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Akademie fur Alte Musik Berlin celebrates C.P.E. Bach with a well-performed program

By Joan Reinthaler, April 6, 2014

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There were musical Bachs all over Germany in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and Johann Sebastian was just another of those among a bevy of busy and talented uncles and sons who labored in the service of the church and local dignitaries.

Certainly his music has best withstood the test of time, but, in his own day it was his son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, who was the popular favorite. **At the Library of Congress on Saturday, the Akademie fur Alte Musik Berlin, 17 strong, celebrated the 300th anniversary of C.P.E. Bach’s birth with a program that featured three Bachs — J.S., C.P.E and another son, J.C (Johann Christian) — and, for good measure threw in a concerto grosso by Johann Sebastian Bach’s great contemporary, Handel.**

The two C.P.E. Bach works on the program reflected a broad range of styles. His Symphony No. 5 in B minor for strings was all drama and mannerisms, with an opening movement that could easily have been the soundtrack of a silent film. The Oboe Concerto in E flat major was a more straightforward conversation between the oboe (played with agility and a melting lyricism by Xenia Loeffler) and the strings, led by violinist Georg Kallweit. A sticky oboe key almost upended Loeffler’s efforts in the third movement, but she recovered, managed some instrumental first aid during a lull in her solo line and finished triumphantly. J.C. Bach’s G Minor Symphony, Op. 6, No. 6, with oboes, bassoon and horns joining the strings, was a galumphing martial-sounding romp with some sweet passages in the middle movement.

With the exception of an unnervingly fast race through the Bourrees of the opening J.S. Bach Orchestral Suite No. 1, **the Akademie’s performances were shaped with a compelling sense of forward motion and dance-influenced weight. The oboes wove their lines together seamlessly, and in the suite’s first movement, Christian Beuse let loose with a wonderful blast of almost coloratura bassoon virtuosity.**

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