

Our program today celebrates the virtues and beauty of both French and Italian Baroque styles. We toyed with a number of possible titles, ones that acknowledge the much-debated merits of each and which so interested writers of the time: Opposites Attract, Italian Extravagance and French Good Taste, Finding Common Ground. But in the end we felt that the intentions of Francois Couperin in his *Les Goûts réunis* in which he set about to unite the French and Italian tastes towards a kind of musical perfection.

The trio sonatas op. 1-4 by the violinist and violin teacher, **Arcangelo Corelli**, are considered to be the single, most influential body of works upon the development of the form. First published between 1681 and 1694, by 1700 these works were available in some thirty-five separate editions. Corelli's home of Rome had become a kind of Mecca for instrumentalists (due perhaps in part to a papal ban on public performances of opera from 1674-1710), and Corelli became the first composer to achieve fame and influence solely through the composition of purely instrumental works. It is not that Corelli invented the trio sonata, but rather that he provided the perfect synthesis of Italian styles in a perfectly balanced form. His idiomatic writing for the violin in fast movements fits perfectly into the hand and positively springs out of the bow—a sheer pleasure to play. At the same time, his luxurious slow movements are superbly crafted in their unadorned simplicity, but also invite the violinists to improvise in their dialogues back and forth, as was the practice of the day.

The composer and cellist, **Antonio Caldara's** birthplace of Venice, by contrast to Corelli's Rome, was one of the most important cities and centers for the development of opera. Not surprisingly, Caldara's reputation during his lifetime and long after his death, (Caldara's music was copied and revered by composers and theorists alike) stems from his mastery of vocal music. The vocality of Caldara's writing and his extraordinary ability to convey the emotional content of a text is patent in his only known instrumental compositions, the op. 1 and 2 trio sonatas. Caldara's sonatas are notable in their intense moods, varying instrumental textures, and closely woven dialogues between the violins. They are also without doubt indebted to the works of Corelli, with whom Caldara would become well acquainted upon his move to Rome in 1708.

The son of a French court singer, the talented **Jean-Fery Rebel**, attracted the attention of the great Jean-Baptiste Lully and became his violin and composition student. Rebel's earliest compositions were his trio sonatas and sonatas for violin and continuo (composed around 1695 and published in 1712) making him, alongside Charpentier, François Couperin, Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre and Sébastien de Brossard, one of the first composers of sonatas in France. Each of the sonatas from his *Recueil de douze sonates à II et III parties avec la basse chiffrée* bear descriptive titles. Sonate no. 6, *L'Immortelle* combines a wonderful blend of French idiom in an Italianate form.

**Jean Barrière's** third book of six cello sonatas (among four such volumes) was published upon his return to Paris in 1739 after a three-year sojourn to Rome, where he reputedly studied with the famous cellist, Franciscello. A consummate virtuoso--- Barrière was regarded as one of the finest cellists in France at the time---he developed his own unique approach to *Les Goûts réunis*. The fourth sonata in Bb major bears his hallmark flair for double stops and wild arpeggiations, but more extraordinarily, his sense of drama and fun and the way he uses his extravagant techniques to capture both the cello's lyricism and theatrical potential.

If Corelli excelled at writing instrumental music, and Caldara at vocal music, **Vivaldi** excelled at both. Vivaldi's compositional output is large to say the least: solo sonatas, countless concertos (including double and triple), sinfonias, masses, psalms and vespers music, oratorios, solo cantatas, and operas (at least 50 of them and possibly 94 if we are to believe his own boasts). Vivaldi brought to the trio sonata all the infectious zest, enthusiasm, and virtuosity which are the hallmarks of both his playing and his compositional style. One does not usually look talk about French influence in Vivaldi's compositional style, but without doubt, the Gavotta of sonata no. 5 in F major shows a true understanding of a theway a French gavotte is written. The dotted rhythms of its bass line would also seem to suggest a lovely French *inégal*.

**Giovanni Bononcini**, our third cellist composer on the program (!), achieved great fame throughout Europe, particularly in London, Vienna, and Paris. His operas and more than 200 cantatas were especially appreciated in France. One can appreciate Bononcini's skill in vocal music in this Sonata 11. He also clearly knew how to how to dance a minuet. His indicated meter is 3/8, bars it like a dancing master in 6/8, underscoring the 6 step pattern of the dance.

The *Pièces de Clavecin* of **Francois Couperin** are considered by harpsichordists his crowning achievement for an instrument he clearly loved and whose voice he could communicate and be so expressive with. He explains, in the preface to his first volume of 1713 that "In composing these pieces, I have always had an object in view, furnished by various occasions," and that "Thus the titles reflect my ideas." He apologizes for not explaining all of his titles, but explains that "the pieces which bear them are a kind of portrait which, under my fingers, have on occasion been found fair enough likenesses."

The composer, violinist, and dancing master (and lace-maker) **Jean-marie Leclair** Active as a dancing master in Turin, where he studied with the violinist Somis and was also much influenced by Locatelli, with whom he famously enacted a battle between the French and Italian Styles. Leclair reportedly played "like an angel" and Locatelli "like a devil," the former moving audiences with his beautiful tone and the latter astonishing with his technical extravagances. Locatelli and also his earlier work with the violinist Somis likely contributed to Leclairs adapation of the Corellian trio sonata to suit

French taste, Couperin's *Le Gout* . . . The recreations . . . adopt the French suite arrangement. A wonderful combination of the Italian instrumental sonata style, the Lullian dance, and the piece of the harpsichordist.