



## All in the Family: Meet the Bachs

### **Brandenburg Concerto No. 4**

Allegro  
Andante  
Presto

**Johann Sebastian Bach**  
(1685-1750)

### **Sinfonia in A major Movement I**

**Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach**  
(1714-1788)

### **Sinfonia in D minor Adagio Allegro**

**Wilhelm Friedemann Bach**  
(1710-1784)

### **“Fuga Meshuga” from *The Musical Sacrifice***

**P.D.Q. Bach (Peter Schickel)**

### **Sinfonia in D minor Allegro Andante amoroso Allegro assai**

**Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach**  
(1732-1795)

### **Symphony in E-flat major Allegro Andante Allegro assai**

**Johann Christian Bach**  
(1735-1782)

### **Orchestral Suite No. 3, Excerpts**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

### **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

#### **He was a family man**

Johann Sebastian Bach could certainly be called a family man. He had 20 children, nine of whom lived to adulthood. His first wife, Maria Barbara, died and left him with four children (three other children had died at a young age) when he was 35 years old. He married Anna Magdalena Wilcken, a singer and daughter of a trumpeter, one year later. They had 13 children (seven lived to adulthood). It was a busy household, full of music.



### **A comparison with that other Baroque composer**

In a bit of irony, he and the other “music giant” of the Baroque era George Frideric Handel were born within months of each other in 1685 in towns less than 80 miles apart. Yet they never met, much to Bach’s regret.

Handel did not come from a musical family, but he became an internationally renowned composer during his lifetime, traveling extensively throughout Europe. He never married nor had children.

### **The family tree full of musicians**

Going back several generations, Bach’s family tree was filled with musicians (over 70 of them, 50 of them named Johann or Johanna) and most of them lived in the region of Thuringia, Germany. In fact, by the time Johann Sebastian was born, the word “Bach” was synonymous with “musician” in that region.

Like his ancestors, he was a middle-class family man, trained as a violinist and as an organist, who never traveled outside Germany. He was, however, greatly influenced by the music styles of French, Austrian, Italian and other German composers, whose scores he copied, arranged and studied.

### **It was just a job**

Bach didn’t compose for posterity. In fact, he was totally unaware of the monumental influence that his music would have on future generations. He supported his family as a church or court organist/music director. A requirement of that position was that he compose the music to be performed by instrumental groups and choirs. He regarded himself as a craftsman doing a job to the best of his ability for the satisfaction of his superiors.

He died at the age of 65. After his death, all of his original music manuscripts were divided among his family. Some of the music was sold, much of it lost. It is estimated that only about half of all the music Bach actually composed (estimated to be at least 1,200 compositions) has been found.

### **The next generation carried on**

Ironically, four of Johann Sebastian Bach’s sons went out into the world and on to significant musical careers during their lifetimes. Their father’s influence is unmistakable, but each of the four took different paths. We’ll explore those paths during this performance of their music.

### **100 years later – the world took notice of their father**

It was not until nearly 100 years later when Felix Mendelssohn took an interest in his music that Johann Sebastian’s genius became widely recognized.

Today, more than 250 years after his death, his music is performed and studied throughout the world, and his name is more deeply revered by many musicians than that of any other composer.

## **Brandenburg Concerto No. 4**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

**(1685-1750)**

### **A resume of sorts**

Very few musical works are as loved as the six *Brandenburg* Concertos by Johann Sebastian Bach.



Although the exact dates of their composition are not known, it is known that they were written prior to 1721, probably when Bach was in service at the Court of the young music-loving Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen.

Although he enjoyed his work, he craved a more substantial position. Remembering a conversation he had with the Margrave of Brandenburg two years earlier, he brought the six pieces together, titling them “Six Concerts Avec Plusieurs Instruments” and sent them off to the Margrave with a flowery dedication, typical of the period. The assumption is that he was hoping for a position in the Margrave’s court.

### **There wasn’t even a call back**

There is no record that the Margrave ever responded to Bach; in fact, scholars believe that he never examined the scores because the original manuscript was found unopened in pristine condition in his library when he died thirteen years later. They were brought to light during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bach revival, published in 1850, and have since come to be recognized as some of the best examples of Baroque instrumental music.

### **The music with no name - for 150 years**

They didn’t have a name for 150 years until Bach’s biographer Philipp Spitta called them *Brandenburg* Concertos for the very first time, and the name stuck.

### **A showcase for the great composer**

The concertos are considered by most scholars to be a culmination of Bach’s talents as a composer, showcasing all of the compositional tools he had at his disposal: a perfect compositional resume.

The violin part in the 4<sup>th</sup> *Brandenburg* Concerto is extremely virtuosic, especially in the first and third movements.

## **Sinfonia in A major**

**Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach  
(1714-1788)**

### **A most illustrious son**

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, known today as C.P.E. Bach and as the most influential composer bridging the transition between the Baroque and Classical period, was the second of five sons of Johann Sebastian and Maria Barbara.

Mozart said of him, “He is the father, we are the children.” Haydn, known as the father of the Classical symphony, studied his works, and Beethoven expressed admiration for his genius. Far from being a mere transitional figure, C.P.E. Bach is increasingly being recognized as a significant composer in his own right. In fact, he was often called the founder of the Classical style.

