of the most popular dances of the day. The French led with a number of contributions such as the minuet, bourrée, and gavotte, while the Germans contributed the allemande, the Spanish the sarabande, and from the British Isles came the jig (or gigue, in its Gallicized version). Such collections were written by the hundreds for keyboard and other instruments.

An orchestral version of the suite developed at the court of Louis (*L'état, c'est moi*) XIV, the source of so many fashions in many areas of European cultural life. Before launching into the sequence of dances, this version of the suite opened with a so-called French overture, a grand and pompous movement that immediately became a symbol for royal authority, a kind of metaphor for the concept of the divine right of kings. (Listeners familiar with Handel's *Messiah* might remember that it opens with such a French overture, there presumably suggesting heavenly rather than earthly majesty.)

Bach wrote four such overture-suites, (sometimes they are simply called overtures because of the importance of the opening movement), of which the Third is perhaps the best known. This work shows Bach at his most worldly, writing ingratiating music that illustrates his ability to absorb the various styles of the day, in this case not only the elegance of French influences but the passion and virtuosity of the Italian style as well. As usual, however, he adds his own German polyphonic complexity to create a uniquely rich amalgam of styles.

The overture begins in the typical fashion with a slow portion characterized by its pompously stilted, jerky rhythms, probably originally intended to accompany royal processions. This is followed by a spritely fugal *allegro* which becomes almost an Italian style concerto. A brief reprise of the stately opening concludes the movement. A brilliantly festive atmosphere is created by the set of high trumpets and timpani, which were such an important part of German municipal music making that they had their own trade unions.

The justly famous *Air* which follows the overture is the best known portion of the suite, and is often played by itself. It is a striking example of Bach's timeless universality, as it seems to transcend the stylistic conventions of its own period. It is as "romantic" in its own way as any string cantilena by Tchaikovsky.

Finally, in the last three movements Bach lets down the hair of his wig and give us a delightful sampling of dance music, each with its own characteristic rhythm and mood.

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Concerto in E-flat major for 2 Horns and 2 Violins, TWV 54:Es1
by Georg Philipp Telemann (1681 – 1767)

Duration: Approximately 16 minutes

First Performance: unknown - c. 1733

These are the first ESO performances of the work

During his lifetime, Georg Philipp Telemann was considered one of the greatest German composers and was better known than his good friend, Johann Sebastian Bach. The situation would be reversed during the nineteenth century, when Telemann was largely forgotten and Bach was elevated to god-like status as the fountainhead of Western music. Only during the great baroque revival of the mid-twentieth century would Telemann regain the respect that he deserves as a writer of elegantly diverting music that may lack Bach's profundity yet shows him to be a master of virtually all the genres and styles of his era.

Perhaps the best known of Telemann's works is the *Musique de Table* ("Table Music"), a collection dating from 1733 that serves as a kind of thesaurus of the most important instrumental genres of the day. The tradition of dinner music for courtly banquets reaches well back to the medieval period and here Telemann has produced what is a kind of apotheosis of the form, the most complete and sophisticated example of dinner music ever composed. (The form would gradually fall out of fashion later in the century to be replaced by the *divertimento*.)

Telemann divided the work into three portions or *Productions*, to use the French word. Each *Production* contains six works: an overture –suite, a quartet, concerto, trio sonata, solo sonata, and a *Conclusion* written in the same key as the opening suite. This plan lays out a kind of musical feast which apparently was designed to mirror and accompany an elaborate banquet in the French style (*service à la française*). As in so many other ways the French set the tone for the rest of Europe, and such banquets became the standard not only for royalty and nobility but also the *nouveau riche* of the bourgeoisie. A typical meal would contain three courses, each course containing five or six items, ranging from soup and *hors d'oeuvres* through entrées to various desserts, fruits, and cheeses.

