



Eldred Marshall, Artistic Director & Conductor

# Bach: The Virtuoso!



**First Methodist Mansfield**

November 17, 2024

7:00pm

## PROGRAM

Toccatà in C minor, BWV 911 (1710)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

French Suite No. 5 in G major, BWV 816 (1723)

J. S. Bach

*Allemande*

*Courante*

*Sarabande*

*Gavotte*

*Bourrée*

*Loure*

*Gigue*

Italian Concerto in F major, BWV 971 (1735)

J. S. Bach

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Presto*

## INTERMISSION

French Overture in B minor, BWV 831 (1735)

J. S. Bach

*Ouverture*

*Courante*

*Gavotte I & II*

*Passepied I & II*

*Sarabande*

*Bourrée I & II*

*Gigue*

*Echo*

## Program Notes

### **Tocatta in C minor, BWV 911 (1710)**

One of Bach's earliest works, written during his Weimar Period (1708-1717), this piece is a compendium of what is now considered early German Baroque techniques championed by composers such as Dietrich Buxtehude and Johann Pachelbel.

It begins as a quasi-improvisation, where a simple mordent calls the audience to their attention and leads into a series of florid scales, arpeggios, and sophisticated ornamentation. Once all is settled on the Dominant mode, Bach leads the listener into a contrapuntal yet chorale-like section, where each voice – Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass – gets a chance to not only showcase its take on the subject but also divide themselves into separate voices to invoke a richly chromatic language.

The toccata ends with one of Bach's most extended three-voice double-fugues. The first fugue is established with a single subject that will eventually be fully developed and treated by all three voices. However, the first fugue comes to an abrupt stop for a quick improvisational moment. After the short moment concludes, the alto voice restates the first fugue's subject while the soprano introduces the second fugue's subject simultaneously.

The work ends as it begins – with one final improvisation and a simple low note at the end of the scale that utilizes all the registers of the keyboard.

### **French Suite No. 5 in G major, BWV 816 (1723)**

Written during Bach's Cöthen (or Köthen) Period, and exactly contemporaneous with *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1*, French Suite No. 5 is one of a collection of six keyboard suites meant to evoke the French aristocratic style of dancing. These suites were primarily intended to be used as a teaching tool for composition and keyboard playing. However, the two most advanced suites in terms of keyboard skill and technique are the fifth one, in G major, and the sixth one, in E major.

French Suite No. 5 begins with a placid yet intricate allemande. The courante that follows is a two-part invention – where both hands mimic and mirror each other. The sarabande is one of Bach's greatest keyboard forays into absolute poetry, making it a popular choice for an encore after a concerto or a recital. The gavotte, bourrée, and loure that follow are masterpieces in simplicity and joy. The Gigue is a rollicking three-voice fugue that never fails to delight.

### **Concerto in the Italian Style, or Italian Concerto, in F major, BWV 971 (1735)**

Bach absolutely adored Italian music and composers. Amongst his favorites are Benedetto Marcello, Antonio Vivaldi, and the Scarlatti family (Alessandro, the father; Domenico, the son). He kept up with the musical developments in Italy, just as he did with similar developments in France, although he never left his native Germany. Having deeply studied the concerto grosso form, which originated in Italy, Bach decided to try his hand at composing his own three-movement "Italian" concerto as an homage to a genre he admired.

Written during his Leipzig Period and published alongside the French Overture (or the Overture in the French Style) as the *Clavierübung II*, this work evokes a possible violin or oboe soloist playing against a full string orchestra. The Allegro first movement follows a traditional *ripieno* style where the orchestra and the soloist play together at the outset, where the main theme is established. After the theme is developed and concluded, the orchestra fades into the background and the soloist introduces new melodic and motivic material. Once the soloist has finished this section, the orchestra returns alongside the soloist to restate the main theme, but in the Dominant (or C major in this case). This type of back-and-forth leads the audience on a memorable sonic adventure.

The second movement, Andante, centers on the soloist completely. The orchestra has nothing to do beyond mere accompaniment. The third movement, Presto, is an etude that showcases not only orchestral colors and distinct voices, but it also allows the performer to show off finger dexterity.

## Overture in the French Style, or French Overture, in B minor, BWV 831 (1735)

This sprawling partita is the bulk of *Clavierübung II*. Stately and magisterial, this work is the longest suite Bach composed.

It is organized and patterned after the large suites by composers such as Couperin and Lully. The title “French Overture” comes from the form of the first movement: It begins with slow, double-dotted yet triple-metered introduction and then it proceeds to a fast three-voice fugue which is felt in duple meter. The French overture was popularized in France and was commonly used in orchestral settings. That Bach reduced it to keyboard is strikingly unusual. However, throughout the score, one can deduce that Bach was thinking orchestrally as he uses dynamic indications throughout the fugue, notating which voices or passages are *forte* versus *piano*.

After the massive French overture movement, Bach skips the allemande and goes directly to a gentle courante. After the courante comes a series of *da capo* dances – where the first dance is played; the first dance is followed by a second one in the same style but in a major key (either B major, or D major), which then leads back to the first dance (or *da capo*; from the top).

Notably this French Overture does not end with the gigue, rather with an “echo.” Thus far unspoken about the Italian Concerto or the French Overture is that this larger work is intended for a two-manual (or two-keyboard) harpsichord. This is where and how Bach planned to get dynamic variations. On a modern piano, these features do not exist. However, mastery of the modern piano includes possessing a wide repertoire of touch. Therefore, one can use the “echo,” with its sudden indications of *forte* and *piano*, as a type of etude of touch.

### Artist Biography



**Eldred Marshall** began studying the piano at age six and played in public by age seven. By 16, he debuted with orchestra, playing Brahms’s Piano Concerto no. 2 in B-flat Major with the Victor Valley Symphony Orchestra. Before entering into Yale University, where he graduated with honors with a B.A. in Political Science, he had already performed all over the United States.

The critically-acclaimed pianist has performed in Spain, Italy, the Republic of San Marino, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, the People’s Republic of China, and Canada. He has performed the entire cycle of 32 Piano Sonatas of Beethoven in public, from memory. Other notable tour projects include all-Bach piano recital programs including the *Goldberg Variations*, the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1, and Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*.

As an orchestral conductor, Marshall has led the Ukrainian State Academic Orchestra (Kiev, Ukraine), the Kharkiv Youth Symphony (Kharkiv, Ukraine), the Pleven Philharmonic Orchestra (Pleven, Bulgaria), the Vidin Philharmonic Orchestra (Vidin, Bulgaria), the Filharmonica Oltenia di Craiova (Craiova, Romania), and the Constanta “Black Sea” Philharmonic Orchestra (Constanta, Romania). Additionally, he has led several opera productions, such as Mozart’s *Bastien und Bastienne*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte*, as well as Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Marshall earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance degree from the University of North Texas (UNT) in 2018. Additionally, he earned three Master of Music degrees from Southern Methodist University (SMU): piano (2011), organ (2012) and orchestral conducting (2013). Institutions at which he has taught include Grambling State University, Texas A&M Commerce, UNT, SMU, and North Texas Central College.

Presently, Marshall serves as the Artistic Director/Conductor of the Mansfield Philharmonic Orchestra. Additionally, he serves as Associate Director of Music at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Rockwall, TX. He is the founding Artistic Director/Conductor of the Lucas Chorale, and the Organist/Music Director of Grace Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lucas, TX.