



GUIDE OVERVIEW

Berliner Konzert PAUL FREHNER



For Piano trio (violin, cello, piano) and string orchestra.

Premiere: November 24, 2009

Length of Recording: 24 minutes

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Recommended for Grade 12

World History Since 1900 – Global and Regional Perspectives (CHT30) – Communities Local, National and Global: Conflict and Cooperation – Explain the causes, course, and results of the Cold War.

Citizenship and Heritage – Rights of Individuals and Groups

Social, Economic, and Political Structures – Forms of Government

Canadian and World Politics – Grade 12, University Preparation (CPW4U) – Influences on International Relations – describe some major challenges and conflicts caused by the end of the Cold War.

CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS

Human Rights and Freedoms; Empathy

MAJOR THEMES

Fall of the Berlin Wall; Commemoration through Art

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ABOUT SOUNDMAKERS RESOURCES

The Soundstreams' series of SoundMakers Study Guides have been created for educators to enhance the SoundMakers.ca experience. There is a wealth of *free* streamable and downloadable music available on SoundMakers. These guides give background information, activity ideas, and curriculum connections to help teachers get the most out of the Soundstreams commissions catalogue which is available online.

In-class workshops are also available through Soundstreams. Soundstreams composers and artist-educators can visit your school or organization for in-class workshops or for a staff learning session.

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This Resource Guide was written by Jessi Linn Davies

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INSPIRATION

Created to mark the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, this piece does not merely celebrate that momentous event; its larger purpose is to explore through music the entire story of the city's division. Each of its six movements is inspired by historical events during the Wall's rise and fall. In evoking the various moods associated with those events, the piece charts the changing social and political climate of Berlin during the post-war years. The work's concertante nature (meaning it features both soloists and the orchestra at different times) likewise changes as it proceeds: sometimes the members of the trio play as three soloists alongside the orchestra, at other times they join together as a whole. Its solo and ensemble passages ranging from the atmospherically nuanced to the propulsively rhythmic, *Berliner Konzert* lends powerful expression to a city's troubled history even as it celebrates the collapse of a barrier that claimed so many lives.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

b.1970, CANADA

Paul Frehner's initial musical experiences came from playing guitar in several rock and folk music groups throughout his teenage years. He then studied composition at McGill University with John Rea, Brian Cherney and Denys Bouliane, eventually completing his doctoral degree in 2004.

Frehner's compositions have been performed by the Almeida Opera, the Esprit Orchestra, the Prague Philharmonia, the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, the North Holland Philharmonic Orchestra, the CBC Vancouver Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Ensemble Contemporaine de Montréal and the Quasar Saxophone Quartet.

He has received commissions by Genesis Foundation, Esprit Orchestra, Ensemble Contemporaine de Montréal, Radio France, Fibonacci Trio, Gryphon Trio and Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn, among others.

Paul Frehner is a faculty member of the Don Wright Faculty of Music of Western University (London, Canada) where he teaches composition, electroacoustic music, and co-directs the contemporary music ensemble.

IN THE MUSIC - THE SIX MOVEMENTS OF BERLINER KONZERT

Composer Paul Frehner divided *Berliner Konzert* into six movements, each inspired by a moment in the history of the Berlin Wall. We will explore each movement by outlining the moment which inspired Frehner, his musical motivations, and providing opportunities for further research.

PRELUDE

(0:00 minutes to 2:07 minutes on the SoundMakers recording)

Moment: On August 13, 1961, a barbed wire fence was erected by East German police. It entirely surrounded West Berlin. Berlin, a city that had been politically divided since the end of WWII, was physically divided, literally overnight.

Music: *"I tried to capture an ominous feeling in this movement as if something is happening but it is quite intangible at the moment, it is a bit dark."* – P.F.

More: Two days after the barbed wire fence was erected, there was a concrete wall in its place. It was later built up and rebuilt to be a massive fortification with watchtowers and guard dogs. The communist East Berlin government extolled the virtues of the wall, proclaiming that the Wall would keep Western "fascists" from entering and undermining the Easterners' socialist state. The Wall stood until November 9, 1989 when the borders were finally reopened and the wall began to be dismantled.

The History Channel has a two-minute video depicting a rendering of the building of the Berlin Wall, and outlining a brief history of the wall's construction and demise.

<http://www.history.com/topics/berlin-wall>

SAND AND CEMENT

(2:07 to 8:21)

Moment: When the Wall was erected, the city of Berlin was totally divided. The wall kept those in East Berlin from jobs, family, and everything in the West part of the city. The citizens, who once moved with the fluidity of sand, became stuck. People ceased to flow freely through the busy metropolis.

Continued

Music: Berlin was built upon sandy, granular soil. The wall was built of sand made into solid cement. Freher was inspired by this change from the fluidity of sand to the rigidity of cement.

“[The] fluidity of the city was halted by the building of this wall. So in this movement I have a type of granular bit of music played by the trio and it’s quasi folk-like, a type of artificial folk music. The orchestra here have a different role in this movement. They’re playing these harsh chords and massive sonorities that gradually build up and take over the music of the trio.” – P.F.

