Bach to School

Program One, “Bach in Time”

Presented by the
WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT
FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Even though the music of Bach was written 300 years ago, it is as fresh and fun to listen to now as ever.

It might surprise you that there are many more people who listen to Bach's music today than there were in Bach's time!

All of us at the Washington Bach Consort hope that you enjoy the performance of "Bach in Time" and that the music of Bach will be a part of the music that you listen to all during your lives.

J. Reilly Lewis
Washington Bach Consort
Music Director

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If you are interested in supporting Bach to School by making a gift directly to the program, please contact the Washington Bach Consort.
In far off outer space, an unmanned satellite sails among distant stars.

But, what is this music?

And who is this person?

Let's go in close and find out!

Oh! It's you!

In fact, I've been expecting you!

Do come in, will you?
But, where are my manners? My name is Johann Sebastian Bach.

Call me Sebastian, though.

After all, that’s what all of my friends call me, and I’d like you to be my friend too!

However, you’re probably wondering what I’m doing up here in space. After all, I don’t look like your usual astronaut.

If you’d care to listen, though, I can explain everything.

You see, 300 years ago, I was a COMPOSER.

A “composer” is someone who writes music. I wrote over one THOUSAND pieces of music!

I was a VERY good composer.
I was born in 1635, in a German town called Eisenach. It was a very cheery house, and a very fine place to live. Sadly, though, my parents died when I was 10, and I went to live with my older brother, Christian.

Christian was a musician, too—and quite good! He taught me a lot about music.

But, I learned even more by sneaking into his room at nights, and secretly copying the music that he wrote! I had to be really, really careful about doing this, though...

After all, you know what big brothers can do when they find you with their stuff!

Growing up, though, it felt like everyone that I knew made music: parents, uncles, aunts, cousins...

Heck, my family was so musical that I wrote a book: "Origin of the Musical Bach family"!
Back then, I spared nothing for music.

Once, I walked hundreds of miles to hear my most favorite musician.

I didn’t even have enough money to get a room at an inn!

I was quite cold.
And very uncomfortable.

You can sleep out here, if you want.

And that was BEFORE the bucket of dead fish!

Dead and SMELLY fish, I might add!

But then, what ALSO fell on me, with all of those dead fish? Why, a bright-

- Shiny -
- Golden -
- Coin!

Yes, it was a gold coin! Just enough money to rent a room for the night and to get some dinner!

I walked miles and miles to hear the music that I loved.

Tell me, what do YOU love, and how far would YOU go to experience it?

And a hot bath, too!

It was an adventure, for sure, but the music made it all worthwhile! I liked it so much that I even extended my trip for several weeks, just to hear more!
Now, let me change course a bit, so I can tell you about the sort of music that I used to write.

I made music in what is called the Baroque style.

"Baroque" sounds like "broke," but it means that my music was very decorated and fancy... a bit like a Christmas tree!

I wrote some music for the church, called Sacred music.

Sacred music often uses the Organ, an instrument that can weigh thousands of pounds!

I call this organ the "Big Squeaker."

I also wrote music for famous people, like princes, and taught music to children. That kind of music is called Secular music.

Who knows what "high C" sounds like?

This music is fit for a king - a king like me!
I wrote music for many different instruments, too...

The CELLO makes a deep sound when you rub its strings with a bow made of wood and horsehair.

The sound from an ORGAN comes when air blows through its pipes. Some pipes can be as thin as a finger. Others can be larger than a person!

An OBOE makes a mellow sound with a vibrating reed.

Here's the FLUTE - the earliest of all musical instruments.

The VIOLIN is like a small cello. It has a higher pitched sound, or "voice."

These instruments look alike, but in a HARPSTICHORD, the strings are plucked.

In a PIANO, the strings are hit with a hammer!
When many instruments play together, we call it an ORCHESTRA. A group of singers - like these - is a CHORUS.

On the other hand, when a singer or musician is all by herself, we call it a SOLO.

Right now, am I a solo, an orchestra, or a chorus?

There are lots of other things a musician can play with. PITCH, for instance, is how high or low the music sounds.

The lowest pitch is the BASS singer.

Next lowest is the TENOR.

Next highest is the ALTO.

The highest pitch is the SOPRANO.

METER gives music its “beat” - that’s the thing that you can dance to!

