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CAL PHIL GOES BAROQUE ON APRIL 26

Music Director and early music scholar Victor Vener promises “authentic” and “virtuosic” performance of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos

SAN MARINO, Calif. Victor Vener, Music Director of the California Philharmonic, is not only a musician and conductor but also a lifelong scholar whose doctorate includes a specialty field in Historic Music Editing. Once again, he’s cracking the books and combing the manuscripts as he prepares for Cal Phil’s upcoming performance of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos on April 26 at the historic Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena at 8 p.m.

“I’m researching all I can,” says Vener. “There are so many folk tales out there about the Brandenburg Concertos. How many instruments did Bach really use? Did the musicians stand or sit? How far do we push the envelope to make the performance as authentic as possible?”

During that journey back to the Baroque past, Vener opted to do as Bach did and encourage the musicians to view the score as a departure point. “What do you see? What do you hear? How do you interpret it? Those are the questions I’ve asked them to consider, then I’ll trust in their artistry,” says Vener, a founding member of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra.

Although the concertos were written over a period of 10 years from 1711 to 1721, Bach ultimately presented the works as a set to the Margrave of Brandenburg. Bach called the concertos a gift; in actuality, they were a job application.

“Bach was hoping to become the court musician so he pulled out all the stops to show the breadth of his artistry,” Vener explains. “Each concerto features different solo instruments with differently configured orchestras.”

For instance, while Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 is scored for oboes, bassoon, horn, strings and continuo, the fifth concerto is written for flute, violin, strings, continuo and harpsichord.

“Concerto No. 5 is basically the first piano concerto ever written because it’s the first time the harpsichord appears as a solo instrument rather than as part of the orchestra,” explains Vener, who studied with renowned early music scholar Horace Fitzpatrick of Oxford. “Yet all six concertos, while unique, are each incredibly virtuosic, inventive and varied. Audiences had never heard anything like them before.”

Audiences today continue to enjoy the works. Excerpts from the Brandenburg Concertos have been heard on television programs ranging from *The X-Files* and *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* to BBC's *Antiques Roadshow* and William F. Buckley's *Firing Line* as well as in the film *Die Hard*. In addition, it was the first movement of Concerto No. 2 that scientists included on the Voyager Golden Record on the Voyager spacecraft.

Here, closer to home, actors dressed in period costumes will greet audience members as they arrive at the Ambassador Auditorium on concert night. But Vener – whose quest since founding the California Philharmonic in 1995 is to entice those who might not ordinarily attend a live performance of classical music to open their minds, expand their musical horizons and do just that – will make sure actors Jeremy Guskin, Markus Baldwin and Julie Mitchell do their homework as well. Each actor has received detailed information about Bach, the Baroque era of music and the rarely performed Brandenburg Concertos, so that they can share what they've learned with audience members in the lobby prior to the performance.

Guskin, whom many may recognize from television appearances in *Alias*, *ER* and *Six Feet Under*, will appear as Bach's first violinist during the pre concert lecture conducted by Vener at 7 p.m. "We'll obviously have fun, but we're not going to do anything to detract from the artistic value of the music," promises Vener. "The whole point is to enhance our patrons' enjoyment and understanding of one of classical music's pre-eminent giants."

Tickets for Cal Phil's performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos range from \$30 to \$95/person and are available by calling 626.300.8200 or online, at www.calphil.org. The box office, located at 1120 Huntington Drive in San Marino, is open Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Ambassador Auditorium is located at 131 South St. John Avenue in Pasadena.

In 1995, Music Director and Conductor Victor Vener and a small group of enthusiastic, dedicated music lovers based in Pasadena, California founded the The CalPhil Foundation. The Foundation, a nonprofit community benefit organization, supports the California Philharmonic in its quest to expand awareness of classical music, thus increasing the interest and support for great timeless music with wide audience appeal, from the classical and operatic repertoire to diverse genres of jazz, pops, Hollywood and Broadway. Also, with a strong commitment to new music and to expanding the symphonic repertoire, the California Philharmonic has presented numerous world premieres of both orchestral and chamber works.

The California Philharmonic began regular programming in 1997 with a five-concert inaugural summer season of Cal Phil Festival on the Green on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden in Arcadia. Now, Cal Phil presents twenty-four concerts per year in five different, but equally impressive, venues throughout Los Angeles County. These series include Cal Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall (downtown Los Angeles), Cal Phil at the Ambassador (Pasadena), Cal Phil Music, Martinis and the Maestro (Green Hotel in Pasadena)

and Cal Phil at The Mill (The Old Mill in San Marino). For more information, visit www.calphil.org or call 626.300.8200.

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