

VII - THE ORCHESTRA AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

At first they were called Instrumental Ensemble. Sometimes they were listed in the concert programs simply as The Orchestra. By the seventh season, in 1983, they were formally identified as the Denton Bach Society Orchestra. These were the instrumental musicians of the Denton Bach Society, who have accompanied the Denton Bach Society Choir in 39 of their 87 concerts during the Society's twenty-year history.

Typically, the number of players in the Denton Bach Society Orchestra has been from fifteen to twenty members, although the numbers have run as low as ten and as high as 22. On a few special occasions a substantially larger number has played: Bach's *The Passion According to St. Matthew*, (1985) 29 members; *Noye's Fludde*, (1993) 44 members; Haydn's *The Creation*, (1995) 35 members.

Naturally, the composition of the orchestra may change with the dictates of the music, but the following is a typical lineup of instruments that have been used:

- 5 or 6 violins
- 2 violas
- 1 cello or violoncello
- 1 bass
- 1 bassoon
- 1 horn
- 1 or 2 oboes
- 1 or 2 flutes
- 2 trumpets
- 1 timpani
- 1 continuo
- 1 organ or harpsichord

Some 263 persons can be identified, on the basis of available concert programs, as having played in the Denton Bach Orchestra at least once. Their names, with the instruments they played (a few persons played more than one instrument), appear in Appendix E.

The various instruments used, and the number of persons who played them, are as follows:

Violins (I & II)78			
Viola	30	English Horn	7
Cello	12	French Horn	5
Violoncello	13	Horn	8
Viola da Gamba	4	Basset Horn	2
Viola d'amore	1	Trombone	11
Violone	2	Saxaphone	4
Bass	14	Trumpet	18
Recorder	7	Timpani	6
Flute	17	Percussion	3
Oboe/Oboe d' more	17	Organ	5
Oboe d'amore	8	Continuo	1
Bassoon	11	Harpsichord	2
Clarinet	2	Piano	2
Lute	2		

This list totals 283, and includes the duplicate listings.

Even a casual perusal of Appendix E shows that, although there are a significant number of frequent performers, the vast majority of the players have been only occasional players. Fifty percent of the players have performed in only one concert over the years, and more than four out of five have been recruited for no more than three performances. And only a small portion, roughly ten percent, have performed in more than five concerts.

Some individuals have played in the Bach Orchestra for many years. They have close professional and interpersonal relationships amongst themselves and with Bach Society officers and members, and they are personally loyal to the ideals and objectives of the Bach Society.

As was the case with the Bach Choir, there seems to have been some carry-over of instrumentalists from one year to the next so as to provide the Bach Orchestra with some degree of continuity. But clearly, the turnover rate has been higher for the Bach Orchestra than for the Bach Choir, and there have been fewer veteran, long-term participants among orchestra personnel than among choir members.

The two groups are, in fact, rather different creatures. The choir consists of volunteers who get together to experience the pleasures of singing the music--and for the sociability that ordinarily results from the rehearsals, performances, and other occasions for interaction. They may be skilled and, in many cases, highly-trained musicians, but they are nevertheless amateurs.

For orchestra players, the situation is somewhat different. Although they may not all be highly paid, they do receive remuneration, and they view themselves as professionals. Like choir members, they may also thrill to the music, but the opportunities for socialization are not as great. They are recruited for a specific musical purpose and performance, and they may show up for only one or two dress rehearsals and for the concert. For most of them, the concert may be just another gig. They are understandably not involved in the many volunteer duties which occupy much of the choir members' time, and hence they have less opportunity to develop strong ties of identity with the Bach Society per se.

Other Musical Groups. The collaborative endeavors of the Denton Bach Society with other musical organizations have previously been alluded to. In sixteen instances instrumental groups outside the Denton Bach Society have performed in concert with the Bach Society Choir. These groups, with their number of appearances, can be summarized as follows:

- Denton Community Band (1)
- Denton Community Orchestra (2)
- Denton Chamber Orchestra (1)
- North Texas State University Orchestra (2)
- Texas Baroque Ensemble (2)
- Les Petit Violons (5)
- University of North Texas Collegium Musicum (3)

This represents a rather varied group of musical organizations which has helped provide Denton audiences with a rich variety of musical experiences.

The last three groups are of special significance for the Bach Society's musical style and tradition. The Texas Baroque Ensemble is located in Dallas and is directed by Susan Ferre, and Les Petits Violons and Collegium Musicum are from the University of North Texas and are under the direction of Dr. Cecil Adkins. These groups specialize not only in early classical music but also in the use of Baroque style instruments. These rare and delicate instruments require special care and skills, and some of them bear strange and exotic names such as violone, theorbo, cittern, and archlute, as well as sackbutte, krumhorn, and clarino. The appearance of these ensembles with the Denton Bach Society Choir has lent special interest and authenticity to the Society's musical performances.

Soloists and Other Instrumentalists. Individual instrumentalists have always been an integral part of the Society's programming. It was customary, in fact, in the early years to open every concert with a Bach organ number. By the fourth season, however, in December of 1979, Director Charles Brown broke with this "tradition" when he opened the program with Frescobaldi's *Toccata Prima (11 Secondo Libro Di Toccate)*. And after the opening concert of the sixth season, in November, 1981, the organ solo opening was abandoned altogether.

In 23 concerts, in which no orchestra or large ensemble played, instrumentalists have performed in various ways: as soloists, in duets or small ensembles, or in conjunction with the choir or other singers.

The harpsichord has been a solo instrument of choice, for Charles Brown in the early period, and for Lenora McCroskey who started playing with the Denton Bach Society in 1983. Two instruments frequently used for solo works were the organ and the violin, while the flute and oboe have also been featured. The music of Johann Sebastian Bach and Girolamo Frescobaldi were selected most often in these solo works.

In a special instrumental number, in February, 1980, John Dowland's *Lachrimae* was played on the lute by Michael Craddock. Dowland, who was born in 1563, was an Irish composer who was known for his excellent lute playing.

In a quite different setting from the traditional music of the Baroque period, Leslie Enlow played the guitar in a program that featured Catalonian folk songs during The Hispanic Christmas Festival presented in December, 1991.

The versatility of Bach's genius as a composer was demonstrated well by his use of various instruments and the human voice, in a wide variety of combinations and juxtapositions. And other Baroque composers showed similar interest. Appendix F represents a brief summary of these instrumental performances that have laced Denton Bach Society concerts.

This diversified instrumental programming, it can be noted, was more pronounced during the first decade of the Society's history; the second decade witnessed a somewhat more frequent inclusion of the orchestra, whether it be the Bach Society Orchestra or a guest ensemble, and adhering somewhat closer to choral programs.

In either case, Denton audiences have been privileged to have heard a rich and diversified repertoire of classical music performed, or sponsored, by the Denton Bach Society.