

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE WEST COAST DEBUT OF
AKADEMIE FÜR ALTE MUSIK BERLIN IN A PROGRAM OF BAROQUE
MASTERPIECES, SUNDAY, MAY 15 AT 3:00 P.M. IN WHEELER AUDITORIUM**

The Concert Includes Works by Händel, Vivaldi, Bach and Geminiani

BERKELEY, April 5, 2005 – In its first tour of the United States, the “best period orchestra in the world” (*Early Music America*), the **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin** (Berlin Academy of Early Music) will perform at UC Berkeley’s Wheeler Auditorium on **Sunday, May 15 at 3:00 p.m.**, presented by Cal Performances. The 17-member ensemble, which struggled for its artistic independence against the repressive government of the former East Germany, will present a concert of baroque masterpieces and lesser-known works. The concert will begin with the Suite from **Georg Friedrich Händel**’s first opera, *Almira*, led by violinist **Georg Kallweit**. One of the most influential compositions of the first half of the 18th century, the **Concerto in D minor** by **Antonio Vivaldi**, will follow featuring oboists **Xenia Löffler** and **Michael Bosch**. **Johann Sebastian Bach**’s **Concerto for Two Violins in D minor**, with its sinuous theme woven between violinists Georg Kallweit and **Midori Seiler**, rounds out the first half of the concert. After intermission, the **Akademie** will present Bach’s **Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C major** with **Stephan Mai** as violin leader, a piece which features dance movements including a *forlane*, *courantes*, *gavottes*, *menuets*, *boureés* and *passespieds*. The concert will close with a piece by **Francisco Geminiani**, whose works are not well known today though he was considered the equal of Händel by many of his contemporaries. Geminiani's **Concerto grosso No. 12 in D Minor**, an arrangement of **Arcangelo Corelli**’s sonata, *La Follia*, will feature violinists Georg Kallweit and Midori Seiler and cellist **Jan Freiheit** as the concertino.

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin began in 1982, when a small group of young musicians in Berlin, led by Stephan Mai, risked the wrath of officials in the German Democratic Republic (the former East Germany) by forming an independent musical academy devoted to the research and historical interpretation of Baroque music. Predictably, the socialist government and its state-controlled arts programs frowned upon their efforts, in part because of the group’s

democratic style: it performs without a conductor, instead choosing to have members of the group lead the ensemble while playing. What's more, the musicians themselves make artistic decisions for the ensemble.

In spite of official condemnation, the public was enthusiastic in its support of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, and the group began performing a regular concert series at East Berlin's Humboldt University and Berlin Konzerthaus. In 1985, with the 300th anniversary of Bach and Händel's births and the rise of perestroika in the USSR, official strictures softened and several members of the group, including Mr. Mai, traveled to the Innsbruck Summer Academy for Early Music; there, the orchestra made important contacts with colleagues in the west. (The financing for the trip had been smuggled to East Germany in a toothpaste tube.) The group also made its first recording in 1985, featuring the music of Georg Philipp Telemann, which was sold simultaneously in East and West Germany. In December 1986, despite nerve-wracking last-minute visa complications, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin gave its first concert in West Germany, playing at the Early Music Festival in Heme.

In 1989, when the Berlin Wall finally fell, the ensemble had already played in major early music venues in Innsbruck, Bremen, Gregensburg, and Utrecht, as well as concerts in West Berlin. When Germany was reunified a year later, the members of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin gave up their official state orchestra jobs and devoted themselves full-time to the success of the young baroque orchestra. They formed a relationship with Belgian conductor and counter-tenor René Jacobs, recording Telemann cantatas and odes and becoming a regular guest at the Berliner Staatsoper Unter den Linden. There, they performed in productions of several baroque operas, including Telemann's *Orpheus* and Alessandro Scarlatti's *Griselda*. *Classics Today* wrote of the ensemble's recording of the latter, "Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin plays with precision, energy and a sense of purpose that could convince us that *Griselda* is a stageworthy undertaking. The horns are magnificent, the winds can pierce or loll, the strings attack decisively but never harshly. The continuo includes a bassoon -- it takes a while to identify and appreciate it, but it's a stroke of genius."

The ensemble signed an exclusive recording contract with Harmonia Mundi France in 1994 and have appeared on over two dozen recordings. They have also increased their touring

schedule in recent years, appearing in over 100 engagements in 2000 alone. The orchestra has appeared throughout Europe and in Israel, Japan, Thailand, The Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. Individual members of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin are regular guests in Europe's major concert halls, including London's Wigmore Hall, Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Zurich's Tonhalle, and Vienna Musikverein. The group is pleased to be at long last making their United States debut.

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin receives warm welcomes and glowing reviews wherever they travel. The *Times* of London said, "In their hands, their breath and their bows, even Bach sounds reborn and rediscovered all over again...Every voice, every phrase, every second of articulation has been thought through, deeply assimilated, and set to work with a will." *The Independent* (UK) wrote that Stephan Mai "is one of music's great characters ...he coaxes his players, standing on his toes, to electrifying leads and dazzling ensemble, teasing them to excellence with the bonhomie of a St. Louis jazz master." *Gramophone* described the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin as "a group in which every member is prepared to live the music to the full, and the result is a joy from start to finish."

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin** on **Sunday, May 15** at **3:00 p.m.** in Wheeler Auditorium are priced at **\$42.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Sunday, May 15 at 3:00 p.m.

Wheeler Auditorium, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Concert

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Program:

Händel/Suite from the opera *Almira*

Vivaldi/Concerto in D minor for two oboes, strings, and continuo XII, No. 9

Bach/Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, BWV 1043

Bach/Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C major, BWV 1066

Geminiani/Concerto grosso No. 12 in D minor (after Corelli Op. 5 No. 12 *La Follia*)

Tickets: \$42.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.

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