



Program info for Southeast Tour, February 2026

As of January 24, 2026

[Billing info:]

APOLLO'S FIRE

Jeannette Sorrell, Artistic Director

[Program title:]

A Night at Bach's Coffeehouse

– PROGRAM –

EVARISTO DALL'ABACO (1675-1742)

Passepieds from Concerto in E minor à più strumenti, Op. 5
Kathie Stewart, traverso; Daphna Mor, recorder

J.S. BACH (1685-1750)

Orchestral Suite no. 2 in B Minor, BWV 1067 (selections)
Ouverture – Rondeau – Polonaise – Menuet – Badinerie
Kathie Stewart, traverso

BACH

Concerto in D minor for Two Violins, BWV 1043
Vivace – Largo ma non tanto – Allegro
Alan Choo & Susanna Perry Gilmore, violins

– Intermission –

MARAIN MARAIS (1656-1728), arr. J. Sorrell
Sonnerie de Sainte-Geneviève du Mont de Paris

G.P. TELEMANN (1681-1767)

Overture – Les Plaisirs – Menuet I-II – Polonaise – Réjouissance

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741), arr. J. Sorrell
La Folia (“Madness”) Concerto Grosso after the Trio Sonata RV 63

**Apollo's Fire CDs, including Vivaldi's *La Folia*, are for sale in the lobby.
The artists will be on hand to sign CDs following the concert.**

Apollo's Fire and Jeannette Sorrell appear by arrangement with:

ARABELLA ARTISTS

Stefana Atlas, Managing Director

A Coffeehouse Jam-Session

By Jeannette Sorrell

I. The Setting

Johann Sebastian Bach had a difficult life. As the Cantor of the Thomasschule in Leipzig, he was in charge of the music for all of the town's principal churches. His duties included composing new cantatas virtually every week, engaging and rehearsing musicians to perform the cantatas (a difficulty due to the shortage of "freelance" musicians), and teaching the boys of the Thomasschule every day.

Such a workload would no doubt have been joyously stimulating to a man of Bach's genius, were it not for the hostile work environment. From 1720 onward, Bach's relationship with the Leipzig Town Council became a constant litany of arguments and criticism. Several years later, forbidden to perform a Passion for Good Friday, Bach noted bitterly that it would have been "just a burden anyway."

Against this backdrop of conflict, it is not surprising that Bach enjoyed letting his hair down in the lively atmosphere of **Zimmerman's Coffeehouse**, a sort of Starbuck's of 18th-century Leipzig. Gottfried Zimmerman, a middle-class entrepreneur, sponsored casual weekly concerts in his coffeehouse in the Catherstrasse. In the summer, the concerts were held outdoors in the "coffee garden." The main attraction of the concerts was the Collegium Musicum, the informal student orchestra of the University of Leipzig. Bach became their director in 1729, and quickly began focusing his compositional energy on the orchestra at the expense of his church work. Perhaps the Collegium was just more fun than his laborious church duties? In any case, he set to work creating concertos that could be played by himself, his sons, and his friends with the Collegium Musicum.

In his coffeehouse concerts, Bach revived pieces that he had written during his previous employment in Cöthen, where he had led an excellent orchestra of virtuosi. So in 1729, he began recycling and transcribing these lively instrumental works so that they could be played by the available musicians at Zimmerman's Coffeehouse.

At these coffeehouse events, Bach also performed music by his most admired colleagues, especially Telemann and Vivaldi. Though many composers might not have chosen to promote the works of their competitors, Bach seems to have fostered a warm and collegial spirit in these concerts.

II. The Music

In his great Ouverture-Suites (or orchestral suites), Bach imitated the French baroque style. The **Suite no. 2 in B Minor** is a famous quasi-concerto for the baroque flute. We are performing five of the sparkling dance movements, which beautifully showcase the flute. The opening *Overture* follows the classic French style, featuring dotted rhythms leading to a fast and lively fugal section. The flute often doubles the first violins but breaks away for virtuosic episodes. The *Rondeau* movement is a graceful dance characterized by a recurring theme interspersed with contrasting episodes. The stately *Polonaise* is a proud and stylized dance inspired by Polish

music, but popular among the French aristocracy. *Badinerie* means “chatter” or “playful gossip” (*badinage*). The title perfectly fits the rapid chatter of the solo flute part in the famous final movement, with its lightning-fast display of flute virtuosity.

