

The flattery of Italy's pieces,
The unrestrained liveliness
That flows from French songs;
Britain's leaping, obliging nature;
Yes, Sarmatia's exquisite pleasure,
To which the notes' jesting is devoted:
German diligence combines all this
To the honor of its country,
All the more to please the listener here
Through pen, mouth, and hand.

So writes Georg Philipp Telemann in his lost cantata *Wie? ruhet ihr, versteckte Saiten?*, first performed in 1721. Telemann's characterizations highlight the importance to the Baroque aesthetic of the idea of being a nation, and by extension, having a "national style." While Telemann, Handel, and many other composers traveled to other countries to learn about different musical traditions, they simultaneously reinforced and promoted—in our own time, we might even say "profiled"—the musical characteristics of different regions. National styles were frequently a source of internal and external debate, but they were also an important source of national identity and pride. In this program, Nicholas Kraemer has brought together important composers from four different countries, providing an aural illustration of the similarities and differences among their musical conventions.

ITALY

Many of the significant Baroque genres, including the concerto grosso and the solo concerto, originated in Italy, and **Arcangelo Corelli** was at the forefront of both. Born in 1653, Corelli was an extraordinary violinist as well as a composer. After studying violin with masters in Bologna, he moved to Rome, where in 1689 he became first violinist and director of music to the newly appointed Cardinal Ottoboni, who regularly presented concerts in his lavish palace. Corelli ultimately became known as one of the greatest composers of his time, and was one of the first to earn such a reputation based solely on instrumental music. The composer's **Opus 6** set of twelve concerti grossi was published in 1714, a year after his death, but some of these concertos may have been composed as early as 1682—making them perhaps the first such works ever written. For Corelli, the concerto grosso was essentially an expansion of the trio sonata, a multi-movement work often written for two violins and continuo. The op. 6 concertos add a *ripieno*, or small ensemble, to this grouping, weaving them together in a sort of musical tapestry.

If Corelli was one of the concerto's pioneers, **Antonio Vivaldi** took the genre to the next level. Born in Venice, Vivaldi was educated in music as a child, but his first career was the priesthood. Ordained in 1703, his vocation—coupled with his striking red hair—earned him the moniker “il prete rosso,” or the “Red Priest.” Music ultimately called more loudly than the divine, however, and Vivaldi's picturesque nickname was soon the only vestige of his priestly duties. Around 1704, he began his association with the Ospedale della Pietà, a Venetian school for orphaned, abandoned, illegitimate, and indigent girls that specialized in musical training. In addition to room, board, and an excellent education in music, the Pietà offered a creative outlet for women at a time of little opportunity for female musicians. The students were well respected: according to one scholar, “The ‘stars’ of the Pietà...ranked with the foremost virtuosi of their time in the opinion of connoisseurs.” They also played many different instruments. “[They] play the violin, the recorder, the organ, the oboe, the cello, the bassoon,” one eighteenth-century writer observed, “in fact, there is no instrument large enough to frighten them.” The young musicians always needed new music, and much of Vivaldi's compositional output was devoted to these talented performers—including, most likely, the **Concerto for Four Violins and Cello Obligato in B Minor**, which is written in the three-movement form that eventually became the generic standard. While the first violin dominates throughout the piece, the other three are given solo turns as well.

ENGLAND

Culture flourished in England in the Renaissance, but the musical landscape was bleak during the Commonwealth: Oliver Cromwell kept a small band of musicians for his own entertainment, but the Puritans dissolved the cathedral choirs and banned instrumental music in churches, allowing only the singing of Psalms and biblical cantatas. With Charles II's restoration to the throne in 1660, however, the situation changed radically. While political matters commanded the bulk of the King's attention, he was heavily invested in establishing the legitimacy of his reign, and music—a vibrant part of the continental courts he had encountered during his exile—was key. Charles had been especially taken with the *24 Violons du Roy* at the court of Louis XIV, and he immediately created its English counterpart as well as a smaller consort known as the Private Musick. He also reinstated music in institutions like Westminster Abbey, as well as in his own Chapel Royal. This newly reclaimed sphere of music was the world of the young **Henry Purcell**—and as a composer at the courts of Charles II, James II, and William and Mary, as well as the organist for Westminster Abbey, he ultimately became its figurehead. By his death in 1695 at the age of 36, Purcell had firmly established himself as the “Orpheus of England.”