More:

Here is one article of a woman’s account of how the Wall changed her life:

“The Berlin Wall kept me apart from my baby son”
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/nov/07/berlin-wall-sigrud-paul>

NO MAN’S LAND

(8:21 to 14:26)

Moment: Peter Fechter, an 18 year-old who lived in East Germany, tried to escape to the West on August 17, 1962. He and a co-worker ran across the 300 foot strip of terrain known as “no man’s land” which lay just inside the Eastern side of the Wall. While his co-worker scaled the fence and escaped unharmed, Fechter was shot by East German guards and was left, bleeding to death, for an hour. This event happened in broad daylight and with hundreds of bystanders. The image of Fechter lying beside the Wall became a poignant symbol of the Cold War conflict.

Music: This movement is inspired by Fechter’s escape attempt and death. Listen as courageous anticipation leads to running and the deadly shot followed by a sense of helplessness and finally the last breaths. As our composer, Frehner, plaintively observed, after Fechter was shot, “Nobody knew what to do.”

More: Many others attempted to escape from East Berlin. There are reported escape attempts by hot air balloon, tunnel, hijacked tank, in car trunks, and many others.

The CBC has put together a very informative interactive site titled Berlin Wall Escape Stories:

<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/international-politics/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-berlin-wall/dying-to-escape.html>

Here is an image of Peter Fechter lying at the Wall:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Body_of_Peter_Fechter_lying_next_to_Berlin_Wall.jpg

KOOLTUR

(14:26 to 17:46)

Moment: Life in West Berlin continued on and that part of the city thrived economically, as all of Western-controlled Germany prospered.

Music: *“This is a movement that was really inspired by the life of West Berlin in the divided city and the music of the young people, the new wave music, all the various musics that the young people of the time listened to and the sort of ‘cool’ aspect of the music as well.” – P.F.*

More: Pop Music in West Germany was greatly influenced by the chart-toppers in America and Great Britain.

Here is an article outlining Here is an article outlining pop music in Germany to 1989

<http://www.goethe.de/kue/mus/pop/pop/en8573839.htm>

FRAGMENT

(17:46 to 19:46)

Moment: On November 9, 1989, the border restrictions were lifted and people were able to pass freely between East and West Germany; the Wall began to be taken down. When exiled Russian cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich, heard the news on his radio, he flew to Berlin to give an impromptu performance at the site of the Wall. He played Bach’s Cello Suite and performed over the course of a few days following the fall of the wall.

Music: *“Melodically, the cello has the lead role in this movement. And the cello makes use of quotations, or melodic fragments from the Sarabande from the Bach Cello Suite in G Major. The orchestra echoes the cello.” – P.F.*

Continued

More:

Listen to the original cello version of Bach's Sarabande section as streaming audio from Wikipedia.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cello_Suites_\(Bach\)#Suite_No._1_in_G_major.2C_BWV_1007](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cello_Suites_(Bach)#Suite_No._1_in_G_major.2C_BWV_1007)

View video footage of Rostropovich playing the Sarabande at the Berlin Wall:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB4oJxjKZow>

DRESDEN 03 10 89

(19:46 to 23:55)

Moment: This movement was inspired by the train rides taken by thousands of East Germans who had camped out at the West German embassy in Prague, hoping to be granted passage to the West. The East German government — appalled and perhaps embarrassed by the very visible and public frenzy — provided trains and passage through East Germany to Dresden for those assembled.

Music: Listen for Frehner's musical rendition of the chaos at the embassy in Prague, the momentum of the train, and the wonder and possibility upon arrival in Dresden.

More: It was not just the embassy in Prague that was overrun with would-be evacuees. Many other West German embassies filled with people as the surrounding governments scrambled to make their border policies clear in light of the East German government's move to change its travel regulations.

Here is a contemporary news article outlining the exodus by train from embassies in the East to cities in the West:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/06/world/jubilant-east-germans-cross-to-west-in-sealed-trains.html>

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Cold War Museum's Timeline of the Berlin Wall:
<http://www.coldwar.org/articles/60s/BerlinWallTimeLine.asp>

A photographer's eyewitness account of the fall of the Wall includes an interview accompanied by many of his photographed images:

http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,49315435001_1936561,00.html

COMMEMORATING EVENTS THROUGH ART

Berliner Konzert is a commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Soundstreams, who commissioned the work, and the composer Paul Frehner, felt it was important to mark this occasion. Do you think it is important to commemorate or memorialize events? Why or why not?

What are some other ways you have seen or heard events commemorated (statues, plaques, theatre pieces, parties, festivals, scholarships, etc.)?

What events that have happened in your lifetime have changed your path the most? What memorial would you create for one of those events?

GLOSSARY

Piano Trio is a group of piano and two other instruments, usually a violin and a cello, or a piece of music written for such a group. It is one of the most common forms found in classical chamber music.^[1]

Movements are a self-contained part of a musical composition or musical form. While individual or selected movements from a composition are sometimes performed separately, a performance of the complete work requires all the movements to be performed in succession.^[2]

Prelude is a short piece of music, the form of which may vary from piece to piece. The prelude can be thought of as a preface. It may stand on its own or introduce another work. It generally features a small number of rhythmic and melodic motifs that recur throughout the piece.^[3]

Sinfonia Concertante is a musical form that emerged during the Classical period of Western music. It is essentially a mixture of the symphony and the concerto genres: a concerto in that one or more soloists are on prominent display, and a symphony in that the soloists are nonetheless discernibly a part of the total ensemble and not preeminent.^[4]

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_trio

[2] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_(music))

[3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude_(music))

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music