Bach’s ever-popular **Concerto for Two Violins** had most likely been written for the virtuoso musicians of CUothen. At the Coffeehouse, the best of the student musicians took the solo parts. The first and third movements feature lively ritornellos that show the influence of Vivaldi. In the first movement, the two soloists engage in a dramatic discourse, while in the second they converse serenely as two intimate friends, in a poignant and sunny F major. In the third, they launch into a fiery and virtuosic duel, showing that Bach could fully challenge Vivaldi at his own game.

The coffeehouse orchestra, otherwise known as the Collegium Musicum of Leipzig, had been founded years earlier by a lively and popular law student named **G. P. TELEMANN**. But since then, Telemann had gone on to greater things: he had become Music Director for the wealthy city of Hamburg. (He had also been chosen over Bach for the Music Director post in Leipzig. But he declined the offer, and the post eventually went to Bach after it was also declined by Graupner and Fasch.) Bach and Telemann seem to have met when both were in their 20’s. Despite the inevitable competition between them, the two were close friends. In 1714, Telemann became godfather to Bach’s son Carl Phillip Emmanuel. Bach paid tribute to Telemann by studying his music and performing it with the Collegium at Zimmerman’s.

Though Telemann was four years the elder, he was definitely the more trendy and forward-looking of the two composers. His sense of musical humor, lightness, and use of folk elements greatly endeared him to the public. The fact that Telemann’s music is not only lighter but *easier to play* than Bach’s would have also contributed to his widespread popularity. Whereas only a dedicated professional could master Bach’s works, many talented amateurs could play Telemann for pleasure. In fact, Telemann, who received four times as much space in 18th-century German music encyclopedias as Bach did, was praised for *not composing like Bach*.

Telemann’s **Recorder Suite in A minor** is one of the most beloved and virtuosic works featuring the recorder. Like Bach’s Orchestral Suite no. 2, this piece combines the concerto form and the suite form. Telemann infuses the concerto form into the middle lively section of the Overture movement. The fast theme that we hear at the start of this section forms the basis for a ritornello (“refrain”) for the whole band, alternating with virtuoso solo passages for the recorder. Three of the other selected movements from this work are also written in the French style – **Les Plaisirs** (which is a pair of French bourrées), a pair of **Menuets** and the **Réjouissance**.

Bach admired and studied French music, and copied some French pieces into his *Notebook for Anna Magdalena*. Though we don’t know for sure, he likely knew the work of French composer Marin Marais, who was a central figure at the court of Louis XIV. Marais’ **Sonnerie de Sainte-Geneviève du Mont-de-Paris** (The Bells of St. Genevieve) is named after the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris (the site where the Panthéon now stands). Marais evokes the sound of the bells ringing out across the city, creating an overlapping web of sound. The entire piece is built upon a **three-note basso ostinato** (a repeating ground bass): D-F-E, evoking the carillon that never ceases. While the bass remains constant, Marais weaves an increasingly complex series of

variations above it. Marais composed this piece for solo violín, solo gamba, and harpsichord; but Jeannette has lightly orchestrated it so that our full band can join in the party.

The composer whom Bach seems to have admired and studied the most was Antonio Vivaldi. We know that he performed many of Vivaldi's works at the coffeehouse, and often transcribed Vivaldi's music into keyboard music that could be performed by Bach and his sons. Vivaldi was considerably more famous than Bach during the first half of his career; as music master at the prestigious Pietà in Venice (a special school for orphaned girls and illegitimate daughters of the nobility, with an extraordinary emphasis on music), Vivaldi attained great honor throughout Europe. Tourists from as far as England flocked to Venice to attend the concerts of the "red-headed priest" and his girls.

Vivaldi's *La Folia* ("Madness") is a set of variations based on the popular renaissance dance of that name. In the word "folia" we hear the root of the word "folly," or madness. The dance originated in Portugal, and traditionally got faster and wilder toward the end (as if the dancers were mad). In baroque times, many composers wrote variations on this wildly popular tune. Vivaldi's version was written for two violins and continuo, but Jeannette has arranged it as a concerto grosso so that all of us can join in the fray.

Vivaldi's younger colleague, Evaristo Dall'Abaco, grew up in the shadow of his famous countryman – and his musical style emulates Vivaldi's. However, Dall'Abaco eventually left Italy and went north to the courts of Munich and Brussels, where he worked as a chamber musician. During his years in Brussels he absorbed the French style. The *Passepieds* from his *Concerto à piu strumenti* ("concerto for multiple instruments") is a classic example of a composer writing in the French musical style within an Italian genre. The *Passepied* is a brisk dance in triple meter, here appearing as a pair of dances in minor and major keys, with a reprise of the first *passepied* after.

