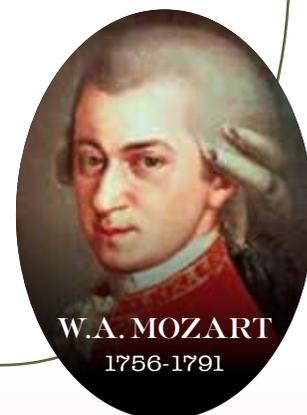


HERTEL: Bassoon Concerto in A minor

Notes on the Program

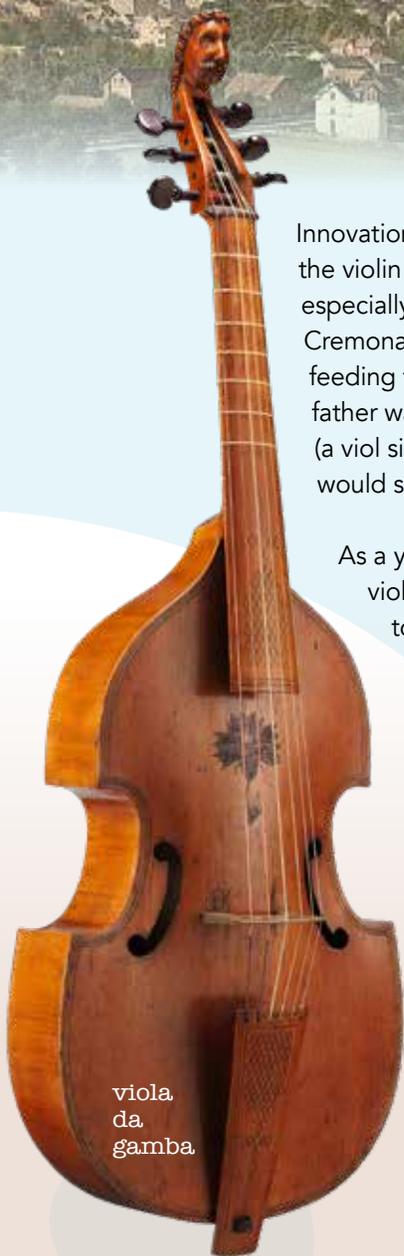
By Noel Morris ©2020

Johann Wilhelm Hertel was roughly the same age as the children of J.S. Bach or the parents of Mozart, which is to say he bridges the gap between two distinct eras in music. He was born in Eisenach, Thuringia, the same town as J.S. Bach. He came from a musical family—same as Bach—but was part of a new generation of musician.



Innovations to the design of the violin family of instruments, especially in the Italian city of Cremona, had spread across Europe, feeding the growth of orchestras. Hertel's father was a celebrated viola da gamba player (a viol similar in size to the cello), an instrument that would soon fade from the music scene.

As a youth, Hertel was a fine harpsichord player and violinist, and attended excellent schools. He was on track to study law in Leipzig when he took a fateful trip to Berlin. In 1745, at the age of 17, he visited the home of his father's violinist friend Franz Benda, who was having a little jam session with Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (son of Johann Sebastian). Hertel was transfixed and began having second thoughts about his career path. Days later, he went home to Neustrelitz, took a job in the local orchestra and eventually returned to Berlin to study violin with Benda, composition with a man named Graun, and harpsichord with C.P.E. Bach. The A minor Bassoon Concerto owes a debt to C.P.E. Bach, cut from the same musical cloth as his D minor Harpsichord Concerto.



viola
da
gamba

HERTEL: Bassoon Concerto in A minor

This is an ASO premiere.

Instrumentation: Solo bassoon, keyboard + strings

BACH: Orchestral Suite No. 3

In 1716, Johann Sebastian Bach was passed over for the position of Kapellmeister by his employer, Duke Wilhelm Ernst. Incensed, the brilliant organist accepted a better job in Köthen and tendered his resignation—at which point, the Duke threw him in jail.