Because Purcell was essentially a court composer, scholars assume that both the **Pavan in G Minor** and **Fantasy Upon a Ground in D Major** were written for performance by one of the King's ensembles. Both are scored for the somewhat unusual combination of three violins and continuo, an ensemble popular on the continent earlier in the century. Purcell may have been inspired by German virtuoso violinist Thomas Baltzar, who joined the Private Musick in 1661 and had composed a ten-movement work for three violins just a decade earlier. Written in a dance form more popular early in the century, the Pavan in G Minor has been proposed as an elegy for either Matthew Locke or John Jenkins, both English composers. The contrasting Fantasy is full of remarkable examples of counterpoint—no small feat, considering the confines of a ground bass pattern. In the 1694 edition of Playford's *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, Purcell himself commented that while “Composing upon a Ground” was “a very easie thing to do,” to “maintain Fuges upon it would be difficult, being confined like a Canon to a Plain Song.” The Fantasy demonstrates that Purcell was certainly up to the task. While such a display of contrapuntal prowess runs the risk of sounding academic, Purcell makes the work come alive with dotted rhythms, inventive variations, flashes of brilliant passagework, and surprising dashes of dissonance.

GERMANY

In Johann Sebastian Bach's famous memorandum to the Leipzig town council, one of his complaints hints at an important aspect of German Baroque music: “It is, anyhow, somewhat strange that German musicians are expected to be capable of performing at once and *ex tempore* all kinds of music, whether it come from Italy or France, England or Poland.” Stylistic mixtures were advocated in German theoretical treatises of the time. As Johann Joachim Quantz writes,

When we know how to choose with proper discrimination what is best in each from the musical tastes of the different peoples, there comes from this a mixed taste, which, without stepping beyond the bounds of modesty, may very well be called the German taste: not only because the Germans discovered it first but also because it was introduced into various districts of Germany many years ago and still flourishes, nor is displeasing in Italy, France or other countries.

Georg Philipp Telemann was revered for his fluency with a variety of “musical tastes,” which has been noted as one of the reasons he was more popular with his contemporaries than Bach. Telemann had a particular gift for incorporating elements of Polish style, which he likely learned first while serving as Court Kapellmeister for Count Erdmann von Promnitz. He wrote in his 1718 autobiography: “Here there

was further acquaintance with Polish music, through proximity, from which I confess that I have found many different good things which later were of service to me in matters both many and serious...Now a Polish song makes the whole world dance; so I need no care to bring it to an end: Polish music must not be wooden." While many regarded Polish music as beautiful and "barbaric," casting it in the role of exotic "Other," Telemann considered the country to be on par with France, Italy, and England, and approached its musical traditions with pioneering respect. The last movement of the **Concerto for Recorder and Flute**, based on traditional Polish folk music, is an excellent example of music in *style polonaise* that "makes the whole world dance."

FRANCE

James Anthony states in the opening to his book on French Baroque music, "Any study of the music of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in France must also be a study of the institutions from which much of the music issued." More than any other country, France marshaled its musical forces towards the articulation of an empire—and during the reign of Louis XIV, many facets of artistic and intellectual life came under government jurisdiction. In addition to the King's own first-rate musical forces—for example, the famous *24 Violons du Roy*—the Academie Royale de Musique was established specifically to tackle the genre of opera. Perhaps because of its relative isolation, music in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France developed along slightly different lines than elsewhere in Europe. Though clearly influenced by the music scene in Germany and Italy, dance and descriptive music play an extremely large role in the French Baroque. Dance, for example, was regarded as far more than a social activity: it was a form of communication. Following the teachings of the ancient Greeks, one dance treatise notes that "dancing is a kind of mute rhetoric by which the orator, without uttering a word, can make himself understood by his movements and persuade the spectators that he is gallant and worthy to be acclaimed, admired, and loved." And music also had the power to paint pictures: as Anthony notes, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, "descriptive or programmatic music . . . had been virtually elevated to an aesthetic dogma." Undergirding all of this was a fierce belief in the importance of a uniquely French music, an idea generating frequent heated debates.

In a recent interview, conductor Nicholas Kraemer dubbed **Jean-Philippe Rameau** "the Messaien of the 18th century." Indeed, Rameau was one of the most significant composers of his time. Often credited with the invention of modern tonality, his operas were extremely popular in their day. Unlike Italian

opera, French opera of the period features a large number of dance interludes scattered throughout. The suite of excerpted music from *Dardanus* on tonight's program represents this facet of the French operatic tradition: we hear an overture, a descriptive movement, and several dance movements. The opera's story centers on the love between Dardanus, the son of Jupiter, and Iphise, the daughter of Teucer. At war with Dardanus, Teucer has promised his daughter to his ally, King Antenor. When Dardanus saves Antenor from a sea monster, however, he wins the object of his desire.