Saturdays with Sebastian
Charlotte Mattax Moersch, harpsichord

East Gallery, Krannert Art Museum
University of Illinois
Saturday, March 2, 2019, 2:00 PM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Prelude in Bb Major, WTC I, BWV 866
Fugue in D Major, WTC I, BWV 850

Suite “für das Lautenwerk” in E Minor, BWV 996
Praeludio: Passaggio-Presto
Allemanda
Courante
Sarabande
Bourrée
Gigue

Partita VI in E Minor, BWV 830
Toccata
Allemanda
Corrente
Air
Sarabande
Tempo di Gavotta
Gigue

French Suite V in G Major, BWV 816
Allemanda
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte
Bourrée
Loure
Gigue
The immediate model for the J.S. Bach’s *Well Tempered Clavier* was Johann Ferdinand Fischer’s *Ariadne Musica* of 1702, a collection of preludes and fugues in 20 keys. In this afternoon’s concert, the unusual pairing of the Prelude in Bb Major and Fugue in D Major was chosen to highlight J.S. Bach’s internationalism. The Prelude in Bb Major is a virtuoso toccata in the Italian style, in contrast to the Fugue in D Major, which evokes the French overture with its dotted rhythms and tirades — fast running passages to the downbeats. The fugue invites the player to double dot the rhythms in the manner of orchestral overtures by Jean-Baptiste Lully, while the toccata encourages the harpsichordist to play as fast as possible in the style of Alessandro Scarlatti’s toccatas.

The remaining pieces on the program celebrate Bach’s genius in writing keyboard suites. Just as with the WTC, Bach presents an encyclopedic summary, here of all the possibilities of the dance suite. The Suite in E Minor, BWV 996, may have been written for the “lautenwerk,” a lute-harpsichord strung with un-damped, gut strings, described by eighteenth-century scholar Jacob Adlung as “the most beautiful of all keyboard instruments after the organ...because it imitates the lute, not only in tone quality, but also in compass and delicacy.”

Partita VI in E Minor, BWV 830, completes the set of suites Bach published in the first volume of his *Clavierübung* and continues the succession of ascending tonics represented by Partitas I, II, IV (Bb, c, D). According to David Schulenberg, “the Sixth Partita is the crowning work of the set and Bach’s greatest suite. The allemande and sarabande contain some of the most audacious and dramatic melodic embellishment ever written, and the work opens and closes with two particularly ambitious contrapuntal movements.” The Toccata and Corrente are Italianate, while the sarabande is typically French in style, with long-short rhythms dotted in the style of the French performance practice known as notes inégales. The Gavotte and Gigue present notational puzzles that require the player to adapt Bach’s binary rhythms to triplets.

The French Suites represent Bach’s foray into the French galant style. Light and homophonic in texture, they are distinguished by the inclusion of unusual dances. The Fifth Suite in G Major, BWV 816, contains a wonderful loure, which evokes the picture of a theatrical loure performed in a French opera. The choreography for this dance is full of virtuosic leaps and twirls, represented here in the swirling figuration and dotted notes.

--Charlotte Mattax Moersch

Since capturing First and Third Prizes at the International Harpsichord Competitions in Paris and Bruges in both solo harpsichord and basso continuo performance, Charlotte Mattax Moersch has performed at major venues in the United States and Europe, including New York’s Carnegie Hall, London’s Royal Albert Hall, Salzburg’s Mozarteum, and Oxford’s historic Sheldonian Theatre, among others. As a guest artist, she has been heard at international music festivals, including the Festival of the Associazione Musicale Romana, Tage alter musik Regensburg, and the Bethlehem Bach Festival. As a chamber musician, she has performed with the Boulder Bach Festival, New York’s Grande Bande, Washington’s Opera Lafayette, and San Francisco’s American Baroque, and has toured Europe with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

The recipient of several important awards and prizes, she was honored with a Solo Recitalist Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Woolley Scholarship for study in Paris. A specialist in seventeenth-century French music, she is the author of the book, *Accompaniment on Theorbo and Harpsichord: Denis Delair’s Traité of 1690*, published by Indiana University Press. She has recorded for Centaur, Koch, Analekta, Dorian, Newport Classic, and Amon Ra Records. Solo harpsichord discs include the toccatas and partitas of J.S. Bach, the sonatas of W.F. Bach, and the *Pièces de clavecin* of Jean-Henry D’Anglebert, Armand-Louis Couperin, Charles Noblet, and Pierre Février. She recently recorded Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* and *The Bach Legacy*, a disc of the works of J.S. and his sons C.P.E., W.F., and J.C.F. Bach.

Currently Professor of Harpsichord at the University of Illinois, where she directs the period instrument ensemble *Concerto Urbano*, Charlotte Mattax Moersch was awarded the Campus Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching and an Arnold O. Beckman Research Award. Professor Mattax studied harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt at the Sweelinck Conservatory, Bob van Asperen at the Hague Conservatory, and Kenneth Gilbert in Paris, where she also studied organ with André Isoir. She has degrees from Yale University, the Juilliard School of Music, and Stanford University.