Over his 65 years, Johann Sebastian Bach was first and foremost a church musician, producing volumes of choral and organ works.

There was only one major departure from this pattern: between 1717 and 1723, he served as Kapellmeister (after his month in jail) to Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen.

Leopold was a Calvinist whose faith tradition frowned upon having music in the church. Outside of church, he was an ardent music fan and decent viola da gamba player. When a prominent orchestra in Berlin disbanded, Leopold stretched his finances to bring some of those musicians to Köthen, giving Bach a fine group of players to work with. Sadly, many of these instrumental works have been lost.



Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen

Bach's fortunes changed when Leopold married a woman who disapproved of seeing her husband consort with musicians. Again, Bach found a new job, this time at St. Thomas Church, Leipzig. Back in church, he was tethered to producing new choral and organ works for Sunday services, but also found an outlet at Café Zimmermann, a popular Koffeehaus. Bach assumed directorship of the Collegium Musicum, the resident ensemble at the establishment. For the price of a cup of coffee, Leipzigers could hear his latest orchestral works. Bach wrote his four known orchestral suites for Zimmermann's; the Third Suite comes from around 1731.

BACH: Orchestral Suite No. 3

First ASO Performance: **JAN 29, 1968** | **Michael Palmer, conductor**

Most Recent Performances: **MAR 22 + 24, 2018** | **Robert Spano, conductor**

Instrumentation: **2 oboes, 3 trumpets, timpani, keyboard + strings**

HANDEL: *Water Music*

In 1705, a nineteen-year-old boy carried the manuscript of his first opera, *Almira*, into a theater in Hamburg. He presented it to his colleagues in the orchestra where he had been working as a violinist and harpsichordist.

Soon, that orchestra played the first performance of *Almira*, and it was a hit. Young Handel followed *Almira* immediately with a second hit opera and soon had the financial wherewithal to choose his next move—a trip to Italy, which was, in his mind, the center of the opera universe.

Handel stayed in Italy for more than three years, learning the language, meeting other composers and

soaking up the “Italian style.” He rubbed elbows with members of the high nobility, including Prince Ernst August, brother of the Elector of Hanover who invited him to come for a visit. In 1710, Handel, now 25, crossed the Alps and went immediately to Hanover where he took the top job as Kapellmeister.

By that time, Handel’s new boss, Georg Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover, had his eye on England. An act of Parliament had named his mother, Sophie, heir to the British throne. Although there were some 50 other claimants, Sophie was a Stuart on her mother’s side—and a Protestant—and that was all that mattered to the men at Westminster. Handel was in Hanover for less than a year

when Georg Ludwig granted him leave to go to England. There, the composer presented his “Italian opera” *Rinaldo*, and the Londoners received him like a rock star. For a short while, in 1711, he returned to his post in Hanover and then, again, requested leave to go to England. Three years later, Handel was still “on leave” in England when the Elector’s mother, Sophie of Palatinate, died suddenly in 1714. Anne, Queen of Great Britain, died two months later, and Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover, became England’s King George I.

The new king was terribly unpopular. People took issue with his connection to rural Germany and came to refer to him as the turnip hoer or “turnip head.” In 1717, King George decided to host a very public party on the Thames (literally) and commissioned Handel, his star composer, to write the music.

An observer named Friedrich Bonet provided the following account:

About eight in the evening the King repaired to his barge . . . Next to the King’s barge was that of the musicians, about 50 in number, who played on all kinds of instruments . . . His Majesty approved of [Handel’s music] so greatly that he caused it to be repeated three times in all, although each performance lasted an hour—namely twice before and once after supper. The evening was all that could be desired for the festivity, the number of barges and above all of boats filled with people desirous of hearing was beyond counting.



HANDEL: *Water Music*

First ASO Performance: JAN 18, 1962 | Henry Sopkin, conductor

Most Recent Performance: DEC 20, 2002 | Alexander Mickelthwate, conductor

Instrumentation: 2 oboes, 1 trumpet, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, keyboard + strings