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## The Boston Globe

### Akamus offers stunning program of concertos at Gardner

By Harlow Robinson, April 8, 2014

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In affairs of state, Germans and Italians have not always gotten along so well. (The sack of Rome by the Visigoths didn't help.) But the music of these two nations has long interacted peacefully and creatively, as a stylish program of 18th-century concertos confirmed at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on Sunday afternoon.

Currently embarked on an extensive US tour, the 16 members of the renowned Akademie für alte Musik Berlin (Academy for Old Music, Akamus for short) played eight diverse works by two Germans (J. S. Bach and Georg Philipp Telemann), three Italians (Alessandro Marcello, Francesco Veracini, and Antonio Vivaldi), and one German-born cosmopolitan (George Frideric Handel) on Baroque instruments **with fearless energy, zest, and precision.**

Given its open square performing space surrounded by the audience on four levels, Calderwood Hall's unusual configuration presents a challenge. So as not to sit with backs facing half of the listeners, Akamus chose to stand in a circle around the harpsichord. The results were stunning.

Not only did the sound inhabit the entire space from floor to ceiling, holding musicians and listeners in a gently pulsating embrace. But also the audience received a fresh perspective on how musical lines intertwine. The performers (six violinists, two violists, one cellist, one string bassist, two oboists, one bassoonist, two on horn, one harpsichordist) also communicated across the circle in a fresh musical conversation, led by concertmaster Georg Kallweit.

Six of the eight works played bear the title “concerto,” which only goes to show how capacious is this genre. Two of them (Handel's Concerto Grosso (Op. 6, No.2) and Vivaldi's Concerto for Strings RV 114) were composed for instrumental ensemble. The other four (one each by Bach and Marcello and two by Vivaldi) featured a solo instrument (or instruments): violin, oboe, horns. **Oboist Xenia Löffler played with vivacity, nuance, and taste** in two different concerti, by Vivaldi and Marcello. Most unusual was a **luminous Vivaldi concerto** (RV 538) for strings, continuo and two horns — the kind without valves, with mellow, muffled tone — **wielded gracefully by Erwin Wieringa and Miroslav Rovenský.** Each half of the concert concluded with an overture, first by Veracini and then by Telemann. **The entire ensemble reunited for a lusty encore**, the playful final movement of Haydn's Third Symphony.