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ISU Chamber Orchestra

Glenn Block Director/Conductor
Illinois State University

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Music Department
Illinois State University

ISU
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

GLENN BLOCK, *Music Director & Conductor*

Forty-third program of the 1992-93 season.

Kemp Recital Hall
Wednesday Evening
November 11
7:00 p.m.

Program Notes

Program

Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major, BMV 1066

Ouverture
Courante
Gavotte I & II
Forlane
Menuett I & II
Bourée I & II
Passepied I & II

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Octet, Op. 20

Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo
Presto

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

The four masterworks we know today as Bach's "orchestral suites" were not originally called suites at all, but "ouvertures." The term "orchestral suites" is a creation of 19th-century scholars and publishers who collaborated to publish the vast amount of music found after Bach's death.

Bach and his contemporaries wrote such works and called them ouvertures because they were modeled after the operatic ouvertures which had been composed for the royal court of Louis XIV at Versailles. From Lully to Mozart, nobody surpassed Bach in the depiction of majesty which dominate the four suites. The custom of rounding off the grandiose Baroque ouvertures with a string of dances and other light pieces was perhaps suggested by popular Rococo collections (suites) of dances for chamber or keyboard collections.

Suite No. 1 is perhaps the oldest of the four although nobody is certain what was the specific year of composition.

Ouverture. The opening is Bach at his most vigorous. Two oboes announce the fast-moving fugal allegro theme.

Courante. This is a lively triple-rhythm dance with shifting accents.

Gavotte I & II. Originally a straight-forward peasant dance, then a ballroom dance, Bach's gavotte also emphasizes cross accents and rhythms.

Forlane. A lilting Italian dance, the forlane had come to picture in Bach's time French depictions of the carnival of Venice.

Menuett I & II. Bach's use of the French names for the dances shows the influence of the French musical traditions.

Bourée I & II. Originally a French peasant dance, the bourée is imaginatively expanded here and made to sound like a subtle variation on the theme of the preceding menuet and following passepied.

Passepied I & II. A popular dance at the court of Versailles.

The stimulus for Mendelssohn's precocious musical creativity was provided by the evenings of music-making which took place every Sunday in his parents' home. All kinds of serious music were played, everything that could be produced in a private house, and it was for these events that Mendelssohn wrote most of his early works. This collection also includes the Octet for double string quartet. The combination of eight string parts was an innovation in his time, but Mendelssohn's admonition for the small ensemble ". . . to play in a symphonic orchestral style" supports the notion of tonight's performance which utilizes all the multiple forces of the ISU Chamber Orchestra.

The Scherzo, in particular, is a masterpiece so characteristic of the Mendelssohn style of light, elfish music found in his overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was written immediately after the Octet. From the very first performance, the Octet's Scherzo made such an impression upon audiences that it was encored at many future performances.

The success of the Octet inspired many composers of the time, but no other work has survived in the repertory while Mendelssohn's opus continues to occupy an honored place in romantic chamber music literature.

Notes by Dr. Glenn Block

Violin

Nicholas Currie, *Concertmaster*

Carlene Easley, *Principal Second Violin*

Amy Ahrens

Mary Dion

Elisabeth Honn

Rebecca Mertz

Heather Neaveill

Viola

Jacqueline Young, *Co-principal*

Jon Feller, *Co-principal*

Abigail Baker

Denise Phillips

Cello

Maria Cooper, *Principal*

Jennifer Holtman

Bo Li

Double Bass

Brian Dollinger, *Co-principal*

Michael Govert, *Co-principal*

Oboe

Karla Ilten, *Principal*

April Faires

Bassoon

Jeffrey Womack

Harpsichord

Julian Dawson