Interestingly, his older brother Wilhelm Friedemann was his father’s favorite and the one son he thought was capable of carrying on the family’s rich tradition with music. He would have been heartbroken had he lived to see this favored son reach an old age after a dissolute and unproductive life.



### **A law degree down the tubes**

When C.P.E. was ten years old he entered the St. Thomas School at Leipzig, where his father had become cantor. He eventually received a law degree, but never practiced law; instead, he decided to devote himself to music.

He obtained an appointment in the service of King Frederick II of Prussia (“Frederick the Great”) and became a member of the royal orchestra as a noted keyboard performer (harpsichord, clavichord and, later, pianoforte). He remained with the King, an avid flutist and music lover, for 22 years, composing and performing.

At the age of 53, he succeeded his godfather William Telemann as kapellmeister at Hamburg where he turned his attention toward church music. He remained in that position until the end of his life.

### **A dutiful and loving son**

Undoubtedly, this is the one child who was most active in preserving the music and legacy of Johann Sebastian. He treasured the original scores he had inherited from his father and he was responsible for the only publication of the music of J.S. Bach.

### **He created his own masterpieces and a legacy of his own**

He was a superb composer in his own right, with a highly emotional, vibrant style.

A great deal of his music was written for the keyboard instruments on which he was acknowledged to be pre-eminent as a performer. However, he was a prolific composer in most genres popular in his day - chamber music, including a set of sonatas for flute and harpsichord that sent shock waves throughout the music establishment of the day, vocal works for choirs as well as for soloists and orchestral works, including 18 (some say 20) symphonies.

### **“Music should come from the Heart.” – C.P.E. Bach**

His compositions are full of unusual musical features (for that era) in which he imprints his individualized and highly creative style. They are notable for their rich use of harmonic language and abrupt changes of harmonic style and for melodies with unusual dynamic contrasts and complicated rhythms. In short, his music is unusually expressive, full of sensitivity and feeling (categorized as *Empfindsamer Stil*) – almost representative of the Romantic period of the following century.

### **An entrepreneur at heart**

Like many composers, he composed for well-trained professional musicians who could handle difficult parts, but he also had to compose for non-professionals who just enjoyed performing. His astute differentiation of those two sets of musicians was well documented in the marketing and publication of his works. At the end of his life, he left his wife with many unpublished compositions for her to sell as a source of income. He was indeed an entrepreneur.

### **Sinfonia? Symphony?**

In early 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy, a sinfonia was a three-movement prelude (overture) to an Italian opera. However, in France during the same era, an opera preluding piece was a one-movement form known as the French overture. Handel and Bach used the French overture to begin their orchestral suites.

Haydn and Mozart began composing in the Italian three-movement sinfonia format as an independent orchestral composition. Mozart also composed divertimentos in this format.



Then Haydn took it a step further and inserted a fourth movement, called a minuet, between the last two movements and added a French-style overture before the first movement. The resulting composition was no longer called a sinfonia – **the symphony was born.**

### **Back to the sinfonia and C.P.E. Bach**

After C.P.E. Bach moved to Hamburg, he wrote a set of six string works in 1773 for Baron Gottfried van Swieten, an Austrian patron to many well-known composers, including Mozart and Haydn. Although the composers did not work for van Swieten on salary or commission, they received payments from him from time to time.

For this set of works, Bach specified that "the composer's creative imagination might have free reign, unfettered by any regard for technical difficulties." Thus, the Sinfonia in A major came into existence.

## **Sinfonia in D minor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784)**

### **The eldest son**

The eldest son of J.S. Bach, Wilhelm Friedemann has not been treated well by posterity. His long life (74 years) was marred by personal problems, including alcoholism, and scholars have never forgiven him for selling off his share of his father's musical estate to cover his debts, thus dispersing dozens, and possibly hundreds, of original works by J.S. Bach, most of which remain lost to this day.

### **A path through life with lots of bumps**

Trained as a keyboard player and violinist, Wilhelm Friedemann was greatly influenced by his father who wrote keyboard works for him to study when he was ten. He was 23 years old when he became organist in Dresden. Thirteen years later he became the organist in Halle, a position that had been rejected by his father years earlier. He left that position after 18 years, and was never employed again. He died in poverty 20 years later.

### **A Bach moves to America**

His wife Dorothea owned a great deal of land, but was forced to sell most of it to raise cash for the high taxes which resulted from the Seven Years War. The couple produced two sons and a daughter, Friederica Sophia (born in 1757), who was the only one of their offspring to live past infancy. Friederica Sophia eventually migrated to America.

### **What might have been**

Although he did not compose a great deal of music, he did compose in most of the popular genres of the time. He was extremely talented, but his personal struggles precluded him from ever reaching his true potential.

The brief and lovely Sinfonia in D minor is a two-movement piece for church performance in "prelude and fugue" form.

