

# The Burney Travelogue

News and  
Views from  
The Burney  
Ensemble

Fall 2000

## Milestones

*Cynics would say that it's easy to reach milestones when a group is as young as ours – but that doesn't make them any less exciting! Here are a few things that we're proud of:*

### Welcome ... and welcome back!

The Burney Ensemble started its season with four times as many subscribers as last year! Thanks for joining us – we hope you enjoy the journey.

### Sold Out in Ottawa

Our two performances as part of the world's largest chamber music festival, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, featured sell-out crowds, with around 500 people at each performance!

### CBC Broadcasts

The Burney Ensemble's April 2000 appearance together with Monica Huggett for Early Music Vancouver was broadcast no less than 5 times between May and July 2000.

### Salt Spring and Suzie

In addition to concerts in Vancouver and Victoria, the ensemble travels, together with internationally renowned Canadian baroque soprano Suzie LeBlanc, to Salt Spring Island, for a concert at the Artspring Theatre on April 1, 2001.

### Fundraising

Thank-you – Our first fundraising drive was such a success that we were able to present the first concert of the 2000-2001 season, **Bach: The Cantata Project**, twice! The ensemble also received grants from the Hamber Foundation and The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation.

### North American Premiere

Ensemble member Elizabeth Liddle's "**Three Love Songs**" received its North American premiere in early November, in a performance by Liz Hamel, Ray Nurse and members of The Burney Ensemble.

## The French Noël

**Saturday, December 2, 2000 at 3:00 pm and at 8:00 pm**  
**St. Mark's-Trinity Church, 1805 Larch Street at West 2nd**

The Canadian winter, in all its fabled glory, never really strikes this part of the world. Sure, we get a couple of days of snow, and traffic grinds to a halt, but we never really experience the true joys of winter – blizzards, mountains of snow and frigid temperatures.

Winter was probably one of the biggest shocks to the early settlers of this country. Marie de l'Incarnation, Mother Superior of the Ursulines of New France writes of ice in the garden during the month of June, while Jacques de Meulles, Intendant of New France dismisses this country, with its mountains covered in snow five to six months of the year.

And yet this very season is a source of great pride to many Canadians, as it clearly shows the true Canadian spirit – hardy and rugged – able to withstand the cruelest cold.

We bring you the Canadian winter, eighteenth-century style. Join The Burney Ensemble, together with soprano Elizabeth MacIsaac, for an evening of early French carols and pastoral instrumental music – together with quotes about early Canada and early Canadians.

We bring you some of the music born on Canadian soil: an anonymous 'Motet pour Noël' from the Archives of the Ursulines in Quebec City, and Canada's first 'noël', The Huron Carol, written by Father Jean de Brébeuf in the 1640's.

The word 'noël', which means 'news', as in 'good news', started to appear in texts as early as the thirteenth century, though its use specifically for Christmas dates from the late fifteenth century.

Although some early manuscripts were obviously written for wealthy patrons, most early printed collections, the so-called Bibles de Noelz, were small, simple, and printed on cheap paper – much like the versions printed by newspapers today.

These rustic texts, often focusing on the shepherds and shepherdesses going to visit the Christ child, were set to pre-existing melodies, usually drawn from the popular repertory of theatrical, dance, and drinking songs. By the eighteenth century, they were an intrinsic part of popular culture and sung by people of all classes.

It seems safe to assume that most, if not all, of the early settlers in New France would have known and loved these songs.

The simple beauty and pastoral charm of these rustic texts of these songs also appealed greatly to the French nobility of the high Baroque – evoking images of peaceful innocence and an arcadian utopia. This interest in the 'simple life' led to the use of rustic instruments such as the flute, hurdy-gurdy and the musette, and, late in the eighteenth century, to the creation of Marie-Antoinette's 'farm' on the grounds of Versailles.

French composers such as Daquin, Rippert, Dandrieu, Delalande and Charpentier exploited this interest, and all used these melodies as a basis for instrumental variations, causing the Synod of Avignon to complain in 1725: "...[noels in church] tolerated up until now, are prohibited by this holy synod, because they debase the holy mysteries, by mixing ridiculous things, many vain chattering, and ill-sounding organ registrations."

### *Take Note:*

The French Noël will be broadcast on  
CBC Radio Two (105.7 FM in the Lower Mainland)  
on *In Performance* and *Take Five* during the month of December.

# The Philosopher King

Saturday, February 10, 2001 at 8:00 pm

St. Mark's-Trinity Church, 1805 Larch Street at West 2nd

Frederick the Great of Prussia was, without a doubt, one of the most influential leader in mid-eighteenth century Europe. He was a formidable force on the battlefield and was considered a hero by the French *philosophes*, who hailed his enlightened ideas. But Frederick the Great was more than a superlative statesman – he was also a man of letters and connoisseur of fine arts.

