

Early Music of Iberia and the Americas Program Notes

We all know that the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth in 1612 and that farther to the south another ship of British citizens established a settlement in Jamestown, Virginia a few years prior to that in 1607. Most Americans, however, forget that nearly one hundred years earlier in 1513 Ponce de León landed in Florida, and in 1539 Hernando de Soto landed on the west side of our state near present-day Port Charlotte and journeyed all the way up the peninsula up to Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee before turning west to Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. These pioneers and those who followed brought with them composers from Spain who trained subsequent generations of native composers in the European style and musical traditions. We are delighted to devote our 2008 Collegium Musicum concert to the music of the Spaniards and Portuguese who settled far more of the Western Hemisphere than anyone else. After all, a concert of Pilgrim music would not be very long or much fun for that matter. Some of this music may be unfamiliar to you as it was to many of us. Preparing this concert has been our own voyage of discovery, and we look forward to sharing with you what we've found. This pleasingly fresh, exciting, and eccentric repertoire emphasizes dynamic rhythm, sharp dissonance, and intense passion. It has also inspired us to include some instruments you may not have heard on previous collegium concerts: organ, bassoon, and classical guitar.

Our adventure begins with perhaps Luigi Boccherini's flashiest composition, his Introduction and Fandango for guitar and harpsichord, often heard in versions for string quartet & guitar or guitar trio or quartet. The guitar is actually as old as the lute, its cousin rather than its descendant. With Boccherini, a native Italian who later settled in Madrid, we reach the distant end of collegium's temporal boundary. A typical southern Spanish dance-song in triple meter, the fandango was performed in flamenco style and accompanied by guitars and castanets. The piece heard on this evening's program is a slow, idealized, instrumental version in the classical tradition, adapted by the composer to the requirements of the royal court. On the second half of tonight's concert we experience Boccherini, the virtuoso cellist. Isolated from European musical activities, Boccherini cultivated a rather personal compositional flair that nevertheless retains the courtly, galant style favored in Madrid in the late eighteenth century. In the Sonata in La, one of his almost thirty cello sonatas, Boccherini explores the upper register of the cello, experimental harmonies, and double stops. Notice the different color our harpsichordist achieves by performing the Largo on the harpsichord's lower manual and the Allegro on the more nasal upper manual.

Following two short one-movement solo sonatas in D Major for harpsichord, the first by the least known of the composers with the surname of Albeniz, and the second by Domenico Scarlatti, we arrive at one of the most unusual pieces on this concert: a sonata by Scarlatti that is not for solo harpsichord. The Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti was the son of the famous opera composer Alessandro Scarlatti. Like Boccherini, the younger Scarlatti was an Italian composer who settled in Spain, and like Boccherini, his music combines the melodiousness of the Italian style with the verve of the Spanish. The Sonata in D Minor, K. 89 for recorder and harpsichord is cast in the common three-movement chamber sonata form. Its outer movements are typically spirited, but the slow movement, accompanied by the harpsichord's lute stop, brings us back to Scarlatti's cantabile roots; had he heard this, we imagine that Domenico's father would have proudly proclaimed "Quello è'1 mio ragazzo!"

While in Madrid, Scarlatti certainly heard the popular Spanish folk song "De los álamos vengo." Here it is set in an elegant unaccompanied polyphonic style by Juan Vasquez. The song opens with a statement in the alto that is then imitated by each of the other voices, a common opening gesture in Vasquez's compositions. *Dindirín* is the refrain of a simple homophonic folk-like villancico that tells of a girl who dispatches a nightingale to deliver a message to her lover, telling him that she is already married to another. The refrain ironically represents the sound of wedding bells.

