



# Program I

Sol Joseph Recital Hall • San Francisco Conservatory of Music  
7:30 p.m.

Evolution in music revolves around styles, textures, and the effects they have on their listeners. And the process by which music of various periods evolves is affected by the locales and ingenuity of both its composers and performers. Sometimes, the shifts are quite tectonic and groundbreaking, especially when major styles merge into something new and unexpected. For example, the approach of those jazz, rock, and “classical” musicians who brought worlds together allowed artists to explore diverse influences and expand the boundaries of their music. Musical fusion has been a dynamic and evolving aspect of contemporary music, indeed, allowing artists to break down genre barriers and create innovative sounds. By blending diverse styles and cultural influences, musicians express their creativity and connect with a wide range of audiences, making fusion a vital part of the modern musical landscape. Jazz Fusion (Miles Davis and Chick Corea), Rock Fusion (Electric Light Orchestra), World Music Fusion (Yo-Yo Ma and Silkwood Ensemble), and Hip-Hop Fusion (The Roots) are modern examples of the process. But the nature of “fusion” was just as prevalent in the Baroque era as it has been in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Even though the differences between the music of Bach, Vivaldi, and Rameau, for example, are distinctly noticeable, other important composers and performers from the period sought to create new hybrid blends of not just national styles but also of technical styles. Typically, the music of German, Italian, French, and English composers required and showcased the technical facets of performing that music. But the bravest and boldest among them not only combined the “sounds” of several national styles, but also forged new ways of advancing the techniques of playing instruments. Of course, there was a natural cause for some of the melding process: When a celebrated composer or performer moved to a new location in a new country and brought along their musical panache, the qualities of their style would become disseminated and eventually integrated into the music-making of their new communities.

One such musician was the composer and violinist Jean-Marie Leclair. He is credited as the founder of the French Baroque violin school. A renowned performer, he drew upon aspects of all the national styles throughout Europe, especially blending the grace of French music, the dynamism of the Italian approach, and the cerebral cleverness of German composition. His **Violin Sonata in D Major** displays that ingenuity through wonderfully accessible melodies and, at times, a kind of rustic simplicity while requiring tremendous skills in playing, for much of the sonata, multiple lines at once (“double-stops”).

George Frideric Handel was a champion of “Baroque fusion.” His life’s travels and career took him from Germany, where his early experiences of music were thoroughly Germanic, to Italy, where he quickly absorbed the brilliance of Italian operatic style (and rather surpassed the abilities of his Italian-born contemporaries), to England, where he

fully implemented his composite style. Handel’s music sounds like that of none other precisely because of his genius at amalgamating the best of European music with his rather unsurpassed talent for writing beautiful melodies that engage listeners through the centuries. Even in just the opening measures of the **Trio Sonata in B-flat Major**, the “lilt” of French music is unmistakable, and followed by a fugue-like second movement, drawing upon that great form of imitation of a principal theme, as developed primarily among German composers. And the entire sonata is framed within the Italian form of a trio sonata.

Whereas Handel’s manifestation of fusion of national styles was perhaps a natural and passive result of his background, Georg Philipp Telemann was a more deliberate champion of celebrating the international sounds of European music. His music can be described as the “German mixed style,” incorporating both highbrow and unsophisticated flavors of German, French, Italian, and Polish music of the time. Both the **Fantasia in A Minor** for solo violin and the **Sonata in F Major** for five instruments (heard at the end of this program) present those multinational facets, at times in highly polished sounds and at other times seeming wonderfully colloquial.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach remarked on his father’s sonatas for violin and harpsichord that they were still delightful “despite being more than 50 years old.” Whereas the kind of myopia adopted by composers in the Baroque era regarding the future usefulness of their music was a true reflection of the reality that music was rarely, if ever, conceived to have a life span of more than a few decades, the modern and ongoing appreciation of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach as timelessly engaging makes that Baroque supposition of impermanence all the more puzzling. That notion of transience was belied by the fact that Bach continued to polish his sonatas for violin and “obligato” harpsichord for many years after they were composed, probably when Bach was in his early 30s, living at the court in the city of Cöthen. One of the most interesting aspects of those sonatas, including the **Sonata in F Minor**, is that they have the “texture” of a trio sonata (two upper voices and a bass line), but the second of the two upper voices is taken by the right hand of the harpsichordist. In this way, what sounds like a trio sonata requires only two players and showcases an entirely soloistic aspect of the harpsichord, which, in other cases, provides more of an accompaniment than discrete participation.

The astonishing brilliance of Bach’s six suites for unaccompanied ‘cello, including the **Suite in E-flat Major**, simply can’t be expressed in the few words of a program note. The elegance of a suite of refined dance movements, revealed through Bach’s genius in implying multiple lines of melody played by just one instrument, has made these profound pieces celebrated for their intricate counterpoint, expressive depth, rich harmonies, and emotional nuance.

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