Born in 1712, Frederick had a miserable childhood. Much to the disgust of his father, the infamous 'Sergeant King' Frederick-William I, young Frederick was not interested in military discipline, hunting, or boorish behaviour, but developed a passion for music, philosophy, poetry, and all things French.

Determined to break him of these 'unmanly' and 'ungodly' interests, Frederick-William forbade his son to play the flute, and subjected him to ferocious physical beatings. But Frederick persevered, disappearing into the forest (under the pretense of hunting) to play flute duets with his personal valet.

Frederick's one attempt to escape his father's dominance ended in tragedy – he and his friend were caught, and Frederick was later forced to watch his friend's execution.

Frederick the Great ascended the throne in 1740 and immediately re-established the Berlin Academy of Sciences, abolished torture, proclaimed religious tolerance and declared freedom of the press. Two months later he invaded Silesia, the first of a long series of military campaigns that brought Prussia into the European spotlight.

Frederick's internal policies, from religious tolerance, to justice for all citizens and the abolition of serfdom, elicited praise from many who saw his reign as the inspired product of Reason.

He was hailed as an enlightened leader, but was also an intensely pragmatic man. On closer inspection it is clear that many of

his progressive policies were dictated by this pragmatism. How, for example, could the peasant grow grain, serve in the army or pay taxes, if his situation was too wretched to permit this? The prosperity of the whole nation depended upon the well-being of the peasant. By the same token, how could an army, made up of men of differing religious persuasions, possibly work effectively and cohesively without religious tolerance?

And yet, statesmanship was only one of the roles that Frederick the Great played. He saw himself as a true 'man of the Enlightenment', and immersed himself in philosophy, literature and the arts. An accomplished musician, Frederick also composed a formidable amount of music, including 125 flute sonatas and numerous concerti.

In addition to this, Frederick employed some of Europe's finest musicians – keyboardist Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, opera composer Karl Heinrich Graun, the virtuoso violin playing Benda brothers and J.S. Bach's theoretician student Kirnberger.

Frederick's home was the intimate, yet ornate palace of Sans Souci. Sans Souci, meaning 'without a care', was the nucleus of the Prussian state, but also housed his beloved library, filled with several thousand books (all in French), and his famous music room (about half the size of St. Mark's-Trinity Church), where he performed three times a week. This personal, and very private, retreat was frequented only by those guests privileged enough to be invited to stay. Frederick's wife, Elisabeth Christina of Brunswick-Bevern, never saw the inside of the palace.

The Burney Ensemble pays tribute to the enigmatic genius of the 'Philosopher of Sans Souci' on Saturday, February 10, 2001 with a program of works by C.P.E. Bach, Kirnberger, J.A. Benda and Frederick the Great himself.

See you there!

## Help – Volunteers Needed!

This organisation, like so many others, depends on the generosity of approximately 20 volunteers. Things like poster, ticket taking, program folding, cookie baking – even volunteer co-ordination, are done by our hard-working and dedicated gang of

volunteers. As we grow, we need more help. Can you help us out? Call Glenys Webster, our volunteer co-ordinator, at 731-2708. All volunteers receive free tickets to Burney Ensemble concerts – as well as our grateful thanks for your support.

## Composer Profile

*We continue our series of composer profiles with the little known Dutch composer Pieter Hellendaal, whose Violin Sonata in c minor, Op. 2 # 4 will be featured in our April 2001 "Angels and Devils" programme.*

### Pieter Hellendaal (1721-1799)

The Dutch composer, violinist and organist Pieter Hellendaal was born in Rotterdam in 1721, and was appointed to his first position, as organist at St. Nicholas church in Utrecht, at the age of 11 in 1732.

After violin studies with the celebrated Tartini in Italy, Hellendaal returned to The Netherlands, settling first in Amsterdam, where he published his first two sets of violin sonatas, and, in 1749, moving to Leiden.

By 1751 he was on the move again – this time to London, where he spent the rest of his life. Hellendaal was extremely active in London's musical life, appearing in Handel's "Acis and Galatea" (performing violin solos between the acts), as well as in numerous other productions.

In 1760, he succeeded our very own Charles Burney as organist of St. Margaret's Church in King's Lynn. A succession of church positions followed, and Hellendaal continued to compose and perform on the violin, publishing chamber music as well as several vocal works, both sacred and secular. He died in Cambridge in 1799.

Hellendaal's Sonata in c minor, Op. 2 # 4 was published in London before 1777, and features the characteristic virtuosity for which his performances were well known – one observer noted that he had "the best hands in Town"!

### The Burney Ensemble

PO Box 3190 MPO  
Vancouver, BC  
V6B 3X6

phone/fax: (604) 737-4954

email: burney@vcn.bc.ca

Administrator: Búi Petersen  
Programming and Newsletter: Sonja Boon

[www.vcn.bc.ca/burney](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/burney)