## **Sinfonia in D minor**

**Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach  
(1732-1795)**

### **The ninth son, the Bürkeburg Bach**

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach was the ninth son of J.S. Bach and was sometimes referred to as “the Bürkeburg Bach” after he was appointed harpsichordist (and, later, konzertmeister) at Bürkeburg by Count Wilhelm of Schaumburg-Lippe. He and the poet Johann Gottfried Herder, who arrived at the Court a few years after Bach arrived, collaborated on cantatas and oratorios for five years.

### **Touted as the best musician in the family**

Taught by his father and by a distant cousin, he was also influenced by his brother C.P.E. Bach. He was a virtuoso keyboard player who was, in fact, regarded by his oldest brother Wilhelm Friedemann as the best musician in the family.

He married a singer, and the Count stood as the godfather to their son Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst Bach, who later became music director to King Frederick William II of Prussia.

### **His Sinfonia in D minor**

As with the other Bach boys, he composed for all popular genres of the day, but he had to adapt his music to the Italian style favored by the Count. His sinfonias (he wrote 20 of them) have been performed more in recent years. His Sinfonia in D minor demonstrates that this Bach was at least acquainted with the *sturm und drang* (“storm and stress”) music of the 1770s, primarily associated with Haydn.

Sadly, however, most of his compositions were lost in the destruction of the Staatliches Institut for Musikforschung in Berlin during World War II where the scores had been on deposit since 1917.

## **Symphony in E-flat major**

**Johann Christian Bach  
(1735-1782)**

### **The eleventh son – the London Bach**

This Bach boy, the eleventh and youngest son of J.S. Bach, was a composer of the Classical era. He is often referred to as “the London Bach” due to the time he spent living in that city.

His esteemed father was already 50 years old when Johann Christian was born. After his father’s death, when Johann Christian was 15, he studied with his second oldest brother C.P.E. Bach, 21 years his senior.

### **Becoming a Catholic in Italy**

Four years later, at the age of 19, he left for Italy and was appointed as chapel master to Conte Agostino Litta who gave him enough funds to train under Padre Martini. During this time, he became a Catholic and became a composer of church music. His first major work, a Mass, was highly acclaimed.



He later became organist at the cathedral of Milan and began to compose operas, an economically feasible endeavor. His operas proved to be very popular and his reputation became wide-spread.

### **To London he moved – and found favor with the queen**

At the age of 27, he moved to London and made this city his home until his death 20 years later. The “London Bach” achieved immediate renown in England and was appointed music master to the Queen within two years. He was the first composer who preferred the piano to older keyboard instruments such as the harpsichord and clavichord.

### **Friend and fame**

Soon after he moved to London, he became friends with Karl Friedrich Abel, a virtuoso of the viola da gamba, a viol usually much larger than the violin which was played while seated and supported between the legs, developed in Europe in the 1400s and used primarily during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Johann Christian joined his friend as keyboardist and, for the next two decades, the two achieved great fame with their joint concerts in London.

### **Connecting with Mozart**

He also met and taught young Mozart in London. Mozart acknowledged his debt to his mentor by using Bach’s piano sonatas as the bases for his own early piano concertos.

### **From sinfonia to symphony**

J.C. Bach wrote at least 48 symphonies (43 others have not been authenticated as his works), written in *style galant*, the “new” elegant, playful pre-Classical music where the melody becomes much more important than the bass part. His symphonies, however, are closer to the Italian sinfonias than to the later Classical symphony in its most fully developed state of four movements, composed by Haydn and Mozart.

## **Orchestral Suite No. 3, excerpts**

### **Johann Sebastian Bach**

**(1685-1750)**

### **A symphonic dance - with the mind, not the feet**

The four Orchestral Suites (or Overtures) are a set of compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach that were probably composed between 1725 and 1739 in Leipzig.

### **Air on the G String**

The *Air* from No. 3 is one of the most famous pieces of classical music, often used today in movies and TV programs. An arrangement of the piece by German violinist August Wilhelmj has come to be known as *Air on the G String*. By transposing the key of the piece from its original D major to C major and transposing the melody down an octave, Wilhelmj was able to play the piece on only one string of his violin, the G string.

## **P.D.Q. Bach**

### **“Fuga Meshuga” from *The Musical Sacrifice***

#### **The 21<sup>st</sup> child of 20 Bach children**

P. D. Q. Bach is a fictional composer invented by musical satirist "Professor" Peter Schickele. In a running gag that Schickele has used in a four-decade-long career, he performs "discovered" works of this forgotten member of the Bach family. His music combines parodies of musicological scholarship, the conventions of Baroque and Classical music and elements of slapstick comedy.

#### **Did you know?**

- Johann Sebastian Bach composed in all forms of the late Baroque era except opera.
- Although he had worked for the city of Leipzig for more than a quarter of a century, the town council voted to reduce the pension to his widow after he died; she died in abject poverty ten years later and was buried in a pauper's grave.
- He once walked 200 miles just to hear the great organist Dietrich Buxtehude play.
- Both of his parents had died by the time he was ten and he went to live with a brother.
- He supported himself from the time he was 15 years old.
- The clavichord is a keyboard instrument that, unlike the piano which uses hammers to strike the strings or the harpsichord that plucks the strings, puts pressure on the strings from below - as a result the clavichord has a much softer tone.