In his Coffeehouse concerts, Bach showed a warm sense of collegiality and respect for his more successful colleagues, Telemann and Vivaldi. If he felt any envy of their success, we have no sign of it. His generous spirit and the sense of communal gathering at these informal concerts make Zimmermann's Coffeehouse an inspiring model for music-making today.

Program notes by Jeannette Sorrell and Alan Choo

Optional Sidebar:

The Rise of Coffee in 18th-century Leipzig

- 1694 Entrepreneur Johann Lehmann opens the first coffee stall in the town marketplace.
- 1704 New coffeehouses are thriving, and the Leipzig Town Council reacts by ordering them to stop serving at 9:00pm, and by banning women from entering,. This ordinance seems to have been largely ignored.
- 1707 A pamphlet appears showing women having a coffee-party, with the sardonic caption, "Even if we're drinking ourselves to death, at least we're doing it in the latest style."
- 1711 The eight coffeehouses of Leipzig form a consortium to keep further entrepreneurs from opening more (foreshadowing the Starbucks monopoly?)

1729 J.S. Bach takes over the concert series at Zimmerman's Coffeehouse, which hosts the most famous of the coffeehouse-orchestras

APOLLO'S FIRE | on period instruments
Jeannette Sorrell, Artistic Director

VIOLIN I Alan Choo, concertmaster Susanna Perry Gilmore, assoc. Kiyoe Matsuura	CONTRABASS Sue Yelanjian
VIOLIN II Emi Tanabe, principal Hanna Bingham	TRAVERSO Kathie Stewart
VIOLA Nikki Divall	RECORDER Daphna Mor
CELLO Sarah Stone	THEORBO/GUITAR William Simms
	HARPSICHORD Jeannette Sorrell

APPROVED BIOS – July 2025

“Sorrell and her dazzling period band... are incandescent.”

– The Sunday Times, London

“Led by a brilliant harpsichordist, Jeannette Sorrell, the ensemble exudes stylish energy – a blend of scholarship and visceral intensity.” -- GRAMOPHONE

GRAMMY®-winning ensemble Apollo's Fire is praised as “the USA's hottest baroque band” (*Classical Music Magazine*, UK). Led by award-winning harpsichordist and conductor Jeannette Sorrell, the period-instrument orchestra is dedicated to the baroque concept of moving the passions of the listeners.

In Europe and the UK, Apollo's Fire has performed 6 tours including sold-out concerts at the BBC Proms in London, the Aldeburgh Festival (UK), Madrid's Royal Theatre, St Martin-in-the-Fields, and Bordeaux's Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra; with concerts at Heidelberg Spring Festival, the Irish National Concert Hall (Dublin), the Irish National Opera House (Wexford), and venues in Germany, France, Italy, Austria, and Portugal. The ensemble has had many live radio broadcasts across Europe. AF's London 2014 concert was chosen by the DAILY TELEGRAPH as one of the “Best 5 Classical Concerts of the Year,” with their critic writing, *“An evening of superlative music-making... the group combines European stylishness with American entrepreneurialism.”*

North American tour engagements include Carnegie Hall (2018 and 2022), the Tanglewood Festival (2015, 2017, and 2021), the Ravinia Festival (4 times), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY (numerous times), the Boston Early Music Festival series, the Library of Congress, the Aspen Music Festival, Caramoor Festival, and major venues in Toronto, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Apollo's Singers have twice performed with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Jeannette Sorrell, winning rave reviews.

With over 20 million views (total) of its YouTube videos, Apollo's Fire is one of the most popular baroque orchestras on the worldwide internet. At home in Cleveland and Chicago, Apollo's Fire frequently enjoys sold-out performances at its subscription series, which has drawn national attention for creative programming.