The delightful concerto on today's program is from the third *Production*, meaning that it is presumably one of the third course after-dinner treats and a very tasty one at that. Unlike the common three movement, fast-slow-fast concerto form favored by composers like Vivaldi, this one is in four movements, alternating between slow and fast. The opening *Maestoso* is indeed majestic as the term implies, featuring the noble sound of an instrument that Telemann calls a *tromba selvatica*, a poetic term meaning "trumpet

(horn, in this case) of the woods.” In Telemann’s day the horn was still very much thought of as an outdoor instrument used for signal calling in hunting, and was finally gradually becoming accepted as a member of the polite society of an orchestra. One particularly striking effect is the intertwining of the two horn parts as they occasionally play a dissonance (two notes which clash with each other) which then resolves to a consonance, producing an effect of tension followed by release.

The second movement is a vivacious *Allegro* which features spectacular high horn parts and brilliant virtuoso playing in the two solo violin parts. This is followed by a soulful slow movement in which the violins sing a melody of great pathos while the horns add discreet punctuations. The mood changes suddenly for the jolly *finale* in gigue rhythms.

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Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551, (*Jupiter*)
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Duration: Approximately 31 minutes

First Performance: unknown - c. 1788

Last ESO Performance: April, 2012; Jaime Laredo, conductor

The summer of 1788 was a grim one for Mozart, marked by financial problems and the death of his six year old daughter Theresia. In spite of these concerns, in the amazingly short period of six weeks Mozart wrote, among other works, three symphonies which were to be his last, and, by common consent, his greatest efforts in the genre.

Evidence of the composer’s unhappy state of mind is not particularly easy to find in this trio of masterpieces, for it is only the second of the three, the famous symphony No. 40 in G minor that can reasonably be construed as a tragic work. The last of the group, far from being mournful, often displays feelings of pomp and regal triumph, and is written in the key of C major, a key often used in eighteenth century music for festive occasions. The reference to Jupiter, king of the Roman gods, came after Mozart’s death and was presumably prompted not only out of admiration for the god-like mastery of the work, but also by the stately dotted rhythms and military use of trumpets and drums which to the eighteenth century ear suggested nobility and godliness.

From the outset, the symphony provides a particularly vivid example of the classical style. Unlike their baroque predecessors, who generally maintained a single emotion or *Affekt* throughout a single movement, composers of the classical period commanded a large repertoire of musical rhetorical devices that could be juxtaposed within a given movement. Thus, the opening phrase, with its flamboyant bow strokes, is a strong “masculine” theme, which immediately receives a gently “feminine” answer.

(I hope feminists in the audience will forgive these gender stereotypes.) Other examples from the composer's thesaurus of musical gestures are the march-like theme with the previously mentioned dotted rhythms, as well as an innocuous sounding melody entitled "A Kiss on the Hand," which Mozart had written for insertion into another composer's opera. This innocent little tune, incidentally, becomes the most important theme in the powerful development section.

The beautiful slow movement does contain more than a hint of tragedy, with several poignant sections moving into a minor key. High spirits return in the minuet, although it is not the typically straightforward, graceful dance. As Mozart scholar Neal Zaslaw has written, the proto-romanticism and complexity of the writing are alien to eighteenth century dance music and seem almost a revolutionary critique of the *ancien régime* and its aristocratic minuets. (The French Revolution was, after all, only a few years away.)

The finale of the *Jupiter* is one of the most discussed and analyzed movements in all of music. Here Mozart uses the so-called "learned" contrapuntal style of the baroque period, a practice which, though anachronistic in a sense, was a "retro" style used fairly often by classical composers to achieve a lofty sentiment, particularly in church music. Beginning with a simple four note motif (C D F E), which was the beginning of a famous hymn as well as a common figure in counterpoint method books of the time (Mozart himself had used the figure in a number of his earlier works), Mozart achieves one of the great *tours de force* in symphonic history. In the coda, the concluding part, no fewer than five motifs are combined in invertible counterpoint (meaning that a lower and higher part can reverse their positions and still make musical sense). The result is a grandeur never before achieved in the finale of a symphony and an achievement which Jupiter himself might envy.

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