Also on the first half of our concert are two sets that each begin with a toccata for solo harpsichord that serves as an introduction to a recercada by Diego Ortiz. A contemporary of Scarlatti with whom he worked in Lisbon, José António Carlos de Seixas was one of the most important Portuguese composers in the Baroque era. Much of his music was destroyed in the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755; this short two-

movement toccata is one of only around a hundred compositions that survived the catastrophe. Like Pachelbel's Canon in D Major isn't really a canon, Ortiz' recercadas aren't really ricercars; both the "canon" and the recercadas are ground bass variations, i.e., variations over a repeated chordal pattern, the same idea that informs the 12-bar blues progression that pervades early rock 'n roll standards such as Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven." Recercada Quarta in D Minor, tonight performed on viola, has an expansive epic quality that could certainly find a place in the film score to "Pirates of the Caribbean 23." Here preceded by a lovely toccata by Carvalho, the Recercada Segunda in G Major has spent 22,776 weeks on the Spanish Renaissance Top 10. We first hear the viola perform its cascade of rapid notes in a sprightly fashion, which sets the stage for a blazing recorder version that makes for a fitting conclusion to the first half of the concert.

Most of the early art music heard in the Americas was promulgated by Spanish missionaries who settled much of the New World. At first it was mostly *a cappella* sacred vocal music. Later on with the establishment of mission churches, the organ became more prominent. The distinguished Spanish composer and organist Antonio de Cabezón was known for his *tientos* – short, intense, liturgical polyphonic works for organ that varied in technique and mood. Derived from the Spanish verb *tentar* (to try out), the *tiento* is the Spanish version of the *ricercar* or *fantasia*. By the end of the 16th century the *tiento* was exclusively a keyboard form, especially for the organ. Tomás Luis de Victoria's compositions are often compared to Palestrina's, although the Spanish composer's compositions are thought to be more personally expressive. *O vos omnes* is traditionally performed during Holy Week and is considered one of Victoria's best motets, combining well-crafted polyphony with a highly expressive interpretation of the words. It is followed by a binary single-movement sonata by Lidón modeled after Bach's two-part inventions.

Although Juan (Domingo) Moreno y Polo was primarily known as an organist and one of three brothers, musicians all, we have chosen to represent his contribution to the Spanish keyboard repertoire with a *style galant* minuet. The Catalan composer Antonio Soler, who at one time studied with Scarlatti, was a monk, organist, and teacher at the monastery of the Escorial near Madrid, where he became *maestro de cappella*. Soler is principally known for his many keyboard sonatas, which clearly draw from his experience as Scarlatti's pupil. Sonata No. 45 in G Major is a fine example of this influence. Soler dedicated the Sonata in B Minor for violin and harpsichord, originally for solo keyboard, to Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain. Following a rather dramatic opening that sounds startlingly reminiscent of the *Phantom of the Opera* (Or is it the other way around?), the single-movement sonata demonstrates the technical virtuosity and sharply contrasted emotional effects so associated with the Spanish tradition.

We conclude our evening's festivities with two large-scale compositions by New World composers that combine the forces of the Collegium Musicum with those of the University Chorale. An exact contemporary of Franz Joseph Haydn, Esteban Salas spent his entire life in Cuba, working for many years as music director at the Santiago de Cuba Cathedral. Though his career was spent in the New World, Salas was in touch with musical developments in Europe, and he brought to Cuba the music of such prominent Spanish composers as Sebastián Durón and Francisco Courcelle. His Christmas villancico with soprano soloist "Si al ver en el Oriente" is stylistically comparable to the music of Haydn or Mozart. The Spanish equivalent of a carols, villancicos were most often sung for the feasts of Christmas and Corpus Christi, especially in the big processions that accompanied the celebration of these occasions. Jose Loaysa y Agurta was probably born in Mexico City and worked at the cathedral there for nearly fifty years. He served in several capacities, including music director and *maestro de los villancicos*, a position that required him to compose many villancicos such as *Vaya, Vaya de Cantos de Amores*, which like the previous piece is also for Christmas. Though Loaysa's career falls in the middle of the Baroque period, his music is stylistically closer to a somewhat earlier time. With this we end our Iberian musical travels and thank you for spending your evening with us. We look forward to seeing you in late October at our next Collegium Musicum concert, *Bach, et. al.*

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