

SPEAKER 1: [SINGING OPERA]

SPEAKER 2: That's nice, but you don't need to take-- you don't need to take the accent on [NON-ENGLISH].

[VOCALIZING]

It should have a sense of coming down as a full line chain. Don't break it. I think that's wrong.

SPEAKER 1: You know why I'm doing that?

CONNIE GOLDMAN: The music of JS Bach is unquestionably giant work, serious and sacred. You don't ordinarily think of Bach as lighthearted, humorous, or downright raucous. But welcome to *A Lighthearted Evening with the Bach Family* and Linda Hoeschler, its director and coordinator.

LINDA HOESCHLER: It's the first time in the world this has ever been done. Nobody ever thought the family was funny. Maybe they weren't.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: *The Lighthearted Evening with the Bach Family* is an attempt to present Baroque humor in a manner that people will find humorous today. The Minnesota Bach Society has enlisted the creative talents of the Minnesota Opera Company and the Children's Theater too. And the net result is, well, a Bach you never knew.

LINDA HOESCHLER: It's sort of an odd-bag collection and I think most of the music except for JS Bach's *Coffee Cantata*. We have a fair representation of the family. Most of the music has not been sung or performed since it was written. So I think in that way, it's a novelty concert. And we are trying to make it lighthearted without making it too raucous and out of character with the times.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: The *Coffee Cantata* is one that people have heard of. Can you tell me something about it?

LINDA HOESCHLER: Yes, well, that will be the third selection on our program. And that was by JS Bach himself. And at the time he wrote it, about 1721, there was a great controversy all over Europe about coffee. It was regarded as sort of the marijuana of its days. And there were many poems saying that women had uncontrollable urges to coffee. And so in the same spirit, he wrote the *Coffee Cantata*, where a father tries to tell his daughter that she should stop drinking the coffee. It's leading her to ruin.

And nothing he threatens her with, saying that she won't be able to visit her friends, she won't be able to buy any new clothes unless she stops drinking it. And the girl does nothing until he threatens that he will not get her a husband. And then she capitulates. But secretly, she spreads the rumor that anyone who wishes to marry her will have to write into the marriage contract that she can make coffee as often as she wants.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: Who are some of the other members of the Bach family that are going to be represented that maybe we don't know about?

LINDA HOESCHLER: Well, there will be a lot. We have those who we don't have music about because our music isn't kept. We start out with Veit the baker back in the beginning of the 16th century. We proceed to [? Lips ?] Bach. I'm sure you never knew there was a [? Lips. ?] Hans-- all the way through, really, the whole family. As far as humorous music goes, though, the first-- [LAUGHS] we decided [? Lips ?] was a vocalist or a woodwind player after the first bit of really humorous music that wasn't subtle.

Now, you've got religious cantatas, where people would mock-- Bach members would mock the style of maybe a composer at the same time. This would not seem funny to us. But the first genuinely comic thing written was written 30 years by a cousin 30 years older than JS Bach, Johann Nikolaus. And this is the *Jena Cantata* about the two students. And then we have a quodlibet, which means "as you please" in Latin. And this was a form of family entertainment that you got in the Baroque period.

People would take a tune, and they would stand up and sing nonsense verses. And this is the only one that has been left. A friend of mine found it in Chicago, where they thought it didn't even exist anymore, in the Newberry Library. A lot of this music we've sort of discovered. And this is about-- I rearranged this whole piece to make some sense. Because unless you knew the people involved, it would not make sense because they sung verses out of order. They sung nonsense verses in between.

So we've taken those verses that refer to the fact of a student who was kicked out of school for having had an affair with a maidservant at the Golden Crown Hotel. JS Bach wrote the music. And originally, it was thought that the words referred to himself, but it turns out it was one of his good friends. But the piece was sung at JS Bach's wedding party. So we're going to have a reenactment of the party and sing the quodlibet there.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: I don't know about the humor of the Bach family, but you certainly have a sense of humor about all this.

LINDA HOESCHLER: I think I've had to to keep persevering through all these manuscripts. To find them, I had-- well, this same friend who found this quodlibet in Chicago also found these Vauxhall songs which were written by JS Bach's son. And we have words like "tender virgin be not deceived by him whose wiles seek to debase" and such wonderful things is this. And when he went into the Newberry Library, they gave him one manuscript. He turned the first page, and it fell apart. So you sort of have to keep your humor about the whole thing when the music disintegrates before your very eyes.

CONNIE GOLDMAN: Linda Hoeschler, the lady that deserves the credit for pulling this unlikely music adventure together to be presented this Sunday evening, March 25, at O'Shaughnessy Auditorium, on the campus of the College of Saint Catherine's, *A Lighthearted Evening with the Bach Family*. You're invited. I'm Connie Goldman.

SPEAKER 2: Flip it anyway.

SPEAKER 1: [SINGING OPERA]

SPEAKER 2: That's nice, but you don't need to--