

Akron Baroque: “Vintage Vivaldi” at Faith Lutheran Church (June 4)

by Robert Rollin



On Sunday afternoon, June 4, Fairlawn’s Faith Lutheran Church hosted Akron Baroque’s energetic “Vintage Vivaldi” program directed by violinist Alan Bodman, who began each piece with clear gestures, leading the ensemble of twelve talented string players from his concertmaster’s chair.

Three of the five works featured solo performers, making for a lively and enjoyable afternoon. Bodman starred in a particularly memorable rendition of “Summer” from Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*, an early example of program music for which the composer included descriptive poems, sometimes attributed to himself.

The opening poem describes the burning sun of a hot summer day, birds singing, and the expectation of a rain shower. The music alternates between languid sections depicting the sweltering heat and animated sections representing the impending storm. The remaining two movements continue the descriptive music, the third using rapidly descending scale passages to convey the downpour. The Akron Baroque strings were excellent, and Bodman tossed off his difficult solo passages with panache.

Faith Lutheran’s organist and music director Robert Mollard was soloist in Handel’s *Organ Concerto in F*, Op. 4, No. 5. He chose effective registrations on the church’s modern instrument for the opening movements and the delicate *alla Siciliana* that followed, and produced antiphonal effects in the final Presto using divisions of the organ in front and back of the sanctuary.

Oboist Thomas Moore was scintillating in Alessandro Marcello's *Oboe Concerto in c*, producing a dark, attractive sound especially in the gorgeous, long phrases of the opening Allegro. His intense *appoggiaturas* enlivened the Adagio with its slow, pulsating accompaniment, and Handel provided some colorful modulations in the final Allegro.

Vivaldi string concertos bookended the first half of the program. The sequences of the g-minor concerto, RV 152, sparkled and the strings produced a beautiful sound. Charming echo effects in the Andante lead to a fugue in the finale. The G-major concerto, "alla rustica," RV 151, is one of the best-known of the composer's 45 string concertos. The opening, triple-meter Presto alternates tutti passages with unisons. Mollard, at the harpsichord, played some lively solos in the Adagio, and the strings played the short closing Allegro, full of repeating motives, with gusto.

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