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Program Notes. En Garde! Camerata Milwaukee, Shorewood, WI. March 23, 2019

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Andrea Falconieri (1585/6 — 1656)

* Battalla de Barabaso yerno de Satanas

Johann Schmelzer (1620/3 — 1680)

* Fechtschule

Aria I — Aria II — Sarabande — Courante
Fechtschule — Bader Aria

Henry Purcell (1659 — 1695)

* Suite from "Abdelazer"

Overture — Rondeau — Air — Air — Minuet
Air — Jig — Hornpipe — Air

~~ *Short Intermission* ~~

Marco Uccellini (1603? — 1680)

* Symphonia 34 "A Gran Battaglia"

Heinrich Biber (1644 — 1704)

* Battalia à 10 "Sonata di Marche"

Presto I — Allegro — Presto II — Der Mars — Presto III
Aria — Die Schlacht — Lamento Adagio

Antonio Vivaldi (1678 — 1741)

* Concerto in G minor for Strings and BC, RV 154: Allegro — Adagio — Allegro

* Concerto in C Major for Strings and BC, RV 115: Allegro — Largo — Allegro

Program Notes

While we tend to think of programmatic music as something hailing from the Romantic era of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, in truth composers have been writing both narrative and onomatopoeic music for a very long time. Tonight we explore the Baroque genre of "battle music" as found in Italy, England, and Austria. Dashing battles? Swooning love songs? Vengeful generals? Be prepared to be en garde!

Not much is known about Neapolitan native Andrea Falconieri (1585/6–1656), though what few records we do possess indicate he was probably the first instrumental composer from southern Italy to gain prominence writing violin sonatas. In his imaginative *Battle of Barabas*, son-in-law of Satan, listen for the alternations of meter (duple time versus triple time), the imitations of horses, and the final lovesong. It is interesting to note that in Spanish slang, *barrabás* can refer to an evil or naughty person; this usage may have been known to Falconieri since Spanish kings occupied the throne of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily throughout the composer's life.

Austrian violinist, cornettist, and composer Johann Schmelzer (1620/3–1680), first worked in the St. Stephen's Dome cathedral in Vienna before taking on various appointments for the ruling Hapsburg family. The Fencing-school was commissioned for the 1668 carnival season by bishop palatine Carl von Liechtenstein, who wanted some "nice tunes for dancing". As the official composer of ballet music for the Viennese court, it makes sense this commission was given to Schmelzer. Since it is likely that this work was presented as a pantomime or ballet, it is easy to imagine each fencing partner being introduced with his own respective entrance aria. Then come two French courtly dances, a sarabande and a courante, perhaps for warming up the fencers. The fencing match itself is full of fun sound effects. The suite concludes with the "Bader Aria", which can be construed either as the "bath-song" of the contestants as they wash up after the duel, or as the song of the medic/barber-surgeon who has to tend to the nicks and bruises caused by the match.

Aphra Behn (1640?–1689) was the first Englishwoman to earn a living by writing poetry, plays, and novels. Her 1676 tragedy *Abdelazer* enjoyed enough success to merit a revival twenty years later; it was for this revival that Henry Purcell (1659–1695) wrote the suite of incidental music heard tonight. The plot of the play revolves around *Abdelazer*, a Moorish general bent on avenging his father's death, even if it means murdering the Spanish king and betraying his own wife. Although Behn's play is no longer performed, the music for it remains one of Purcell's most enduring creations. Movie fans may notice several familiar tunes. The *rondeau* was used as the dancing music for the *Netherfield Ball* in the 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*; it also forms the basis for the theme and variations in Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, which was in turn used in Wes Anderson's film *Moonrise Kingdom*. The eighth movement, the hornpipe, was popularized in Henry Playford's important series of *Dancing Master* tune-books as "The Hole in the Wall"; Regency-era dances to this tune can be seen in both *Wives and Daughters* and *Becoming Jane*.

Born in the north-eastern Italian city of Forlimpopoli, Marco Uccellini (1603?–1680) devoted his career to serving the Este family in Modena and then the Farnese family in Parma. Of his operas, ballets, sonatas, sinfonias, and dances, only the instrumental works survive. His seven volumes of violin sonatas helped solidify the violin sonata as a genre, and include demanding harmonies and performing techniques, such as some of the first documented use of the high-reaching fourth position on the E-string. "A Gran Battaglia" is the thirty-fourth sinfonia in Uccellini's Op. 8 collection *Sinfonie Boscarecie*. Listen for the chasing, imitative strettos and the contrasting shifts in meter between 4/4 duples and 12/8 triples.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644–1704) was born in Prague but spent most of his life as Kapellmeister for the court of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg. His works pushed the bounds of German composition in both harmony and performance technique, directly influencing the string writing of J.S. Bach. *Battalia à 10*, also known as the *Sonata di Marche*, is a narrative work in eight movements that uses many imitative, onomatopoeic devices—that is, sounds that sound like other sounds. It is dedicated to Bacchus, the god of wine, and was probably written for the Carnival season; like his teacher Schmelzer's *Fechtschule*, it may have been a pantomime. The range of extended performance techniques Biber calls for in this work were unprecedented. In the first movement can be heard the bustle of drums and horses and troops gathering for an encampment. Once settled in, the "dissolute society of all kinds of humors" starts singing a cacophonous quodlibet of German, Slovak, and Czech folk songs in disparate meters and keys. The second bass part notes: "Here it is dissonant because they are all drunk and bellowing different songs." Harmony returns in the second presto, which precedes the entrance of Mars, the god of war, to the beat of a snare drum and a whistling fife. This duet for violin and violone is unusual in its performance directions to the violone player, which instruct the violone player to place a sheet of paper in between the strings in order to achieve the effect of the "buzz" of the snares in the drum, and to strike the string with the wood of the bow (col legno) instead of using the hair. A third presto (which calls for left-hand pizzicato) and a sorrow-laden aria set the scene for the battle. In the battle itself, listen for snap pizzicati that imitate cannon shots, and the chasing lines between the parts that reflect the ebb and push of the troops. After the battle is over, the work finishes with the lament of the wounded musketeers.

Training as a violinist with his father, Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) composed multitudinous operas, oratorios, and instrumental works for the Venetian public. Among his many accomplishments was the solidification of the northern Italian violin concerto into a three-movement form of fast-slow-fast. Tonight we have two examples of this genre: RV 154 which explores the possibilities present in a minor key, and RV 115, which takes a different approach with a major key.

Marianne Kordas graduated with master's degrees in music history and library science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She currently serves as the Director of the Music Materials Center for the James White Library at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, MI. Her passions include gardening, hiking, and early music.

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En Garde!

*Biber - Farina - Purcell - Schmelzer -
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23 Mar 2019