

"CANARY" Cantata, TWV 20:37

G. P. Telemann (1676 – 1765)

Georg Philipp Telemann was born in Magdeburg, Germany, and grew up in an upper-middle class family. But unfortunately, his mother was not supportive of his desire to pursue a career as a musician /composer. He attended law school for a short period of time before he decided to fully dedicate his life to music. According to music scholars, Telemann was considered to be the most prolific composer of all time with more than a thousand cantatas attributed to him. In fact, he was even more popular and in demand as a composer than J. S. Bach was during his lifetime.

Telemann taught himself how to play many different instruments such as the organ, violin, recorder and even the bass trombone. His major compositions include the popular Tafelmusik, Viola Concerto in G Major, numerous orchestral suites and concertos for various instruments.

The German title of Telemann's "Canary" Cantata is "Trauer-musik eines kunsterfahrenen Canarienvogels," which translates to "Cantata of Funeral Music for an Artistically-Trained Canary." Legend has it that Telemann was commissioned by a Hamburg's pet lover to write this piece of music for the untimely death (killed by a cat) of his beloved canary. Even though the text is comical, performers usually take it rather seriously - after all, it is quite a tragic story. The cantata has nine movements and is scored for voice, strings and continuo.

A Musical Joke, K. 522

W. A. Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27th., 1756 in Salzburg, Austria to Leopold and Anna Marie Mozart. At the time of Mozart's birth, Leopold was employed by the Archbishop of Salzburg as the Vice-Kapellmeister of his orchestra. When Leopold realized that his son was a child prodigy, he decided to showcase Mozart's talents all over Europe. However, this did not help Mozart in securing decent employment in the Viennese court later on in his life. In fact, at the time of his death, he was so deep in debt that he had to borrow money from his close friends to pay his bills. Mozart died on December 5, 1791; the cause of his death is unknown. During his lifetime, Mozart wrote over 600 compositions including 27 piano concerti, 5 violin concerti, numerous operas such as The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni and The Magic Flute, 41 symphonies, several sonatas for piano and violin, and his final work, The Requiem.

Mozart's Ein Musickalischer Spass (A Musical Joke), K. 522 was written in 1787, the same year he composed the opera Don Giovanni. It has four movements and is scored for strings, two French horns.

Nobody knows for certain Mozart's intention for writing this composition. Some believed that he meant to poke fun at the not-so-accomplished composers of his days since there are numerous passages in the piece where conventional rules of harmony were broken. For instance, there are sections where consecutive fifths and octaves are prominent; instruments playing in different keys at the same time (a practice that was more commonly employed by 20th. century composers such as Debussy and Stravinsky.)

Nevertheless, the composition techniques employed and harmonic structure of "**A Musical Joke**" are very much Mozart's own style. While listening to the music, one should pay close attention to the intricate writing style of Mozart rather than focusing on the off-key French

horn passages or the solo violin playing a whole-tone scale in the high register. It is only by doing so that one can fully appreciate the genius of Mozart creative ability.

"COFFEE" Cantata, BWV 211

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Saxe-Eisenach in March 1685 to family of musicians. His father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was the director of the town musicians and his uncles were all professional musicians. His father gave him lessons on the violin and harpsichord; one of his uncles, Johann Christoph Bach introduced him to the organ. Unfortunately, Bach was orphaned at the age of 10 and was raised by his oldest brother. Even though Bach was discouraged from studying music by his own brothers, he was exposed to the music of established composers of the day such Johann Pachelbel, Frenchman Jean Baptiste Lully and Italian Girolamo Frescobaldi. During this same period, Bach also had the opportunity to study Theology and learn foreign languages such as French, Greek and Latin.

In 1699, Bach was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the famous St. Michael's School in Lüneburg. It was during this period that Bach mastered his skills on the organ. Bach married Maria Barbara Bach, his second cousin in 1706, and of the seven children that they had, only two of his sons became accomplished composers: Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. While Bach was working for the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, his wife Maria Barbara, suddenly passed away in July of 1720. He later met and married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a young, highly gifted soprano 17 years his junior. Together they had thirteen children.

Johann Sebastian Bach passed away on July 28, 1750 in Leipzig. Contemporary scholars suspected that he died of a stroke complicated by pneumonia. He was buried in an unmarked grave and it was not until 1894 that his coffin was found. He is now permanently interred at Leipzig's Church of St. Thomas.

During Bach's lifetime, he has written numerous pieces for the harpsichord and the organ. Other major works include three violin concertos, Six Brandenburg Concertos, St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion, Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, Six Solo Cello Suites and the Mass in B Minor. Unfortunately, Bach's music was totally forgotten after his death. It was not until the mid 19th. century that his music was revived by Felix Mendelssohn and received renewed appreciation.

