

Apollo and the Muses
Joel Speerstra, organ

A concert program performed twice for organ and clavichord, and once for solo organ in 2018. The music examples are taken from the organ performance on 25 August, 2018 at the Cavazzani organ in the Basilica SS. Martiri in Sanzeno, Italy, as part of the 2018 Smarano Organ Academy.



INNOCENZO CAVAZZANI organ (1792)

From an idea developed in the VR project “Acting at the Keyboard” (2008-2010), repertoire was chosen for each of the muses, challenging the performer to try to represent the nine archetypal faces of the traditional muses in affect and expression in a single concert. The first four pieces are a suite built of individual movements from J. C. F. Fischer’s nine keyboard suites on each of the muses, “Musikalischer Parnassus” from c. 1700. The others rely on emblematic titles or structures that can build direct associations to the individual muses.

Calliope: the muse of epic poetry
Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1656–1746)
Calliope Suite: Overture

The eldest of the nine muses, Calliope was the mother of Orpheus. Her symbol is the writing tablet or book. The musical form most associated with her is the Overture which always begins an epic story.

Clio: the muse of history
J. C. F. Fischer
Clio Suite: Allemande

Clio's symbol is the scroll. This muse begins Fischer's suites for the nine muses, and the prelude, still, and meditative, is reminiscent of Bach's first Prelude in the Well-Tempered Clavier.

Terpsichore: **the muse of dance**
 J. C. F. Fischer
 Terpsichore Suite: Riguadon

Terpsichore is often portrayed dancing and holding a lyre or a tambourine. She was the mother of the Sirens. Fischer gives Terpsichore this dance characterized by lively hopping steps.

Erato: **the muse of love poetry**
 J. C. F. Fischer
 Erato Suite: Chaconne

Erato's symbol is the lyre. She is often seen wearing a crown of roses. Fischer captures a peaceful languorousness in his suite, especially the Chaconne that seems almost like a gentle Aria.

Melpomene: the muse of tragedy
 Johann Kuhnau (1660–1722)
 Second Biblical Sonata: Saul malincolico
 Movement one: La tristezza
 ed il furore del Re

Melpomene's symbol is the tragic mask, and she often carries a sword. In Kuhnau's Second Biblical Sonata we find a classic tragic character. King Saul, driven by grief and madness, tries to spear David. **Music Example 1**

Urania: **the muse of astronomy**
 Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621)
 Fantasia super: Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La

Urania holds a globe and wears a cloak covered with stars. The movements of the planets in Sweelinck's time were thought to create a music based on the relative proportions and speeds of their orbits. In our microcosm, this celestial music was most often represented by a scale, where each note represented a planet. In Sweelinck's Fantasia on a planetary scale, you can also hear the same theme repeated at different speeds perhaps also reflecting the cosmic motion of the planets in music. **Music Example 2**

Polyhymnia: **the muse of religious music**
 Georg Böhm (1661–1733)
 Partita on "Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig"

Polyhymnia is often identified by a meditative look on her face, which is sometimes veiled. The variations by Böhm on Ach wie Nichtig are some of Böhm's most meditative hymn-inspired polyphony. **Music Example 3**

Euterpe: **the muse of music**
 Johann Pachelbel, (1653–1706)
 Hexachordum Apollinis (1699):
 Aria Terzia with 6 Variations

Euterpe's symbol is the flute, which she invented. She was the mother of Rhosus who was killed at Troy. Pachelbel's 1699 book of Arias is clearly related to Apollo and the muses. The third and sixth variations sound like wonderful duets for two virtuosic flutes.

Thalia: **the muse of comedy**
 Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788)
 Character piece: La Buchholtz

Thalia's symbol is the comic mask. She appears with a shepherd's staff and wearing a crown of ivy. of the best examples of the comic element in keyboard music is the character piece and C. P. E. Bach was a master, often writing pieces that captured the personalities of friends in music. **Music example 4.**

Apollo: **Ciaccona in C Dur**
 Bernardo Storace (fl. 1664)

Apollo of the six-stringed lyre. Apollo Sun God, winner of epic music contests, father of Orpheus. These sunny C major variations over a repeating bass in a grand 6/2 time signature captures the scale, the radiance and the power of its namesake.