Then, there’s MELODY. “Melody” is also known as music’s “tune.”

When you play two notes at the same time, you play in HARMONY. It helps make music more interesting and enjoyable.

DYNAMICS means volume.

(It can be very quiet)

OR REALLY LOUD!
But of all techniques, COUNTERPOINT is my favorite!
Imagine, if you will...

... a FLUTIST ....
On their own, quite nice, eh?

But wait!

... and a VIOLINIST.

See how the music from the two instruments interacts?

One goes high, the other low... one fast, the other slow...

It's almost as if the instruments are having a conversation!

That's COUNTERPOINT!
So, how does all of this explain why I’m in space? Well, many people say that I was the greatest composer, ever.

When the U.S. government sent the Voyager satellite into space, it put many things from Earth inside of it.

Then, if aliens ever find it, they can learn about us Earthlings.

They wanted to include the best examples of music that they could find, so they included three of my pieces on a golden record!

And so THAT’S why I’m in space! But, then, I wonder ...

... If YOU were going into space ...

... What music would YOU want to bring along?
1) How many musical pieces did Bach compose?
   a) 20      b) 5,000      c) 1,200

2) A harpsichord has strings that are:
   a) Hammered       b) Pulled       c) Plucked

3) “Baroque” is a word that means:
   a) Simple         b) Decorated     c) Broken

4) The earliest musical instrument is:
   a) Flute          b) Violin        c) Oboe

5) The singer with the highest pitch is called:
   a) Bass           b) Tenor         c) Soprano

6) Which instrument makes sound by air blowing through pipes?
   a) Piano          b) Organ         c) Harpsichord
SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE

You heard musicians play and sing "Sheep May Safely Graze". As you listened, did you imagine the scenes that the music was describing?

In the box below, describe in words, or draw a picture, of what you were imagining while the music was playing:

Describe the music. Was it:

a) Fast and quiet?
b) Slow and quiet?
c) Slow and loud?

You heard four instruments during the performance. Can you identify them by filling in the missing letters below?

V__O____N
C____L__O
__A___PS__C__O__D
__B__O__
Bach used to walk many miles and travel long distances, just to hear the music that he loved.

He’s just made one such trip, but now he has to get back to his orchestra. Unfortunately, he’s forgotten exactly which road he has to take!

Help Bach get back to his band by leading him through the maze – Be careful, and don’t cross any black lines!
A MUSICAL KIND OF WORD FIND

We've gone over a lot of new words together. Can you help me keep track of all of them?

Help Bach find these words:

BACH
BAROQUE
VIOLIN
VOICE
FLUTE
CANON
CELLO
FUGUE
MELODY
TUNE
TENOR
CHORUS

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE
J.S. BACH’S “CONNECT THE DOTS”

Start at 1 and connect the dots in numerical order. Are you able to identify the instruments on this page?

After you’ve connected all of the dots, grab some markers or colored pencils and color in the pictures!
Do you like drawing? My grandson - also named Johann Sebastian Bach - was an excellent painter. Perhaps you'd like to draw me a picture? How about you draw your OWN version of me, or perhaps your favorite instrument.
LET'S DO A QUICK REVIEW

Whew! Between the performance that you saw, and this comic, we sure covered a lot of stuff! Let's take a quick moment and review some of the things that we learned about.

Music

The Baroque period: 1600 - 1750

Musical Instruments

- Cello
- Oboe
- Violin
- Harpsichord
- Piano
- Organ
- Flute

Musical Terms

- Cantata
- Meter
- Pitch
- Harmony
- Dynamics
- Round
- Counterpoint

Composers

- Dietrich Buxtehude
  Danish composer
  1637 - 1707

- Johann Sebastian Bach
  German composer
  1685 - 1750

- Johann Pachelbel
  German composer
  1653 - 1706

That sure is a lot! Look back at all that we’ve covered - what else can you add to this page?
THE MUSIC

Bouree from Orchestral Suite No. 1
Sheep May Safely Graze, BWV 208
Trio for oboe, Violin and cello from Cantata 208
Bouree I from Orchestral Suite No. 1
Movement 7 from Cantata 202
Excerpts from Chorale and Aria No. 2 from Cantata 80
Two-part Invention No. 8
“Echo” Aria from Cantata 213
Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring from Cantata 147
Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 - Final Movement

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