Bach's spent his musical career can be divided into three periods: Weimar (1703 – 1717), Cothen (1717 – 1723) and Leipzig (1723 -1750). Bach wrote all his major cantatas while he was working in Leipzig as the Cantor of the Thomasschule at Thomaskirche in Leipzig, and Director of Music in the Church at Nikolaikirche and the Paulinerkirche, the church of the University of Leipzig. It was his responsibility to write a new cantata every week for the weekly Sunday service. Since the "Coffee" was a secular cantata, it was, therefore, always performed in a social setting rather than in a church.

The basic plot of the "Coffee Cantata" is about a feud between a man named Schlendrian (the father) and his daughter Lieschen. In the beginning, Schlendrian demonstrated his strong disapproval towards his daughter's addiction to coffee and decided to use different ways to punish her such as taking away her meals and other privileges if she continued to disobey him. However, Lieschen eventually found a way to convince the father that drinking coffee is natural and does the body no harm. The music is scored for soprano,

tenor, bass, flute, strings and continuo, and the libretto was written by Christian Friedrich Henrici. It was probably first performed by Bach's Collegium at Zimmerman's Coffee House, Leipzig, between 1732 & 1734.

PROGRAM NOTES WRITTEN BY ERIC D. FAHN ©

.....

MUSIC 101: There are two types of Cantata – sacred and secular. Sacred cantatas consist of biblical themes and are sung in church during Sunday services or other liturgical celebrations. Secular cantatas are sung in social settings such as the home of a local nobleman or theatre. Bach's "Coffee" cantata and Telemann's "Canary" cantata are considered secular cantatas. In terms of orchestration, it is normally scored for soloist(s), choir and an orchestra.

**Libretto for Bach's "COFFEE" Cantata
(Christian Friedrich Henrici)**

I. Recitative: Narrator

Be quiet, stop chattering,
and pay attention to what's taking place:
here comes Herr Schlendrian
with his daughter Lieschen;
he's growling like a honey bear.
Hear for yourselves, what she has done to him!

II. Aria: Schlendrian

Don't one's children cause one
endless trials & tribulations!
What I say each day
to my daughter Lieschen
falls on stony ground.

III. Recitative: Lieschen & Schlendrian

Schlendrian

You wicked child, you disobedient girl,
oh! when will I get my way;
give up coffee!

Lieschen

Father, don't be so severe!
If I can't drink my bowl of coffee three times daily,
then in my torment I will shrivel up like a piece of roast goat.

IV. Aria: Lieschen

Mm! how sweet the coffee tastes,
more delicious than a thousand kisses,
mellower than muscatel wine.
Coffee, coffee I must have,
and if someone wishes to give me a treat,
ah, then pour me out some coffee!

V. Recitative: *Lieschen & Schlendrian*

Schlendrian

If you don't give up drinking coffee
then you shan't go to any wedding feast,
nor go out walking.
oh! when will I get my way;
give up coffee!

Lieschen

Oh well!
Just leave me my coffee!

Schlendrian

Now I've got the little minx!
I won't get you a whalebone skirt
in the latest fashion.

Lieschen

I can easily live with that.

Schlendrian

You're not to stand at the window
and watch people pass by!

Lieschen

That as well, only I beg of you,
leave me my coffee!

Schlendrian

Furthermore, you shan't be getting
any silver or gold ribbon
for your bonnet from me!

Lieschen

Yes, yes! only leave me to my pleasure!

Schlendrian

You disobedient Lieschen you,
so you go along with it all!

VI. Aria: Schlendrian

Hard-hearted girls
are not so easily won over.
Yet if one finds their weak spot,
ah! then one comes away successful.

VII. Recitative: Lieschen & Schlendrian

Schlendrian Now take heed what your father says!

Lieschen In everything but the coffee.

Schlendrian Well then, you'll have to resign yourself
to never taking a husband.

Lieschen Oh yes! Father, a husband!

Schlendrian I swear it won't happen.

Lieschen Until I can forgo coffee?

From now on, coffee, remain forever untouched!

Father, listen, I won't drink any

Schlendrian Then you shall have a husband at last!

VIII. Aria: Lieschen

Today even
dear father, see to it!
Oh, a husband!
Really, that suits me splendidly!
If it could only happen soon
that at last, before I go to bed,
instead of coffee
I were to get a proper lover!

IX. Recitative: Narrator

Old Schlendrian goes off
to see if he can find a husband forthwith
for his daughter Lieschen;
but Lieschen secretly lets it be known:
no suitor is to come to my house
unless he promises me,
and it is also written into the marriage contract,
that I will be permitted
to make myself coffee whenever I want.

Trio

A cat won't stop from catching mice,
and maidens remain faithful to their coffee.
The mother holds her coffee dear,
the grandmother drank it also,
who can thus rebuke the daughters!