Apollo's Fire has released 34 commercial CDs and won a GRAMMY® award in 2019 for the album *Songs of Orpheus* with tenor Karim Sulayman. AF's recordings of the Bach *St John Passion*, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, and the Monteverdi *Vespers* have been chosen as best in the field by the Sunday Times of London (2020 and 2021) and BBC Magazine (2022). Thirteen of the ensemble's CD releases have become best-sellers on the classical Billboard chart, including Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (Billboard Classical #2, 2021), the Monteverdi *Vespers*, Bach's Brandenburg Concertos & Harpsichord Concertos, a disc of Handel arias with soprano Amanda Forsythe titled “The Power

of Love" (Billboard Classical #3, 2015), *Songs of Orpheus* (Billboard Classical #5, 2018), and five of Jeannette Sorrell's multicultural programs: *Come to the River – An Early American Gathering* (Billboard Classical #9, 2011); *Sacrum Mysterium – A Celtic Christmas Vespers* (Billboard Classical #11, 2012); *Sugarloaf Mountain – An Appalachian Gathering* (Billboard Classical #5, 2015); *Sephardic Journey – Wanderings of the Spanish Jews* (Billboard World Music Chart #2 and Billboard Classical #5, 2016); and *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain* (Billboard #3, 2018).

JEANNETTE SORRELL, *ARTISTIC DIRECTOR*

"Sorrell is an absolute dynamo onstage and a pleasure to see conduct....

a force to be reckoned with."

– San Francisco Classical Voice

"Sorrell led a splendid performance. Wonderful vitality... lithe, glowing and elegant. It's difficult for a "Messiah" performance to stand out. But this one did."

– THE NEW YORK TIMES, Anthony Tommasini, chief critic
(review of *Messiah* with New York Philharmonic), 2021

GRAMMY®-winning conductor Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as one of today's most compelling interpreters of Baroque and Classical repertoire. She is credited by **BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE** for "forging a vibrant, life-affirming approach to early music." She is the subject of the documentary by Oscar-winning director Allan Miller, titled *PLAYING WITH FIRE: Jeannette Sorrell and the Mysteries of Conducting*, commercially released in 2023.

Bridging the period-instrument and symphonic worlds from a young age, Sorrell studied conducting under Leonard Bernstein, Roger Norrington and Robert Spano at the Tanglewood and Aspen music festivals. As a harpsichordist, she studied with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam and won First Prize and the Audience Choice Award in the Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from Europe, Israel, the U.S., and the Soviet Union.

As a guest conductor, Sorrell made her New York Philharmonic debut in 2021 to rave reviews and returned in 2023. She has repeatedly conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Florida Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco, and New World Symphony; and has also led the Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center (NYC), Baltimore Symphony, the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, Houston Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Opera St

Louis with the St Louis Symphony, the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa), Calgary Philharmonic (Canada), Royal Northern Sinfonia (UK), Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (Spain), Grand Rapids Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, and the Orchestra of St Luke's at Carnegie Hall, among others.

Upcoming engagements in 2025-26 include return engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and Detroit Symphony, and debuts with the Manchester Hallé Orchestra (UK) and the Oregon Symphony,

Sorrell has been featured on *Living the Classical Life*, and has attracted national awards for her creative programming and her “storytelling” approach to early music, which has attracted many new listeners to the genre.

As the founder and artistic director of APOLLO'S FIRE, Sorrell has led the renowned period ensemble in sold-out concerts at Carnegie Hall, the Madrid Royal Theatre, London's BBC Proms, St Martin-in-the-Fields, and many other venues in North America and Europe. At home in Cleveland, she and Apollo's Fire have built one of the largest audiences of any baroque orchestra in North America.

With over 20 million views of their YouTube videos, Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 34 commercial CDs, of which 13 have been bestsellers on Billboard Classical. Sorrell won a GRAMMY® in 2019 for her album “*Songs of Orpheus*” with Apollo's Fire and tenor Karim Sulayman. Her CD recordings of the Bach *St John Passion* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* have been chosen as best in the field by the SUNDAY TIMES of London (2020 and 2021). Her Monteverdi *Vespers* recording was chosen by **BBC Music Magazine** as one of “30 Must-Have Recordings for Our Lifetime” (September 2022). Her discography also includes the complete Brandenburg Concerti and harpsichord concerti of Bach (Billboard Classical Top 10 in 2012), four discs of Mozart, Handel's *Messiah*, and five creative crossover projects, including *Sephardic Journey* (Billboard World Music #2, Classical #7) and *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain* (Billboard Classical #3, and named “Festive Disc of the Year” by GRAMOPHONE).

She holds an Artist Diploma from Oberlin Conservatory, an honorary doctorate from Case Western University and an award from the American Musicological Society. Passionate about guiding the next generation of performers, Sorrell is the architect of Apollo's Fire's Young Artist Fellowship program, which has produced many of the nation's leading young professional baroque players.